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Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education

Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education is an academic forum for the study of teaching and pedagogy that focuses on the relationship between education and its socio-cultural context. Drawing upon a variety of contextualizing disciplines including cultural studies, curriculum theorizing, feminist studies, the social foundations of education, critical pedagogy, multi/interculturalism, queer theory, and symbolic interactionism, Taboo is grounded on the notion of “radical contextualization.” The journal encourages papers from a wide range of contributors who work within these general areas. As its title suggests, Taboo seeks compelling and controversial submissions.

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Welcome to Volume 14, Issue 1 of Taboo. This issue draws together work that was submitted to the previous editorial team. We thank the authors for their patience with the delays in publication as we have worked to ensure that Taboo meets its commitments to previously accepted articles. We thank the previous editorial team for their efforts in drawing together these works and are pleased to be able to bring them to publication.

During the preparation of this issue, one of our current editorial team was impacted by serious health concerns. It seems all too common in academics of critical persuasions that their health suffers from the stresses ensuing from standing up and being heard on issues of inequality. The critical path is, at times, a stressful path and one that none of us takes lightly. To be a critical academic is to not leave your profession at work when you go home. Our criticality permeates every area of our lives and as such impacts our health and well-being. Many of us draw strength from our critical dispositions, but living and acting critically can be stressful, especially in increasingly conservative educative spaces. The editorial team remembers those who have suffered serious health impacts and indeed lost their lives. In particular, we pause to pay respect to the late Joe Kincheloe. We would like to take this opportunity to urge our contributors and readers to take the time to look after their physical and mental health.

The themes of identity and representation wind their way through the articles of this issue. Considering identity, Traci Baxley in “Taking Off the Rose-Colored Glasses: Exposing Colorism through Counter Narratives” examines skin color stratification in Black communities drawing on her own experiences rationalising her darker complexion as a child. Reclaiming of indigenous identity is central to Colin Scheyen’s article “Abo-Digatalism: Youth Identity, Critical Pedagogy, and Popular Media.” In “The Education of Pauline Carey” by Jon Judy, the history of the education of women is considered biographically in the context of its influence...
on future generations. Andrew Binder in “World Monuments: A Critical Perspective for the Elucidation of Art Appreciation Instructors and Students” draws on his personal journey (both physical and metaphorical) to teach art appreciation from a critical perspective. Considering representation, Kerrita K. Mayfield in “Liminal eRoticism: Emerging Forms of Gender Identity and Performance in e-Romances and Their Feminist Electronic Communities” frames social feminism in e-romance novels using a postmodern lens; Myrna A. Hant in “Feminism Comes of Age on Television: The Portrayals of Empowered Older Women from Murder She Wrote to Damages” considers the change in representation on television of older women from sickly and weak to empowered and vigorous, making links to deconstructing the assumptions of aging; and the film genre of ‘eddies,’ films about schools, provides the basis of Derisa Grant’s analysis of the function and organization of schools in “‘Welcome to the Jungle’: Understanding the Archetypes and Cinematic Techniques of ‘Eddies.’”

We thank all of the authors for their contributions to the issue and trust that readers of the journal will engage with the works in a way that inspires their own theory and practice. As always, Taboo is accepting general papers, which are compelling and controversial, fitting within the theme of the relationship between education and its socio-cultural context. We are also happy to receive proposals for special issues to be guest edited.

Renee Baynes, Jon Austin, and Glen Parkes are faculty in the College of Australian Indigenous Studies of the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Australia.
Feminism Comes of Age on Television
The Portrayals of Empowered Older Women
from *Murder She Wrote* to *Damages*

*Myrna A. Hant*

According to the Frankfurt School,1 “So-called mass culture and communications stand in the center of leisure activity, are important agents of socialization, mediators of political reality, and should thus be seen as major institutions of contemporary societies” (Miller, 2002, p. 17). The early feminist television critical examinations decried the “political reality” of females on television for the “demeaning and stereotypical images of women” (Brunsden, 1997, p. 5). Largely absent though, in previous and present feminist discourse, is the examination of older women. A feminist textual analysis of mature women on television historically revealed a surprisingly consistent media archetype. By deconstructing the politics of representation and the changes in 21st century portrayals of older women, media pedagogy may be expanded, and thus can assist in giving older individuals “power over their cultural environments” (Kellner, 1995, p. 10).

The entrenchment of ageism, particularly directed at women, has a long history in the United States of America. Ageism, a term defined by Robert Butler in 1975, is a

... process of systemic stereotyping of and discrimination against older people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish this with skin colour and gender. Old people are categorized as, “senile, rigid in thought and manner, old fashioned in morality and skills. (Butler, 1975, p. 12)

Kathleen Woodward warns that “the practice of ageism can also be a horrible self-fulfilling prophecy.” In terms of women, especially, “as younger women turn these very prejudices against women older than themselves, they will in effect be turning against their very future selves as older women” (Woodward, 1999, p. xiii). Prime time television shows for more than 50 years have presented a typically consistent portrayal of older people, especially women, as ridiculous, interfering, obsessed with the family, and incapable of functioning outside the home. Betty Friedan
discusses a survey conducted by Retirement Living on a cross section of people under and over 65 and the most commonly used adjectives for television’s over-60 depictions were ‘ridiculous,’ ‘ decrepit,’ and ‘childish’ (Friedan, 1993). In another survey conducted by Cohen (2002), participants stereotyped the portrayal of older women as having the following characteristics: living in the past; old fashioned in behavior, thinking, and the way they looked; not interested in sexual activity; basically cared for by families without giving in return, and largely invisible (Cohen, 2002). They are often portrayed as stubborn, eccentric, foolish, dependent, frail, vulnerable, isolated, grumpy, and a drain on society (Bazzini, 1997, p. 7). However, a feminist textual analysis of older women presently on television reveals a gradual and accelerating transformation of depictions which is the harbinger of a new politics of representation.

“The emergence of cultivation analysis (which deliberately focuses solely on television as the dominant medium) and agenda setting research…explore ways in which television can create common assumptions and ways of understanding the world, not by overt attempts at persuasion, but simply by privileging some kinds of images, representations or facts over others” (Miller, 2002). Douglas Kellner promotes media pedagogy as giving individuals “power over their cultural environment” (Kellner, 1995, p. 10). Deconstructing some common assumptions of the ‘new aging’ is an exercise in this empowerment. In the new paradigm, older women are seen as powerful, sexual and in control. In order to analyze this change, it is helpful to understand some demographic variables, both old and new. Secondly, a perusal of the counter-hegemonic older woman characters starting in the mid-80’s elucidates the pioneers of feminist aging. And thirdly, a textual analysis of the new older woman offers an exercise in media literacy to promote the banishment of negative stereotypes not only for older viewers but for a younger audience as well.

Since 1950, the average American has added 30 years to his/her life span. For the average 65-year-old in the 21st Century, a man has 16.6 years to live and a woman has 19.5 years. One quarter of all Americans who turn 65 will see their 90th birthday, a possibility for 40% of the aging population by 2050. And perhaps, most significantly of all, the disability years after 65 number 14 years (Freedman, 2007). By 2030, 20% of the population will be over 65 (Cruikshank, 2009). Statistics alone of this cohort augur well that they will become an increasingly important segment of the population. Thus, despite being referred to as the senior tsunami, the age wave, the grey hordes, or an avalanche, older Americans are increasingly becoming an important cultural cohort. A new paradigm is partially a result of the numbers, the education level of the over 65 group (25% of baby boomers have a bachelor’s degree) and the economic strength of the aging. According to Joe Flint (2012), 2.7 trillion dollars were spent by those over 50 in 2010, making the aging population a financial force as well.

Cruikshank’s thesis is that “aging in North America is shaped more by culture than biology” (2009, p. ix). What will be the cultural messages for successful ag-
Dominant values in American culture have long been the enshrinement of individualism and the need for productivity, often associated with money (Gergen & Gergen, 2000) or as Cruikshank delineates, “Self-esteem is very closely linked to the cultural value of independence, autonomy, and self-reliance” (Cruikshank, 2009, p. 17). Rather than critique these values for the older population—are they really applicable to this age group?—the media has recently made a concerted effort to promote agency and the denial of aging for the purpose of selling products. The new paradigm promotes not getting old and certainly not acting old. Accordingly plastic surgery, skin treatments, medicalizing aging, exercise, and adventure travel assist in the process of ‘youthful aging.’

Increasingly the media and advertisers are conditioning people to expect a more youthful and energetic ‘old age.’ A magazine for baby boomers is titled What’s Next?; a retirement community in Laguna, California, Leisure World, changes its name to Laguna Woods in 2005; Elderhostel now calls itself Road Scholars. And Freedman (2007) reveals Paine Webber (among many advertisers) declaring,

They say retirement means the end of your working years. We say plan ahead so you can redefine retirement any time and any way you want. For many, it will be a bridge to a second career. A new business. Or true labor of love.

Or a Morgan Stanley ad declares,

Who made 60 the magical number? I want to stay in the game for as long as I can. Maybe I’ll start a company.

According to Susan Jacoby (2011), the new successful aging is a person who presents an “image of vigor and physical wellbeing, demonstrates a consistent willingness to try anything new” (p. xii), has “faith in the possibility of repeated self-transformation” (p. 57), believes that “clean and virtuous living will keep the doctor away” (p. 74), and accepts “that a combination of exercise and endless high tech surgeries will restore not only the general well-being but the athletic capacities and/or appearance of youth” (p. 76). Whether all these traits are possible or even desirable is debatable but some in the media have accepted these premises as they configure advertising and increasingly portrayals of aging on television.

Not surprisingly, producers of television programs with older characters are starting to become cognizant of the new ‘healthy aging’ mythos. Perhaps the 99 million Americans over 50 may be tapped for purchasing the products they are trying to sell. Instead of insulting the older population with tiresome stereotypes, a few shows are paving the way for innovative depictions.

Consistently for almost the entire history of television productions, older women have fallen into three categories: the other, the invisible, and the metaphor. Simone de Beauvoir (2011) in her book, The Second Sex, originally published in 1949, defined essential personhood as male and female while defining herself in terms of the male. Accordingly, the essential being or standard of womanhood in American
cultural youthfulness. Therefore, if a woman is ‘old,’ she is not essential woman but rather ‘the other’ and consequently different. The older woman is perceived as menopausal and hence is no longer a recipient of the ‘male gaze.’ Moreover, older women adopt this view of themselves and desperately try to be young or at least ‘pass’ as young and thus, young and old are accomplices in creating a social construct that defines being old as a negative attribute.

The ‘other’ is parodied in Sophia Petrillo in *The Golden Girls* (1985-1992), the wise-cracking, smart-mouthed senior member of the quadrangle of ‘golden women.’ While relishing the freedom of older people, she carries the twin burdens of being uninhibited enough to say exactly what she feels but is also excoriated as ‘the other.’ She sits on a stool in the kitchen when the three other women are discussing their lives. She is part of the scene but only on the periphery. Ninety-year-old Betty White in *Hot in Cleveland* (2010-present) replicates the older woman who “talks dirty and can deliver the punch line” (Flint, 2012), but is nothing more than the hackneyed stereotype revisited.

**Stereotypical Roles for Older Women**

Traditionally, the older woman is only ‘visible’ in her roles as mother and grandmother. Frequently, she is a ‘Jewish Mother’ (whether Jewish or not), as she whines, devours, and complains. Historically, to depict an older woman as an intellectually vital, sexually active, productive member of society in her own right is extremely rare. Emblematic of visible mother, but invisible womanhood, are characters such as Edith Bunker (*All in the Family*, 1971-1979), Estelle Costanza (*Seinfeld*, 1993-1998), and Marie Barone (*Everybody Loves Raymond*, 1996-2005). They are women, much like the pantheon of Jewish mothers, Ida Morgenstem (*Rhoda*), Sylvia (*The Nanny*), Sheila (*South Park*, 1997-present) and Susie (*Curb Your Enthusiasm*, 2000-present), who “push, weadle, demand, constrain, and are insatiable in their expectations and wants” (Prell, 1999, p. 143). Too frequently we see the depictions on television of older women as a metaphor for disease, isolation, worthlessness, vulnerability, dissatisfaction, and decrepitude. Aptly depicted by Livia (mother of Tony, Barbara, and Janice) in *The Sopranos* (1999-2007), is the ‘ill’ Italian matriarch who closely mimics a Jewish mother stereotype.

**Counter-Hegemonic Portrayals**

Gradually, older women characters are breaking the stereotype and instead of being always presented as the other, the mother, and the metaphor, a few are defying the archetype. As early as 1984 two dynamic older women on popular television shows convinced audiences that mature women can think and be involved in society. *Miss Marple* (1984-present) and Jessica Fletcher portrayed by Angela Lansbury in *Murder She Wrote* (1984-1996) are clever agents who investigate murders. One is an
amateur detective, the model of decorum, in the British village of St. Mary Mead, and the other is a mystery writer who herself scrutinizes murders in Cabot Cove, Maine, and later New York City. Both use their wits, rather than their physicality, to solve the mysteries, applying what might be labeled a feminine approach to sleuthing. Through observation and keen insights into human behavior, these women are the heroines who are not marginalized and certainly not invisible. Noteworthy is the beginning of each segment of Murder She Wrote where Jessica Fletcher is shown riding her bicycle and waving at many members of the community. However, both women are ‘spinsters,’ presumably so they will have time to pursue their cases rather than obsess over mothering and grandmothers. They are the pioneers, though, for the multi-dimensional female characters in the 21st century.

In the 21st century, television increasingly departs from the older woman as parody to the more nuanced portrayals of the ‘new aging’ female. Incorporated into this new ideology of aging are mainly three categories: physical aging, mental aging, and emotional aging. In regards to the physical manifestations of aging, the primary rule is to not get old or especially don’t act old. It is essential to present vigor and well-being in an effort to ignore or deny aging or to belie stereotypes. The new picture of mental aging is agency, being in control of one’s mind and one’s destiny. This power manifests itself in influence over others and consequently, the older woman is not invisible. Emotional aging incorporates a sexual self in which love, growth and transformation exist. Childbearing is not possible but the ‘male gaze’ is still a precursor to a satisfying sexual and emotional life.

As Time Goes By, a British sitcom airing from 1992 to 2005 (and in constant reruns to the present), is a clever depiction of mature lovers who meet after 38 years without contact. Having met in 1953, he as a second lieutenant and she a nurse, they lose contact after he is sent to Korea. The title of the show is based upon the poignant song As Time Goes By, written in 1931 for a Broadway musical, Everybody’s Welcome. It is also the theme song for the opening credits. The lyrics capture the possibility that love is timeless and can still flourish after 38 years:

You must remember this.
A kiss is just a kiss, a sigh is just a sigh.
The fundamental things apply as time goes by.
And when two lovers woo.
They still say I love you.
On that you can rely.
No matter what the future brings.
As time goes by.”

—as Time Goes By, music and words by Herman Hupfeld, 1932

The song closely parallels the interactions between Jean (Judi Dench) and Lionel (Geoffrey Palmer), a mature couple bemused by their connection so late in life.

The dialogue constantly refers to their old age when they are interacting with young people. After a party attended by young book publishers, Lionel, who is
forced to go in an effort to promote his book on Kenya, remarks to Jean, “This was not a generation gap, it was a generation chasm.” They are comfortable with their ages although constantly reacting to ‘ageist’ comments with a smirk and a knowing wisdom. They accept the limitations of age and all its accompanying ailments (leg cramps or less energy), but are not apologetic about this stage.

The sweet poignancy of ‘what might have been’ permeates the show but never overwhelms it. In one episode, “A Surprise for Jean” from 1997, Lionel finally has the proof that he did send Jean a love letter from Korea, a letter she never received. When a copy of his letter miraculously ends up in the Imperial War Museum, Lionel remarks, “There it was, all faded in a glass case. A letter from Second Lieutenant Hardcastle to Nurse Jean Pargetter, posted in Korea.” She replies, “But it never arrived.” The letter begins, “My darling Jean,” and Jean laments that if she had only gotten that letter her life may have been completely different. “It’s a beautiful letter, Lionel. You really did love me.” And Lionel admits, “I still do.” It’s never too late to experience deep commitment and love no matter when it occurs in life. Ironically, despite all the nostalgia the emphasis is on ‘newness.’ Lionel encapsulates these beginnings by telling Jean. “I’m starting a new chapter in my life. I don’t want all the old pages. Too many were blank anyhow.”

Jean is a professional woman and owner of a secretarial service, “Type for You,” who is portrayed as a dedicated employer capable of efficiency and unquestionable agency. She is emotionally and sexually attracted to Lionel while at the same time perfectly self-aware about her age and her (and his) physical limitations. Neither she nor Lionel are subjects of ageist humor. When age-related humor exists, it largely emanates from Jean or Lionel in self-deprecating remarks about their ‘ancientness.’ At the same time Jean revels in her stage of life with no apologies for any age-related shortcomings. Health issues are just byproducts of her getting older, certainly not the metaphor for her existence.

Tyne Daly in Judging Amy (2001-2005) introduces the audience to a rarity, Maxine Gray. Not only is she a sought-after professional woman, a social worker with the department of children and families in Hartford, Connecticut, she is also a person who is respected for what she says and does. Not physically beautiful, not young and a little plump, she carries herself with grace and confidence and has love interests in the show—notably the rich businessman Jared Duff to whom she becomes engaged, losing him to a heart attack 48 hours before the wedding. The audience observes a gray-haired woman, not obsessed with her appearance, who knows who she is and who is not trying to camouflage her age or her wisdom. Capable of toughness, love, and humor, she is also a multi-dimensional character who represents frailties (she has not spoken to her brother in 12 years).

Her relationship with Ignacio Messina, her landscape designer, is not a demeaning one—a coupling of two old folks that are laughable caricatures (like Sophia Petrillo’s relationships). Rather they are presented as mature individuals who learn from each other and communicate their needs and feelings. Mr. Messina takes Maxine salsa
dancing and remarks that she lacks passion on the dance floor. The implication is that Maxine needs to accept her femininity and enjoy the connection with him as a partner. He is smitten with this gray-haired overweight grandmother, and the attraction is believable and poignant, not ridiculous. He formally asks Maxine if he can ‘court her’ and she is pleased and willing to continue the relationship. Maxine is seen throughout the series advising not only her granddaughter and daughter, but advocating, as a professional, for youngsters in trouble.

Sharon Gless in *Queer as Folk* (2000-2005) manages as Debbie Notony to present a working-class woman who accepts her son and others the way they are. With her lashing remarks and her impatience with intolerance, she is the admirable advocate of justice and humanity. She is frequently contrasted with those who cannot change and must profess their ideologies no matter what the price. It is telling that Brian’s mother, a lonely widow whose phone never rings and who is the antithesis of Debbie, is adamant about excoriating her gay son, telling him how sinful his lifestyle is and that he will surely go to Hell.

Despite Debbie’s floozy looks and her ubiquitous t-shirt (“It’s All About Me”), she is not degraded as an older woman and does not pattern her life only after her own demands. In one episode, a gay boy is found dead in the trash bin behind Debbie’s restaurant. Detective Horvath labels him, “John Doe.” Debbie is indignant that the detective is cavalier about the death and yells at him, “The kid has a name. You’re a homophobic prick.” She is incensed that no one in the community, including the detective, takes this death seriously enough to investigate fully, and she proceeds to find out the identity of the boy. Detective Horvath is so impressed with her perseverance, and her humaneness, that he wishes to date Debbie. Again, Debbie is hardly an invisible presence on the show but rather a pivotal character endowed with street-smart wisdom.

Frances Conroy’s Ruth Fisher in *Six Feet Under* (2001-2005) reveals an exceedingly complex woman, layered with inadequacies, uncertainties, and struggles. She is an imperfect wife who resorts to an affair with Hiram (Ed Begley, Jr.), while still married to Nathaniel. Later as a widow she has an active sex life, dating her boss at the florist shop and ultimately marrying George Sibley (James Cromwell), a geologist and professor. Although she mainly dresses in a plain, matronly style, and is a self-accepting prude, she is a desirable woman who attracts many men.

In an episode of *Six Feet Under* entitled “Ecotone” (2005), she tries to rekindle her romantic relationship with Hiram, but comes to the conclusion that she is desperately disgusted with all the men in her life who have constantly made demands on her. In an epiphany of self-awareness, she dramatically ‘shoots’ each of the love interests in her life and comes to understand that she no longer needs or is interested in Hiram. Despite George’s constant entreaties to travel together ‘to close the distance between them’ and even after George recovers from his mental breakdown, Ruth concludes that she wants her freedom. There is nothing ‘other’ about this character who struggles, as do all the characters, regardless of age, to
make sense of a world which includes the incomprehensible (the death of Nate). Her mother-daughter battles with Claire are representative of the difficulties of familial interaction. She is neither static nor is she purely defined as a mother and grandmother. Her multi-age support group, her knitting circle, accepts and discusses her problems with men in the light of all women’s problems with men, not classifying her as ‘old’ and different. She continues to explore who she is as an employee in the florist shop and ultimately as an owner, along with her friend, Bettina, of the Four Paws Pet Retreat. There is nothing ageist depicted about her choices.

Stephanie Cole as Joan Norton is the mature emotional foil to Martin Clune as Dr. Martin Ellingham in the British comedy drama series *Doc Martin* (2004-present). The show takes place in a seaside village, Portwenn, in Cornwall, United Kingdom, where Dr. Ellingham, a brilliant vascular surgeon in London, develops a severe fear of blood and must stop practicing surgery. He becomes a general practitioner in Portwenn where he encounters a multitude of illnesses, accidents, and emergencies with the local population. Joan Norton (Doc Martin’s aunt), runs a farm outside of the village and frequently offers sage advice to her nephew. Martin, as a young boy, had spent every summer with his Aunt Joan who was the only person in his youth who really loved him. Joan, a long-time widow, is physically strong as she is the sole occupant of the farm and thus is required to do the necessary manual labor as well as to tend the animals. Although she has her share of aches and pains from her physical efforts she is never obviously portrayed as physically weak or in need of special attention because she’s older. She drives around Portwenn in a pick-up truck no more or less recklessly than the other inhabitants of the village. She makes her own decisions and takes responsibility for them and what happens to her. She is particularly accepting of Doc Martin’s obstreperousness although she frequently points out to him the effects of his behavior on the villagers and his love interest, Louisa, the local elementary school teacher. She is a multi-layered character who experiences flirtations and love interests on the show; an indication that she is capable of love and change.

In one of the most poignant episodes of *Doc Martin*, “Of All the Harbours,” aired on January 1, 2004, Joan’s former lover returns to Portwenn after 30 years. The viewer learns that 30 years ago John Slater and Joan had an affair while Joan was married. Because Martin’s parents felt her encounter was morally reprehensible, they threatened that Martin could never visit her in the summer again unless she gave up John. Joan decides that since Martin is like a son to her she will tell her lover to leave. Thirty years later John returns to see Joan and finds out that her husband has died. He wants to resume their relationship. There is flirtation and obvious sexual attraction. Joan feels that she’s free and despite being ‘a certified ancient monument,’ she loves John and is ready to sail the world with him. But John is diagnosed with a fatal heart condition, hides the news from Joan and sails away from the village. As Joan and her nephew, Martin, watch him sail away,
Martin says, “All those times you brought me up here (on the cliff overlooking the ocean). Was it always to watch him sail?” And Joan responds, “I’m sorry. Affairs taint everything, don’t they?” The lovers, although in their seventies, are portrayed with dignity and sexual tension. A few references to age, ‘we’re both 105,’ do not define the relationship and the viewer shares in their love and hope and possibility for transformation. Alas, the love is star-crossed due to illness, a complication which could occur at any age.

In a later episode, “The GP Always Rings Twice,” initially airing on October 15, 2007, Edward Melville, a young painter, becomes smitten with Joan. He feels she has a neo-classical look and would like to paint a portrait of her. Despite a 50-year age difference, Edward and Joan commence a sexual relationship and are even caught on the kitchen table when Martin barges into Joan’s house. When the shocked Doc Martin tries to convince Joan that, “Sex on the kitchen table with a man 50 years your junior does not qualify as a real relationship,” and that her behavior is grossly inappropriate, she responds, “I’m not going to watch time kick by. My life is not over.” When Martin protests, she quietly explains, “I’m going to continue to see Edward. It won’t last forever and it certainly isn’t true love, but it’s what I want. Get used to it.” In these episodes Joan embodies all aspects of ‘the new aging.’ She is physically fit; she has control over her decisions (agency); and she is a sexual being. No one is going to convince her that her remaining years should or should not be ‘appropriate’ to her age.

Maggie Smith who plays the Dowager (Countess of Grantham, Violet Crawley) in Downton Abbey (2010-present), is an iconic figure in the panoply of aristocratic British characters from the early 20th century. Violet Crawley, the Dowager, represents not so much a deviation from the caricature of the older British elite but an affirmation of the expected respect that someone in her position demands. Nonetheless, as a depiction of an older female character, she is admirable in her strength and visibility. Physically she neither deigns to deny or accept aging; it is simply not an issue. Although most of the scenes are shot with her sitting down, she is erect and presents herself as vigorous with a sense of well-being. It is in the area of agency that her character illuminates the difference between the stereotype of the ineffective and invisible elderly and the influence she exerts on all the members at Grantham.

The Dowager is a consistent character mired in her sense of respectability based upon the mores of the second half of the 19th century and pre-World War I (WWI) England. She predictably mirrors the standards of the aristocracy about titles, positions and money by disdaining those without the proper heritage. She also embodies the old era perplexed by the newfangled gadgets invading Downton Abbey. When confronted with a telephone, she cryptically decries, “Is this an instrument of communication or torture?” The plot centers around the loss of The Dower House, in Downton, Yorkshire, to Matthew Crawley, a cousin and a member of the upper middle class rather than nobility. Interspersed throughout all the episodes
are her derogatory comments that reinforce the distance between her class and ‘the others.’

The Dowager, Violet, is extremely upset when Downton Abbey, The Dower House, is turned into a convalescent home for wounded soldiers during WW1. “Oh really, it’s like living in a second-rate hotel, where the guests keep arriving and no one seems to leave.” Or consistent with her station in life she’ll admonish, “Don’t be defeatist, dear, it’s very middle class.” Her nemesis is Isobel Crawley, the mother of Matthew, the prospective inheritor of Downton Abbey. They participate in constant verbal exchanges invariably with the dowager trying to demean Isobel. Isobel, mistakenly assuming the Countess is saying something pleasant to her responds, “I take that as a compliment” to which the Countess immediately retorts, “I must have said it wrong.”

Despite the stereotype, the Countess is a much more multi-layered character than would be predicted and she is capable of change and transformation. Mrs. Crawley, the embodiment of the ‘new’ woman is an activist and pits herself against the Dowager in several instances. Mrs. Crawley advocates for modern medical practices at the Downton Hospital, much against the wishes of the Dowager. Ultimately, the Dowager must share power over the hospital when Mrs. Crawley is appointed Chairman of the hospital Board. Although disconcerted by change, the Dowager Countess accepts it without excessive fuss. Another instance is the expected awarding of the Best Bloom in the Village Award, an automatic honor bestowed yearly on the Dowager. In the end, the Countess announces that the father of the butler will be the winner. These instances represent the Dowager’s willingness to accept change, although reluctantly, with dignity. William, the footman, is seriously wounded in a WW1 battle, and because he’s not an officer is not eligible to be nursed at Downton Abbey, but the Dowager goes against the military officials and makes sure that William can be cared for at Downton.

Both Isobel and Violet in their distinctive roles represent women who can make decisions and who are capable of change. They are empowered within their environments and are respected by all of the younger characters. Sickness befalls younger members of the household, not them. Violet is a stalwart of tradition whereas Isobel defies tradition but each in her own way, struggles to embrace the England that is necessarily and profoundly changed by WW1. They epitomize the ‘new aging’ on television, the physical aspects of vigor and well-being and the mental capacity that promotes agency, control their minds and their destinies.

In a contemporary setting but just as imbued with agency is Kathy Bates as Harriet (“Harry”) Korn in Harry’s Law (2011-2012). She portrays an indefatigable lawyer who was fired as a patent lawyer mainly because she lost interest in her work. Instead she’s chosen to establish a tiny law firm, initially running her office out of a shoe store. Her clients are often ones who desperately need the services of a smart, no-nonsense lawyer who really cares about her clients. Always trying to find the positive qualities in others, she sometimes hides her compassion with
humor and sarcasm. The cast of clients consist of a panoply of believable yet bizarre characters who often appear guilty, except to Harry. From a third grade teacher who moonlights making sex tapes (“Reproach Time”) to a mother accused of killing her encephalitic baby (“Mercy or Murder”), Harry is tough, reasonable, and emotionally involved. Usually the cases have moral components but often they represent the ambiguities of the law and of life. In “Mercy or Murder,” after the nurse proves to be the killer of the baby, Harry remarks “the DA was right. This was mercy killing; he just had the wrong angel of mercy.”

One possible explanation for Harry’s persona is her explication of what happened to her when she was 12 years old. She and her father were shooting quail and her father said as a special treat that they would go afterwards to the local “private club.” When they got there they were not allowed in because they were Jewish. Harry never forgot what her father said that day—“America is not supposed to be this way.” Harry laments that now “America is less and less inclusive every day and that’s not what America is supposed to be.” She views herself as a force to improve this.

Harry is a large woman, not sexually involved with anyone but a force that represents the predominance of the mind as a conduit to agency. In many ways she’s an androgynous figure who is visible in whatever environment she inhabits. She is not physically, emotionally, or mentally weak, and if she is a metaphor it is for empowerment through promoting a moral order.

Another series, Damages, starring Glenn Close as Patty Hewes (2007-2012), has been specifically designated a television program highlighting the intricacies of power. According to Daniel Zelman (2009), one of the writers, “What really motivated us to write about this world, first and foremost, was our interest in power dynamics, the dynamics of power in society.” The fascinating choice of an older woman, Glenn Close, as the conduit for examination of what power is and to what extent people will manipulate others to achieve it, is indicative that older women, per se, do not just represent weakness and illness. One world in which women now command power and influence is the legal realm. Patty Hewes (Glenn Close) is the head of the law firm, Hewes and Associates, located in New York City. Her foil is a young and originally quite impressionable protégée, Ellen Parsons (Rose Byrne). Together they perform a waltz of attraction and detestation towards each other as they work on cases dealing with such contemporary issues as insider trading, environmental issues, and banking. They are both presented as smart and calculating—Patty as far more experienced in deviousness than the naïve Ellen. Juxtaposing two highly intelligent women for and against each other who are intoxicated with power, sends a message that women, both old and young, are no different from men in their motivations.

Patty is unrelenting in her ruthless endeavors to control all situations. She’s a thin and very attractive woman who dresses stylishly in the latest fashions and is precisely adorned with earrings. She’s tough, smart, strong, and feared. Egomania-cal in her pursuit of justice she is also a passionate champion of her clients. One
fellow lawyer calls her “a real hard dick bitch. If you were a man, I’d kick the shit out of you.” She’ll do absolutely anything to maintain her agency from pretending to fire a ten year employee to having a potential witness’ dog killed to embolden the witness to testify in Patty’s favor. Even she admits that she’s lied and manipulated. “I’m ashamed of myself. I have a lot of flaws.” One of her fellow lawyers proclaims, “Your cases have a stink to them.”

In one episode in Season One, Patty reveals to her new employee Ellen, her protégée, some of her weaknesses. Patty is married for the second time, apparently successfully, and has an incorrigible 17-year-old son. He appears to be the only part of her world that she cannot completely control. She and her husband are frequently called to the boy’s school to deal with his problems. She confesses to Ellen that she should “do herself a favor; don’t have kids. They ruin your ambition. You can leave husbands, but you can’t leave kids. Kids are like clients; they want all of you, all of the time.” This is a dramatic difference from older women typically portrayed on television whose only identities are as mothers and grandmothers. Children for these women are the essence of their identities even though their television roles center around admonishing and teaching their adult children.

Thus, Glenn Close’s Patty Hewes is another example of a fit older woman whose physical ailments play no part in her persona. She both demands and commands attention and for those who will not accept her power she will destroy them. Agency is the fiber that feeds her ambition. She is never invisible but always is scheming to win. She is not asexual but projects the image that overt sexual behavior is inappropriate in the work world. In many ways she is the metaphor for the feared “feminist” who will emasculate men and eventually destroy them. The fact that she’s an older woman radiates a unique message—powerful, in control, visible older women are forces within society.

The decoding of media stereotypes of older women and the awareness of increasingly counter-hegemonic empowered women helps to promote agency for this cohort. It was only 14 years ago that McQuaide (1998) wrote:

Women doing well are aware of a troubling discrepancy between the positive way they see themselves and social devaluation they perceive and they feel challenged to live lives that contradict the “over the hill” stereotype. Their sense of ‘personhood’ is stronger than ever, yet society and media are fading them into invisibility that does not sit well with the baby boomer generation. They are aware of dissonance between the increased freedom and power they feel and negative cultural stereotypes and media portrayals. (McQuaide, 1998, p. 21)

Too often, males in the media business determine who and how women shall be presented on television.

Male contempt for the older woman as unfit for the reproducer/sex object roles filled by younger women (still the primary source of female power in the patriarchy) is the foundation of the old woman’s position…If we are not sex objects or
breeders or caretakers or wage workers, we are loathsome since it is these roles which makes females legitimate in male judgment. (Copper, 1997, p. 122)

There is still a multitude of examples of egregious stereotyping but the politics of representation of this cohort is changing from the debilitating depictions of helplessness, fragility, and aimlessness. It is being replaced by a more identifiable new older woman, one who is strong, motivated, and still a sexual being. This image not only helps the mature woman to be hopeful about this stage in life but allows the young as well to look forward to a time of new possibilities and opportunities filled with increased agency and renewed activism. Younger women and older women alike can learn that “one’s age is not necessarily the principal signifier for an individual and is not the barrier to life’s riches and enjoyment that some young people (and program makers) seem to believe” (Healey, 2002, p. 112).

Notes

1 The Frankfurt School, one of the three theoretical schools of cultural studies, was first developed in Nazi Germany in the 1930’s. This school focused on how the Nazis used media and culture to indoctrinate people. “During the 1930’s the Frankfurt school developed a critical and transdisciplinary approach to culture and analysis of texts, and audience reception studies of the social and ideological effects of mass culture and communications.” (Miller, 2002, p. 17) When the founders of the Frankfurt School were forced to flee Germany, they continued their work in the United States finding that American mass culture was every bit as ideological as Germany’s. According to Douglas Kellner, they found that the United States was a culture of consumer capitalism, heterosexuality and competition.

2 Cenegenics, sometimes labeled “youthful aging” is “the world’s largest age management practice and the recognized leading authority in its field” according to their website, www.cenegenics.com. Their focus is on healthy aging that promotes low-glycemic nutrition, exercise, nutrition supplements and hormone therapies. Featured on 60 Minutes on April 23, 2006 Cenegenics detailed their program of providing supplements of testosterone and human growth hormones.

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Taking Off the Rose-Colored Glasses
Exposing Colorism through Counter Narratives

Traci Baxley

[The] color complex is a form of intraracial genocide. Because it positions Blacks versus Blacks, the emotional toll it imposes and the lack of trust or acceptance of others that it breeds are exhausting and demoralizing. (Golden, 2004)

Introduction

My journey with skin color privilege began at an early age growing up as the sole brown-skinned female in my immediate family, having a light brown-skinned mother and three light brown-skinned sisters. A vivid memory dating back to elementary school includes my constant need to explain why my skin color was darker than my sisters’ skin: “I am darker only because I play sports and spend a lot of time in the sun.” I also remember having feelings of inadequacy based upon a sense that I was less physically attractive than my sisters because of my darker complexion. How at such a young age was I cognizant of the need to rationalize my “darkness” to people? Why did I so readily internalize the “black sheep” mentality? What had society already conveyed to me about not being good enough? How did I discern that I needed to create ways to distract others from noticing or judging me by my brownness?

As the mother of five children, I quietly watch them play and interact with each other and I am rendered almost apoplectic by the thoughts of how the pigment of their skin, the hue of their eyes (my daughter has light brown eyes), and the texture of their hair (my children have what is coined as “good hair” by African-American standards) may impact their future journeys and experiences, define who they are, or who they will become. My oldest son, and my only “brown” skinned child, began expressing a dislike of his skin color at the age of five. Do I dare tell him that his path in society may be different from his siblings because of his skin color? Should I constantly adorn him with positive affirmations regarding the beauty of his skin?
color which potentially conveys the message that my other four children’s skin tone is less beautiful? How can society affirm the beauty in all of our brown-skinned children; specifically Black girls who rely on society’s Eurocentric definition of beauty as a measuring stick for acceptance, identity, and self-esteem?

Once a taboo topic, colorism, defined as the intraracial discrimination and privilege system based on skin color (and other phenotypical characteristics such as hair texture, breadth of nose, and lip thickness) (Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992), is regarded in the Black community as commonplace and continues to divide and impact the identity and self-esteem of Black girls. As a researcher, I recognize that there are concerns that light-skinned Black citizens must confront—like having to convince their darker-skinned counterparts that they are “Black” enough and are not looking or acting white. For example, during his election campaign, President Obama had to prove that he was Black enough to win the trust and votes in the Black community.

However, there is overwhelming evidence that light-skinned Black females receive higher education levels (Hunter, 2002; Hughes & Hertel, 1990), acquire more prestigious jobs (Hunter, 2005; Russell et al., 1992), develop higher self-esteem (Thompson & Keith, 2001; Williams-Burns, 1980) and marry men with higher profile status (Bone & Cash, 1992; Hughes & Hertel 1990; Russell et al., 1992) than their darker-skinned female counterparts. Additionally, research supports the notion that there are adverse effects of having dark skin in a post-colonial society like the United States, including being characterized as being less attractive and trustworthy (Golden, 2004; Wade & Bielitz, 2005).

As a woman, I have successfully achieved numerous goals in various facets of my life, a long way from that little brown-skinned girl who concealed the scars from insensitive remarks, lost friendships over color lines and who fought to be heard and seen. As a Black female scholar, it is impossible to escape from the authenticity of my Blackness and all that it entails, fighting marginalization and disempowerment, while genuinely loving the skin that I am in. Working with adolescent Black girls, I see the confusion, and sometimes devastation, that colorism continues to inflict on the development of their identity and the division it causes within the “sisterhood” (of Black girls). This article uses key tenets of critical race theory, including counter narratives, to define colorism and discuss its impact on dark-skinned adolescent girls. The article also highlights the influences (positive and negative) of multicultural literature in giving voice to Black teenage girls in speaking about and against colorism within various community discourses, including families and “the sisterhood.”

**Theoretical Framework**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) has its points of origin in the legal realm and ties its genesis to the Civil Rights Movement. It recognizes and acknowledges the con-
nections between race, racism, and power in society (Delgado, 1988/1989). CRT was first introduced into education with the publication of *Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education* by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), providing a lens designed to observe, name, expose, and challenge dominant norms and assumptions that appear neutral, but which systematically marginalize, silence, and misrepresent people of color (Harper, Patton, & Woodson, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2009; McKay, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Vargas, 2003). Tenets of CRT can be used to examine the sociopolitical construct of skin color from the perspective of “light-skin privilege,” the advantages that light-skinned Black females have over their dark-skinned sisters due to their skin color (Hunter, 2002). The elements of CRT that are pertinent to the notion of colorism for the purposes of this article include power and privilege of (intra)racial identities, finding voice for the disempowered (dark-skinned girls), and the use of counter-narratives to share perspectives in order to begin the mental liberation essential to remedying the effects of colorism.

Historically, dating back to the time of slavery in the United States of America, skin color played a significant role determining the power stratification and racial hierarchies within enslaved African communities. “Mulatto,” the now-offensive term used at the time to refer to the offspring of White slave owners and African slaves, received superior treatment and were viewed as more intelligent and privileged. Lighter-skinned slaves were often assigned easier, indoor, domestic work or skilled labor jobs while the darker-skinned slaves were relegated to more strenuous outside labor (Wilder, 2009). Consequently, “mulatto” slaves were worth more on the auction block, often receiving basic education and eventually, in some cases, their freedom. The White colonists created and encouraged a social structuring based on the “privileging of Whiteness” within the slave community which resembled that of the Black/White stratification of power in society today (Hunter, 2002, p. 176). After the Civil War, these lighter-skinned slaves began internalizing the concept of intraracism and created (social, class, and physical) distances from their dark-skinned sisters and brothers by forming elite communities, civil and cultural organizations, churches, and sororities and fraternities. This color stratification has become naturalized and normalized into the daily practices and consciousness of U.S. society (Hunter 2002; Kerr; 2006; Russell et al., 1992).

CRT offers counter-narratives as a means to recognize and legitimize the perspectives of traditionally marginalized groups of people, in this case dark-skinned adolescent girls. Counter-narratives provide a stage for the Black adolescent girls in this study to name their reality and express their story. The aim in the use of counter-narratives is not to replace one narrative with another, but to give voice to the experiences and ways of knowing of groups who are “Othered” (Ladson-Billings, 2009). According to Delgado (1988/1989), counter narratives can build a sense of community among marginalized groups by offering a voice to hear one another and space to be understood by others. The counter narratives can then be offered as an alternative perspective to gain a deeper understanding of (intra) racial
dynamics (Solórzano & Yosso, 2009) and serve as a source of empowerment for
the narrator and those like her (Pollard, 2006; Etter-Lewis, 1997).

Methodology

I had the opportunity to facilitate a literacy group with eight adolescent Black
females for three academic school terms (sixth through the eighth grade years).
We met after school once a week and occasionally during their lunch time. The
participants were registered in the after-school program at a deregulated K-8 public
school in the southeast part of the United States. The nationalities of the members of
GIRLS (Girls Inspired by Reading, Learning, and Success) Club included African
Americans, Caribbean Americans (Haitian and Bahamian), and one Black Canadian.
Through book discussions, journal writing, and scrapbooking we developed
a trusting community where authentic dialogue and debate were encouraged and
a personal, protective bond was created. The books that we read were written by
African-American authors (mostly women) and the protagonists were always Black
teenage girls. All of the group discussions were audiotaped and each participant
was encouraged to maintain a journal to record connections to the text and personal
reactions to anything happening in their lives that we needed to discuss during the
“Let it out and let it go” session. This 15-minute debriefing session at the begin-
nning of each meeting was established after the girls would arrive each week full of
information they wanted to share with the group before we began discussing the
book. It was during these debriefing sessions that the girls really began to assess
sociopolitical issues related to race, sex, and class. As I transcribed the discussions
and coded the journals, transformative themes emerged. The issues surrounding the
concept of colorism and the girls’ ability to critically articulate colorism’s impact
on their lives compelled me to write this article.

The data were analyzed using critical race methodology as a “tool for exposing,
analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege” (Solórzano
& Yosso, 2002, p. 32). In this case, the counter narratives focused on the intrarac-
cism that occurs within the Black community and are used as a tool for liberation
and conscientization (Freire, 2006). As a methodological tool, counter narratives
construct stories “out of the historical, socio-cultural and political realities…and
give the readers a context for understanding the way inequity manifests in policy,
practice, and people’s experiences” (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. xi).

As we approached the final months of meetings, after having been together
for three years, we started to discuss the impact the books and the group meetings
had on our lives. The GIRLS Club members began to critically comprehend the
transformative effect the books had on their development during their middle school
years as Black females. Critical race methodology recognizes the intersectionality
between race, gender, and class and how it affects people of color (Golden, 2004;
Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). It also recognizes the power of counter narratives in
uncovering, evaluating, and challenging the master narratives. Creating the counter narrative, included using the critical lens of intersectionality (race, sex, and class), and the experiences of the adolescent Black girls to examine the themes of societal negative messages, redefining beauty, and increasing self-esteem by using voice. In addition, existing literature and related readings (including adolescent literature) on colorism in the Black community and its impact on Black females is explored. And finally, I draw on my own professional and personal experiences as they relate to colorism. What follows is a composite counter narrative (Solarzano & Yosso, 2002), offering both biographical and autobiographical analysis situated in sociopolitical and historical content of colorism. These various forms of data were analyzed and then compiled to create composite characters who help bring life to the counter narrative.

**Counter Narrative**

Solórzano and Bernal (2001) describe counter narratives’ ability to build unity and sense of community by “putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice” and “open[ing] new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society” (pp. 327-328). Equally as important, counter narratives demonstrate the power of combining narrative and cultural realities in creating a “world that is richer than either the [narrative] or the reality alone” (p. 328). The counter narrative begins with Dr. Parker (Dr. P) and four 8th grade Black girls convening for their weekly book discussion meetings. The group members included: Wilma, a spirited, precocious leader; Melissa, a socially-conscious rebel; Samantha, the spontaneous spunky comedian of the group; and Ava, the shy, reserved and distanced member.

Dr. P: Well girls, we are approaching our last months together. I would love to spend the next few meetings looking back over our time together and discussing the impact the adolescent literature and the group discussions have had on our lives. You all have come such a long way from the first meeting back in sixth grade. Remember the first meeting when you all would only say whether you liked the book or not! Now look at you. The way you critically examine and question what you read and see is very impressive. You have learned to see the power of language and are able to not only read the words, but you have learned to read the world (Freire, 2006). Let’s take that transforming power to set goals for what you want for your next experiences in school and in life.

Wilma: I know one thing I would like to see continue. Dr. P, you were the first person to give us choices about what we read. We never got to read books of girls who looked like us. It definitely makes a difference in motivating us to want to read (Gay, 2010). I want to keep having choices! But not just books with characters who are Black girls, but books that depict Black girls in a positive light whose experiences reflect our own and validate our voice. Not just stereotyping.
Dr. P: Wilma, can you elaborate on that for me. What do you mean by stereotyping?

Samantha: I know what she means. For example, can we see a dark-skinned girl with braids, but without the big butt, wide hips, big lips and a baby on her hip!

There is a roar of laughter in the room and all the girls nod their heads in agreement. This example sparks a lively conversation about how the literature that they read throughout the year portrayed, both positively and negatively, who they are.

Dr. P: That is one of the goals of critical literacy, right. You want to question what the author is trying to say and how what she is saying positions you as a reader (Gopalakrishnan, 2011). When done well, it has assisted us in engaging in intense dialogue about controversial social issues that are relevant to your lives (Elliott & Dupuis, 2002).

Samantha: That’s true. I saw myself through the characters sometimes, like when Feni, in The Dear One (Woodson, 1991) had to share her room with 15 year old, pregnant Rebecca. Feni was so angry at first when her mom agreed to let her friend’s daughter live with them. When my sister got pregnant at 16 I felt angry too. For different reasons (my mom just became angry all the time and my sister was the reason), but I still could relate to Feni in a lot of ways.

Dr. P: I am glad you all are finding ways to connect and critically examine the literature. As we wrap up today, I have an assignment for you for our next meeting. I want you to go through your journal entries, your sticky notes and highlights in all of your books, and read over your discussion notes. Then pick at least five passages or topics that really resonate with you for some reason. Be prepared to discuss which passages you chose and why you chose them.

As the girls arrived the following week they could not wait to get started.

Ava: Dr. P, we have been discussing this all week long…at lunch, between classes, during PE. We could not believe how many of the same passages we chose. We really need to talk!

Dr. P: I am excited to hear. Grab a snack and let’s get started right away.

Wilma: We noticed that all of the books that we read had some passages describing somebody’s skin color. Nobody liked to be called dark-skinned or black. Look here in The Skin I’m In (Flake, 1998) when Miss Saunders the new English teacher tells Maleeka her black skin is beautiful. John-John says, “I don’t see no pretty, just a whole lotta black.” She was always getting teased or bullied because of her dark skin. Then here on page four she says “They don’t say nothing about the fact that I’m a math whiz…or that I got a good memory and never forget one single, solitary thing that I read. They only see what they see, and they don’t seem to like what they see much” (pp. 4-5).
Taking Off the Rose-Colored Glasses

Dr. P: *That is quite interesting and sad for Maleeka and other girls like her. She did not always hate her skin. Listen, “I didn’t used to mind being this color. I don’t get it. I think I’m kind of nice-looking. Why don’t other people see what I see?”* (Flake, 1998, pp. 41-42). *What do you think happened?*

Melissa: *Peers! Society!* (Tummala-Narra, 2007). *She even says that the kids started teasing her about her skin color.*

Of all the girls, Melissa was the most vocal about sociopolitical realities when it came to race, sex and class. She was aware and capable of naming the oppressions that exists and articulating the way it disempowers her and others like her (Freire, 2006). Through the years together Dr. P has come to depend on Melissa’s wisdom in getting the other girls to a place of “enlightenment” regarding many of the social justice issues that had been addressed.

Melissa: *You know, we let people tell us what and how we should feel all the time.*

Dr. P was intrigued by where Melissa was going with her thinking.

Dr. P: *Tell us what you mean, Melissa. There are researchers, like me, who focus on this very issue that you speak about* (Robinson & Ward, 1995).

Melissa: *Well, I know when I look in magazines or watch TV the ads are always telling us what we need to buy to look beautiful. And there are always skinny White girls or skinny light-skinned Black girls. They think just because they put a really light brown face on the cover then they did something for the Black people to get us to buy their stuff. I don’t look like any of those girls. Does that mean I am not beautiful? Or to be beautiful I need to look like them?*

Samantha: *Yeah, that’s true! How do they tell us what is beautiful? How do they get the power to tell us that our kinky hair, big noses, thick lips and curvy hips are unattractive or wrong in some way? Remember in the book Crystal by Walter Dean Myers (1987) when she was modeling for that photographer for the first time and her agent Loretta said…wait let me look it up. Here it is on page 6. Loretta says: “Honey, you’re so beautiful and fresh that he doesn’t see you as Black. Also your eyes are a little Asian I think he sees you as more exotic than anything else.” And look at page 8. When the photographer came in to start shooting he says “One of your parents White?”* (Myers, 1987, p. 8).

Ava: *Oh look, I marked a passage from Money Hungry (2001) that’s almost the same. Raspberry, the main character, describes her friend Mia. “Her eyebrows are beautiful, though, just like her slanty eyes, and long, thick lashes. Half the time, people can’t figure out what race she is. And they’re always telling her how exotic she looks…”* (p. 37).

Wilma: *What this says to me is you have to have light skin, “good hair,” thin nose and lips. In other words, not have any African features.*
Melissa: That would leave me out!

Dr. P: That would leave us all out! There have been studies that determine that dark-skinned teenage girls are more likely to have lower grades and have higher dropout rates (Holcomb-McCoy & Moore-Thomas, 2001). Also some studies show that dark-skinned Black girls have self-esteem and identity issues related to their skin color (Thompson & Keith, 2001; Porter, 1991).

All of the girls look down at their arms and then around at each other. All of the group members’ complexions ranged from medium brown to very dark brown. They felt an unspoken kinship, a solidarity that was palpable.

Samantha: At least we have Michelle Obama! She is a beautiful, smart, and brown-skinned sista. You gotta love that!

Dr. P: And I do! She is a wonderful role model. Do you think skin color matters?

Wilma: Yes, even though it shouldn’t matter. Discrimination is a big factor.

Samantha: Honestly, I have to say, it does even though it should not. Skin color can get you a job, car, and any other “foot in the door” opportunities (Golden, 2004; Hunter, 2002; Hughes & Hertel, 1990). You get treated differently.

Ava: No, we are all equal regardless of our skin color. In the end, we all have the same color blood. A person should not be defined by appearance, but by their character.

Samantha: You sound like Martin Luther King, Jr.

The girls all laugh and this lightens the moment.

Melissa: For real, though. In society it does matter, even though it shouldn’t. Think about how many times you are called a name or you call someone a name based on their skin color. Think about all the ball players and Black male Hollywood stars. They either have White wives or Black wives who looks half White (Bone & Cash, 1992; Hughes & Hertel, 1990). That is real.

Samantha: I even see it in my family. My auntie has two daughters. One is light-skinned and the other one has dark brown skin. Ashley, the one with light complexion, gets treated better. She always gets her way. It is so obvious! I always feel so sorry for my cousin, Lauren. She does not get the same treatment. It’s kind of sad that we do it to our own people.

Dr. P: Do you know what that is called, Samantha… internalized racism, which happens when we as people of color define each other based on the White Euro-centric system of rules and thinking (Jones, 2000; Tatum, 1992). We are doing to each other what the Europeans did to us for hundreds of years. The standard of beauty is socially constructed. In other words, people in power make the decisions of how beauty is defined and we begin to believe it. If you are in certain countries
in Africa, women are put in huts for a few months before the wedding and are fed rich creamy milk to fatten up. This is the sign of wealth and beauty. In that society beauty is defined very differently than ours. Beauty in our country is racially defined. Eurocentric beauty is so entrenched in the culture that it appears normal, so we, as black women, don’t really question it. We just believe that that is just the way it is. We have internalized this definition of beauty (Tummala-Narra, 2007). So let me ask you this, what is your personal definition of beauty? Think about it and I will give you three minutes to jot down anything that comes to mind.

Dr. P: Okay girls; let’s share our answers out loud.

Samantha: Ok, if we are being honest here, I must admit I have just learned that I am an “internalized racist!” I wrote weave, light-skinned, tall and skinny. I know it sounds bad. At least I am now thinking and questioning my definition.

Ava: Well, I’m not much better. I wrote when your hair and nails are done, having straight long hair, and when your make-up is on.

Melissa: Are you all serious? Okay, sorry. I guess I appreciate the honesty, but we really need to keep talking about this. I think beauty is how you see yourself, not how others define you. I don’t want to be a part of the problem of internalized racism. Me and my brown face and natural ‘fro are doing just fine!

Wilma: I wrote beauty is within and how you take care of yourself. I guess I am somewhere in the middle on this issue. I am not as Eurocentric in my thoughts on beauty as Samantha and Ava, but I am not so “fight the power” like Melissa either.

Dr. P wondered how these definitions of beauty aligned with their journals the first week of group meetings when she asked how much they loved themselves (Baxley & Boston, 2009).

Dr. P: Why do you think our definitions of beauty are so different?

Melissa: Because as dark-skinned girls we have been brainwashed. We start believing that we are not as pretty. Look at all of us here. None of us are light-skinned, but I think we are all beautiful (Golden, 2004; Russell et al., 1992).

Samantha: Black is beautiful, baby!

Dr. P: Okay, then let me ask you all this. If you could change just one thing about yourself, would you? If so, what would it be?

Dr. P was not surprised to hear all of the members chose to change a part of themselves that was directly associated with colorism.

Wilma: Smaller hips and a maybe longer hair.
Samantha: That was two things. Dr. P said just one thing. I would definitely change my nose. It is too wide.

Ava: I would like to be lighter because people always call me names like darky, charcoal and blurple.

Melissa: Blurple. What is that?

Ava: It means I am so dark that I am a combination of blue and purple. My momma even calls me names. It is very hurtful. I try to laugh it off, like it is not a big deal. Sometimes I even say it back to people. I don’t know if they feel the same pain and are hiding it too. When my momma is angry she says “bring your crispy butt over here right now.”

And with a sad smile, Ava looks at Dr. P and slowly lowers her head toward the floor. Dr. P can’t help but wonder if this contributes to Ava’s quiet disposition and her uncanny ability to disappear within herself.

Dr. P: I am so sorry that you have to go through that, Ava. You are not alone. I am reading a book by Marita Golden called Don’t Play in the Sun (2004). It’s a book about Ms. Golden’s life growing up and dealing with color complex, which is another name for colorism. She describes one summer afternoon when she was young her mother shouts for her and says “Come on in the house—it’s too hot to be playing out here. I’ve told you don’t play in the sun. You’re going to have to get a light-skinned husband for the sake of your children as it is” (Golden, 2004, p. 4). We need to find ways to empower ourselves and support each other. We have to learn to use language that builds character and self-worth. I have an assignment for you, Ava. This week, I want you to write an unsent letter to your mom. An unsent letter is written to get your feelings and thoughts out, but you don’t have to actually send the letter to the person. It is a way to recognize the oppressive force in your way and gain some power over it. Bring it in next week and you can share it to the group, read it to me as if I were your mom, or just keep it to yourself. Whatever you feel comfortable doing is fine.

Ava: Okay, Dr. P. That sounds like something I would like to do.

Dr. P: Excellent. If anybody else wants to work on an original piece, unsent letters, raps, poems, drawings, or creative writing based on what we are discussing that would be great. We will take some time to share what you have come up with during our next meeting. Before you leave, you know I have an activity for you to work on. I am giving you all a slip of paper with a phrase on it. You are responsible for finding out what that phrase means and how it relates to colorism. Everyone has a different phrase so you will have to explain it to the rest of the group during the next meeting. This was a great session, ladies. Have a great week and see you next Wednesday.
The following week the girls were anxious to share what they found on their assigned phrase.

Dr. P: Okay ladies. Who is going first?

Wilma: I will. My phrase was blue-veined society. I was so mad when I found out what this was. This was a group of rich Black people, most of them were descendants of African slave women and White slave owners, who had strict rules about who could join their social clubs. They would ask people to hold up the inside of their arms. If you were light enough to see the veins under the skin then you were able to join the club (Golden, 2004; Thompson & Keith, 2001).

Samantha: Well, ain’t no blue-veiners in here!

All of the girls held up their arms, laughed and then high-five each other.

Samantha: Okay, I’ll go next. My phrases are the brown bag and brown door test. You all are not going to believe this. And this was going on inside our churches, too! When you walked into a church or organization a member would stand at the door with a brown paper bag, if your skin was darker than the bag you were shown the door (Kerr, 2006; Russell et al., 1992). You couldn’t even come in! Another test they had in the church was the brown door test. The members of the church would paint the inside of the front door a light brown and if your skin was darker than that…well you all know the drill now. Don’t let the door hit you where the good Lord split you! Amen. Wasn’t that very Christian-like of them!

The girls roared in laughter.

Ava: Okay, okay. I’m next. My phrase goes perfectly after Samantha’s. My phrase was the comb test. The churches would actually have a comb on a string hung on the door at the entrance of the church and the people would line up as members of the church used the comb to judge whether their hair was “good enough” to be a part of the church. They would literally comb your hair and if the comb got stuck in your kinky hair you were asked to leave. They didn’t want any nappy heads up in their church (Russell et al., 1992).

Melissa: I guess that would leave me out! You know we are laughing, but this is serious. We have things similar to this going on right now. First let me share my phrase and then I will give you an example of it today. My phrase was the color tax. What this means is if a brother in a fraternity brought a date to a party he had to pay an admission fee based on his date’s skin color. The darker the girl was, the more the brother had to pay at the door! So you know these brothers were looking for the lightest, brightest, closest to whitest girls they could find. Now think about the sororities and fraternities today. There are still complexion issues with membership today? My mom told me about a movie made by Spike Lee called School Daze
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(1988) in the 80s. She said it was one of the first times that Black people started talking about colorism in public.

Dr. P: Yes, it was. Some critics were not very happy with Spike because they thought he was “airing our dirty laundry” for Whites to see. But other people advocated for Spike and said it was about time we dealt with this issue in public instead of it being the “elephant in the room.” I’m glad you brought that up. If we look back in history, the 1960s, during the Civil Rights Movement was one of the most celebrated times to be Black. The Movement encouraged racial consciousness and Black pride and power. This time in history is when the phrase “Black is beautiful” was fashioned (Wilder, 2009). Unfortunately, this way of thinking and behaving disappeared a great deal after the Jim Crow Laws were removed. Also, I don’t know if you all watched Chris Rock’s documentary called Good Hair (2009), but it deals with colorism issues as well. If you get a chance, you should watch it because I think you all will get something out of it after our conversations. Thanks for taking the time to do your research. It is important for us to know the history of color complex because it can empower us to make changes in our actions. I think we have all learned from each other and we now need to begin to focus on what we can do to continue to transform ourselves and not be a part of what Golden calls “a form of intraracial genocide” (2004, p. 47).

Ava: Dr. P, I want to share with you how I empowered myself this week. First, I wrote my unsent letter, which I would like to share with you all in a minute. After I read it, I cried and then I said to myself. “Now what are you going to do?” At first, I didn’t have an answer. Then I decided to speak up for myself. I went to the kitchen and told my mom that I wanted to read something to her. We sat down at the table and then I read my letter to her. We both started crying. She told me she was so sorry and she knew what I felt because she was called names about her dark complexion by her dad all of her life. It was such a part of her childhood; she never realized that she was doing the same thing to me. She also told me during her teenage years she considered bleaching her skin to make it lighter (Hall, 1995). Instead of being angry with my mom, I felt sorry for her. Having the conversation was helpful to both of us. During the weekend my older cousin came over to our house and right away called me “charcoal” and laughed. For the first time, my mom stood up for me. She said “don’t call my baby no negative names about her beautiful brown skin” and then she looked at me and winked. It felt like a heavy brick was lifted off of my chest. So I am telling you all this, if someone calls you a name and you do not like it, say something. If you hear someone calling another person a name, say something. If you catch yourself calling someone a negative name based on skin complexion, say something to yourself! We can do this girls! It can start with us in this room, right now.
Melissa: Wow, look at you Ava. Go girl! You can’t be out-doing me now. I am the radical one!

Ava: Nobody can out “radical” you, Melissa. But for the first time I really get what you have been saying for the last two years! Let me read my letter to you all.

Momma,
Why do you always call me names about my dark skin? I came from you. Everybody says I look and act just like you and everything about me, including my skin color came from you. You didn’t like your skin color when you were my age? You make me feel dirty and bad. It makes me feel like I disappoint you. I want to feel good about myself. It is hard enough trying to fit in at school. I don’t need to come home feeling like it’s better to be at school. I used to like my skin. Now I wish I could change it. Why do people care so much? Why does it matter so much? How come I cannot be dark and pretty. I wish I had the answers. Do you know why?

Love, Ava

Not a dry eye in the room. Everyone was deeply touched by Ava’s letter and they felt her pain, but were blissfully elated for her breakthrough.

Melissa: Okay, stop your crying. Throughout these years together Dr. P always talked about finding voice and the need for us to define ourselves. Well, I wrote a poem where I attempted to give the sisterhood a voice...one that was designed and defined by us. Here goes...

Skin, Skin, Skin.
My light skinned sistahs, why you hate on me?
Why can’t you let my chocolate skin just be;
Our differences, red, yellow, brown, black are not that great
The white man has taught you the power to hate.
Your skin...your kin...we all fall short and sin;
If we love what is on the inside, we can all win.
Let’s define African Beauty,
Defending the sisterhood is our duty.
Stand up Brown sistah and be proud;
Your beautiful cocoa skin will stand out in the crowd.
Don’t let nobody define who you are;
Your black skin makes you a superstar.
Brown, Carmel, Tan, or Black;
Let’s cut out the colorism and get back on track.

A standing ovation and a roar of cheers filled the room.

Dr. P: I am so moved by you all right now. You girls Rock! Continue to use your voice. We can knock down these colorism walls, one brick at a time.
Conclusion

Counter narratives allowed me to tell the story of dark-skinned adolescent girls and their need to redefine European beauty, combat societal negative images and messages (which often come from their own community) regarding their complexion, and ultimately to become empowered and moved to transformative action. Passages from the multicultural literature triggered a series of discussions that led to the uncovering of important issues in the Black community surrounding beauty and acceptance. It was much more common to find examples of colorism in the young adult literature that further marginalized the females in the literacy group, than excerpts that empowered them. Authors, especially Black women, educators, and parents need to recognize the power of literature and the importance of teaching adolescents to read text critically. Having the girls engage in self-reflection is a first step to embrace their African-influenced features and counter hegemonic sociopolitical constructs that attempt to define who they are and the beauty that lies within each of them.

The impact of colorism in society is well documented and is an important factor in opportunities and outcomes for dark-skinned Black females. Light skin color that is admired and sought after is symptomatic of the postcolonial self-hatred in the Black community. The effects of internalized racism have grave consequences on the psyche and self-worth of adolescent Black girls. As a community, we must teach Black youth to critically examine racially-biased images from popular culture (media, literature, and music) that perpetuate color stratification. Redefining beauty, self-love and mental liberation are essential to remedying postcolonial outcomes of colorism.

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The Education of Pauline Carey

It is a chilly Saturday in March, 2012, and I am waving my sign for the busy traffic along Cleveland Avenue in front of the Planned Parenthood in Canton, Ohio. I multitask by engaging the pro-lifer to my left in a debate disguised as a shouting match. Before she can even go there, because I can tell she is going to, I head off the inevitable question about how I’d like it if my mom had aborted me.

“Of course I’m glad my mom didn’t abort me. I’m also glad she had a choice. That’s how I know she truly loved me, because she didn’t have to have me, but she had me anyway. So thanks, mom,” I say as I throw my arm around the shoulders of the silent, embarrassed lady to my right. She freezes up a little before engaging my sparring partner in a much more civil debate. That’s my mom, for you: as passionate in her convictions as I am in mine, but civility and kindness are among the strongest of those convictions.

That I should in many ways reflect my mother’s influence may not be an earth-shattering observation, and yet I was nonetheless suddenly taken aback recently by the thought. Perhaps that’s because I recently took a course this semester in the history of the education of women. Much of that education has traditionally taken place in settings outside of the classroom (McClelland, 1992, p. 174), and so I have been inordinately preoccupied as of late with the ways in which knowledge, skills, beliefs, and values are transmitted from generation to generation, from grandparent to parent to child. Had you asked me before that course if I was in some ways shaped by my mother, I’d have said of course. However, the degree of that influence was something I had not considered so fully before. And in considering her influence on me, I was led to consider the influences on her. My mother was raised by her mother and maternal grandmother. Both of them, like my mom, were single mothers and I married a single mother. I have to think that being the product of three generations of single moms was an influence in my attraction to my wife. But what were the social and educational forces that shaped that lineage? To answer
that, I turned my focus to my grandmother, who was a central figure in her family for roughly 80 years.

My mother’s mother, (Emma) Pauline Rizer Carey, was of course a tremendous influence on my mother. Pauline’s mother was, of course, a tremendous influence on Pauline as well as on my mother, as she helped raise her. My mother, as I’ve needlessly pointed out and am now pointing out again, was a tremendous influence on me, as was Pauline, my Grandma C, who lived with us and helped raise me in the absence of my father—Pauline was a regular caregiver for my step-daughter. In summation, considering my mother’s influences naturally leads me to consider Pauline, who was a central figure in five generations of our family: (1) her mother’s generation, in that her mother’s influence was made manifest in Pauline and Pauline cared for her mother in her later years; (2) Pauline’s own generation, as my grandmother became the matriarch to her siblings and their children, and so she therefore was central to; (3) my mother’s generation; (4) my own generation, as she helped raise my brother and me; and finally, (5) Pauline Carey was also Grandma C to my five-year-old step-daughter who, 15 years later, just kissed me on the cheek as she left for work.

I’ve never been able to understand anything outside of seeing its influence on my own life, on me. So in my effort to broaden my knowledge and understanding of the history of women’s education, I turned inward. My intent in this article is to look at what I know of my grandmother’s education and to articulate its influence on my mother, myself, and my step-daughter in turn. If I am successful, this will make concrete some of the larger, more macro concepts in the history of the education of women and place them in a context that is simultaneously contemporary and traditional. If I fail, this will bear no resemblance to a scholarly work and will instead read like a love letter to my grandma. I can think of few people more deserving of love letters, and I can think of worse fates than being a failed scholar who wrote such a letter. So I’ll risk it.

Pauline was born in Myersdale, Pennsylvania, in 1913. Her family moved to nearby Hyndman when she was two, not long before she was struck with polio. As a child, she could walk but with great difficulty and pain, manually lifting her left leg at times—the leg that was two inches shorter than the other—and then swinging it out in front of her. She walked two-and-a-half miles to school and back each day in this laborious fashion. Her older brother, Buck, accompanied her and helped as he could. Some days, Buck was more coercive and Pauline less cooperative. “I used to get a little contrary going to school. Buck would have to hunt me and get a hold of me and practically drag me there,” she once told me. My clearest memories related to Buck are first of a faded post-war picture of him flanked by two smiling geishas and second of my confused grandma calling me Buck once or twice, near the end.

The school they walked to was the proverbial one-room country school, with all eight grades in a single classroom. There was a large stove in the middle of the room. “Kids that behaved themselves got to sit by the stove,” Pauline recalled. There
was a sink in one corner that carried in water from a spring in the nearby mountains. Grandma’s younger brother, Bob, once remembered that a similar spring served as the source for the baptismal font in their church. He told me of his memories of being dipped in the frigid mountain water, and I thought it so appropriate that the Christian baptism, representing as it does death and rebirth, should be as cold as a tomb.

Back to the school: I know two other details about that little room, not from Grandma but from two of her sisters. Younger sister Helen recalled the inkwells in the desks, and that, yes, boys did indeed dip girls’ hair in them. Nonie, the youngest, recalled that the room was not level but rather sloped down a hillside. She remembered this vividly, because one day she lost control of her bladder, and she could only watch as a small, yellow stream ran down the length of the classroom. She laughed about it as she told me, but she seemed less amused when she remembered how her classmates mocked her at the time. Nonie laughed about most everything. She laughed about peeing in front of her classmates and about her first husband beating her brutally and about the cold shoulder her new in-laws turned to her when she remarried. To think, a White divorcee marrying their boy, a good orthodox Syrian. People did talk.

Grandma remembered her peers as being kinder than Nonie described them. “Kids back then weren’t like they are today,” she explained. And so no one made fun of Grandma for having few possessions. When the teacher asked her in fourth grade what she got for Christmas, the class was disbelieving, but not cruel or mocking, when she told them she had gotten nothing. Nor did they make fun of her for not having a coat that winter. Instead she wore a tan sweater with brown stripes to and from school. Fortunately, by this time the family was living in town, and she had far less than two-and-a-half miles to walk. But even if the weather was cold, the classmates weren’t: “Not many kids had very much, you know. They understood you didn’t have anything. Everybody was kind of friendly.” She seldom seemed happier than she did when she recalled how they let her participate in their games of baseball: “I used to hit the ball, and then somebody would run for me. That’s what I think of when I… Nobody ever made fun of me. Never.” I was a shy, fat, awkward kid, and I envied her that.

Amidst the possessions Pauline left behind was a tattered notebook full of notes, verses, and signatures from her classmates. Their writings reflect the kindness Pauline recalled to me—page after page, they expressed their playful affections and exchanged inside jokes. “How about going to a baseball game?” one of her classmates wrote. Apparently, they knew her well. Perhaps the other children took pity on her because of her legs or maybe social norms dictated unkind treatment only to those who had violated some taboo or were products of such a violation. In the nineteenth century, a single young lady “alone with a gentleman, might not visit a theatre or a dance, without incurring a social anathema” (Mulhern, 1933, p. 373). So, maybe just a few decades later, they were extra cruel to Nonie, because she was one of three illegitimate children Great-grandma Rizer had after her husband died.
Pauline’s father, Harry Rizer, passed when Grandma was just six months old, forcing her mother, Pearl Rizer, to move in with her sister and brother-in-law on a farm on Hyndman’s outskirts. Later, Pearl found work running a boarding house in town. She also took in washing and ironing and generally did ‘whatever she had to’ for her children. I often wondered if the three illegitimate children that followed Grandma were byproducts of Great-grandma doing whatever it was she had to do, but I never asked. It really did not matter. As Grandma said, “She could have given us away.” Whatever she had to do, she had to do. Sometimes it’s hard to make ends meet and sometimes you need a little help getting through a lonely night.

Grandma got some help her senior year when her aunt Nora paid for her to undergo an experimental surgery. So instead of going to school, she went to Pittsburgh, and instead of Uncle Buck it was doctors dragging her along, or rather moving muscles from the backs of her legs to the front. Then they put her left leg; the short, twisted one, in a cast. Each day, they twisted the cast a little more, until finally her left knee faced forward. The surgery largely was a failure, but the knee adjustment, “worked pretty good. But it was painful. Good lord, it was painful. That’s the year I was supposed to graduate.”

Instead of going back to school, she went back to stay on Aunt Nora’s farm, helping out as she could so that Nora and her husband, Ellsworth, had someone to rely on other than the occasional, random farmhand. She did chores around the house, cooked, and fed and slaughtered the chickens. It must have been a rewarding experience for her, if one were to believe My Career Book, a homework assignment she completed in 1932, her junior year:

The choice of a life career is most important, it is something that must be planned. Mere drifting into an occupation has caused many a failure. At the present time I have not decided exactly what career I want to follow but at the present time am more interested in homemaking. Therefore I have chosen this subject to write upon. (Carey, 1932, Preface)

The English-language snob in me wants to dwell on the comma splice, the comma-less coordinating conjunction, the repetition of the phrase “at the present time,” the dreaded proposition at the end of the sentence. The scholar in me is struck by the themes in this project that are relevant to class discussions of which I have been a part.

There is no doubt that the most logical sphere for a woman is where she can best utilize her feminine knowledge and motherly instincts. The fact that over 90 percent of all women marry at some time in their lives is evidence that this most logical sphere is homemaking. Not only is homemaking a noble and worthy career to which any girl may aspire, but is a career devoted to the creation and maintenance of the very foundation of society. It is no wonder then that homemaking is considered the most important career for women, for through the ages the progress of civilization has been aided and abetted by the ideal home, which in turn was created and managed by competent and faithful homemakers.
For this effort, Grandma earned a B+ and an underlined notation: “Very fine.”

Grandma’s homework echoes some of the recurring themes in the history of education for women. For example, this view of homemakers as doing more than making homes but as being societal shepherds is one that has been appropriated by various educational movements, movements that may have viewed the world differently but somehow came to the same conclusion: Woman, get thyself to a kitchen. Colonial women learned their crafts—cooking, cleaning, making and administering medicines, sewing, household management, etc.—in the home, the lessons of their mothers substituting for a formal education. Women were taught what they needed to know, and what they needed to know was how to keep the home running. After all, we were an agrarian society; the farm and family were the factories of their day (McClelland, 1992).

But in the wake of America’s independence, the new nation discovered it had a new problem. Democracy required an educated population that could participate in governing itself. Mothers were no longer responsible for just running the home and teaching their daughters to do the same. Now, in what has come to be known as the ‘republican mother’ view of their duties, women “were told from the pulpit, the newspaper, and the popular journal that the success or failure of the American experiment rested on their shoulders” (p. 56). Mothers were expected to “raise their sons for independent participation in republican government” which required them “to become self-reliant, confident, and, above all, rational” (p. 57).

This new perception of the mother required a new approach to educating women. With the fate of democracy itself on their shoulders, women needed an education that encompassed the public sphere as well as the private. They needed to know how to run the home and how the world was run (p. 56). That meant a new understanding of women’s intellectual capacities; they were not as bright as men, certainly, but brighter than had been thought. And so more educational opportunities were opened to women, but their narrow life path was maintained. This is consistent with a larger, historical pattern: “[…] many of the major historical events which are often cited as improving the cultural and educational prospects for all people have, in fact, had correspondingly limiting consequences for women” (p. 14). Women could learn more because boys needed to learn more, but women were expected to use what they learned to serve the home. One can see echoes of this eighteenth century ideology in Pauline’s Career Book when she wrote: “not only is homemaking a noble and worthy career to which any girl may aspire, but is a career devoted to the creation and maintenance of the very foundation of society.” The very foundation of society? Not much pressure there.

Similarly, a perception of women’s role in preserving all of society was one facet of the nineteenth century “cult of true womanhood.” Now the family unit and the agrarian way of life were threatened by the Industrial Revolution, an era that could well have been dubbed the Industrial Revolutionary War, as it saw a new lifestyle invading and conquering an older one. Every war has its casualties; in this
case, one was the traditional family and its farming way of life. Men were pulled from the home and into the city, leaving mothers alone to raise children who were now growing up amidst seemingly unprecedented sin and vice. Thus the cult arose to right these wrongs. Like the republican mother, the true woman was expected to nurture her children, to guide them through a perilous world by giving them their start in an ideal home. And so again the education of women was widened while their course was expected to stay narrow: Their educations were meant to serve the home and church. Therein lies one distinction between republican mothers and true women. The true woman was usually upper-class and aligned with the church, keeping the holy relevant as men moved towards more secular lives (McClelland 1992). Nevertheless, both ideologies came to the same conclusion: Women have a very specific function, and belonged in the home. It is almost as though this was a foregone conclusion, and the ideologies developed to justify it, not to create it.

Yes, there are echoes of these ideologies in Pauline’s work, but they are certainly diluted and must have been mitigated by the realities of her life. I mentioned that, as a scholar, the remnants of old ideologies in Grandma’s assignment interested me. As her grandson, I was struck by the sad, vast distances among the life she said she wanted, the one she began with, and the one with which she ended up. The Career Book is illustrated with Lady’s Home Journal-type pictures of a perfect bungalow and beautiful, stylish women shopping for their debonair husbands. “My idea of a home,” the bungalow is labeled. The home I associated with Grandma, the one she had while I was growing up, was a bungalow nearly identical to the one in the picture, minus the beautifully landscaped yards and bushes. I’m glad she got at least one thing she wanted out of life. Her home life certainly never lived up to republican or true woman ideals.

In Hyndman, she lived with her single mother, illegitimate siblings, and Uncle Charles. Uncle Charles was better-known as Spoony. He split his time between the mountains, where he and his friends brewed moonshine, and his attic bedroom back in the family home. He spat his tobacco out the window of his room and in the winters it would run down the roof, come dripping off the sides, and freeze into brown icicles. He urinated in cans that he then baked in ovens. He said it kept the witches away. I doubt it was a tip one could find in Godey’s Lady Book (1830-1878). On the farm, Aunt Nora had her own unique way of handling nature’s call. She would stand out on the porch, waving to and chatting with passersby as she urinated over the knothole in the porch, her long skirt her only nod to modesty. That was the life Grandma began with, and the one she ended up with was also a far cry from the idealized life to which she alleged to aspire.

Uncle Ellsworth died, then Nora. And that left Grandma and uncle-by-marriage Simon Carey alone on the farm. Simon was Nora’s brother, and he worked around the property. A single woman and a man 24 years her senior living alone together? I can only imagine what people said. Not long after Nora’s death, Pauline left Hyndman for Canton, Ohio. Nonie and her husband, Jack, had moved there so
he could find work. They had one child and another on the way, and Nonie asked Grandma to join them to help out with the childcare. And so in 1943, thirty-year-old Pauline, with no high school degree and no husband, left her life behind to start a new one, one in an entirely different world.

Grandma’s formal education may not have made her the woman the world wanted her to be, but what she learned at home served her well. First, she had the work-ethic she learned on the farm and from watching her mother do ‘whatever she had to.’ Second, she had learned to sew at home, so she had no trouble finding work in a factory making lifejackets for the war effort. She took the bus to work or splurged on a taxi when the weather was bad. Once there, she climbed the forty-four stairs to her third-floor work station—five days a week. That’s two-hundred-and-twenty steps up, two-hundred-and-twenty steps down, every week, dragging her left leg behind her. Her legs had started—just started—to weaken, her left knee to turn inward. But after the war she stayed on at the factory, sewing dresses.

That Pauline’s domestic education served as her entry point to the larger, public sphere is consistent with a path women have long followed into the professional world (McClelland, 1992). A “woman’s chief duties, until well into the nineteenth century, bound her to the home” (Mulhern, 1933, p. 373), and even as that began to change, the progress toward progressive was slow in coming. As late as 1933, Mulhern may have inadvertently intimated some of the mixed emotions with which gains in women’s rights were met, even by those sympathetic to the cause: “In the recognition of [a woman’s] rights to property, Pennsylvania was one of the pioneering states, and it has probably had its share of the blessings and probable evils which resulted from woman’s political emancipation” (Mulhearn, 1933, p. 372).

Perhaps those ‘probable evils’ had to do with applications of ‘political emancipation’ of which the republican mother and true women would never approve. “Mary Bannister and her daughter,” for example, “had been making and selling ‘Sovereign Spirit of Venice Treacles’ before 1721” (Mulhern, 1933, p. 382).

Elizabeth Warnaby was evidently their most aggressive competitor, for she advertised, in the same year, her “Right and Genuine Spirit of Venice Treacle, truly and only prepared by her in Philadelphia, who was the Original and First Promoter of it in the City” (Mulhearn, 1933, p. 382-3).

As unsavory as it might have been to their republican and true descendants, brewing spirits could be seen as yet another example of women moving into the public sphere using their traditional, womanly duties as an entry point. Grandma could recall in detail how Aunt Nora brewed moonshine on the stovetop, though she could no longer recall what was in the mash. She also liked the occasional dandelion wine. Using the kitchen and the household to venture into the business world in a socially approved way, went beyond alcohol. Mulhern (1933), cites numerous examples of businesswomen of the 18th and 19th century, noting how they were often an extension of the home. They include nurses, boarding house managers, restaurant and tavern owners, laundresses, seamstresses, and women who sold
medications, ointments, baked goods, and hats. I am reminded of Great-grandma and the boarding house she ran and of Grandma’s years as a seamstress and lunch counter proprietor. You’ve come a long way, baby.

Before the war ended, uncle Simon Carey showed up in Canton; he had followed Pauline out from Hyndman. For years, I had understood that he had come for the express purpose of asking her to marry him.

“Grandpa must have really loved you,” I once remarked.

“I guess.”

“Did you love him?”

“Oh, he was alright.”

Years later, she told me that Simon had in fact come to Canton to find work, just like Aunt Nonie and Uncle Jack, Aunt Helen and Uncle Dave, Aunt Eva and Uncle Bob. Nearly an entire hillbilly clan uprooted and re-rooted, first to save the free world and then to keep it stocked with steel and clothes. Regardless of his reasons for relocating, Simon did indeed ask Pauline to marry him and, obviously, she said yes. The question then, given her unenthusiastic recollections of him, was why she said yes.

I know Grandma thought her marital prospects were slim. She always felt out-of-place, useless, and insufficient. Now she felt that way and was in her thirties. If Grandma’s memory and/or opinion were at all accurate, or the photographic evidence to be believed, she was no looker either. In fact, one can follow the photos of her life and see her getting prettier as the years went by, as she seemed to become more and more comfortable in her skin. But her marriage was before that gradual metamorphosis. Given the family history, it would be only natural to guess that Simon and Pauline married due to some unplanned, impending, joyous arrival, but the dates don’t line up. No, pregnancy didn’t propel her into a seemingly loveless marriage. The hypothesis I have settled on over the years: Pauline felt she could not “do better” than this much, much older man and also felt compelled to be married. It is just what was done and what is still done, for that matter. Teenage Pauline wrote that “over 90 percent of all women marry at some time in their lives,” and apparently it was her turn. She had been taught to be hard working, she had been taught to be married and so she did both.

If Grandma’s marriage did not live up to the pictures in her Career Book, it at least surpassed the quality of life endured by Nonie. Nonie married Uncle Jack when she was just sixteen. He was the most handsome man in town, and so she gladly went off to Canton with him. Shortly thereafter, they came back to Hyndman for a visit, and Nonie turned to big sister Pauline for advice. She didn’t want to go back with Jack. He was cruel. And a drunk. And he beat her. What should she do? “Well you’re married to him. I guess you have to go back with him,” is the advice Grandma gave her. “But I wish I’d have said don’t go back with him. But what did I know?” What she knew was what she had been taught, and what she had been taught was that a woman should get married, stay married, and make a beautiful
home. After all, “the creation and maintenance of the very foundation of society” depended on it. Nonie endured years of abuse—Jack once used her head to pound a nail into drywall—before she left him. Society’s foundation did not crumble. She would later remarry and stay married until more than six decades later, when Uncle Bill preceded her into death. Nonie said nothing, showed no reaction, just as she had said nothing and shown no reaction to anything for several years. In the late stages of Alzheimer’s, she was just fading away in a nursing home. Grandma always wondered if the beatings Nonie had suffered played some part in her disappearing mind. Unscientific evidence, of course, but enough to send Grandma on an occasional guilt trip.

Pauline’s own marriage was much less tumultuous and much shorter. A few years into their marriage, seventeen months after the birth of their daughter, Simon died of cancer. Pauline never did remarry. Now a woman whose professed aspiration was to make a home, had to make it, pay for it, and raise a little girl. Pauline’s mother came out from Hyndman to help her get it all done but all the burden was squarely on Grandma’s shoulders. Forget about the foundation of society, she had a family to support. She took Simon’s life insurance and used it as a down payment on a duplex, so she could bring in some extra income as a landlady. It’s yet another example of how a woman could move into the public sphere and a gutsy move for a single mom in 1948. It was also gutsy of her five years later to quit her job and buy a lunch counter, “What you would call a convenience store today.” For two years, she walked two blocks to the store and spent all day on her feet, cooking meals and selling miscellaneous goods. Twelve hours a day, seven days a week. Aunt Helen helped out. Yet more fruits of her education: The know-how to run a business must have come from the halls of Hyndman High, where Pauline served as the treasurer of some extracurricular club (None of us can remember what it was, but we do have a page of notations about dues collected and bake sale revenue). The cooking-savvy, on the other hand, that Grandma needed for that bake sale and to run a lunch counter, was a product of all those aunts and mothers who had come before her, who had, to paraphrase Grandma’s beloved Mister Rogers, “loved her into being.”

Two years of “Carey’s Cut-rate” was too much, and Pauline sold the shop and went back to the sewing factory, because climbing those forty-four stairs each day was so much easier on her body. By 1969, she needed a metal brace to support her left leg. By the time I came along almost a decade later, she had two braces. From my earliest memories of her, she walked slowly and laboriously, using two canes. When she moved in with us, in the late eighties, she had moved onto using a walker. She spent her days cooking and cleaning, sewing when she could. She watched TV: figure skating, soap operas, Mister Rogers. Baseball. Always baseball. And she read and sewed when she could. When she fell and broke her leg in the early 21st century, it led to a long, downward spiral. It felt like it was more than an old woman who had fallen. It may not have been the foundation of society, but it sure felt like it. It felt like the end of an era.
She had raised a daughter, helped put her through college, took care of her elderly mother, defied her legs on a daily basis. She had been a landlady and a shopkeeper and found a little money each week to give me when I was an undergrad. It wasn’t much, but it paid for the gas so my wife and I could get back and forth to school. And she did all that without a high school diploma, something she always regretted. She had written to her old school to request her transcript in the 1960s, thinking she might go back to finish what she had started. She never did, but she would occasionally pull out that transcript and pore over it. So close. “I looked at that the other day,” she told me once. “I have that paper. I only needed a half a credit to graduate in three years.” It was as if all she had done, all she had learned, had no value. Not without the paper.

Beyond occasionally brooding wistfully over her transcript, Pauline often enthused about the importance of education. “You’re going to finish college,” my mother recalled Grandma telling her repeatedly during her childhood. “You can do whatever else you want, but you’re going to finish college.” Mom saw the value in college; she needed to meet a man, get married, have children, and make a home. That was the extent of her ambitions, her heart’s desire. And she needed no degree to do that. Still, Grandma insisted. I like to think she saw some value in education for education’s sake, but I think it’s just that she had learned some difficult lessons. Some men die. Some leave. Some beat you. You can’t put all your eggs in a man’s basket. So perhaps the urgency with which Grandma approached mom’s, my brother’s, and my education was a product of pragmatism. But maybe there was something more to it than that.

Grandma’s reverence for education may have been a consequence of a Pennsylvanian tradition of respect for learning. Only months after William Penn arrived at the colony in 1682, the first general assembly passed the “Great Law” laying out the laws of the land, one of which concerned teaching about said laws in the curriculum of “the schools of this Province and Territories” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 3). The next year, educational intent was made more explicit by the second assembly, which decreed that the colony would offer free—to the needy—compulsory education and that all children must be literate by the age of 12 and taught a skill or trade (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 4). Although it would be an understatement to say that these mandates were not met for quite some time, the explicit articulation of intent was itself extraordinary in a time when education was the domain of the home and the church.

Not only were some early Pennsylvanians progressive in their view of the relationship between school and state, they were similarly ahead of their time in their views of the relationship between school and girls. By 1696, the state had not lived up to its educational goals, and Philadelphia Quakers petitioned the state governor to establish a free public school for all children, including girls. This inclusive approach flew in the face of much thought at the time about educating girls, and “indicated on the part of Quakers an attitude toward women that had an
important influence on education and social life” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 7). One nine
teenth century writer said of the Quakers, “They have interested themselves in
the education of women, and also in Women’s rights, which is the natural outgrowth
of the liberty always allowed by them to women in preaching and in the conduct
of church affairs” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 20).

Of course, Quakers’ beliefs about education were shaped by their religion—one
was educated so as to enhance one’s relationship with God—and as such their be-
liefs do not all seem progressive through twentieth century eyes: “Not only were
all games forbidden but balls, the theatre, works of fiction, poetry and music were
classed together as disturbers of the emotions and therefore ungodly” (Walsh &
Walsh, 1930, pp. 14-15). Grandma certainly did not share these attitudes, whatever
she may have thought about the value of formal education; she was a voracious
reader (even if she favored quantity over quality, true crime magazines and books
being favorites) and physical education, ballgames in particular, held a special
place in her heart. She loved watching people do things with their bodies that she
could never even attempt.

The Friends’ dedication to teaching girls continued on through the long years
when the colony left its educational mandates unfunded and unenforced. By the
mid-1700s, the Philadelphia Quakers had established the Girls’ School, further
evidence of their progressive approach to gender equality, or at least a prototype
thereof: Girls were taught, in addition to their rudimentary three Rs and moral
instruction, “needlework of various kinds” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 30). One
Philadelphia Friend, Anne Parrish, opened a school for underprivileged girls in
the late 1700s. Later she founded The Society for the Free Instruction of Female
Children, which was still later combined with the Aimwell School, a school that,
“under the control of Quaker women, had done a splendid work among the girls of
Philadelphia” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 99). Some came to see the Quaker com-
munity as given to dogmatic inflexibility and even hypocrisy in their approach to
education, equality, and suffrage, but their dedication to at least basic learning was
firm: “It can truly be said that no Quaker community in Pennsylvania ever became
illiterate” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 34-5).

The Quakers were not alone in Pennsylvania in their progressive, religious-
based approach to education. Their Scotch-Irish contemporaries believed the abil-
ity to read scriptures was essential to obtaining salvation, and so all children were
taught basic literacy. A Moravian school founded in Germantown in 1742 grew to a
boarding school serving 50 boys and girls, “among them two Indian Girls,” by 1747.
Three years later, a co-educational boarding school was founded by Moravians in
Nazareth, and in 1759 the girls of this school became “the nucleus for the famous
Seminary for Young Ladies” in Bethlehem (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 68). In 1776
a girls’ school was founded by Moravians in Lititz. It would evolve into “Linden
Hall, a girls’ boarding school which has made the name of Lititz known far and
wide and which combines in a rare way the fine cultural and spiritual values of the
old Moravian education with the best progressive ideas of the present” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 69).

Eventually, educational opportunities developed outside of religious origins. In 1801, The Philadelphia Society for the Establishment and Support of Charity Schools was founded, and it went on to establish schools “for both boys and girls and these were the first schools opened in Philadelphia to which pupils were admitted without regard to religious affiliation, nationality, or race” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 99). Similarly, The Philadelphia Association for the Instruction of Poor Children operated boys’ and girls’ schools from 1804 to 1818. This movement toward more secular educational opportunities continued in Philadelphia, with the creation of the First School District of the State of Pennsylvania, a title that was still in place as late as 1928 (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 104). Although it did not provide a free education for all, the district did aim at providing a less expensive education for poor children, with the poorest boys admitted free of charge from ages six to fourteen and girls from five to thirteen (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 104). Certainly not gender equality, but nonetheless progressive in light of aforementioned misogynistic attitudes toward education.

Before the advent of accessible schools, children learned what they needed, or what their culture perceived them as needing, in their homes. Walsh and Walsh painted a picture of this process as it was experienced by children of Pennsylvania pioneers.

Under pioneer and rural life, parents and children were very closely associated. The boys worked with their father, accepted his judgments, imbibed his social and religious attitudes, and in general followed the pattern set them. The girls associated with and copied their mother in the same way. Moreover, the child’s time was fully occupied from the day he became old enough to assist in the simple tasks about the home until he took his place as a man in the labor of the field. There was little leisure for boy or man, girl or woman. (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 110)

As has been said, this family unit was imperiled during the Industrial Revolution. With dad away at work, “boys worked, went to school, played, or loafed, away from the father’s oversight and control. Many boys and even girls worked in factories when they should have been in school,” and the increase in leisure time that accompanied life off the farm resulted in “more temptations and, hence, more vice. Home ties were weakened and the old moral restraints on the young seemed to be breaking down” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, pp. 110-111). Beyond seeing these social conditions as requiring women to step up to save the nation and the family, Walsh and Walsh (1930), asserted that these conditions inspired Pennsylvanians to demand better educations for all children so as to deliver them from these evils.

Not that the fulfillment of that demand went smoothly. An 1834 law designed to finally establish and fund a formal public school system in the state met with much resistance upon its passage. Walsh and Walsh explained that these rejections came from distinct segments of the population, including those who objected to the law
on religious grounds, those who were simply closed to new, untraditional ideas, and wealthy citizens who did not mind funding, through donations, the limited education of the poor, but did not want to be compelled to pay for the comprehensive education of all Pennsylvanians (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 122-3). The collection of citizens brought together only by their hatred of the new legislation was a motley, patchwork bunch, but it was by no means a small or disorganized lot. Almost half of the State’s counties—475 of 987—voted to repeal the law, and a number of new legislators won office based solely on their promises to overturn it (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 121).

Pauline’s home county of Bedford was not one of those voting against the law. In fact, only three of the county’s 20 districts supported repealing, and in the end most of the state sided with them. The law was modified but not killed, and “The fight for the principle of state-controlled free public education had at last been won” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 128). Understanding just this truncated version of Pennsylvania’s educational history helped me answer some of my questions about Pauline’s life. How did a poor Appalachian girl with polio manage to very nearly finish high school? And why did she care so much about her own daughter’s formal education when she knew firsthand that a woman did not need college to survive? Growing up as she did in a state with a rich history of caring about education for all and a county that overwhelmingly supported public education, it was perhaps only natural for Pauline to embrace learning. Furthermore, that natural tendency must have been encouraged by the events of Pauline’s life. You’re going to finish college. You can’t climb stairs forever.

True to her goal, Kathleen met a man in school and married him right after. When he was drafted and stationed in Texas, Mom followed him. Like her aunt Nonie those long decades before, she followed her man far from her home, all her reservations and fears pushed aside. There she put her sociology degree to work by going door to door to the homes of poor, Mexican immigrants, preaching the gospel of Planned Parenthood. There were days she felt threatened. There were days she was threatened but she kept right on walking. One more thing she learned from her mother: You’ve got to keep putting one foot in front of the other, no matter how hard it is. And about a decade later, for all the usual reasons, my parents divorced. That was something else Mom learned from Grandma: It’s OK not to follow him and you can raise them and pay the bills on your own. It can be done.

Mom also learned what she did not want to do from Grandma. My mother was always frank and open when discussing sex, an extension of her general attitude toward the topic—that it was simply a natural part of being a human—a natural and a healthy part, provided it was done right. No details have ever been offered, nor have I ever asked for any, but at some point Pauline had a boyfriend who sexually abused my mother. Years later, at my parents’ wedding reception, he spent the evening trying to surreptitiously look up the dresses of female guests of all ages. As a little girl, my mother told Pauline what was going on. Pauline brushed
her off and said that’s just how men were. My mother would only ever say of the relationship that Pauline was always very lonely, living, as she did, with only her mother and daughter and suffering from her physical impediments. Still, efforts at understanding and forgiveness aside, the man clearly scarred my mother. I don’t think it was any coincidence that she went on to work for nearly two decades as a social worker in children’s protective services, trying to save the kids of the world, or that she spent hours lecturing me when I was a boy about how to protect myself from abuse, and talking to me frankly about sex.

Perhaps she was too frank and too early. According to family lore, we went to visit Pauline later on the day my mother explained the birds and bees to me. Upon seeing my grandma, I excitedly asked, “Do you have a ‘gina like mommy?” I don’t actually remember that, but I’ve heard it so often and for so long that I feel like I remember it. Do-not-vu as opposed to déjà vu, I suppose. My mother’s penchant for open discussions of sexuality was no doubt a product of my grandmother’s upbringing. For as much sex as her community seems to have had, there was little discussion of it in tiny Hyndman, or at least in her home. When Grandma’s father died, he left Great-grandma with Pauline and her two older siblings; brother Buck and sister Toots. Great-grandma would go on to have three more children to three different fathers and to raise a granddaughter, Charlotte, as her own. Charlotte’s mother—Toots—died under mysterious circumstances. When I was a child, in the eighties, Grandma told me she died of pneumonia. In the nineties, she told me her sister died during childbirth. In 2010, a few months before dying, grandma told me her sister had indeed died in childbirth, but it was apparently the result of a botched abortion. Still, no one ever came out and said that.

“We didn’t talk to kids about those things,” Grandma explained, and waved off questions about why she was finally willing to discuss what had only ever been half-whispered rumors among the kinfolk. There was a lot about which they didn’t talk. Grandma said the same thing about getting her first period: “[Mom] never talked about anything. You learned from other kids, you know.” There wasn’t much my mom didn’t talk about. Once during my early adolescence, Mom paused while changing my bedclothes and looked up at me thoughtfully.

“You know,” she said, “you’ll probably have wet dreams soon.”

“Mom!”

“It’s OK. It’s nothing to be embarrassed about. If it happens, just take your sheets down to the basement and put them by the washer. I’ll take care of them the next day. Then just put on some clean sheets from the hall closet.”

“Geez, Mom.”

“I just want you to know how to handle it, that everything’s OK.”

“OK. Fine.”

Some more thinking, and then: “And you’ll probably start masturbating soon.”

“Mom!”

“It’s OK. It’s natural. Everyone does it.”
“God!”
“Do you want me to ask your dad talk to you about this?”
“I don’t want anyone to talk to me about this!”
“Well talk about it or not, it happens. Everyone does it.”
I didn’t want to hear about it, but, truth be told, it did make me feel better. And it was an experience that served me well nearly two decades later, while I was having a similar discussion with my step-daughter, Maranda.
“It’s OK. Everyone does it.”
“Really?”
“Of course. Don’t you think we know why you take such long showers?”
Looking up at us, smiling sheepishly, barely audible: “You knew about that?”
Later, her birth father would catch her masturbating and disgustedly chastise her for it. I don’t know to what degree, if any, she was inoculated from his shaming by our conversation. I think some conversations like that could have helped Pauline and Kathleen. I know they helped me. I hope they helped Maranda.
Grandma never could see value in her life, in the generations she nurtured and taught. After Simon died, she bought a car, modified it with a handbrake so she could use it, found a willing instructor, and learned to drive. Later, when Nonie’s daughter Sheila was herself struck with polio, Grandma taught her to drive. And she taught Mom. And mom taught me. She just didn’t see value in things like that.
“I feel so useless. I’d like to have a job,” she told me once when she was in her eighties. “I think a lot. I never did talk to people and tell them how I really felt. I never felt like I belonged. I never felt like I was up to par.” She said this to me as we sat in her bedroom, an add-on mother-in-law suite. By this age, she had long since been forced into retirement by doctor’s orders. Her left knee was completely twisted, her feet perpetually curled into balls of pain. Her knees literally inverted when she removed her braces. Twenty years of feeling useless because there was no official paycheck every two weeks to say she was contributing. When I was an adolescent, unbeknownst to her, I would listen to Pauline from the kitchen off of her bedroom as she lay awake each night.
“Why, God?” She’d ask over and over. “Why am I still alive? Why don’t you just take me already? Why do I have to keep living?”
Another lesson learned: It’s OK to ask questions. It’s OK not to buy official lines about God, the universe, and everything. Combine that with the reverence for education with which I was imbued, and you have got the recipe for a perpetual student. Eighteen years of post-secondary education. Only two degrees to show for it. And I’m still asking questions.
Speaking of asking questions, in 2007 Grandma asked me if I could look into getting her a high school diploma. I did some internet searching, made a few phone calls, sent a couple of emails, and in a short time the Bedford-Hyndman school board voted to award her an honorary degree. And why not? She was an excellent student, earning A’s and B’s in subjects like Latin, French, biology, history, civics.
This wasn’t just the three R’s. Throw in the life experience, and how could they have denied her a diploma?

I consider her formal education with some melancholy. The words of her *Career Book* aside, it had not been Pauline’s desire to be a homemaker. She had wanted to be a nurse. I think of her excellent schoolwork. Then I think of how she cared for her cancer-ridden, bed-bound aunt Nora, changing and sanitizing the bandages and gauze used to plug the holes in her back and abdomen left by the radiation treatments. In his final days, she had to help Uncle Ellsworth urinate into a bottle. She cared for her mother as she left this life. The meals she cooked and served, the diapers and bedpans she changed, the colds and flus she nursed grandkids through. My grandma was a nurse and more. I don’t care what paper she did or didn’t have. The thing she lacked was not the paper but the chance; if they had given her the opportunities, who knows what she could have done?

But Pauline did care about that official paper, and was beaming with pride when the Bedford-Hyndman School Board called her with their decision. The family was gathered around, certain the news would be good. “What happened?” Grandma asked. “Did I get it?” When they told her the good news, she was relieved that she wouldn’t have to do any more work to satisfy the board. The Hyndman paper reported that “Carey quipped that she ‘thought maybe I’d have to go back to school now to do something’ to earn the board’s approval” (Maust, 2007, p. 1). The reporter didn’t know Pauline. She wasn’t quipping; she was prepared to work for it. She was always prepared to work for it.

That diploma hung on the wall over Grandma’s bed, and she showed it off to every visitor. We threw her a graduation party, and the diploma and she were the center of attention. And every time they shuffled her from the hospital to another nursing home, the diploma followed, but it seemed to offer little comfort. I visited her one day near the end in her final nursing home, video camera fortunately in hand. “My braces are in that closet there. Sometimes I doubt I’ll ever wear them again,” she said. And she didn’t. “What’s the use of thinking about it?” she asked no one in particular. “What’s the use of thinking about it? Sometimes it gets so painful that you can’t hardly stand it.”

When she finally died in August of 2010, a few months shy of her 97th birthday, the diploma hung on the wall over her deathbed. In the same room, Nonie occupied the other bed. She did little more than breathe, looking off at nothing and smacking her lips. Two sisters who left Hyndman, Pennsylvania, behind, traveled down roads sometimes interwoven and sometimes parallel, only to end up in the same nursing home, in the same room, one practically dead and the other actually dead.

Now it is a cool April night in 2012, and I’m the one lying in my grandma’s old bedroom. My wife and I have been separated for a few weeks. I’m a couple months shy of 36 and I’ve moved back in with my mom. I’m still in school, still trying to find answers. I lie in bed and stare at the ceiling and turn it all over in my mind. I think of afternoons watching *Mister Rogers* with Grandma, of watching
baseball, of eating her food, of listening to her words and thinking of just how far she had come. It was not just the distance from Hyndman to Canton. It was a distance that could not be measured in miles but only in words: “Why shouldn’t they let gay people adopt kids? Ain’t their love better than no love?”; “I like that Barak Obama. I just hope nobody shoots him.”; “That poor Susan Smith. Can you imagine the life she must have had to think killing her kids was the right thing to do?”

I try to comfort myself with this: I have no idea where I’m going, but at least I know where I’m from.

References


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Liminal eRoticism
Emerging Forms of Gender Identity
and Performance in e-Romances
and Their Feminist Electronic Communities

Kerrita K. Mayfield

In the last 20 years of ‘women’s literature,’ romances’ content has grown into postmodern stories whose heroines (and male protagonists) are in a wider array than ever before: Asian-American, Latina, multiracial, women who love women, shapeshifters, women with superpowers, and women who explore the boundaries of being sexually submissive or dominant (Ellora’s Cave, 2012; Fitzgerald, 2006; Laws, 2007). When women edit, read, and own Internet-based publishing houses, the electronic format proliferates forms of feminism by producing material that subverts the alpha male domination present in traditional brick-and-mortar romance novels. Furthermore, narratives of female desire and performance are disrupted and legitimated; thus creating powerfully disruptive narratives of gender and gender identity from the social periphery.

This article has three contentions about the social feminism in e–romance novels. First, e-romances are postmodern artifacts; a signpost of socio-sexual and technological advancement that is being increasingly consumed by Third and Fourth Wave generations of romance readers. With almost $6.7 million dollars of revenues in 2006 alone, the trend of e-publishing at houses founded by women such as Man Love Romance, Wicked Women of Color, and Loose Id are growing in popularity and patronage (Fitzgerald, 2006; Henley, 2007; Schoenberger, 2007). Many sources here will reflect and seek to legitimate femmecentric electronic worlds and voices.

Second, this article examines how women who write e-romances create characters that extol feminist and womanist ideals birthed from the Second Wave of American feminism and its concomitant literature forms. The heroine’s relational practices contest the traditional roles of women in “women’s literature” like romance novels.

Third, I maintain that the performances of gender and sex role expectations in e-romances are no longer hegemonically constrained by heteronormativity and are performed in fluid liminal spaces. An exemplar of the aforementioned three points is the site The Smut Sluts (2010) who describe themselves as,
SMUT... smut [smut] slut [slut]
(plural smuts) n [15th century. Origin ?]
(plural sluts) n
(1) Uninhibited, Mature, Confident, Intelligent Women
(2) A group of women who exude confidence and relish exploring their sexuality through erotic books, conversation, and bonding. Found primarily in every walk of life. They cross all age barriers. They unite women for the purpose of female empowerment. Tearing down boundaries, passé stereotypes, and building self-esteem in its wake. Women who know what they want and aren’t ashamed of it…

Neologisms

The lowercase “e” in “e-romance” represents the erotic nature of the protagonists’ relationships and e-romance’s electronic publishing origins; unifying the themes of electronic and erotic as the material and distribution are intertwined. The “e” signifies the genre’s birth as a technology-driven artifact representative of the postmodern era’s most recent wave of feminism; a form of feminism promulgated in Internet communities like Feministe and Feminist Majority Online among many others. Data tracking applications on websites illustrate the global reach of such internet communities when various users around the globe are shown to have accessed the materials therein. Embedded in the use of the lowercase “e” is resistance to gender norming and the power to create and promulgate communal neologisms. Ellora’s Cave (2004) designates “Romantica” as “containing explicit and frank sexual language…that culminates in a monogamous relationship.” The monogamous relationship here does not mean a traditional heterosexual marriage. Although there are websites, weblogs, and organizations that promote forms of feminism via the Internet, and a growing body of work about the interactions of women, adolescent girls, and feminism on the Internet, this article examines the feminist community that has sprung up around e-romantic literature promoted, disseminated, and published via electronic means.

Let me clarify the term e-romance, then I will explicate my use of postmodernism. E-romance has been legitimated, with some contention, as a subgenre by the Romance Writers of America, despite its focus on non-traditional sexual and social relationships (dePre, June 7, 2006; Romance Writers of America, 2005). “Non-traditional” encompasses nonheteronormative relationships, including cross-dressing partners, ciswomen and cismen1 who are gender queer. E-romances feature gay, lesbian, trans*, bisexual, or ménage a trois2 romantic protagonists, although e-publishers’ stories also include interracial (IR), May/December, and women who are described as “Rubenesque,” or plus-sized (Ellora’s Cave, 2004). E-romance publishers differ from brick-and-mortar publishers in that the former are progenitors of the genre who push the social and sexual boundaries of readers, authors, and format. This work focuses on novels or short stories available for online purchase, not material freely available on the Internet as fanfiction (fanfic) or in e-zines.
There are also unique ways to denote relationship dynamics. Among them are M/M and F/F, which denote relationships composed of various configurations of men and women.

Postmodernism in this work is a signifier of technological advance and a social and relational theory. Theoretically, postmodernism explores the idea that there is no unitary “truth” to the world of women, and subsequently, their forms of gender expression (Merriam, 2002). Women are indeed intersectional artifacts whose myriad worlds of home, mother, wife, lover intersect with race, class, social systems, and gender hierarchy (Hill Collins, 1993). Further, women’s truths are contextual, so investigations of the structures that prop up power relationships reveal how women construct their multiple worlds (Anyon, 1994; Fraser, 2005; McRobbie, 2004). Accompanying leaps in technology, women like McRobbie (2004), Lather (1991, 1992), and Mohanty (2003) elucidate that women’s multiple and global sites of identity are a troubling of existing power paradigms (Jackson, 2003). Accommodated by technology, the resulting gender performances are unique in their rejection of gender as irrevocably binary (Butler, 1990). Further, new modalities of reading and reading formats have irrevocably altered the ways text is consumed. Various forms of technology also change a woman’s access to community, which will be discussed further.

Methodology

This work is part of a larger examination of postmodern forms of feminist power and includes a series of semi-structured e-mail interviews with e-romance author and self-identified feminist Jeanne Laws, who has published award winning e-romance novellas and is active in the e-romance community. Reinharz (1992) recommends that with feminist-oriented practices there also needs to be diverse investigative approaches. As such, Laws allowed me access to her website, writing process, weblog posts, and e-book covers under redesign as additional data. Further, Laws member-checked the initial article draft as another form of feminist validity building (DeVault & Gross, 2012). Reinharz (1992) also notes that a case study’s purpose is to illuminate a case; Jeanne Laws is an ethnically diverse, erudite, heterosexual e-romance author, an articulate feminist and a full-time wife and mother.

Additional data were collected from websites, blogs, open and closed message and topic groups, and other forms of electronic broadcasting, such as the texts themselves. I am seeking a normalization of these women’s electronic products as data and voice (Blackman, 2004).

Postmodern Tools Are Re-Shaping Postmodern Feminist Communities

E-romance’s electronic presence promotes an author’s persona(e) in places such
as a weblog (blog), a website, Twitter feed, Facebook Group, membership in writing or reader groups—communities that exist solely on the Internet and which can only be accessed by electronic means. Readers can join the authors’ e-newsletter, can e-mail an author or visit and comment upon their blogs or Facebook Groups, all of which usually require membership or at least the submission of one’s Internet identifiers or machine’s IP (internet protocol) address. The expanding and elastic electronic community is a habitué for women as e-romance consumers and producers. As many researchers and women know, communities of like-minded women are a powerful economic, political, and social force (Fitzgerald, 2007; hooks, 2000).

While it is clear that not all aspects of the Internet are positive for women (see Doring, 2000; Morahan-Martin, 2000; Lewis, 2012; Straumshein, 2014) and have been so for many years, the Internet is also a rich site for a woman’s social power and feminist activism. Women have a variety of hardware and software options for consuming e-romances and dismantling sexist practice. For example, e-romances can be downloaded in HTML (HyperText Markup Language), and PDF (Portable Document Files) formats into portable hardware devices like memory sticks, external hard drives, cell phones, and handheld readers (Schoenberger, 2007). Personal portability also makes it easier for men to consume erotic romances without public embarrassment because consumption is not bound by a reader’s location or the gendered traditional brick-and-mortar novel cover.

The method of transmission helps contort the author’s identity as it delivers her (or his, or their) message, because users of the medium have come to expect that authors will make themselves as accessible as the medium. For example, if a reader follows Laws from her professional website to her blog, there are links to other e-romance sites where she can be found blogging, cross promoting, or publishing newsletters for her local romance writing group. Site visitation data and reference citations are also accessed from an e-romance author’s site—the place where their Internet and e-publishing identities reside. Interestingly, Jeanne Laws is a pseudonym, so for all her ‘appearances’ as a guest on the Authors of Erotic Romance Website, interviews of fellow e-romance authors, links, blogs and cross-references, whomever ‘lives’ onscreen is subsequently a postmodern and electronic chimera.

Technology encourages an unknowingness of the author’s sexuality, communities, and ethnicity. Traditional authors are physically accessible to their readers because of the need to promote paper books via store visits, romance conventions, and other face-to-face activities. By way of contrast, e-romance authors’ photographs seldom appear on the back pages of their work, an expectation few brick-and-mortar novelists eschew.

The Internet has fostered a commonality of language Bourdieu (1963, in Swartz, 1998) contends acts like currency when exchanged within a community of like people. My favorite insider acronyms describe the un-emancipated traditional heroine who is TSTL in pursuit of her HEA, or “too stupid to live” in pursuit of her “happily ever after.” The TSTL protagonist represents an archetype at odds with
the heroines (when there is one) in Laws’ books. The acronym woman embodies the trope of witlessly waiting to be saved by her man and is reviled because her gender performance and subsequent gendered power is the antithesis of a biometal-engineered rescue astronaut.

Laws’ 2006 article for the Los Angeles Romance Association comments upon a workshop she attended which stated that pornography is consumed and produced for male pleasure, without the social and interpersonal interactions found in romance novels. The distinction between the erotic and pornography represents a shift from androcentric pleasure to a femmecentric focus upon what female protagonists, and subsequent readers, desire (Knight, June 8, 2006). In Laurenston’s (2004, p.102) story *A Pride Christmas in Brooklyn*, the female protagonist is about to have intercourse on her terms, illustrated by this conversation:

“These jeans new?”
His head snapped forward. “What?”
Such urgency flooded his voice, it took all her strength not to bust out laughing.
“I said are these jeans new? They look new.”
He swallowed. “Um… yeah…got them this morning.”
“Locally?”
His fingers dug into the metal of her island countertop. Even his claws came out. “Yes.”
“The sweater too?” She tugged on it. “It’s nice. I like it.”
He glared down at her. “You’re killing me, Desiree.”
“I know, baby.”
“What do you want?”
“I want you to ask me…nicely.”

Desiree is a peer participant instead of an erotic object. The nattering discord about erotica versus romance is really about a woman’s illicit demand to pursue sexual pleasure.

The creation and maintenance of power, coupled with sexual and romantic freedom, benefits women outside of the hegemonic mainstream who understand the totality of their lived experiences (Lorde, 2000). In the Third and Fourth Wave tradition, this power warrants scholarly inquiry because women benefit from the exploration of new romantic and gendered identities (Brady & Dentith, 2001).

The Evolving Erotic Stories of Our Second Wave Mothers

The second part of this work explicates how e-romances are an evolution of Second Wave erotic literature and are a harbinger of Fourth Wave forms of feminism. Postmodern e-romance authors would not exist without their Second Wave progenitors. Considering the dominance of the masculine over the feminine and the cultural eroticization of heterosexual relationships; in gaze, the proliferation of androcentric stroke material, and in the subordination of women in socio-economic position; the work of women like Brownmiller (1975), Gilligan (1979), Lorde...
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(2000), and Weissten (1968) was crucial. Second Wave women challenged the politics, relationships, and even the psychiatry underpinning the status of women in the 1970s and 1980s, and claimed erotic power as sexual relationships became politicized as a site of feminist activism (see for example Butler, 1990 or Jong, 1973). Second Wave feminists also articulated the social and structural distinctions between the erotic and the pornographic (Lorde, 2000; Steinem, 1998). E-romance authors perpetuate the positive roles of women in erotica, although Third Wave pro-pornography and sex-positive feminists like Annie Sprinkle and Julie Simone disagree about the depth and social importance of this distinction to postmodern women and to feminism as a social practice (Harris, 2008).

An RWA survey shows that a plurality, 22%, of romance readers are indeed in the age group to be daughters of the Second Wave, ages 34-44 (RWA, 2005). The other 78% of respondents are dispersed among ages 18 to 60+ (RWA, 2005). Age is part of my claim to Third Wave feminism because of a generational shift in the gender representations of classic 1970s feminist romance fiction. E-romances have evolved from my mother’s novels to tell a story of female power that is intriguing in its social reflections.

Crain (1974) presents feminist fiction as a bridge between the worldly woman and the world of women; interrogating the worlds of (heterosexual and married) women in seminal literature like Jong’s 1973 Fear of Flying or Shulman’s 1972 Memoirs of an ex-Prom Queen. These novels precede the “chick-lit” literary trend. Crain finds fictional women invested in examining and resisting the disappointing doldrums of their socially approved romantic relationships. Indeed, Crain (1974, p. 59) noted that no feminist novel of the time warranted “critical scrutiny” because these novels were:

. . . too steeped in ideology to pay the elementary respect to human complexity that good fiction demands. Still, the ideology itself—the world of attitudes and ideas, the feminist novel projects—is worth looking into, the more so since the books as a group have not only sold extremely well but also have been widely, respectfully, and even enthusiastically reviewed.

Navigating between the constraints of the romance format, while incorporating the powerful feminist point of view, was an elemental conflict for a feminist author before this electronic form.

If an observer follows some e-romance authors’ discussion threads (connected conversations) back to their sites and blogs, there are clear declarations of feminist and womanist ideals. For example, Laws’ (2007) website states that she writes about “women with moxie,” while Laurenston (2007) idealizes female characters “in touch with [their] inner bitch.” Reynolds (2006) states that her goal as a writer is to “create romantic adventures,” where the reader will encounter no “passive females.” Reynolds continues that she does not want to read about women “who want to be rescued” but instead about women who “embrace life.” These authors are disrupting the traditional positioning of the women in a romantic story.
Laws (May 15, 2007a), when asked if she considers herself a feminist author, replied, “I think the last point is important: ‘Feminists may disagree over…the extent to which gender and gender based identities should be questioned and critiqued.’” After quoting Wikipedia, she continues,

The romance novel tends to get a bad rap from feminists because the genre for the most part embraces traditional gender roles. One of the main reasons I started to write romance was because of my frustration with the typical romance heroine out there. I found the over abundance of heroines needing to be rescued and 50’s style power differentials unappealing.

Laws uses her writing to talk back to the genre of her Second Wave progenitors by expressing what she desires as a reader and feminist. E-romances promote the socio-sexual expression celebrated by postmodern feminists with a variety of significant social results (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000; Edut, 2000; Karp & Stoller, 1999; Levy, 2005; Walker, 1995).

Traditional romances are invariably marketed to women, and until recently, so-called chick-lit novels were perceived by brick-and-mortar publishing houses to be a robust postmodern and femme-centric literary form (Dammann, 2008). Like chick-lit, romance novels are defined by the RWA (2002) as “books with the love story as part of the novel.” E-romance authors also consider the sexual expressions and lives of the main characters to be vital narrative frames. Understanding that these consummations occur with an HEA free from stylized female angst is important to framing how these authors’ work embodies feminist social ideals (Knight, June 8, 2006; Laws, May 30, 2007). The e-romance format has grown away from chick-lit’s reliance upon the trope of an anxiety-ridden white middle class 30-something female protagonist as an expression of female power and desirability (Gill & Herdieckerhoff, 2006). The women in e-romance novels expand beyond the “no means yes” sexual paradigm found in traditional romance novels, whereas the power differentials in chick-lit books does not guarantee a woman’s ultimate relationship prize, an HEA (Gill & Herdieckerhoff, 2006). Nor, of course, is her agency guaranteed. The women in Laws’ books do not feign resistance to their desires. There is not a sense in these novel forms, as in the famed Bridget Jones archetype, of a woman eagerly anticipating rescue via her “perfect” man.

Converse to insular chick-lit, Mann and Huffman (2005, p. 57) characterize “the diverse feminisms of the third wave” as a force whose “foci on difference, deconstruction, and decentering” promote inclusion. Inherent in the Third and Fourth Wave is a postmodern rejection of gender binaries and a repudiation of the hegemonic structures that characterize a woman’s sexual experience; a stance supported by Second Wave push-back against the insular former forms of feminism. Instead, a woman’s identity is a construct, an amalgamated artifact of social positioning, social influence, performances of gender, cultural practices and engagement with
a variety of discourses (Cameron, 2005; Mann & Huffman, 2005; Walker, 1995). Or, as Rinda (September 27, 2006, Msg 3) notes in her blog,

…I do think the new popularity of the “kick-ass” heroine; some think that a strong heroine needs the balance of a weaker hero. Uh no. I’ve put down many a book because that just doesn’t ring true for me. Now, this is a personal preference, but I love a book with two strong character [sic] finding balance. I love the push and pull of that strong attraction and see nothing wrong with either character going after what they want – or letting them take turns. (g). [g is shorthand for ‘grin’—a cyber smile].

Social tension around intersecting identities is reflected in commentary by Milan (July 5, 2007, Msg 1). This blog post is about racism in romance paperbacks featuring or written by African-Americans, where these novels are physically shelved separately from mainstream romances in brick-and-mortar stores.

Romance is about love and relationships and the building of community. We’re better [emphasis hers] than this, or at least we should be. Some higher-ups out there have decided that we need to be shielded from romance that’s “different.” We shouldn’t let them have the satisfaction of being right. And so I have a pledge: At RWA’s (Romance Writers of America) literacy signing event, for every author I approach who I already know because I found her on the shelves of the mainstream romance section, I will buy a book from one author who I don’t know because she doesn’t get shelved with regular romance. I’m planning on buying a lot of books, and I’ll blog about every one.

Social egalitarianism is facilitated by the electronic medium, which is not only a “first adapter” of new technologies, but also allows women to build communities of like-minded individuals across race and other identities because the format physically disembodies the reader and reconstitutes them around the shared identity of a fan.

A trend that reinforces e-romance’s potential social power is the publication of anthologies whose full or partial profits are donated to national or international social justice organizations or causes. These social reconstruction tomes range from books funding re-exploration of 2008’s anti-gay marriage proposal in California, Proposition 8 (I Do and I Do, Two), to works whose profits benefit Amnesty International’s global human rights work (Together at Last, an IR themed book) or aiding the successful repeal of the federal government’s Don’t Ask Don’t Tell Don’t Pursue legislation by funding the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (Because of the Brave), to support of global LGBTQ rights (AllOut.org and Another Place in Time).

Expanding Gender Roles and the New Language of Gender Performance in e-Romance

While the heading can be perceived as hyperbole, authors of e-romance create three-dimensional female characters engaged in multiracial, even multi-spe-
cies intercourse, to the expansion of the romance oeuvre. These non-traditional relationships encompass women whose sexual expressions include fetishes and consensual bondage discipline dominance/submission sadomasochism (BDSM), relationships with other women, or committed polyamory. While definitely not true of all e-romances, those stories transcend the chick-lit paradigm where the heroine is bound by social tropes of “appropriate” femininity or heteropatriarchal gender normativity. An example of the abandonment of the socially proscribed desires of an idealized female character is a trilogy of shapeshifter stories by Shelly Laurenston. In the second book of the trilogy, Go Fetch (Laurenston, 2007, p. 30), the female protagonist, ruminates upon her friends’ relationship; musing

...Sara and Zack were definitely an interesting couple. Miki was still recovering from Sara’s call five months before when she excitedly told her friend she and Zack had “done the deed.” Miki thought that meant they’d rushed off to get married. But leave it to Sara… they’d both gone to the hospital and gotten sterilized. Perfectly matched shapeshifters who never wanted to breed. It was kind of sweet in a bizarre paranormal kind of way.

The HEA here is a committed partnership free from future children with no marriage plans for the couple at the close of the series.

E-romance authors espouse ideals where women are free to explore their sexuality with peers. Because some of the aforementioned authors are of African-American heritage, their feminism appears in Womanist form in their multiracial characters.

Not only is the ideology of social feminism (choice, power, equality) espoused, but the articulation of the protagonists’ choices has changed the language of romances. Early Third Wave shifts in femmecentric language altered the connotations of common terms into “womyn,” “gynography,” and “herstory” (Reinharz, 1992). The shift of gender and sex roles away from a heterosexual binary is exemplified by e-romance authors like James Buchanan, a genderqueer author who is a founder of online collective, Liminal Ink, a site and blog by a community of authors dedicated to exploring the boundaries of gender identity in “writing, art and publishing.” Liminal Ink’s (2010) tagline states that they are

... primarily a writers’ group designed to promote our talent, offer a safe community for expression, and break down the gender stereotyping of authors and artists. We are open to ideas of biologically and socially constructed gender identity. We appreciate the broad range of sexuality that exists within the human experience. It doesn’t matter to us where someone decides to live along the gender continuum or by what means they got there.

Buchanan (2011) explores gender along a continuum of performances whose elasticity is reflected in her characters. Shifting the ways gender is expressed in the postmodern feminist e-romance (gender expression as ephemera versus biology, shapeshifting, alpha heroine, etc.) reflects the ways women’s intersectional lives
are valorized. Apparently, it is easier to promote feminist norms when dealing with Laws’ shapeshifting or Li’s (November 22, 2007) capitalist ninja, than with an actual man with no special abilities in the real world. Liminality is writ large. Such spaces are contentious, as Laws (May 30, 2007) disagreed with other e-romance consumers over her comment that an HEA is a fictional enterprise outside of the e-romance.

The changing relationship expectations of the male counterparts in e-romances are heralded by the presence of what is referred to as the “beta” or even “gamma” male, the anti-alphamale hero who is broadening the male archetypes in e-romance literature (Frantz, July 10, 2007; Ottati, March 15, 2007). The beta or gamma male is the ordinary man whose appeal is embedded in his accessibility. The average guy becomes a heroic figure, codified in language and practice.

Gendered language is explored in Internet romance communities in blogosphere debates about the ways romance novels pervert a woman’s power. On Romancing the Blog: Romance Authors and Readers who Blog, Diana (July, 10, 2007, Msg 10) responds to the post No, I am NOT waiting for a Duke with,

...One of the biggest romance fans I know is a lesbian. So she’s clearly not waiting for any man to sweep her off her feet. This, however, is not a new phenomenon. Lecturing women on the dangers of their reading materials is misogyny as old as the idea of literacy for women. The idea that women are materially damaged by reading and by what they read is a couple of centuries old at least.

Similar feminist sentiments are hosted by blogs like Smart Bitches Who Love Trashy Novels who featured the thread Romance, Erotica and Political Correctness (September 27, 2006). Moreover, Smart Bitches and others, like The Smart Sluts, have co-opted negative terms for aggressive, sexually adventurous women while rendering pointed cultural critiques about gender hierarchy and patriarchy. I disagree with the use of “bitch” and “slut” as signs of recaptured female liberation. However, the adoption of negative monikers is a tactic adopted by minoritized groups from people of color, the differentially abled, and the queer community in their related struggles for emancipation (see Katz, 1993; Kulik, 2000; Westmoreland, 2001; Zola, 1993, for conversations on reclaiming power by (re)naming oneself).

The language changes of authors honors the ways gender interacts with hierarchal social institutions. However, Mohanty (2003) notes the conflict inherent in any language change because postmodernism’s ability to stretch language causes the boundaries that affix terms to become meaningless in its reinterpreted pliancy. Finally, Bloom (1996, p. 178) opines that “an understanding of subjectivity as nonunitary and fragmented is a move toward a more positive acceptance of the complexities of human identity—especially female identity.”

Shifting Relationship Spaces

The primary requirement of erotic romance is an HEA or HFN (Happy for Now). While seemingly outdated and counterproductive to a woman’s power, the
HEA and the HFN create safety for sexual and relational exploration free from social expectation. Selinger (April 24, 2007) posits that the reader will know how the story will end and the foreshadowed fantasy resolution makes the negotiation of non-traditional gender roles possible.

Contradictorily, the presumption of the HEA can weaken a feminist stance. Women are realists, but the HEA anchors women in a turbulent and often androcentric world, reminiscent of our Second Wave mothers’ Fear of Flying (1973) and Diary of a Mad Housewife (1970). On the Internet, the line between subjugation and emancipation is murkier for postmodern feminists as e-romance consumers question what Olivia Knight (April 20, 2007) calls women’s “power, authority, mastery.” The HEA is a source of heated discussion about the ways postmodern (and Third Wave) women desire partnership rules of their own design. Laws (May 30, 2007, Msg 1) started a blogosphere debate on the fantasy of the HEA and the realistic notions of actual romance when she noted,

...I think that romance novels are like fairy tales. We know they’re not real but, deep down, we very much wish they were—and I think, to a certain extent, we convince ourselves that they [HEAs] could be real. The ideas that the perfect man for you is out there, that there is someone who will love you for exactly who you are, and that you don’t have to be alone, are powerful and compelling—no matter how unrealistic. I do think that the romance novels of today are much less “damaging” than the ones of yesterday. The heroes are less than perfect, and fewer and fewer heroines need to be rescued. Still, the fantasy of a HEA is at the core of the genre, and Happily Ever Afters simply don’t exist.

What does an HEA mean when a powerful woman is in relationship that explores bondage, discipline, sadism or masochism? Are the boundaries of postmodern sexual freedom elastic enough to support the conflict of a feminist heroine who relishes a subordinate sexual position? E-romance author Claire Thompson (2005) notes on her website that,

...With my BDSM [e-romance] work, I seek not only to tell a story, but also to come to grips with, and ultimately exalt the true beauty and spirituality of a loving exchange of power. My darker works press the envelope of what is erotic...I strive to write about the timeless themes of sexuality and romance, with twists and curves to examine the romantic side of the human psyche. Ultimately, my work deals with the human conditions, and our constant search for love and intensity of experience.

In a BDSM themed e-romance by Alexander (2005, p. 105), the woman aims to ensnare her partner while remaining in control of their sexual encounter, occupying a dominant (D) sexual role. She ponders, “Because Ty had confirmed her suspicions. He thought women were either nice girls or naughty ones, with no in between. It was a shame, but not a surprise. She was crazy about Ty, but he was sometimes a very typical guys guy.” Later, in Alexander’s (2005, p. 135) story, after their sexual encounter where he was the submissive (s), the man wonders,
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Had he done something wrong? Had he not been good enough for her? He’d always felt pretty accomplished at f**king, but… well, this had been new. Maybe he hadn’t been submissive enough? After all, that part sure hadn’t come naturally. For her, he’d done it—and he’d enjoyed the results—but giving up total control had been difficult.

Both characters explore their sexual relationship while questioning the porous borders of sexual and relational power. Power in conflict becomes magnified, for in the story the (D) woman is the (s) man’s subordinate at his workplace, although he does not realize it—increasing the woman’s power during their encounters.

Returning to postmodern feminism, McRobbie notes that, “there is a shift away from feminist interest in centralized power blocs (e.g., the state, patriarchy, law) to more dispersed sites, events, and instances of power conceptualized as flows and specific convergences and consolidations…” (2004, p. 4). McRobbie’s statement aptly describes the aforementioned D/s romantic encounter. In the closing pages of Laurenston’s (2005, p. 215) paranormal story where the African-American Ph.D. resolves her union with her much taller shapeshifting and blond mate her partner muses,

Sure. He could have gone for a nice normal girl. Or at least a girl who could shift into something other than human. But no, he had to fall in love with Miki Kendrick. Hacker. Scientist. Nut case. Great lay.

His Mate.

M/M, F/F, Trans* Fic

When e-romance protagonists consolidate sites where women exercise their female power in concert with an equally powerful partner, Third Wave authors generate a new e-romance trope: the alpha heroine.

Indeed, cisfemale e-romance authors like Laws, Stephanie Vaughan, ZA Maxfield, James Buchanan, Jules Jones, and KJ Charles promote a pro-gay (M/M or F/F) or consciously nonheteronormative socio-political agenda. These female authors’ characters are not seeking an HEA that leads to a state sanctioned heteronormative marriage (Frantz, June 5, 2007). Laws (June 5, 2007) posted Can Romance be Queered? on the Authors of Erotic Romance blog, and discussion ensued about whether the integrity of romance is upheld when there are no women involved. Laws reveals in the same post that her local RWA chapter removed the cover of her M/M book from its member website due to the stockphoto of two men about to kiss.

The academic blog Teach Me Tonight had a thread Women Writing Men Doing Men (Frantz, February 7, 2007), and a comment that illustrated why heterosexual women may choose to consume M/M fiction. Raven (February 7, 2007 Msg 9) says that erotic fiction is about,

…the gender I’m attracted to and like to look at - - - and not overtly/innately/surprisingly beautiful/sexay woman to wander into things and make me start drawing
negative comparisons. I get to read and enjoy the story and the boys and not have to have my own appearance shortcomings thrown in my face.

An absent heteronormed character may free a woman from the constraints of the narrow social gaze inherent in the dominant paradigms of a standardized female beauty. Or, as Frantz (June 5, 2007) posits, “But is the feminist power we find in romances as reader (and I assume as writers) diminished because there is no heroine? I would assert that the answer is ‘no.’” Jules Jones (2007, Msg 7) uses the M/M format to address social ills like the British identity card system and to address the necessary nature of an HEA by reframing her stories as “happy for right now” subsequently making the protagonists free from traditional gender outcomes. E-romances are about women and their needs, even as women are excluded from the narratives as a heterosexual object of desire (Jolly, 2002). Raven (February 7, 2007, Msg 13) lists five hegemonic assumptions of female beauty in traditional romances and closes with,

…But they’re common enough to have worn me down after having read them since kindergarten. Suffice it to say that I come out on the losing end of any beauty contest between me and a heroine. Every time I read a heroine, I read about someone who makes me look like the ugly stepsister. (Obviously we each, uh, have our own issues. [*G*]. [*G* is another version of grin].

Although the substitution of a male character for the female’s traditional romantic role is paltry gender renorming (Franz June 5, 2007), the presentation of M/M or F/F or Trans* fiction by women for women stretches the boundaries of what women are supposed to desire from an erotic story. More importantly, the e-Romance form represents a postmodern agitation for women’s reclamation of an erotic life.

Where trans* people are represented in the shifting relationship spaces when gender roles are renormed is a source of emerging debate in the e-romance community. Much of the consternation has arisen from the failure of bound gender categories; and the reliance upon a single definitive feature (partner preference, genitals, performance, preferred pronoun) to define how gender functions beyond the binary in romantic relationships (see for example James Buchanan’s Dec. 11, 2011, and Jeff Pearce’s March 28, 2012 entry at Jessewave Reviews, and the related Chicks & Dicks, March 27, 2012). To explore erotic possibilities beyond the destiny of genitals is revolutionary. There are banners for websites that signify allegiance and welcome for trans* readers, characters, and authors (Embrace the Rainbow), but their use is contentious, for allyship must be designated by the liminal, not claimed, or policed. Despite the uncertainty, there are publishers like Riptide Press who welcome submissions of stories with trans* protagonists (2014), and romance stories that feature trans* romantic protagonists (Song of Oestend, Guys Don’t Cry, Blacker than Black).
Is e-Romance Postfeminist?

I have chosen to close by responding to the work of Sonnet (1999) who when exploring the field of erotic fiction, finds such material to be “post-feminist.” She purports that sexual entitlement is beyond a feminist agenda while stating that the pursuit of sexual pleasure should be part of a feminist agenda delinked from the patriarchy. Sonnet (1999, p. 170) continues,

The simplest definition suggests that feminism has achieved its major goals and become irrelevant to the lives of young women today. …with the implicit assumption that its critiques and demands have been accommodated and absorbed far enough to permit ‘return’ to pre-feminist pleasure now transformed in meaning—by a feminist consciousness.

While Sonnet’s (1999) piece initially sounds like a death knell for the movement due to a generational lack of concern, she also signals that feminist pleasure and the attainment of pleasure are intermingled. Women who write e-romances with a feminist agenda know that their form of feminism is neither unmoored from the Second Wave’s work nor is it an extinct historipolitical artifact whose work is complete—in any stage: social, political, sexual or relational.

What I find missing is the distinct Third Wave feminist discourse that is being born from the rapidly evolving interaction of erotic fiction and Internet communities, giving rise to new permutations of feminism. I believe Sonnet (1999) when she contends that the larger point is that erotic fiction repudiates hegemonic ideals about women’s sexuality. Sonnet further states,

. . . the poststructuralist dissolution of feminism’s reliance on ‘identity politics,’ is underpinned by a narrative that casts post-feminist concern for ‘difference’ (race class, ethnicity, etc.) as liberation from Second Wave feminism retrospectively constructed as a monolithic, homogenous, puritanical and sometimes tyrannical discourse (1999, p. 170).

Postmodern e-romance is about the creation of new, subjective, and multiple versions of a female self, without the desire for modernist and poststructuralist deconstruction. Intersectional aspects of a woman’s identity are welcome in the postmodern by Third Wave feminists regardless of the form of interrogation (Hird, 1998). The postmodern pastiche of possible identities creates what McRobbie (1994, p. 26) calls “the broad interconnections between different media forms.” Haraway (1991) sees technology and womanhood merging into a generative feminine hybrid whose new woman has mastered the intersectional multiplicities of postmodern life. Vivanco’s (November 22, 2006) thread about Second and Third Wave women who read romance addresses how (erotic) romances reconcile their brands of feminism. Ideological unity is not a prerequisite for feminist membership or conceptual longevity.

E-romances are a staging ground for a modern woman’s sexual acceptance and present new ways to perform gender. Moreover, I think that the freedoms of
sexual expression in e-romance reject literary norms of female domesticity. This postmodern expression of feminism is one the Second Wave may never have envisioned, for who is ever ready for a superheroine ninja by night who is also a successful CEO by day?

**Notes**

1. Cis denotes people who are biologically female/male and leading lives based upon that biological destiny.
2. A complete list of e-romance publishing houses may be found at: http://www.erecsite.com/2008/11/preditors-comparison.html (retrieved February 20, 2010).
3. Wikipedia warrents notation because it is an encyclopedic and populist postmodern information source available solely on the Internet: a source that has a vast amount of social authority conveyed upon it by its users and contributors.
4. Shapeshifting is an animal/human hybrid and a common plot device in e-romances.

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World Monuments
A Critical Perspective for the Elucidation of Art Appreciation Instructors and Students

Andrew Binder

Introduction

Over the last twelve years, I have been embarked on a quest. My quest started out because after teaching art appreciation for several years, I began to feel inadequate as an instructor; because, I had not seen either the art or the monuments that I was teaching my students about. So I embarked on a series of journeys to try and rectify this deficit. On my first journeys I would go see the art and just pick up local color. For example, that you could sit in an outside pizza parlor in Rome across from the Coliseum and view the monument and the streaming traffic from the street adjacent from the Coliseum’s grounds (Janson & Janson, 1986, pp. 162-163). This personal connection to the art and monuments, and being able to put them in contemporary context did indeed make me a better instructor, but I continued onward in my journeys, even beyond the realms of the Western artistic tradition. After several years of this, I realized that many of the monuments that I was visiting were also UNESCO (the United Nations Education and Science Organization) designated World Heritage Sites (WHS), and I started to look for them and visit them specifically in each country that I visited. In a sense, I embarked on a worldwide cultural survey. As of this writing I have visited five continents, 23 countries, and 41 WHS sites, including whole cites, and numerous monuments and cultural artifacts. While I have many more places to visit, I am ready to make some conclusions regarding what I have seen and studied.

Eventually when I had been exposed to the art and monuments from a worldwide perspective, I really realized that the teaching of art appreciation or art history from just the historically developmental or the Modernist perspective was very limited, and much great art was either not covered or minimized when using those perspectives. As an artist myself I had also concluded that Modernism was an artistic path was exhausted as a movement, and either the Postmodern perspectives, or Pluralism
was the best set of philosophical movements that I could draw from conceptually. While all this was happening I would often draw on my travel experiences and photographs from my trips to form the nucleus of my artistic production, and make book works about my experiences. Eventually (while I continued to make my art) I moved away from the teaching of art at the university level, and shifted to the realm of education and teacher training.

This change of perspective has led me to exposure to many different conceptual frameworks, and most particularly (for this article) critical theory. In addition using multicultural education combined with art also has become an interest of mine. As I have assimilated this new (to me) field of practice and theory, notions of how critical theory could be used to help put in perspective art and more specifically monuments started to coalesce.

Critical Theory as a Conceptual Lens

The subject of this article is how critical theory and power relationships can be used to help analyze and interpret monuments and public art, and how this perspective might be useful as a framework for discussion in art appreciation classes as an introduction to the critical perspective in education. The conceptual framework that I will be using to address this survey of monuments is based on a postmodern perspective combined with a multicultural perspective in art education, and the critical foundation of Paulo Freire. In addition, the informal style of how Shirley Stienberg reports her research has also contributed to the way I have constructed this article. Unlike the Modern idea of progress applied to art or one artistic method or style superseding another that is used in many art appreciation and art history classes is the postmodern idea that each art movement should be evaluated in its own context.

Rather then using the concept of an artistic progress of style, postmodern theorists often decode meaning from art, by looking for subtexts of meaning about art from a society and even different branches of knowledge. I have used this concept extensively in this article. In addition, the precepts of multicultural education combined with art education have also been necessary to consider, due to the fact that worldwide examples are used to support this article’s thesis. The 2002 book Exploring Art: a Global, Thematic Approach by Margaret Lazzari and Dona Schlesier has been a very useful book and it has been as a model for this combination. My data set for this article is monumental examples from art history and personal anecdote. Critical theory will backstop my design and analysis. The relationship of power in terms of education is the main idea of Paulo Freire’s seminal 1968 book Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Many of his ideas and concepts were used to formulate the basis of the power relationships described in the analysis of this article. If postmodern theory is concerned with decoding meaning from within artworks, the analogue in Critical theory is Paulo Freire’s idea of “reading
Andrew Binder

the world” and social constructions of power. This practice is also used to decode and discern power relationships and what they mean to people.

The Pillars of Paulo Freire

The basic ideas that I am using in this article are derived from Paulo Freire’s seminal Pedagogy of the Oppressed. They are conscientization and praxis. Conscientization is the process of educating people to understand social inequalities, and that such inequalities are social constructions, which can be grappled with and overcome with educational, social, and political means to support social justice. The final idea that I will be using in this article is the concept of Praxis. Praxis means to Freire: Thought coming into being. The thought that Freire wants to actualize is freedom, and freedom is born through critical education and social action. The process of conscientization is being utilized in describing the monuments in a critical way in this article. Since both conscientization and praxis require actions to complete the process, it is my hope that art instructors will see the utility of my critical approach, and use my examples as a skeleton to form an instructional unit about monuments using critical theory, and fill in the aesthetic and historical dimensions, which they are already acquainted with and directly teach.

Critical Theory and Monuments

Monuments are public art, because they operate in the public square, always have a social and political context for their meaning, presentation, and makeup. Multiple perceptions and sometimes conflicting worldviews color the ideas about presentation, placement, and meaning of cultural monuments are intimately tied together. It is no accident that Osama bin Laden and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed chose the Twin Towers, the Pentagon, and the White House as their targets on September 11, 2001. These buildings were the physical symbols manifested as monuments of American financial policies and power: military power / political power.

Public art and more specifically public monuments are often connected with power relationships, and often this is the subtext that must be examined about their design, execution, and meanings. Unlocking and interpreting the subtexts of these power relationships can be a useful way of examining and explaining the monuments and putting them in a critical framework in general. Doing this process is exactly the same thing that Freire did in his book when he was “reading the world” for his students. Art appreciation teachers need to be able to do this for their students too. This practice can also be a great way to introduce critical theory, which directly contradicts the hegemonic interpretations generally applied to and about the meaning of many world monuments. This educational contradiction is actually part of the process of enlightenment that leads to social justice and conscientization. While art appreciation instructors do have some experience sifting through analytical
movements that discuss art in the framework of Marxism by 20th century critics or Feminism and western art (as described by activist groups like the Gorilla Girls for example) taking a broader critical perspective might be more of an alien process, this article hope to address this quandry.

The following analyses of world monuments is meant to involve direct examples that art appreciation instructors can draw upon to learn to “read the world” and put the architecture into a new perspective of meaning.

Hegemony and the Construction of Monuments

A Physical Projection of Power

Of all the world’s cultures, the one most obsessed with making and preserving monuments (and those that would dwarf giants) is Ancient Egypt. This makes sense when you remember that the Ancient Egyptian culture was operating almost continuously for 4,000 years. The most iconic examples of Ancient Egyptian monuments are the Great Pyramids and Great Sphinx of Giza. (Janson & Janson, 1986, pp. 59-61) These monuments represent hundreds of years of development, but they contain the kernel of some of the critical ideas that I wish to speak to. The first thing that is remarkable about the Pyramid fields are that they exhibit a kind of monument “arms race” that normally happens between one culture (or country) versus another. What is very interesting about Egypt is that this culture was competing against its past. What I mean about a monument “arms race” is a kind of large-scale “keeping up with the Joneses” mentality that permeates the monumental works of ancient Egypt. This is most apparent in the Pyramid fields that include Giza to Dahshur, where the successive pyramids (Zoser’s step pyramid, Sneferu’s red pyramid, and the Great Pyramid are good examples) almost continuously become larger, use finer stone, and finish until the form was perfected. The archeologists and historians tell us that the pyramids were tombs for the pharaohs in the Old Kingdom, so in effect one pharaoh was trying to be greater (perhaps in the afterlife) than those that came before. The public works of the ancient Egyptians’ had several uses: It solidified the political power of the Pharaohs, because of the sheer size of ancient Egyptian monuments, they could not but awe the citizenry, peasants, and foreigners: traders, travelers, and diplomats alike. This awe increased the pharaoh’s temporal power (because who in their right mind would rebel against a ruler that could make awesome monuments, that were virtually mountains), and since the Pharaoh was also the representation on earth of the ancient Egyptian gods (many monuments show pharaohs dressed in the garb and place of their god Osiris for example) the power of the state religion was also increased. It must also be noted that because of the yearly flooding of the Nile valley, and the displacement of farmers, the Pharaohs had seasonal labor at short ends that they could employ to help create their monuments, so despite the movie myths of 20th and 21st century Hollywood, the rulers of Egypt had willing workers rather than merely slave labor
to make their monuments. Keeping in mind that because of this, and the congruence of the ends of religion and state, the Egyptians were able to create some of the greatest historical monuments with such a community of craftsmen and workers. While it is possible to make monuments as a projection of power to help control a population, it is near impossible to finish them and make them great without a large core of willing workers. (I will speak more about slavery and monuments in other sections of this article.) In addition to aggrandizing the state and its religion, the pyramids in general were personal monuments, and due to their size and simplicity of form, they have an almost timeless aspect. The Pharaohs (especially Khufu who built the largest pyramid) really expected to live life after death contingent to the preservation and existence of the Great Pyramid. This leads us to some interesting critical conclusions, about how the monuments in the Giza plateau were treated over time in both reality and myth, but I will leave it for other sections of this article.

Another take on the “keeping up with the Joneses” aspect of monuments is the case of the Maya who lived in the city of Chichen Itza from the 6th century A.D. In their culture every 57 years they entered another world theologically speaking. They held and projected a calendar many hundreds for years in the future using astronomy and their original numbering system to ensure that they performed the rites necessary to start this new world at the right date and carved their calendars in stone. To commemorate this event they rebuilt their central pyramid every 57 years. But unlike the Egyptians who started new each time, they would use the old pyramid as the core of the new. This way their central pyramid was always the tallest edifice in their city-state and an object of civic pride. Today archeologists have excavated a tunnel that takes you inside the central pyramid at Chichen Itza and visitors can view the top of the earlier pyramid, completely intact with the alters, and carvings (now in the interior) preserved. In addition to being projections of state and religious power, the pyramids of the Maya were also used as places of sacrificial rites, and they were no doubt objects of terror for captives (loosing ball players) and the populations of warring rival city-states.

A Hegemonic Warning

To return to Egypt, over one thousand years after Khufu built the Great Pyramid at Giza another Pharaoh (Ramesses II) provides our next use of power that can be symbolized by monuments. I like to think of this idea as the “don’t tread on me” message. Ramesses II was a Pharaoh of the New Kingdom dynasty of ancient Egypt. It is said that he lived 91 years and if this is true he had three times the life of the average life expectancy of the day. It must have seemed to his rival kings that he really was immortal. During his reign (and perhaps because of its length) he had carved many impressive—some would say colossal—representations of himself. The monument of Abu Simbel is one such set of temples. They sport four colossal statues of Ramesses and his queen. Two statues of Ramesses guarding the front
of a king’s temple complex, and next to them two smaller statues of Nefertari (his wife) guarding the queen’s temple. While the temples themselves are more than impressive, their subtext (partly because of their placement) is more significant. The temples are located at the far southern reaches of the Ancient Egyptian realm, and staring down south to face their rivals for power in that area: Sudan and the Nubian kingdoms. The not too subtle and clear subtext which is re-emphasized by relief carvings of captive Nubians carved in bar relief at the feet of the statue of Ramesses II: Threaten Egypt and Ramesses II will step on you like insects. In other words, it was a warning and a projection of defensive power. Both temples were moved to rescue them from the flooding that happened after the building of the Aswan High Dam in 1965, and this saving effort spurred the UNESCO world heritage program (Boulat, 1965, pp. 28-33).

The Celebration of Hegemony

Celebrations of power and the reeducation of a people in war and rebellion also have representations in some of the modes of power used by oppressors in making monuments. The most egregious example of this type of monument is the Triumph Arch created by the Ancient Romans. “These arches were built to commemorate military victories or major building projects.” (Lazzari & Schlesier, 2002, p. 338). One of the most famous triumphal arches in Rome is the arch of Titus. (Groenewegen-Frankfort & Ashmole, 1987, pp. 450-453). The arch of Titus was created in approximately 81 AD and was founded to commemorate the victory of the Roman general Titus when he suppressed the rebellion of the Jews in Judea (or
present day Jerusalem.) During that conflict the Romans destroyed the great 2nd Temple of Judea and the Wailing Wall is the only shard left of that construction. To commemorate the event the Romans carved realistic panels, showing the loot (including a large menorah) to be brought back to Rome in a procession as booty (Robb, 1963, p. 332). This image is the only depiction existing of the treasures of Judea, as they have been lost to history or destroyed. In addition to visiting the Wailing Wall to write and leave prayers, the Arch of Titus (despite it being originally made for oppressors) has also been used as a site of pilgrimage (at least one time) by Jews who will not walk through it.

When I was there in the year 2000 I was among a group of Russian Jews, and they started to sing spontaneously in Yiddish, and when I asked for a translation, I was told it was a love song about perseverance, and the subtext of the action was essentially: “We shall overcome.”

Reading Monuments as Contestations of Space

Vandalism of Monuments

In this next section, we will turn our analysis on the manipulation of monuments. The despoilment and desecration of monuments can be broken into several levels or types of destruction. Each has a slightly different meaning in terms of power relationships. The first type of despoilment is vandalism. The word vandalism comes from a historical event, the temporary capturing and sacking Rome by the Vandals (a Germanic people) in 455 A.D. This historic event, and perhaps the high regard that historians and Western scholars after the Renaissance had about Greek and Roman artifacts, led to the coining of the term vandalism: which means the senseless damaging of objects (often art) made at great cost. But there is actually a power relationship involved in the act of vandalism. Vandalism gives (often temporary) negative physical power over an object by a person or group that has meaning to someone: Usually that item’s owner. In terms of a monument this means temporary “physical power” over a government or group. Due to the fleeting nature of a vandal’s control however (a guard not being vigilant for example) the monument is only damaged, and not destroyed.

Defacement of Monuments

Defacement of monuments has greater political or religious overtones and ends. Defacement is the selective disfiguring of an object or monument. A good example of this that has a bearing in current cultural wars is the legendary story that Napoleon’s troops shot the nose off of the Great Sphinx during his occupation of Egypt in 1789 in order to demonstrate Western technology’s mastery over the ancients. In a related counter story the Mamluks were instead reputed to have done the deed earlier because of iconoclasm with musket fire (Holmberg, 1995-2007). While both stories are probably apocryphal they have been used in contemporary
speeches and Internet blogs to defame the Western powers or the Islamic worldview in general.

_Graffiti and Monuments_

Graffiti on the other hand can have another meaning altogether.

The word GRAFFITI simply means—words or drawings scratched or scribbled on a wall. The word comes from the Greek term “graphein” (to write) and the word “graffiti” itself is plural of the Italian word “graffito.” (Tucker, 2009, para. 3)

Graffiti can be political. A political slogan painted on a national monument for example does have political, and even revolutionary ends. It can be both a great insult to a nation, and proof of malfeasance or weakness by a government, and can show that defiance is possible to an oppressed people. While this type of political graffiti is done, it is rare compared to the majority of graffiti that is painted. In addition, while some graffiti also displays gang signs and marks territory for those groups, most graffiti consists of individual tags that are stylized signatures of the graffiti artists. An elaborate set of abstractions and individual conventions are often used to make the tag unintelligible to outsiders, but graffiti artists can always tell each other’s styles, and the obstruction is primarily used to hide identities from outsiders and authorities. In effect what the graffiti artist is doing is actually writing their name on the landscape where they live. Some of these tags evolve into very complicated paintings, icons, and styles. But if you pare all of that away usually only the stylized signature remains. From the point of view of individual graffiti artists, what they really are doing is marking their territory, usually on their neighborhood walls. Graffiti artists are often young marginalized people that paint on other people’s property because they have nothing else on a large scale that they can claim ownership of and paint on, and often feel that they never will. If they did own property (and painted on it) they would be classified by society as painting murals, and not doing graffiti.

When a graffiti artist tags a monument, what they are really doing is claiming “psychic ownership” or at the least a connection to that monument. And when it is a great monument like the Great Pyramid they are writing themselves into history too. They are leaving a message: I was here in a physically tangible way. What is interesting about this is that if the graffiti is allowed to age for a very long time and it is not offensive in some other way, it often will be protected and become part of the history of the monument and be preserved by archaeologists and the keepers of that monument; thereby, granting the graffiti artist’s intention and need. Visitors in addition to having the impulse to write their name on a monument, often create a similar connection when the take a stone from a monument, or even merely touch it. In this way they become one with the legend of the monument if only for a moment.
The Destruction of Monuments

The ultimate and most fanatical reaction to a monument is when a government (and not an unorganized revolutionary movement) destroys a cultural treasure for political or religious reasons. The Taliban bombing of the Giant Bamiyan Buddhas despite their obvious historical, cultural, and even future economic significance to Afghanistan is a direct example of this extremism. Many Islamic clerics around the world pleaded with the Taliban to leave the monuments intact. The Taliban chose to dynamite them. Currently: “Attitudes within Afghanistan to the idea of rebuilding the statues vary. The provincial government is in favor but the country’s leading archaeologist decried the idea as a ‘Disney re-creation’ (Sydney Morning Herald, 20 November 2004, pp. 186-187)” (Bevan, 2006, p. 190).

The Preservation of Monuments

The preservation of monuments is one of the ways that we can see a tangible sign that we are anchored in time. Often the monuments will outlast nations, empires, religions, even whole cultures, and we are left to either cling onto them, actively destroy them, or let them be forgotten and buried in the sands of time. The choice to sustain them or let them go is actually a political (if sometimes economic) choice too. Different cultures and peoples have dealt with this problem in different ways.

The Conversion of Monuments

Other than neglect, the most common reaction to (especially religious) monuments left in a contrary government, a different culture, or religion’s care (in the past) is conversion. For example, a temple might get converted into a church, a church into a mosque, and the religious symbols modified, etc. A great example of this would be the Pantheon in Rome. It was first built as the temple of all the Roman gods. Pan from the Greek meaning all and theos referring to god(s); it is the root of our English word for theology today. After the conversion of Constantine and the fall of Rome, the Pantheon was stripped of all its “pre-Christian” decoration, and informally rechristened as St. Mary Rotonda or Saint Mary of the Round, and recycled as a church (Janson, 1986, pp. 164-165). In this way it was maintained and mostly preserved throughout the Middle ages, so architects and artists of the Renaissance could use at as a model and inspiration for their own achievements, like the Duomo in Florence (Hartt, 1987, p. 145). It had such a profound effect on the artist Raphel Sanzio that he asked to be buried in the church. In fact you can go visit his tomb there today; it is marked with a plaque on the wall.

The Accommodation of Monuments

In a similar way the Turks after the capture of Constantinople in 1453 also recycled Hagia Sofia, replacing most of the interior decoration in the lower galleries with arabesque and calligraphic designs, but the upper galleries (unseen by the devout) were preserved, despite their depiction of human beings and Christian
iconography. While this preservation is possibly due to the enlightened action of the Turkish rulers, it might also be recognition by them that Islam has roots in Judaism and Christianity. In either case, the action was very magnanimous of the rulers of the day: Power used with enlightenment. What is more interesting about this is that the Turks built in 1609 another monument directly opposite the building nicknamed the Blue Mosque (the Sultan Ahmed Mosque) of equal size and grandeur, perhaps as a cultural rebuttal and response to Hagia Sofia (Janson & Janson, 1986, pp. 148-250). In Istanbul today they are equally famous and much visited and used still. In fact the Blue Mosque is the National mosque of Turkey. Such an attitude and practice by the Ottoman rulers in cultural accommodation (while not exactly perfect) is very laudable, especially at that time (Preble et al, 1999, p. 352).

**The Recycling of Monuments**

The recycling of monuments deals with not just their use; a more extreme use of recycling can occur when a monument’s materials are used to build new monuments. The most famous example of this occurred when legend has it the outer polished limestone sheathing of the Great Pyramid was used for generations to build palaces and mosques of Egypt; although, it is also said that the sultans did not remove the stones from the edifice itself, this was possibly due to an earthquake. Other examples are not as benign though; a good example of this is the Qutb Minar monument and its accompanying mosques and the archeological complex located near Delhi. The Qutb Minar and its two mosques were created by destroying twenty-seven Jain temples, which were used for parts. But what is interesting about the complex is that many of the walls show carvings from the edifices of the earlier temples, so in effect you can see some of the history carved in stone in front of you. Qutbuddin Aibak (the first Muslim Sultan of India) built the complex in 1193 A.D. as both a political and religious statement against the religions and Indian people recently conquered at that time. The Quintab complex started a new esthetic in India (as well as introduced a new religion.) In fact the closer of the two Mosques to the Minar is the first Mosque built in India. The Islamic rulers replaced the upper castes and became the new aristocrats transplanting their Persian language, texts, arts, and religion, and from that point on (until the Colonial period) Indo Islamic monuments favored geometric design, floral designs, and calligraphy (often taken from passages from the Koran) as decoration for their architecture. The complex was in effect the prototype for future buildings in the Mughal style. It is also quite likely that many Jain and Hindu temples and monuments, due to their almost obsessive use of figurative sculptural elements and possibly erotic content (both forbidden in the new aesthetic), were similarly dispatched in this manner. In fact, during the invasion “Indian monuments were systematically destroyed by the fanatic iconoclasts who formed the backbone of the conquering armies” (Ettinghausen, Grabar, & Jenkins-Madina, 2001, pp. 163-164).
Assimilation and Monuments

An interesting thing can happen when an army invades another country and attempts to stay and become the new upper class. The first stage is the destruction and replacement of the dominant aesthetic and general power base. But if new settlers and populations are not imported to bolster the new ruling class, the rulers will often become assimilated and swallowed up by the larger culture that surrounds them. A good historical example of this is of all the cities that Alexander the Great founded wherever he conquered in the East starting in 323 B.C., most were repatriated after his death, and a majority of his generals lost control of the new territory. The principle accomplishment of Alexander was to distribute Greek culture east, where it got assimilated and reinterpreted in this manner (Preble et al, 1999, p. 321). It is quite striking to see the figure of Buddha but with Hellenistic features (Basham, 1959, p. Plate XXXII).

A Cultural Synthesis and Monuments

If on the other hand an invader remains the ruling class for a very long time, perhaps with immigration and connections to the mother cultures and countries and cultures to begin with, but with lessening influence as time goes on, an accommodation starts to happen, possibly because most of the workers and artisans supporting the new ruling class are indigenous. A synthesis of style and acceptance and even appreciation of the new aesthetic emerges. A prime example of this is embodied in the Taj Mahal.

The Taj Mahal was built in 1632 A.D. by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan as a mausoleum for his beloved third wife (Mumtaz Mahal) who died giving birth to their 14th child. The story goes that Shah Jahan was profoundly in love with his wife, and wracked with grief he spent the next 12 years building her memorial and tomb (Janson, 1986, p. 248). Materials were brought with great expense from all over India (especially the translucent white marble), and semiprecious stones for the floral, arabesque, and calligraphic inlays decorating the building were gathered indigenously, and from countries all over Asia at great expense. Twenty thousand Northern Indian craftsmen and workers were recruited for the work. In addition to building the mausoleum and tomb, a garden, a mosque, a library, and massive front gates were also added to the complex. This part of the project took another 10 years. Legend has it that another identical but mirror image mausoleum (created in black marble) was planned to be constructed with a great reflecting pool and garden between them, perhaps to provide a resting place for the Sultan himself, but before this could be started his eldest son Aurangzeb seized power, complaining that the building was bankrupting the kingdom. Shah Jahan was imprisoned in nearby Agra Fort, but his son made sure that the suite that the former ruler was imprisoned in framed the Taj Mahal in its main window. After his death, Shah Jahan was buried alongside his beloved wife in the mausoleum, where they rest together today (Preble et al, 1999, pp. 350-351).
In Islamic art history books such as *The Art and Architecture of Islam 1250-1800* by Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, published in 1994, the Taj Mahal is classified as a masterpiece of Islamic art because it is argued that Moslems mostly designed and directed its construction, despite the fact that non-Moslem craftsmen built it. Contrary to any such cognitive dissonance, the building is beloved by the Indian people, and used as a symbol of the country. Currently the Indian government is taking great pains to ensure the preservation of the monument (which became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983). When modern problems like acid rain and industrial pollution were found to be eating away at the monument, a 10,400 Km non-industrial zone was created restricting the emission of pollution, with the Taj Mahal at its center to limit the damage. At this point cottage and craft industries are flourishing in Agra because of these restrictions. If you visit the monument today, you are issued white disposable paper booties to cover your shoes to minimize wear on the monument and the grounds. Electric cabs are reputedly being developed to replace the taxis in the city. All this care is being taken for an Islamic monument by a democratic and predominantly Hindu country, still at loggerheads with its rival and brother country, the predominantly Moslem Pakistan. Such a dichotomy can only be explained because of the beauty of the monument, the romance of the story, and possibly due to the fact that it was built by Indian craftsmen. There has even been an attempt in the Indian Parliament to formally classify the building as a Hindu monument, in a kind of revisionist history. All that can be said about this controversy is that the building is beloved by Moslems, Hindus, Christians, and Jains, and a collective appreciation is expressed by Southeast Asians (and the world) granting the monument a kind of cultural synthesis. “The distinctive profile of this building, like those of the Pyramids, the Eiffel Tower, or the Tower of Pisa, has become an icon for the country in which it stands” (Blair & Bloom, 1994, p. 297).

**Colonization of Monuments**

The record of European colonialization and the colonial powers regarding the disposition and preservation of monuments is mixed at best. While on the one hand destroying politically inconvenient monuments under their power (especially in times of unrest and war) seemed to be standard practice, the restoration and preservation of archeological monuments was also embarked upon too—especially in the later years of European rule. Examples of criminal cultural destruction of monuments by the European powers abound. Some examples are the burning of the White House during the war of 1812 by the British, and the destruction of the Forbidden City (also by British forces) during the Opium Wars in China. Luckily both monuments were rebuilt. In contrast to this callous disregard for culture, many reconstructions and excavations were also provided by the European powers. Many of the world’s archeological sites were preserved due to the individual efforts of European archeologists and explorers. Keeping this mixed record in mind, I would
like to comment on some of the present day controversies and motivations that stem from the effects of colonization.

The evils of colonization and colonial rule have long been exposed, especially in terms of critical theory, but I wanted to mention a few cases that have some bearing on power relationships and monuments. The hands-down worst colonial offenders had to be the conquistadors. After the sack and conquest of Mexico City and the rest of the Mexican peninsula, the Spanish systematically burned the books of the Aztecs, Mexica, and the Maya. In Mexico City the whole city was redesigned, the lakes and canals drained, and temples and pyramids were raised to the ground. In fact you can visit the remains of the great Pyramid of the Aztecs, because in a historical accident it was mostly buried by the Spanish, and now it has been converted to a museum and its underground entrance is right next to the Central Cathedral in the Zocalo of Mexico City. Everywhere that the Spanish got a foothold they did their best to minimize indigenous cultures, make them their slaves (at the time), and later subjugate them in everything but name.

Another interesting case involving the Conquistadors can be found in the monuments of Peru. This example is important for explaining why great art and craft cannot be reliably produced through coercion. An example of this can be found in the colonial palace in Cusco Peru, which was built atop and out of an Inca temple. There is a sharp demarcation between the stonework that the Inca craftsmen made for their own religious practice and that which was done for the Spanish invaders. Keep in mind that the same masons possibly made the additions after the conquest, when they were effectively slaves to the Spanish conquistadores. The stonework of the temple section is beautiful; you can’t place a piece of paper between the stones. Massive stones are matched and perfectly ground together, which made them virtually earthquake proof. No mortar was used, or metal tools. The Inca accomplished this with only Stone Age technology; it must have been truly a labor of love to the craftsman. In contrast the top layers are utilitarian, and in no way exhibit the same quality, despite the introduction of steel tools by the Spanish. People cannot be forced to make great art or superior craft. Other social methods of control (like employment and unemployment) evolved to attempt to solve this riddle, but even these methods are acknowledged as decidedly second best to free individuals and groups making art or craft for their own reasons.

The Spoils of Hegemony: Monuments and Their Relocation

The last power relationship that I will talk about regarding colonialism and monuments has to do with the removal of monuments and their parts to museums in the West. This problem is tied up with age-old practices such as spoils of war or conquest, property ownership, international law, and the care and preservation of cultural and historical artifacts. As mentioned before, the looting of monuments and other riches up until recently has been something of an accepted practice.
certainly has happened throughout history, although during colonial times the pace of the practice was accelerated. First silver and gold were plundered from the Americas, and later a market appeared for cultural artifacts. Eventually museums were founded and many of these articles were donated or sold to museums. At this point of development museums, governments, and societies funded archeological and cultural missions throughout the developing world, and received many treasures from these operations, often receiving minimal permission from puppet or subject governments. In the modern era these historical cases of “cultural looting” have resulted in a controversy that deals with complex issues of ownership of artifacts and monuments. Such controversial questions such as: Does the culture or country that made the artifact have rights of possession? What are the property rights of the people that found the artifacts? If the museums bought or had the artifacts lawfully donated to them, do the artifacts belong to that institution? Since it is a priority that these artifacts are preserved for cultural and historical reasons, which country or institution can do the best job in terms of both funding and technology for their preservation? The most famous of these cases involving this controversy is the case of the Elgin Marbles.

The controversy came about in 1801 AD when Lord Elgin, the British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, gained permission from the local Turkish authorities to remove sculptures from the Acropolis site (then in ruins.) Greece at the time was under the control of the Ottoman Empire. And it can be assumed that the possibly corrupt Turkish officials had less regard for Greece’s treasures than their own. Using his own money, Lord Elgin removed over half of the statues from the site. Pediments and the sculptures were cut from the buildings, and the site was left in shreds; although, it was admittedly not in great shape to begin with at the time. The statues were transported to Great Britain, although some were lost in a shipwreck and had to be recovered. Eventually the sculptures were gifted to the British Museum, which built a special annex to show and preserve them.

At this point (just to complicate matters) it cannot be overstated that the Parthenon and its accompanying statues have had a profound effect on Western civilization through art and architecture (Janson, 1986, pp. 122-124). All one has to do is look around at the buildings of Washington or any European capital to see this influence, especially as a model for government buildings. As far as the sculptures go, classical Greek sculpture served as the prototype for realistic depiction in Western art, and since the Parthenon sculptures are regarded as the pinnacle of sculptural development in Ancient Greece, they are irreplaceable artistic and historical treasures. In addition it can also be argued that realistic depiction as symbolized by the sculptures is the first step in the process of the practice of observation that lead to the scientific method. The Elgin marbles were used as the prototype for this development twice: Once for ancient Greece, and then again as reflected in the study of classicism during the Renaissance.

Flash-forward to the modern day, Greece is its own country and is now part
of the European Union, and for years they have advocated for the return of their cultural treasures, and at the top of their list is the Elgin Marbles. While the case has been brought to court, the issue has never been resolved. It must be noted that in the interim Greece has restored the Parthenon site, and ironically removed the remaining sculptures from the Parthenon and replaced them with copies. The originals are kept inside the Acropolis museum near the site for protection from acid rain and pollution. Space is also being kept for the Elgin marbles, if they are eventually repatriated. It must be noted that this is one of the biggest cases that faces the development of the European Union as a complete entity. Observers are watching this case carefully, as an upholding of Greece’s position might make a precedent in international law, facilitating dozens of cases against famous museums, and might cause a shuffling of treasures back to their countries of origin.

Monuments Today

The next set of ideas that we will have to concentrate on in terms of power relationships and monuments is their modern origins and their proliferation of meanings. In the West during the late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance a middle class developed in Europe, and this lead to monuments being built by organizations and private citizens outside the purview and interests of religions and governments. In the years since then this phenomenon has increased worldwide. Guilds, clubs, and wealthy private citizens have added to the proliferation of monuments and added to the mix of power relationships that they can exhibit. It could be said that during the modern era secular monuments have outpaced and proliferated beyond the construction of both government-sponsored and religiously-funded monuments. Some are created by individual artists (and funded by organizations) rather than the traditional patterns of the aggrandizement of religion and the consolidation of government power. While all of this is true, some of the same impulses and power relationships have been maintained. In this vein, attempting to make the tallest building in the world has been a worldwide obsession after the building of the Empire State Building. It is a modern day example of “keeping up with the Joneses” and also of course represents a nod to national pride (even if the buildings are built with private funding.) The Taipei 101 was the tallest building in the world but was supplanted by Dubai’s Burj in 2009, and I am sure due to this natural impulse that this title will not stand long.

Due to this enlarging of the table of creators, the subject, meanings, and purposes for monuments have also expanded. Monuments in the public sphere with ends telegraphing everything from love (Robert Indiana’s Love statue in Philadelphia) to whimsy (the statue of Alice derived from John Tenniel’s illustrations for *Through the Looking-Glass* in New York City’s Central Park) in innumerable styles have been placed into the landscape, especially during the modern era. A great example of this stylistic expansion is the Sydney Opera House designed by Jørn Utzon and
was jointly supervised by the government of Australia and the Sydney Opera House Trust. While the aggrandizement of Australia (by producing an modern architectural masterpiece is also a subtext of the project) the real meaning of the building is to be a kind of cathedral or monument to art. It also has an unspoken meaning that directly contradicts a developed world prejudice that in the past maintained that Australia was a “provincial backwater,” in effect Australia is saying with this monument is that the country supports great culture in a topical and modern way, and can compete on the “world’s stage” with any other cultural capital. In the years since its construction, the Sydney Opera House has graced innumerable advertisements for the Australian Tourist trade, and it is one of the most iconic and beloved buildings in the world.

Praxis and World Monuments

With the great exceptions of the destruction and attempted destruction of monuments in the U.S. on September 11, 2001, and the ownership puzzle of the Elgin marbles, one of the most powerful thing about the power subtext of meaning for a majority of the great monuments that I have presented is that their cultural contexts have passed into history. This interestingly presents an opportunity for art educators to present these power relationships in a non-threatening way; because (for example) nobody currently living cares that Ramesses II was warning off the Nubian Kings all of those thousands of years ago, not even the Sudanese of today. This fact allows Art educators to make a case for putting these historic monuments into a critical context before tackling the most controversial cases.

Praxis and the World Heritage Convention

With this end in mind, looking at world culture with a greater perspective is useful. The best framework that I have found to do this is the World Heritage Convention ratified by UNESCO in 1972. The convention states that: “the cultural or natural heritage [is] of outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole” (UNESCO, 1972, p. 1). Using this idea it is possible to step back and view conflicts from a greater distance and attempt (for example) to preserve and protect all of the historic and religious sites in Jerusalem, despite the political and religious conflicts regarding the displacement and even stacking of monuments on top of each other in disparate eras. While Critical theory allows a deep understanding of the conflicts, it is the stepping back from the bring of controversy and placing the monuments in a greater framework that allows for all of the world’s cultural heritage to be preserved and appreciated. Keeping this in mind, it is the possible, for example, to appreciate the Dome of the Rock (Ettinghausen, Grabar, & Jenkins-Madina, 2001, pp. 15-17) and the Wailing Wall despite their antithetical conflicts. The World Heritage Convention has pro-
vided for a mechanism for states to nominate and list natural and cultural sites that are of outstanding value to human heritage, this list is called the World Heritage List. As of this writing 186 countries have ratified the convention and listed 890 properties: 689 cultural, 176 natural, and 25 mixed. In addition, two properties have been delisted for non-compliance to the convention. A good example of the list transcending local prejudice are the listing by several countries that were former colonies of European powers (and who have no love for colonialism) of properties that were developed by European settlers in their host countries. Malaysia’s 2008 listing of the cities of George Town and Melaka fit the bill for this concept nicely: Where the importance of the sites to history and their intrinsic beauty have outweighed any local political difficulties with Great Britain. When you take this larger perspective other patterns with Critical overtones start to appear.

By orienting students with a global perspective, both ethnic and personal pride in humanities joint achievements can be fostered and maintained. It is a great feeling to know that humanity is capable of feats like the temple complex of Angkor Wat, and a great cautionary tale about our predilection for destruction as symbolized by the Japanese Peace Dome monument which commemorates peace, and was reduced to a ruin by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. The concept of humanity’s joint responsibility for its cultural treasures helps put in perspective the importance of their preservation, and helps to mediate any intercultural or political dispute. This joint perspective also allows member states to use ideas and practices developed for the preservation of cultural sites. A good example of this knowledge bank would be the Japanese practice of farming mahogany trees for the replacement of the main beams in the wooden temple structures of Kyoto’s World Heritage Sites. These buildings are the oldest and largest wooden structures in the world, and some of them have been repaired and reconstructed for more than 800 years. Whole families participate in farming the great trees, and every 90 years or so the pillars are replaced, and seedlings grown for the next cycle. This is sustainable building on a grand scale that the rest of the world needs to come to grips with for the preservation of whole ecologies, and not just World Heritage Sites.

The So What Question?

At the end of this article, I am at the point where I must come to grips with the idea of “so what” and “what is the point” and utility for this set of arguments and research: The best answer that I can give is that critical theory will give a greater depth in probing the meaning of cultural monuments, and the World Heritage convention will allow students to place these controversies in context and foster pride in both ethnic and human achievement, and both of these ends seem to be a powerful way to organize a curriculum for an art appreciation class in a positive way. In addition they will help the students gain in the process of conscientization, which will lead to social justice.
For example, the whole point of colonization by the European powers was to re-create feudalism in their respective colonies, with the dominant culture as the new aristocrats. This involved enslavement and cultural debasement, which became enshrined by the hegemony and was protected by it, even in the educational institutions. It was essential that this perspective be propagated in the past, because the “natives” were generally more numerous than the colonizers. The whole point of “reading the world” is to identify this bias, and to uproot it, especially in education. By talking about the greatest monuments in history, while emphasizing their great aesthetic qualities along with their power relationships, begins to show the way to enlightenment to students, especially in a multicultural environment such as a classroom. This is much better than talking about the influences of Picasso on Cubism, which was just him taking ideas from anonymous African art as a lean towards multiculturalism. Everyone will be able to point to something in pride. The whole point of this is it is impossible to belittle an indigenous culture (even unknowingly) or people while standing on a world heritage site like Teotihuacan or Chichen Itza. Just knowing about them can start the process of conscientization for your students. Where they will be aware of the world and start putting their hands to preserving all heritages and promoting social justice.

Some possible resources that could be helpful for the Art Appreciation teacher are the television series *Adventures in Architecture* by Dan Cruickshank, produced by the BBC in 2010: Episode 6 is entitled “Power” and is of particular interest as it outlines similar content, but with different and contrasting examples. The UNESCO world heritage list online is a great place to visit on the Internet to plan a lesson about world heritage monuments, or to learn more about them: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/. The book *Great White Fathers* by John Taliaferro (2002) is also of interest as it outlines how different people can have contrasting views about the same monument, in this case Mt. Rushmore, and for more information about “reading the world” or “conscientization” there is no better source than Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, or the Freire Project online: http://www.freireproject.org.

References
Andrew Binder


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In an interview with *Local Noise*, Australian rapper MC Wire effectively describes his unique identity as a contemporary musician and as an Australian Aboriginal male: “I’m abo-digital [he explains] because I’m a 21st century Aboriginal, I’m down with laptops and mobile phones and home entertainment. But digital also means your hands and your fingers. I’m still putting my fingers in the dirt; I’m still using my hands to create things” (as cited in Mitchell, 2006). MC Wire’s words demonstrate that in spite of the fact that the mainstream media frequently depicts indigenous cultures as static and primitive, they are in fact dynamic and susceptible to vigorous change and progression. Hip Hop is one such form of expression that has been embraced by colonized people around the world and has played a key role in uniting indigenous cultures’ past and present conditions because of its adaptable sounds and style and its close connection to local and global communities. This article intends to reveal the relevancy of MC Wire’s words by exhibiting how the Blueprint for Life program is uniting alternative forms of critical pedagogy with Hip Hop music and culture to give indigenous youth the opportunity to understand and rediscover their cultural heritage, participate in a process of long-term engagement that will cultivate community leadership, and discover their unique voice while engaging in creative dialogue with other youth on both the local and global level.

In her paper “Media and Marginalization,” American Critical Race theorist Malkia A. Cyril (2005) contends that youth, and particularly minority youth, are among the most demonized and marginalized section of our society. “In the media, the term ‘youth’ has become a coded mechanism to talk about race, and youth policy has become a way to legislate racism while using colorblind language” (p. 98). As a result, young men and women of colour find themselves in the precarious position of having few economic and political options while they are simultaneously identified as the instigators of violent crime and exploiters of the welfare system. These stereotypes are reinforced on countless occasions by television networks,
movie studios and news agencies by depicting young men and women of color as ignorant, violent, and harmful to the general public while their own image is constantly appropriated and exploited by corporations to sell products and further agendas through advertising campaigns (p. 98). As if this was not enough, young men and women of color are expected to accept these values as universal truths as they submit to their roles as passive consumers of media. Without the tools and resources to respond to these negative messages, young men and woman will continue to allow governments and corporations to represent both their image and their interests.

There are few youth with greater challenges in reclaiming their own image and identity than those of Canada’s First Nations people; yet there are even fewer with more at stake. Achieving a modern indigenous voice is not an easy feat, as the terms of representation and appropriation have historically been controlled by the imperial center. Howard Adams (1991) highlights the significance of this issue in a Canadian context by identifying how Canada’s imperial power structure has and continues to portray indigenous culture as “closed and static” (p. 36) at events like the Calgary Stampede where Aboriginal and Métis people present themselves as… a primitive culture, although they are performing in the 20th-century space age. Teepees are exhibited, tomahawks and primitive tools displayed, as if they were current implements and customs in Indian society…

By marginalizing indigenous people as static and one-dimensional cultures of the past, many colonial powers have achieved a profound hegemonic control of the representation and evolution of First Nations and Inuit people that is far more representative of the imperial culture’s perception rather than the indigenous culture itself. Jacquelyn Kilpatrick’s Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film (1999) parallels Adams’ claim and explains that the imperial representation of Indigenous culture is deeply rooted in the idea of the colonial “frontier,” where the indigenous subject “was presented as an obstacle to the civilizing of the continent, a stage in the evolution of human society that preceded agrarian development, which in turn would lead to full-fledged urban civilization.” (p. 39) Kilpatrick further explains that by characterizing the indigenous people as savage and primitive, Euro-Ameri-can and Canadian expansionism could be not only justified, but also glorified and romanticized.

When considering the countless obstacles facing young First Nations and Inuit men and women in terms of identity, history, economic, and social status it is understandable why so many indigenous youth have been drawn to the powerful messages of Hip Hop culture and the challenges it has posed to the current hege-monistic power structures. In her groundbreaking critique of rap music, Black Noise, Tricia Rose (1994) explains that Hip Hop
began in the mid-1970s in the South Bronx in New York City… From the outset, rap music has articulated the pleasures and problems of black urban life in contemporary America. Rappers speak with the voice of personal experience, taking on the identity of the observer and the narrator. Male rappers often speak from the perspective of a young man who wants social status in a locally meaningful way. They rap about how to avoid gang pressures and still earn local respect, how to deal with the loss of several friends to gun fights and drug overdoses, and they tell grandiose and sometimes violent tales that are powered by male sexual power over women. Female rappers sometimes tell stories from the perspective of a young woman who is skeptical of male protestations of love or a girl who has been involved with a drug dealer and cannot sever herself from this dangerous lifestyle. (p. 2)

While young Inuit men and women experience different geographical and cultural conditions from those of Hip Hop’s founders, Rose’s observations identify an intersection of concerns that young people in both cultures can share. These include issues surrounding racial and economic inequity, colonialism, gang violence, drugs, and many other issues that are a result of poverty and cultural hegemony.

What is most important, however, is the fact that young Inuit men and women’s interest in Hip Hop culture demonstrates that there is a real need for them to connect with and relate to other young people from different geographical and cultural locations based upon their commonalities and similar interests. Their intercultural relationships are not based upon an imperialistic imposition of one culture’s values over another, but rather reflect an alignment of similar interests that also embrace cultural and historical differences. In Global Linguistic Flow (2009), H. Samy Alim describes this global community “as the Global Hip Hop Nation, a multilingual, multiethnic ‘nation’ with an international reach, a fluid capacity to cross boarders, and a reluctance to adhere to the geopolitical givens of the present” (p. 3). These communities are composed of disenfranchised youth from diverse religious, economic, and socio-political communities that use Hip Hop culture as a vehicle to answer back to the colonial empire that has sought to assimilate them. While this community is global in scope, each local community aims to “represent” its own unique flavour that strives to remain true to the customs and beliefs of its community while still remaining contemporary in its appeal to the current generation (Stavrias, 2005, p. 46).

Of course Hip Hop culture is not without its own challenges. Critics often point out that the music promotes materialism—“feeds on stereotypes and offensive language; it spoils with retrogressive views; it is rife with hedonism; and it surely doesn’t always side with humanistic values” (Dyson, 2007, p. 21). While many of these concerns have some validity, Michael Eric Dyson points out that arguments such as these “demand little engagement with Hip Hop… [and] don’t require much beyond attending to surface symptoms of a culture that offers far more depth and color when it’s taken seriously and criticized thoughtfully” (p. 21). Dyson encourages people to look beyond the superficial stereotypes of Hip Hop culture that are
often perpetuated in the media and encourages artists, critics and educators to “dig deep into Hip Hop’s rich traditions of expression to generate criticism equal to the art that it inspires” (p. 26). Likewise, Carlson and Dimitriadis (2003) encourage critical educators to bring Hip Hop’s creative and subversive spirit into the classroom and engage with Hip Hop and popular culture in a way that not only embraces indigenous people’s strong interest in the culture, but also empowers them with “a sense that they are controlling their own representation, that they are in control of their own cultural identity, and are creatively shaping and molding language, style and self into something new” (p. 21) and relevant to their lives.

Dyson, Carlson, and Dimitriadis’s words parallel those of Paulo Freire and Ira Shor and reveal a discrepancy between the hegemonic curriculum that governs our current education system and the cultural, linguistic, political and economic dispositions of today’s youth. Shor (1987) explains, “the curriculum is not situated inside student thought and language” (p. 105) and the codified official curriculum results in a hegemonic imposition of thoughts and ideas that are not only irrelevant to the lives of young people, but often perpetuates the same imperialistic values and ideas that were used to conquer colonial subjects. Consequently, Inuit and First Nations students find it increasingly difficult to relate to the concepts found within the current school curriculum and, as the National Strategy on Inuit Education (2011) explains, are increasingly becoming more alienated as “roughly 75% of... [young men and women] are not completing high school, and... find that their skills and knowledge don’t compare to those of non-Aboriginal graduates” (p. 67). This current pedagogical dilemma requires northern educators and community leaders to take a step away from the demands of the curriculum and engage with youth on a level that is relevant to their daily experiences. More importantly, critical educators must resist the temptations that are set forth by the traditional “banking model” of education that aims to pacify learners and transform them into submissive receptacles that are to be filled with isolated and irrelevant facts (Freire, 1994, p. 52). Instead critical educators must engage young First Nations, Métis and Inuit men and women to become active learners and creators who can construct their own meanings and understandings through a process of advanced appropriation and subversion of popular media and culture that will be an effective form of reframing their lived experiences by pulling back some of the layers of hegemonic experiences and recognizing them as a process of development of a critical consciousness.

Blueprint for Life is one such program that has found considerable success by providing youth with the tools necessary to critically engage with popular culture and media in a way that is not only relevant to their unique circumstances, but also provides opportunities for youth to mentor, support and teach vital skills to one another in a manner that has resulted in considerable achievements. While the program itself is narrowly confined to facilitating workshops that focus on b-boy and b-girl dancing, graffiti art, music and fashion, the scope of the project is sig-
significantly larger and allows youth the opportunity to become active and engaged creators by combining Hip Hop style with many of their indigenous traditions that have been affected through decades of colonization. Stephen Leafloor, the founder and chief organizer of the program, describes the significance of this process of hybridization by explaining,

It has been said that the youth of the North have lost their sense of identity—not knowing where they fit between the world of their historical traditions and the new realities they face with exposure to a modern world. We believe Hip Hop can be an adaptable cultural voice to help them define this.

Leafloor’s assertion that Hip Hop music and culture “can be an adaptable cultural voice” to rediscover one’s past is an important aspect to consider when understanding how bricolage and hybridity can function as a tool for educational and social change because it is important for the facilitator to not imperially impose any foreign values upon the youth. Instead, it must be a negotiation and collaboration of equal footing between the youth, their traditions, and the foreign conventions in order for an authentic process of recreating and rediscovering to take place. In the same sense, the facilitators must also have a strong understanding and resistance to reinforcing what Freire (1994) refers to as the traditional “banking” (p. 53) role that assumes that the teacher has all the answers to ensure that they are not replicating the same values that they are working to change. Leafloor confirms Blueprint For Life’s dedication to the collaborative process by explaining “that the Blueprint team always humbles itself when in contact with another culture. We will explore together with… youth how they can be proud of who they are and find their own voice through their culture in Hip hop.”

Leafloor’s words demonstrate the Blueprint for Life program’s dedication to the collaborative teaching process where both the educator and the students share the responsibilities of creative exploration. Dei (2002) explains this process as an organic interplay between teacher and student that must respect the traditions of the students while simultaneously “present communities as active, spiritual subjects, resisters and creators, not just victims of their own histories and experiences. Such collaborative teaching will attest to the power of identity and its linkage with/to knowledge production” (p. 129). Dei and Leafloor both remind us that a democratic and collaborative learning process must not bestow pity, sympathy or any wild aspirations of being the saviours of the students. Instead, the process needs to be built upon mutual respect of each party’s customs and cultures while simultaneously keeping an open mind to identify opportunities for the cultural collaborations and intersections to take place. In spite of this, moving beyond the profound psychological impact of decades of colonialism is no easy feat and the Blueprint for Life team often experiences some resistance to rediscovering their cultural traditions from the students in the early stages of the collaborative process.

It’s unfortunate, Leafloor says, referring to the First Nations youths’ tendency to
diminish their own culture, but because we’re perceived as superstars at doing this stuff, when we give them permission and say it’s really cool when you create a human dog sled in the dance circle, or you simulate the Arctic sports, it’s like these lights go off. ‘Really? We could do that?’ And then you should see the look of the elders. Many don’t speak English but they’re tickled pink that their grandchildren are laughing, having fun, and they see all this symbolism in their dance that represents their traditional culture (Saxberg, 2008).

Leafloor’s words demonstrate that one of the biggest obstacles to the collaborative process is assisting youth in getting beyond the imperialist mindset that has sought to diminish indigenous cultures through generations of colonialism and reinforces the importance of offering a safe place for young men and women to play and negotiate between the cultural practices.

When considering the depth of the cultural hybridizations that have taken place between the Inuit youth and the Blueprint for Life staff, one can see that these collaborations are more of a creative process akin to a dialogue and discourse than an isolated creative project. Shor and Freire (1987) characterizes the nature of this discourse by explaining that in the collaborative pedagogical process information is shared like an object that “is put on the table between the two subjects of knowing. (namely the teacher and the student) They meet around it and though it for mutual inquiry” (p. 99) in an attempt to not only come to a mutual understanding but to share their unique experiences and understanding. In this sense, Freire (1994) explains that

. . . dialogue is the sealing together of the teacher and the students in the joint act of knowing and re-knowing the object of study. Then, instead, of transferring the knowledge statically, as a fixed possession of the teacher, dialogue demands a dynamic approximation towards the object. (p. 100)

While much of the communication shared between the Blueprint for Life staff and the students is in the form of non-verbal communication based around dance and music, the communication process is no different that any verbal exchange as it still allows for the participants to meet and reflect on their current realities while they simultaneously partake in a creative discourse of making and remaking while concurrently fostering and developing healthy relationship with their fellow students based upon trust and mutual understanding. Additionally, these exchanges are dynamic and shift in context as quickly as any verbal exchange but are simultaneously rooted within the traditions of multiple cultures.

In order for young men and women to become fully engaged participants in the collaborative process, it is essential that the facilitators allow for an organic cross-cultural dialogue to take place. While Leafloor contends that many of the traditional “banking” approaches are employed during the early sessions, (Leafloor) the tables are quickly shifted as youth are encouraged to organically fuse many of their cultural traditions with their newly acquired skills. This is a time of great discovery, as the
students are encouraged to be creative during the bricolage process in the hopes of generating new ideas, techniques and conventions. The benefits of this process are twofold: Firstly, this is a time of great skill building and exposure to alternative points of view that challenge many of the misconceptions they may have. The facilitators of program have spoken in great detail about the lack of exposure to diverse media in rural aboriginal communities (Leafloor; Stavrias, p. 49) and workshops have a great opportunity to not only dispel myths about Hip Hop culture, but also expose youth to experiences that are often far removed from their own. Secondly, since bricolage requires every new creation to be a cross-cultural dialogue, aboriginal participants are given the opportunity to look at their own customs and traditions from a new perspective that is relevant to their interests. This often results in the youth discovering a deeper appreciation and understanding of their own culture and often leads to a resurgence in customs and practices that they may have initially thought to be irrelevant to their lives. Ultimately, the goal of this stage should be to allow the youth to examine, rediscover, and understand that they have a creative voice that matters on both the local and global level and in spite of their common feelings of isolation from the rest of the world, their discoveries can play a significant role in both their communities and in a global postcolonial dialogue.

Since the Blueprint for Life program can only work with communities for a limited time, it is extremely important that the program also makes a priority of engaging the entire community with the tools they need to sustain the program well after the Blueprint for Life staff have left. This begins with a community showcase where the community elders can begin to see some of the considerable shifts in the attitudes of the participants. Leafloor describes the significance of this showcase by explaining that

... the entire community turns out for the show, and elders grin when they see drumming, throat singing or traditional arctic games incorporated into the performance... you should see the look of the elders. Many don’t speak English but they’re tickled pink that their grandchildren are laughing, having fun, and they see all this symbolism in their dance that represents their traditional culture. (Saxberg, 2008)

The Blueprint for Life staff understands the importance of community in Inuit culture and demonstrates a commitment to real transformative change by engaging the entire community and its elders in the process. These roles can include anything from supervising rehearsals, offering transportation for the youth, giving insight into cultural traditions, financial assistance, sewing costumes or any other support that will allow for the activities to continue to engage and motivate the participants. Without these vital roles, many young people may feel overwhelmed by the demands of maintaining a project of this scale and may fall back into old habits. More importantly, however, Shilling (2002) describes the benefit of community engagement as a process of making the community whole again because it respects the Inuit people’s collectivist traditions and “restores the individual to
the circle of community” (p. 156) in order to sustain the program and may play a pivotal role in the education of the younger generation.

While there are countless examples of bricolage and cultural hybridity that have occurred during the Blueprint for Life’s programs the following examples are some of the more significant occurrences that have led to the establishment of a unique brand of Inuit Hip Hop and the young men and women’s rediscovery of their own cultural traditions. Musically speaking, this include expressions such as “throat boxing,” which is a hybrid of Hip Hop’s “beat boxing” and traditional throat singing and often includes “sounds like the wind or different animals or different stories…[as] they freestyle back and forth off of each other” (Kelly, n.d.). In a social context, Leafloor explains, there are many traditional songs, dances, and athletic games in the Inuit culture that blend well with Hip Hop dancing because they require great skill, flexibility, concentration and athleticism. “The games are connected historically to passing the time during long winters in a large communal igloo, as a way of staying in shape and having fun. We use these culturally specific games to “flip the script” as they are the experts” (Thompson, n.d.) of these skills and teach the fundamentals to the Blueprint staff while simultaneously combining them with their newly learned skills. Additionally, the youth have exhibited great proficiency at combining their own visual art and fashion styles with Hip Hop culture to produce something very original. “The youth, Leafloor explains, work on a cultural graffiti piece with a powerful positive message that they want to communicate. We teach them basic technique, but the art is all theirs, often done in their traditional language and script.” “The youth are [also] encouraged to come up with their own arctic bling (jewellery) with things like a polar bear claw, or carving their name in graf letters out of caribou antler” (Thompson, n.d.). Finally, the collaborative process also gives youth the opportunity to explore and discover the importance of healthy conflict resolution that does not involve violence or aggression and can be applied to many different aspects of their lives. By this Leafloor explains that

Many Elders tell us that various aspects of their traditional culture seem directly in sync with the battles and the challenge aspects that exist in all the elements of Hip Hop culture. I have been told that drum dancing was used to settle disputes, as a challenge between two drummers, and that throat singing is a face to face challenge where one responds to the other person’s rhythms and sounds, and tries to trip up the other person or make them laugh.

While each of these cultural collaborations could easy stand on their own as a significant achievement of cross-culture collaboration and discourse, the combination of them and the continual creation of new ones everyday demonstrates the emergence of a new creative Inuit voice that is as equally immersed in a greater contemporary global context of Hip Hop and postcolonial discourse as it is within the Inuit’s traditional and sacred heritage.

One of the most noteworthy and inspiring instances of hybridity and bricolage
Abo-Digitalism

was created by the young men and women of the tiny community of Pond Inlet, Nunavut, who were able to combine the “something out of nothing” ethos of Hip Hop culture and the meagre resources around them to create a meaningful piece of art. Leafloor explains that after learning of the suicide of a community member, dozens of youth created their own form of creative expression that they called “frost graffiti” by using the warmth of their fingers to write positive messages about their friend on frosted walls and windows that was similar to that of graffiti tagging.

These kids went out around the whole town all night, feeling like they were accomplishing something positive and powerful together. When the sun came out and the town woke up, everyone was talking about it and walking around town to read all the powerful messages celebrating life and saying things about missing their friend. The whole town was covered in art and messages. (Leafloor)

What is most significant about the young men and women’s accomplishment at Pond Inlet is the fact that this creative and novel form of expression was created on their own without any support from the Blueprint for Life staff and not only demonstrates a profound understanding of the spirit of Hip Hop and bricolage, but also demonstrates a reframing of consciousness similar to Mezirow’s “habits of mind” (2000 p. 21) where creative expression is used in a constructive manner to deal with issues of loss and grief.

While this discourse is certainly a validating and enlightening experience for the young Inuit men and women, perhaps the most empowering relationship develops through the global discourse that takes place through the act of bricolage. Leafloor describes the nature of this transglobal dialogue by explaining that

Despite the underbelly of real pain and anger often experienced by the youth in Canada’s North, there is still a strong passion to try new things, connect with the larger world, and scream out to everyone that they are here and that they count and that their voices are important. In many ways they feel like the rest of the world has forgotten about them and that they don’t count. What is pertinent here is that this sounds like how the youth in the early days of Hip Hop felt in the south Bronx. (2011)

In drawing parallels to the overwhelming sense of isolation and hopelessness that is shared by marginalized youth in Canada’s North and in the United States, Leafloor is able to touch upon a fundamental aspect of postcolonial discourse that, as Dei explains, aims to share a “knowledge of history, place, and culture [that] helps to cultivate a sense of purpose and meaning in life” (2002, p. 128). Stavrias, (2005) however, contends that Hip Hop also shares this desire to assert a local identity within the context of a greater global discourse through what he defines as its “internal logic” that is based around the three common characteristics of “sampling” (artistic appropriation), “representing” (embodying one’s community or roots), and “flow” (attitude or style) (p. 46) that are all dependent upon creating vast networks and styles that all share an important message of global consciousness and transglobal
discourse (Lipsitz, 1994, p.33). More importantly, these global networks of localized communities also represent a highly advanced system of Freire’s dialogical method that aims to share skills, knowledge, and traditions of one local culture with the world. Freire explains the nature of this method by suggesting “dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it… Through dialogue, reflecting together on what we know and don’t know, we can then act critically to transform reality” (1994, pp. 98-99). While today’s technology has opened up opportunities to connect with people from all around the world in an immediate way, the principles of Freire’s dialogical method are still the same and has allowed opportunities for youth to become engaged in a dialogue that extends far beyond their own communities and allows them to connect with people and cultures from around the world that share their frustrations and aspirations.

In his book Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Politics of Place (1997), George Lipsitz explains the significant role that indigenous traditions need to play in contemporary cultural practices.

... much that seems new in contemporary culture carries within itself unresolved contradictions of the past. The solutions to what seem like our newest problems may well be found in communities that have been struggling with them for centuries. The most ‘modern’ people in the world that is emerging may be those from nations that have been considered “backward.” (p. 19)

Lipsitz’s observations about cultures that are considered “backwards” is an important one to make when considering many of the common misconceptions regarding contemporary indigenous perspectives. Renee Shilling (2002) contextualizes this sentiment from a postcolonial perspective by explaining that the search for a contemporary and authentic indigenous voice is “part of [the] decolonization process, which is the deconstruction of the changes since colonization and the ability to look critically at how it has impacted on our families, communities, and nations” (p. 152). More importantly, Shilling, Lipsitz, and many other critical pedagogues, including those working with the Blueprint for Life program, encourage First Nations, Inuit and Métis educators and students to embrace methods of creative learning that will “help heal the wounds… of colonization” (Shilling, 2002, p. 153) and resist the hegemonic representation of indigenous culture as primitive and static in order to issue in a new age of creative discovery that preserves and honors indigenous traditions while simultaneously revitalizing them with contemporary practices.

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“Welcome to the Jungle”
Understanding the Archetypes and Cinematic Techniques of ‘Eddies’

Derisa Grant

What do schools do? How are schools organized? Some educational researchers, when trying to understand the societal functions and organizational structures of schools, might look at schools themselves—observe classrooms, examine test scores, or even interview the students that schools ‘produce.’ However, increasingly educational researchers have turned to films about schools (a genre of films I shall refer to as “eddies”1) in order to understand how classrooms function, as well as the dominant ideologies within education. Between 1960 and 2010, for example, there have been approximately 45 articles written by educational researchers2 about eddies, the majority of which were written after 1993; additionally, over 30 masters theses and doctoral dissertations have been written on eddies.3 However, these analyses, notes Beyerbach (2005), have centered largely around the issue of stereotypes and have examined the extent to which images of educators are “distorted” or maligned (2005, p.268). However, I would also add that most analyses of eddies fall into one of two categories: eddies create negative stereotypes that are then realized in the “real world”4 (what I shall term the creation thesis), or that eddies reflect and disseminate existing (often deleterious) stereotypes about educators to the real world (what I shall term the reflection thesis).

Notably, both categories—which are appropriations of Harper’s (1996) terms simulacral and mimetic representation, respectively—suggest that perceptions of teaching depend greatly upon eddies; however, both categories propose markedly different relationships between eddies (and the world of representation in which eddies are said to exist) and the real world, and consequently ascribe different types of power to eddies. In the former, eddies are generative: film holds the power to produce new concepts and ideas about teaching and students that might otherwise not exist. In the latter perspective, eddies do not produce content; rather, they exert their power spatially, as they are able to disseminate existing stereotypes of schooling to the far corners of the earth.
Yet, though the reflection and creation frameworks suggest different relationships between the real world and the world of representation, both frameworks, as well as researchers’ adherence to the notion of stereotypes, ultimately serve to deny that eddies are films—a medium with specific techniques which may serve to elaborate, enlarge, and potentially challenge schooling archetypes and the relations of power these archetypes embody and normalize. Consequently, by applying these two analytical frameworks to the literature about eddies, we may examine not only the power educational researchers (tacitly and explicitly) attribute to these films, but also the extent to which eddies may (or may not) be used to illuminate schooling. Indeed, I would argue that eddies reveal little, if anything, about schooling; however, they are invaluable in what they show about larger societal discourses and archetypes surrounding schooling.

The Creation Framework

Harper (1996) posits that in simulacral realism, the media “propounds scenarios that might subsequently (and consequently) be realized throughout the larger social field, regardless of whether they actually preexist there” (p. 70). This concept holds that perceptions about social reality originate within the representational realm (i.e., perceptions are created within the film), and that these perceptions are then both realized within and serve to impact social reality. More concretely, Fahri (1999) argues that Dead Poets Society (Haft & Weir, 1989) depicts its protagonist, teacher John Keating, as a “superteacher.” For Farhi, this image of the superteacher, because it is repeated in other eddies, “implies that a teacher has to be unconventional to be qualified, making it difficult, if not impossible for real teachers to measure up” (p. 158). Note that Farhi does not argue that the images presented in Dead Poets Society are inaccurate when compared to real world teaching. Rather, Farhi’s contention that expectations of teaching, however unattainable, that are established within the eddie must nevertheless be met by teachers in the real-world is emblematic of a simulacral or creation argument. According to Farhi and others who hold this viewpoint, the film (a product of the representational world) has created and established an expectation of how teachers (in the real world) should behave. Consequently, an inversion occurs: because the teacher persona has emerged in the celluloid world, real world teachers must then strive, usually unsuccessfully, to mimic the eddie. The real-world teacher is transformed into a performer who must enact the behaviors and personae she has witnessed in the eddie.

Yet, if the superteacher does not exist in the real world, from where do the films’ writers get the idea? More importantly, why, we must ask, do real teachers attempt to emulate superteachers, given that such an image proves to be unrealistic and unattainable? What is it about the image that allows it to gain dominance over the real world and then effect change in the real world? Farhi, along with others who perceive a creation function of eddies, can neither account for the power of
eddies nor offer a satisfying account of the interplay between eddies and the real world.

Furthermore, researchers who support the creation perspective also deny that the viewer is capable of assessing eddies according to their pre-held beliefs. Though the viewer is, in fact, active in the process of interpreting the images, the creation perspective would render her passive. Smith (1999), for example, argues that, “[Eddies] shape the ways in which we talk about and negotiate school issues” (p. 63). However, the author does not state why films, which are merely images, should serve as a tool of educators who are addressing organizational or pedagogical issues within their schools. Finally, Fahri assumes a uniform interpretation of the film: that all teachers will see Keating as a “superteacher” and aim to emulate him. The image, it appears, is so powerful that real individuals will be stripped of both their agency and their ability to form individual and perhaps differing opinions, about the image. In other words, according to Farhi, all who view Dead Poets Society will attempt to become a “superteacher” by enacting the same behaviors as every other person who has seen the eddie. To borrow a phrase of Giroux’s (1983), the creation perspective, I would contend, “leaves no room for moments of self-creation, mediation, [or] resistance” (p. 259). Therefore, this framework is, at best, unsatisfying in the relationship it posits between the world of representation and the real world, and, at worst, is insulting to viewers.

The Reflection Framework

In mimetic realism, Harper argues, a media representation is expected to “reflect’ the social reality on which it was implicitly modeled” (1996, p. 70). The images, we may understand, merely serve to first mirror and then literally broadcast or disseminate the social reality. Furthermore, expectations of accuracy and exhaustiveness are placed upon the image: the many facets of one’s lived experience in the real world should be depicted as accurately as possible in the representation. Consequently, this concept allows one to both compare the media representation to the real world, as well as to judge the representation based upon its accuracy. An eddie, within the reflection realism viewpoint, may be judged as having failed if it disseminates an image that is different from social reality. Freedman (1999) notes that though she wanted to be an “inspirational teacher” consistent with the figure depicted in Stand and Deliver (Labunka & Menendez, 1998), she eventually finds the film lacking because it is “incomplete, contrary to [her] experience as a woman and an educator” (p. 71). Freedman argues that because films like Stand and Deliver (1988) typically feature male teachers in “inner-city” schools, these films “inaccurately reflect the realities existing within school systems” (p. 72) where teachers are primarily women and there are proportionately fewer inner-city schools.

Indeed, when the image diverges from one’s perception of social reality, the image is often said to be a ‘misrepresentation.’ Therefore, within the reflection
framework, two tendencies dominate: metonymy and conflation. First, reviewers suppose that any eddie can, should, and aims to represent all principals, teachers, or students of a particular type within the real world. Within this framework, Joe Clark of *Lean on Me* (Avildsen, 1989), for example, becomes the cinematic inscription of all urban high school principals in the real world, while John Keating of *Dead Poets Society* (Haft & Weir, 1989) becomes the emblematic, real world boarding-school teacher. Consequently, the burden of accuracy these reviewers place upon these characters and films is great. Furthermore, educational reviewers of eddies tend to conflate accuracy with positivity, and those portrayals of educators that are negative are often deemed inaccurate. Glanz (1997), for example, argues that depictions of principals as “insecure autocrats, petty bureaucrats, and classic buffoons,” contradicts the “growing [academic] literature that acknowledges the importance of the principal for achieving an effective school” (p. 298). Thus, Glanz has argued that these fictionalized and individual “buffoons” on the screen were created to mirror the behaviors of all principals. However, Glanz argues, all principals in the real world are not buffoons; in fact, the academic literature he has read would suggest that none are buffoons. Consequently, within the reflection framework, Glanz has used metonymy and conflation to deem eddies inaccurate representations of principals.

Indeed, ‘misrepresentations’ of educators pose a potential threat to the real world of schooling (Breault, 2009). Beyerbach (2005), for example, notes that negative images of teachers in films might give student-teachers the wrong impression about teaching and thus dissuade some students from entering the profession (p. 270) Consequently, those who utilize the reflection framework often advocate interventions by educators into the cinematic world (Smith, 1999). Raimo, Devlin-Scherer, and Zinicola, (2002) argue that “we need” films that depict the real-world impact of welfare reform on education in Minnesota and Wisconsin in order to “send a powerful and important social message” (p. 321). Again, the ideal eddie within the reflection construct serves to disseminate acceptable images of teachers. Therefore, when a film has ‘gotten it right,’ it may function as a pedagogical tool for in-service teachers (Robertson, 1995; Trier, 2001; Trier, 2002; Trier, 2003; Trier, 2005; Freedman, 1999; Beyerbach, 2005), or may allow us to gain insight into how the larger society views everything from teachers to racism, sexism and classism (Giroux, 1997; Beyerbach, 2005). Indeed, acceptable images of the real world may be re-incorporated into the structures and institutions (pre-service classes, classrooms, etc.) of real-world teachers, while unacceptable or inaccurate images must be challenged via the medium of film itself, or within the celluloid world.

**Eddies as Films**

It is notable that though these perspectives reflect two distinct positions on the relationship between the ‘real’ world of schooling and the ‘celluloid’ world of eddies, both often fail to treat eddies as what they are: movies. Those authors who
approach eddies using the creation lens, for example, interpret these films largely by the impact they have or could have on the real world. Images, therefore, are not systems of representations that utilize codes specific to their medium; rather, films, like all images, are rendered instrumental, or significant only for the change they might produce in the real world. Rick Altman (1999), however, notes that those who believe film holds an ideological function—or that film is primarily used by hegemonic entities such as ‘Hollywood’ or ‘The Government’ to promote perceptions and actions that are beneficial to those entities within the real world—place “greater importance [on] discursive concerns than [on] the visual approach” (p. 27). In other words, such reviewers fail to engage with the visual qualities of the film (qualities, I would contend which are central to any understanding of a visual medium such as film) and instead focus on the changes in the real world that the film is supposedly intended to produce.

Furthermore, authors within this perspective posit eddies as a construct created by a nebulous body named “Hollywood.” Hill (1995), for example, notes that, “Hollywood is of two minds when it comes to schoolteachers” (p. 40). (I had not been aware that “Hollywood” had one mind, much less two.) In other words, Hollywood, within the creation perspective, is easily anthropomorphized and becomes both the overlord of the representational world, as well as the originator of representations that will ultimately impact the real world. Yet, Altman (1999) argues that in truth, the circumstances surrounding the production of an image are fraught with contests among writers, producers, critics and studio officials (pp. 44-48). In other words, images are not created by a homogenous group. Granted, representations can serve to normalize relations of power (Gutierrez, 2000); however, the creation thesis oversimplifies the intent and articulation of these images, and obscures the realities of image production within this medium.

As I have previously discussed, those who subscribe to the reflection representation thesis do not view eddies as films, but rather as potential mirrors of social reality. McCarthy (1998) refers to media as performing a “bardic function” of “singing back to society lullabies about what a large cross-section and hegemonic part of it ‘already knows’” (p. 32). Meanwhile, Bulman (2002) and Gale and Densmore (2001) argue that eddies are middle-class suburbanites’ musings on the feared and yet distant urban ghetto. Additionally, in Heilman’s brief review “The Great Teacher Myth” (1991), the author critiques Dead Poets Society not only because the protagonist’s interventions in his students’ lives are inappropriate (as compared, presumably, to a real world teacher’s interventions), but also because the movie fails to show Keating as actually teaching his students (p. 418). Indeed, many reviewers of eddies who adopt the reflection perspective critique eddies for not featuring more scenes of teachers teaching; these films are consequently viewed as unrealistic because unlike celluloid teachers, teacher in the real world spend the majority of their time with students imparting structured lessons (Farhi, 1999; Raímo, Devlin-Scherer & Zinicola., 2002; Gunderson & Haas, 1987; Swetnam, 1992).
Yet, let us imagine a more ‘realistic’ film: would it be six hours long, like a school day in the real world? Would it show the teacher arriving at school, making photocopies, writing a problem on the board as students enter, breaking from the lesson to permit students to go the bathroom, and performing hall-duty when the bell rings? In neither a documentary nor fictional film would such a scenario be appealing or possible. Yet, Heilman (1991) and others, are able to demand that eddies show more instances of teaching because they dismiss the fact that eddies are first and foremost films. Glatthorn (1990), for example, begins his analysis by noting that he intends to “put aside the cinematic qualities” of Dead Poets Society and “consider the film from a professional perspective” (p.83). Would one cast aside the fictional qualities of a novel? No; however, popular films, because they typically utilize a linear narrative and familiar tropes, and because of the ease with which one may view them at a local theater or at home, appear accessible, or easily understandable. Films appear to warrant no analysis of their form or how that form impacts their content: indeed, only five of articles I found mentioned the cuts and shots utilized within an eddie (Giroux, 1997; Robertson, 1997; Yosso & Garcia, 2008; Smith, 1999). Yet, films are cinematic texts with their own structure and language. Films, by nature edit; they utilize cuts in order to shape narratives, and they compress time and space, omitting the daily lesson planning, student bathroom breaks, and other necessary but nevertheless minute details of real world teaching simply because they are films.

From Stereotype to Archetype

That films have cinematic qualities may appear to be a minor, if not obvious, point; however, I contend that the technical qualities of films are too often ignored by researchers who examine eddies. Yet, it is this acknowledgement of the cinematic language of film that will allow us to begin to move beyond the creation versus reflection debate into a more complex understanding of what eddies, as representations of schooling, are and are not capable of doing.

Let us, for example, look at Lean On Me (Avildsen, 1998), the dramatization about principal Joe Clark’s turn-around of a Paterson, New Jersey, high school. In the film, the audience is introduced to the Eastside High that Clark will enter when a shot of the clean, orderly hallway of 1968’s Eastside is overlaid with a graffiti- and litter-filled hallway in which Black students loiter. When we, the viewers, are temporally situated with a caption that states “20 years later,” we are alerted that the dissolve has compressed the 20 years in which Eastside has transformed from having a predominantly White to a predominantly Black student-body. The lighting in this new Eastside High is appreciably more low-key than it had been in the Eastside of the 1960’s, suggesting an ominous and dungeon-like quality to the school. Additionally, the medium long shot utilized in the frame allows us to see the totality of the hallway and, by implication, the magnitude of the school’s
decline. Furthermore, Guns and Roses’ “Welcome to the Jungle” is a non-diegetic sound that serves as a commentary on the school itself: the song’s sirens, juxtaposed with the hallway, suggest that the school itself is a type of jungle. As the opening credits are displayed, students enter the frame; yet, the medium-long shot renders any particular student unidentifiable and unknowable. These students, as a collective, symbolize disorder. By the time Axl Rose sings the first lyrics, “Welcome to the jungle/we’ve got fun and games,” a mass of brown-skinned students are now in the frame. As a Black student wearing a denim jacket reaches the foreground, the camera shifts downward and follows him as he is pushed by another student. The camera follows them as they, and the others who have joined the fight, are swallowed by a mass of students. Individuality is temporary; students are being literally and figuratively ensnared in the pervasive chaos and violence of this school.

Consequently, Lean On Me, in these few seconds, has, I would contend, added a distinctly cinematic element to the archetype (not stereotype) of the ‘urban school,’ as well as to all of the denotations and connotations of that term. Utilizing Lindenfeld’s (2009) analysis of Carl Jung’s work, we may understand that archetypes are abstract but malleable shared representations that arise from and are specific to a given society’s discursive practices. Stereotypes, on the other hand, are “easily grasped images of... groups” (Schramm & Roberts, 1971, as quoted in Gunderson & Haas, 1987) that allow us to create consistent patterns out of inconsistent experiences. Stereotypes are utilized in order to obscure difference among individuals based on a perceived shared identity (e.g., all [insert group here] people [insert behavior or characteristic here]). Archetypes, however, allow for difference, as they serve as templates that individuals may manipulate and recreate; however, archetypes nevertheless remain recognizable to others. Eddies, I would argue, neither create nor disseminate stereotypes; rather, eddies draw from an available well of archetypes about schooling. These archetypes (unlike stereotypes) may change when appropriated into the medium of film, but are nevertheless identifiable. To that end, I propose we move away from the notion of stereotypes (i.e., do films create or disseminate stereotypes?) and to the idea of archetypes.

Yet, what are the meanings contained within the ‘urban school’ archetype, for example, and how does an eddie like Lean On Me reproduce and further those meanings? Popkewitz (1998) argues that, “discourses of urbanness and ruralness are part of an amalgamation or scaffolding of discourses about teaching, learning, and managing the child” (p. 9). Consequently, a term like ‘urban school’ is not merely a “geographical concept” (p. 9). Rather, this archetype serves as a “discursive concept” which contains beliefs and accompanying procedures on how to educate the ‘urban’ student, and which places the ‘urban’ student “outside of reason and the standards of the normal” (p. 10). Notably, this archetype is both widely dispersed and widely utilized within our culture. Popkewitz (1998), for example, studied the then-nascent Teach for America organization (http://www.teachforamerica.org/), and found that it, even though ostensibly outside the
traditional educational system, nevertheless utilized and reproduced the ‘urban school’ archetype.

This pervasive discourse about archetypes (to answer the seemingly unanswerable question posed by those who subscribe to the creation position about the source of imagery that is supposedly created within the representational world) is the source of material for eddies. The familiar and seemingly omnipresent figures of eddies—the naive but determined teacher, the wayward student who becomes motivated to learn, the stubborn administrator who obstructs students’ free expression, or even the urban school—are archetypes that have emerged through discursive practices surrounding schooling.20 This thesis differs from the reflection viewpoint because eddies do not merely reflect these archetypes. Rather, I contend that eddies, because they are first and foremost films, translate these archetypes into a cinematic language, a language that utilizes visual cues, as well as other techniques specific to film. Furthermore, this language and these techniques of cinema, it must be noted, are distinct from, yet central to, the narrative of the film. Therefore, film techniques and language cannot be “put aside,” and must be understood and analyzed in conjunction with a given film’s narrative.

(Re)producing Archetypes through Film

The techniques of the medium of film—the fade, the caption, the ability to utilize non-diegetic music—have allowed Lean On Me, an eddie, to both elaborate and transform the archetype of the urban school. Therefore, Lean On Me, we may understand, has neither created this archetype, nor has it simply reflected this archetype: rather, the movie—through techniques that are specific to film—has magnified, shaped, edited, added a visual and aural element. Thus, the movie has transformed this existing and dominant societal archetype.21 Yet, the very ability of eddies to transform archetypes, as well as the fact that they draw upon archetypes (rather than stereotypes), is largely missing from most educational researchers’ reviews of these films.

Furthermore, the visual reproduction of the urban school archetype within an eddie like Lean On Me is, in fact, an act of production, or of creating a new incarnation of the archetype. This version of the archetype cannot be divorced from the techniques of film, as the archetype has been reshaped in a way that is specific to film, and could not have been produced without the medium. Indeed, the cinematic language of the eddie may serve to propagate the systems of inequality represented by and often hidden within this and similar archetypes about schooling; furthermore, because eddies translate archetypes into the language of the cinema, eddies often reproduce in cinematic language the very inequality represented within and between archetypes created in the “real world.” Lean on Me, for example, because it is a film, also produces anew the inequalities of the urban school archetype within the visual realm. Not only are students of the urban school (i.e., Eastside’s students)
subject to the discourse (and consequent practices of) the archetype, but this eddie has rendered these students objects of the gaze. Mulvey (1975) argues that classical Hollywood cinema structures and ‘genders’ the viewer’s gaze by positing within the film an active male hero and a passive female character. While the male hero advances the plot of the film, and thus becomes the character with whom the audience—presumed to be male—should identify, the female character serves as a break in narrative action, a character who is seen, but who serves little narrative function (1975, p. 11). In Mulvey’s formulation, women are rendered instruments of the male characters’ action and self-realization—these women are not meant to be understood as characters in their own right; rather, they are to be understood by and with reference to the male protagonist.

In eddies about the ‘urban school,’ such as Dangerous Minds (Bruckheimer & Smith, 1995) and Lean On Me, Black and Latino students may be equated to the female character of Mulvey’s analysis: these students serve to advance the self-understanding of the teacher or principal who is the protagonist of the film. As Giroux (1997) writes of Dangerous Minds, “The kids in this movie simply appear as a backdrop for explaining [the teacher] LouAnne’s own self-consciousness and self-education… At the center of the film is the embellished ‘true story’ of LouAnne Johnson” (p. 49). Dangerous Minds renders these students objects of the gaze and posits them in a passive role; thus the film has equated LouAnne’s students with the devalued reoccurring female character of film. Therefore, not only has this eddie translated and reproduced the ‘urban school’ archetype into a cinematic language, but it has also legitimated the archetype within the cinematic realm. Both the ability of the archetype to be appropriated, as well as the ability of its figures to be consistent with the oft-prescribed gender types of the cinema (i.e., the active protagonists and the passive ‘assistants’) signal the archetype’s legitimacy within the realm of the cinema. This cinematic legitimation of the archetype thus allows for its further legitimation within the real world: the archetype, though changed into the language of the cinema, is still recognizable and thus appears ‘real,’ or valid. Consequently, to borrow Gonzalez’s (2003) term, we may understand the relationship between the representational realm and the real world to be a “feedback loop” (p. 387). Rather than merely creating or disseminating images to the real world, media technologies in a feedback loop are informed by hegemonic discourses in both their structure and content. These technologies, in turn, “[articulate] and [define]” these discourses (p. 387.).

Furthermore, as a site of legitimation of the archetype, eddies may be more powerful than other discursive arenas because a disproportionate amount of legitimacy is attributed to images. I believe that Gonzalez’s claim that, “as a recording device, the medium of photography has always been allied with truth claims,” can be applied more broadly to visual representational systems as a whole (2003, p. 379). It is when we assume that images make claims to truth that it becomes common-sensical (though nevertheless inaccurate) to adopt the reflection or creation
perspectives. The danger with such positions, however, is that though eddies and other representations do have a relationship to the real world, that relationship is more complex than either the reflection or creation perspective allows. These perspectives are symptomatic of and yet distract from the true danger posed by visual representations: that images can serve to normalize and mask the relations of power within archetypes simply because we (mis)interpret the image as either representing or striving to represent Truth.

Consequently, this shift from archetype to stereotype is not simply one of semantics. Rather, it is a paradigm shift in how we understand eddies. By acknowledging that archetypes can neither be created within nor reflected by eddies, but rather that archetypes depicted within eddies emerge from and are refracted back into the real world, we can then formulate more appropriate and practical interventions to counter problematic images within eddies. Understanding these archetypes allows for interventions in the ‘real world,’ or investigations of the archetypes themselves, rather than interventions in the representational realm, as advocates of both the reflection or creation perspective would attempt. By identifying the archetypes depicted within eddies and understanding the codes utilized within the eddie to (re)construct the archetype, we destabilize the notion that the archetype and its corresponding relations of power are ‘natural’ or ‘inevitable.’ Rather, through the processes of analysis and interpretation, we begin to use the eddie to deconstruct the archetype (Nestler, 2009). The eddie, rather than being an instrument of creation or reflection becomes a tool for interpretation.

Furthermore, our focus moves away from how to change the film towards how to alter the archetypes depicted within the film. Consequently, instead of focusing on a singular truth—either the monolithic truth in the real world that the image should mimic, or the singular and ‘true’ means of enacting the image in real life—we begin to focus on perspective, or whose ‘truth’ has been represented and advanced through this archetype via the eddie. Indeed, because of their understanding of both the lineage of and many contexts in which schooling archetypes are deployed, educational researchers can bring a unique and valuable perspective to the analysis of eddies. Educational researchers, rather than getting mired within the specious and unproductive reflection and creation frameworks, might instead draw upon their knowledge of the archetypes which are used (often ad nauseum) within many eddies.

**Eddies in (Cinematic) Context**

Though I do not believe that an educational researcher who wants to examine eddies should first get a doctoral degree in Film Studies, I do believe that in order to analyze eddies as a genre, one must understand the history and techniques of that genre. As one would gain expertise in a new area of literature, so too should researchers on eddies gain some expertise in the medium of film.
I have proposed that by understanding eddies as first and foremost films, rather than mere mirrors of the ‘real world’ or simply as spaces in which images may be created to impact the real world, and by concurrently focusing on archetypes rather than stereotypes, educational researchers might better understand the context in which eddies emerge, and consequently sharpen our analyses of these images. First, we are able to consider the issues of genre and methodology when reviewing eddies. Many reviewers of eddies take for granted that there is a “schooling” genre or “teacher film”; in other words, many reviewers accept and create the category of ‘eddie’ by choosing to analyze particular films which exemplify their tacit claim that reflection or creation representation is at play. It could be said that there are over 150 movies that feature schools, teachers, or students. However, the literature analyzing eddies focuses on roughly 35 of those films. Furthermore, the ten most referenced films in articles are not necessarily the ten highest grossing eddies.

Altman notes that film critics or reviewers often “systematically [disregard] films that fail to exhibit clear generic qualifications…. [and] that each major genre has been defined in terms of a nucleus of films…” (1999, p. 17). By studying a limited number of films all of which utilize the same conventions and tropes, eddie reviewers have tacitly defined and have continued to reproduce the eddie genre through a limited set of films. These reviewers often disregard a rigorous sampling methodology and instead perform a type of cutting, editing, and shaping (in ways similar to the films they examine) in order to construct a narrative in which to define the eddie. It might be more interesting, therefore, to study this genre, if one may be said to exist, through films such as *L’enfant Sauvage* (The Wild Child) (Berbert & Truffaut, 1970) or even *Mad TV*’s “Nice White Lady” (Parker, 2007),—representations that are not traditionally considered eddies, but which may offer a unique perspective on these archetypes (see Bulman, 2002, or Beyerbach, 2005, for additional films).

Furthermore, by understanding eddies as films, we may better situate and understand these films (and this genre) within the context of a cinematic lineage. For example, Giroux refers to Michelle Pfeiffer’s character in *Dangerous Minds* as an “innocent border crossing,” or a representative of the middle-class who enters the world of the urban ‘Other’ in order to acculturate ‘the Other’ to the values of the White middle-class (1997, p. 48). Pfeiffer’s character, argues Giroux, ultimately serves to uphold a conservative and revisionist agenda that “rewrites[s] the decline of public schooling and …[attacks] poor Black and Hispanic students as part of a broader project for rearticulating ‘Whiteness as a model of authority’” (p. 51). However, this figure of the border crossing who restores order exists in film genres outside of eddies, and serves a similar function across genres.

Ray (1985) argues that the political polarization within America following the 1960s led to the “‘Left’ and ‘Right’ cycles” within film. While the Left cycle utilizes “outsiders to represent the counterculture’s image of itself in flight form a repressive society,” the Right cycle values “a reluctant individual, confronted by
evil, [who] acts on his own to rid society of spoilers” (1985, p. 351). The latter hero is often found in Westerns, but this characterization, I would argue, is befitting of many protagonists within eddies. Consequently, eddies are situated within a larger, political cinematic contest. In other words, eddies do not create or disburse stereotypes; rather, they draw upon (often weighty) archetypes about education and also upon cinematic tropes and figures.

**Conclusion**

So, what do schools do, and how are they organized? And, more importantly for our purposes, what might eddies tell educational researchers about the function and organization of schools? The answer to the latter question, I would argue, is absolutely nothing. Eddies tell us nothing about schooling because eddies neither represent schools nor do they attempt to prescribe what schools should do or how they should be organized. Rather, eddies are one of many arenas in which educational researchers may witness the disbursement and consequences of schooling archetypes. Furthermore, by acknowledging that eddies utilize and transform readily available archetypes about schools, teachers, and students, educational researchers are able to compare eddies to other ‘texts’ that appropriate these same archetypes about education. For example, what truly separates the narrative of *Lean on Me* from that of Paul Willis’ ethnography *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* (1977)? Both depict working class students and draw upon archetypes in their characterization of these students; both encourage the ‘reader’ to adopt the perspective of the outsider—Principal Clark and Willis, respectively—while implying that the text provides the ‘reader’ access to the lives of working-class students. While *Lean on Me* processes these archetypes through the techniques and language of cinema, *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* structures its narrative through the techniques and norms of ethnography. Both texts also produce a narrative in which student resistance to adopting mainstream middle-class values is rendered both futile and self-destructive. Finally, though the authority of *Lean on Me* is grounded in its medium (i.e., that it is a visual representation), *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*’ authority is grounded in the academic credentials of its author.

I neither argue that the two texts aim to achieve the same purpose, nor do I argue that these texts ultimately present similar representations of working- and lower-class schools. However, I do contend that both draw from the same Western discourse about schools, and that both transform the similar archetypes which they employ. Therefore, the dichotomous categories of ‘serious’ and ‘popular’ representation which separates *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* from *Lean on Me*, if not specious, is, at the very least, worthy of further investigation. Indeed, by focusing on archetypes educational researchers are better able to analyze, contrast, and compare the myriad of images and practices—eddies,
ethnographies, experiments, etc.—that seek to characterize and represent schooling, students, and educators. Consequently, eddies—though they may not teach us much, if anything, about schooling—might allow us to compare and contrast the many systems in which schools are represented. Furthermore, these films might also allow educational researchers to realize the extent to which we—in our own representational practices—might be utilizing and perpetuating the same archetypes as (the nebulous and ominous) ‘Hollywood.’

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Notes

1 John Willinsky coined this phrase (February, 2010) to refer to movies that depict teaching, teachers, schools or students at the primary, secondary, or post-secondary level. The term ‘eddies’ should be viewed as flexible, rather than as restrictive, and able to serve as an umbrella term for a wide range of films. In this article, the term does not refer to television shows, but it could conceivably be applied to any representation of schooling in any medium.

2 I have examined only articles written by educational researchers in peer-reviewed education related publications. There are, of course, a few exceptions, such as Giroux (1997) who was published in Cineaste and Hill (1995), whose article is not peer-reviewed. I will note exceptions as they appear. For our purposes, examining peer-reviewed articles, rather than book chapters or non-peer reviewed articles, serves as a heuristic to ascertaining what the broader scholarly community views as productive analyses of eddies. However, future work should examine other texts in which eddies are reviewed to understand the extent to which the creation and reflection theses dominate scholars’ thinking on eddies.

3 Numbers based on database searches I performed for articles, dissertations, and theses about eddies. These numbers are a conservative estimate, as there might be additional sources not uncovered in my searches.

4 I’ll use the terms: ‘celluloid world,’ ‘world of the film,’ ‘representational world,’ and their derivatives interchangeably. I’ll also use the terms ‘real world’ and ‘social world’ interchangeably, and in opposition to the ‘celluloid world’ and its synonyms. I do so in order to highlight the two realms that reviewers of eddies often suppose: one representational, and the other real. For many reviewers, these two worlds are not only unquestionably separate, but films and other images are produced solely in the representational world. Furthermore, within such a schema, social activity (a term which, presumably, excludes the act of producing a film) is said to occur in the real world. The aim of this article is not to debate whether such a distinction is viable; rather, I would contend that such a distinction, when used solely for analytic purposes, might be helpful. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to understand the functions and powers that eddy researchers have ascribed to these films, as well as the relationship they have posited between what viewers see in these films and what they enact in other arenas of life. To that end, I have adopted and utilize the binary that most educational researchers explicitly and tacitly adopt when reviewing eddies.

5 Harper builds upon Jean Baudrillard’s (1983) Simulations, which Baudrillard begins
with an allegory by Borges in which “cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up exactly covering the territory… (1983, p. 1).” Baudrillard argues that today, the territory is not the referent for the map. Rather, the “territory no long precedes the map, nor survives it (1983, p. 2).” Rather, “the map,” (the representation) precedes the territory, or the real world (Ibid.). In other words, the image has come to dominate the reality. Furthermore, Baudrillard argues, the distinction between the real and the representation (between the territory and the map) has altogether disappeared. There is, to start an imagined difference between the real and the representation, but this imagined difference “culminates in and is engulfed by” the map (1983, p. 3). Notably, the map does not stand as a mirror to the territory (as it might, say in mimetic representation). Rather, in simulacral representation the map allows us to reconstruct the real.

For Harper, simulacral realism is “a representation that usurps the supposed primacy of the objectively ‘real’ entity conventionally imagined to serve as its ‘original’ (1996, 216).” In other words, when the image is created, it is viewed as subservient to the “real world”. It is a copy whereas the real world is the original. However, the image takes on a life of its own, and assumes dominance over the real world. Harper, for example, quotes a TV Guide reviewer from the 1960’s who discussed shows like Julia (starring Diahann Carroll, which was the first show on television with a black female lead). The reviewer wrote: “If Negroes were seen more frequently on television—and in featured roles comparable to those comparable to those played by white actors—their real-life employment picture might be favorably affected. Television’s power to change mass habits and attitudes appears to be significant (154).” This reviewer’s argument is emblematic of the simulacral perspective, in that the reviewer believes that images that are created in the medium of television have the power to change the real world.

6 Such an argument would be typical of the reflection perspective.

7 I do not argue that images lack the potential to impact the real world; rather, I contend that the extent to which eddies and other images are viewed as changing the social world is both overwhelming and unrealistic. The creation perspective constructs the viewer as a blank slate, and denies that the viewer approaches representations, such as eddies, with other pre-existing imagery and beliefs about teaching (Sanders, 2010).

8 It must also be noted that those who hold the creation viewpoint may also seek to counter undesirable images (i.e., images that will engender undesired effects and perceptions in the real world) with other images, as well.

9 I must note, however, that though I present these perspectives as distinct, many authors often vacillate between the two in their analyses of eddies. Gale & Densmore (2001), for example, utilize both perspectives in their analysis. The authors argue that eddies shape students’ perceptions of themselves (in line with the creation perspective); however, they also attempt to analyze three eddies in order to understand which elements of a real, radical classroom are missing from the fictional classrooms (i.e., the reflection thesis) (p. 602). In other words, while the authors argue that students’ self-perception is shaped by eddies, they also suggest that eddies should (and are able to) mirror the ideal real-world classroom. The authors’ shift between perspectives suggests not only the complicated relationship between the representational world and the real world, but also the need to analyze these two frameworks. At what point, we might ask, does the eddy create a perception and at what point does it reflect a perception in reality? These questions are significant because they assume very different functions and powers of eddies. Yet, without a deeper understanding of the reflection and creation frameworks and the implications for eddies once these frameworks
are used as analytical lenses through which we view eddies, not only will we continue to use these two perspectives—though sometimes contradictory—without understanding the full implications of their application, but we will be no closer to truly understanding the potential and potential impact of eddies.

10 Altman’s term references the work of Karl Marx and Louis Althusser, and specifically the idea that the image is a product of a superstructure meant to support and further a society’s underlying relations of production (p. 27). Though Altman does not use the term ‘simulacral,’ I believe his idea is equivalent to Harper’s term. Both ideas hold than an image serves an instrumental purpose, one which is realized in the social, not representational world. Similarly, Altman’s idea of the “ritual approach,” which is based on the work of Marshall Sahlins and contrasts with the ideological function of film, is similar to the mimetic perspective, in that films are, within this viewpoint, seen as a repository for society’s fears and ideals (p. 27).

11 Not a peer reviewed article.
12 Not peer reviewed but typical of many arguments.
13 It is notable that Entre les murs (The Class) (Arnal & Cantet, 2008) dedicates a significant amount of time to the fundamentals of teaching—we see the protagonist, Francois Marin, in the faculty room; we observe students doing group work, reading out loud, and writing verb conjugations on the board. Furthermore, the film strives for realism in other ways: it is based on a semi-autobiographical novel by a former teacher, and the cinematography and camerawork create a documentary-like feel. However, even this film (like all films) has cuts and edits, and moves through one complete school year in the course of 128 minutes. It is not real, and though it tries to gesture towards reality, it cannot be viewed as real.

14 Not peer reviewed, but typical of many arguments.
15 I am largely describing “classical Hollywood” films, or films that follow the narrative conventions established by American studios from the late 1920’s to the late 1960’s. Classical Hollywood cinema often provides an objective reality against which a character’s subjectivity can be measured, gives the viewer some degree of access that characters do not have, and often provides the viewer with narrative closure at the film’s end (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010: 103). This description, would, for example, omit French new wave cinema of the 1950s and ‘60s, which often focused on making visible the interior states of characters, rather than creating a linear narrative.

16 A brief superimposition of a new shot upon the end of a preceding shot.
17 A lighting technique that creates extremely dark and light regions within a frame. It is often used to evoke a sense of mystery or danger (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010: 136).
18 A camera distance in which figures are prominent in the frame—and are often shown from the knees up—but the background remains visible (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, p. 195).
19 A sound whose source does not exist within the narrative of the film.
20 We must understand that these discursive practices are present in many aspects of education research and reform. Metz (1989), for example, argues that educational researchers and reformers tend to work from an ideal (or archetype) of the “American High School,” and consequently focus on the similarities of schools (e.g., the structure and procedures of schools), rather than acknowledging the significant differences among these institutions (p. 76). Consequently, schools attempting institutional reform enact features of the ideal “American High School”—such as schedules, text books, and instruction styles—even
though those reforms may be wholly inappropriate for the particular school and its population. Metz notes that these schools in the midst of reform begin to resemble “plays,” and the members of schools became akin to “actors” following preordained “scripts” (Ibid.). Yet, what is most notable in Metz’s argument is that the adoption of this “script” is encouraged by community members, and often remains unchallenged by the schools’ teachers and staff (pp. 77-78). In other words, archetypes about schooling are so pervasive that they are enacted (pun intended) in different ways. Films constitute one way, or medium, in which these archetypes are enacted.

A similar example can be seen in Giroux’s review of Dangerous Minds, in which the film is first black and white when depicting the neighborhood in which the students of color live and from which they are picked up by the school bus. However, when the bus reaches the suburb in which the school resides, the film becomes (magically!) colorized, suggesting the gritty reality of students has been assuaged by the suburban landscape of the school. Again, this use of color is a distinctly cinematic technique; however, it draws upon, I would argue, a larger discourse of bussing. The contrast between the black and white film and the color film establishes and magnifies the contrast between urban poverty and middle-class suburbia, and between an undesirable and forgotten pre-modernity and the modern capitalist era. The color of the film (as opposed to the color of the students, who are, of course, in possession of “dangerous” minds and bodies) alerts the viewer to safety; it allows the viewer to know that the students have access to the economic and physical security of the middle-class because they are being schooled outside of the gritty neighborhood and its corresponding pathology of poverty. Indeed, the bus, viewers are meant to understand serves as the students’ passage to safety. Indeed, if viewers did not know about the ideologies surrounding bussing, they will by the 2:23 minute mark of the film. Consequently, it is this technique, rather than (as Giroux argues) LouAnne’s later classroom discussions about choice, that first establishes academic and economic achievement as an individual (rather than systematic) issue. This bus scene removes urban schooling from a context and network of larger social structures. Rather, the students, because they have left their neighborhood, now ostensibly have a choice: they are in the land of metaphorical color, and it is up to them to seize this opportunity and to escape their neighborhood, both physically and ideologically. Furthermore, it is the middle-class (as represented by the suburb) that is being invaded by the urban ‘other.’ Therefore, LouAnne’s mission to acclimate these students into the dominant middle-class culture gains a new sense of urgency. Indeed, this distinctly cinematic technique has established spatial difference (and the accompanying ideological differences those spaces represent), just as a similar technique in Lean On Me established a temporal difference.

It is this belief in eddies’ aim to make claims to truth that allows educational researchers to compare eddies to the real world, argue that these films can be viewed as unrealistic or untrue if they do not mirror the real world, or argue that what we see in these films will and can be appropriated into the real world.

To study eddies is an interdisciplinary undertaking, one that requires a specific set of tools by educational researchers.

Based on a count I’ve begun of films that feature teachers, students, or schooling. The list includes films ranging from Freedom Writers (Durning, T. & LaGravenese, R., 2007) to Looking for Mr. Goodbar (Fields, F. & Brooks, R., 1977). So far, my list is comprised of 155 films, some of which were referenced in the articles I’ve discussed.

I manually counted the films referenced in articles dealing with eddies. I then compared this count to the lifetime domestic gross of films within the “Teacher-Inspirational”
genre on www.boxofficemojo.com (http://boxofficemojo.com/genres/chart/?id=teachers.htm). In my count, for example, a film like *Mr. Holland's Opus* (Cort & Herck, 1995) is only the 12th most referenced film within the eddie reviews; however, it is the third highest grossing film within this genre according to the website.

26 The sampling methods utilized among eddie reviewers is inconsistent and often lacking systemization. For example, Breault's sample of 15 films that depict “good teaching” was determined by factors such as box office gross as well as availability for home viewing. Bulman (2001) meanwhile performs an informal survey of friends and a local video-store owner (p. 3). Hill watches “a dozen or so” movies on teachers with films, but then relies upon Leonard Maltin's reviews for those films he is not able to see first-hand (1995, p. 41). Granted, reviewers of eddies might not need randomized, representative samples of all movies ever made about schools for their purposes, and the population of movies that may be deemed eddies is subject to debate. However, it is important to understand that eddie reviewers have and continue to construct the genre of “eddie” by creating a sample through methods that might be judged as unsound if utilized with other texts.

27 A skit parodying many eddies about urban schools.


29 What, we might ask, archetypes and consequent relations of power, do these texts—wittingly and unwittingly—normalize? How do the histories and techniques of the medium in which the archetype is being appropriated impact how the archetype is transformed and refracted back to the social world? And how, finally, is each medium able to critique these archetypes in a way that the other cannot?

References


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In Volume 13, Issue 2 of *Taboo* incorrect author details were provided for the article “Developmental Education: Preparing White Campuses for African-American Students.” The correct author information for that article is:

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The editors apologise for the errors in the original presentation of the article.
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