DIALOGUE

The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy

Intersections:
Belief, Pedagogy, and Politics

Intersections:
Belief, Pedagogy, and Politics

INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy is an open access, peer reviewed journal focused on the intersection of popular culture and pedagogy. While some open access journals charge a publication fee for authors to submit, *Dialogue* is committed to creating and maintaining a scholarly journal that is accessible to all—meaning that there is no charge for either the author or the reader.

The Journal is interested in contributions that offer theoretical, practical, pedagogical, and historical examinations of popular culture, including interdisciplinary discussions and those which examine the connections between American and international cultures. In addition to analyses provided by contributed articles, the Journal also encourages submissions for guest editions, interviews, and reviews of books, films, conferences, music, and technology.

For more information and to submit manuscripts, please visit www.journaldialogue.org or email the editors, Lynnea Chapman King, Editor in Chief, or A. S. CohenMiller, Associate Editor, at editors@journaldialogue.org.

EDITORIAL TEAM

Lynnea Chapman King, PhD, Editor in Chief, Founding Editor

Chapman King also serves as Executive Director for the Southwest Popular/American Culture Association. She received her PhD in American Literature and Film from Texas Tech University and currently writes in the field of Adaptation. Her publications include *No Country for Old Men: From Novel to Film* (co-edited, Scarecrow Press) and the recent *Coen Brothers Encyclopedia* (Rowman & Littlefield).

A. S. CohenMiller, PhD, Associate Editor, Founding Editor

CohenMiller also serves as a member of the Executive Team for the Southwest Popular/American Culture Association and is an Assistant Professor in the Graduate School of Education at Nazarbayev University. She received her PhD in Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching from the University of Texas at San Antonio and currently researches qualitative methods, identity development, and gender in academia. Selected publications include "Visual Arts Methods in Phenomenology" (2018) and "Artful research approaches in #amwritingwithbaby: Qualitative analysis of academic mothers on Facebook" (2016).

Intersections:
Belief, Pedagogy, and Politics

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial: New Horizons

We are pleased to present issue 4.1 of *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*, in which we explore belief systems, pedagogy, and politics. Across these nine works, ranging from explorations of social justice within teaching and learning to critical analysis of scholarship within the field, these articles provide an opportunity to think about the ways in which popular culture and pedagogy can deeply engage both within the classroom and beyond, as well as within informal learning spaces.

We begin the issue with Tara Propper's "The Pedagogy and Politics of Racial Passing: Examining the Role of Visual Literacy in Turn-of-the-Century Activist Media" and Erika Quinn's "Eastern Imaginaries," examining important implications for individuals and society as well as suggestions for pedagogy. Using an historical lens, Propper's article emphasizes the importance of the media in shaping individual racial identity, speaking to current topics of concern including racial passing. Specifically, she explores the use of African American activist media in theorizing the role of pedagogy in the public sphere through historical analysis. Moving from historical perceptions of race as seen in African American activist media, Quinn's work addresses the historical influence of Western ideas shaped by Orientalist tropes of the East. In particular, she uses the imaginary Eastern European country of *Ruritania* as a central example of stereotypical beliefs. Quinn uses two contemporary artifacts—Wes Anderson's film *The Grand Budapest Hotel* and China Miéville's novel *The City and the City*— to explore the way in which popular culture can reify harmful stereotypes or reject such racial conceptions, pushing the audience to confront "issues about collective identity, power, corruption and violence."

While the first two articles address key contemporary concerns as seen through news media and fiction, Jonathan Elmore's, "More Than Simple Plagiarism: Ligotti, Pizzolatto, and *True Detective*'s Terrestrial Horror," considers how horror can speak to common human issues. He explores how "Nic Pizzolatto, the writer of *True Detective*, 'borrowed' sections of Thomas Ligotti's *The Conspiracy Against the Human Race*" and ultimately developed a new type of horror, "terrestrial horror," which incorporates discussion of worldwide threats such as climate change and environmental collapse. The final article in this section discusses postmodern visual dynamics in film. Andrew Urie in "Hyping the Hyperreal: Revisiting the Visual Texture of Amy Heckerling's *Clueless*," focuses not on the standard reading of the 1995 film as an adaptation of Austen's *Emma*, but instead, conducts an examination of the postmodern visual texture of *Clueless*, connecting feminine teen consumerism to the time frame of the in the mid-'90s era Los Angeles.

The second section of this issue, *Applications in the Classroom*, features Edward Janak and Lisa Pescara-Kovach's "Four Decades, Three Songs, Too Much Violence: Using Popular Culture Media Analysis to Prepare Preservice Teachers for Dealing with School Violence" and Jason Gulya's "Teaching Disney/Pixar's *Inside Out* within the Tradition of Allegorical Personification." Janak and Pescara-Kovach address the role of music in the context of teacher education, providing preservice educators with approaches for countering bullying and school violence. Gulya then examines a recent Disney film as a modern iteration of the historical literary form, allegory. Though approaching pedagogy from two very different perspectives—social justice teacher education and content delivery in the classroom—the authors provide innovative perspectives on the role of

popular culture for both instructors and students on how to engage with others and texts.

We conclude the issue with three reviews, of copyright laws, of a design museum, and of popular culture in the classroom. Janet Brennan Croft takes on the ever-challenging topic of copyright laws in academia and the resources used by scholars, reviewing multiple texts to unpack the dynamic sociopolitical nature of US copyright laws. As Croft examines numerous sources, Laurence Raw likewise looks across multiple texts, critically discussing the use of popular culture in the classroom in high schools and universities. Lastly, Michael Samuel engages in a review of The Design Museum in London, discussing details of the museum ranging from architectural features and exhibitions engaging the viewing public.

We look forward to your engagement with these articles tackling new topics and approaches drawing intersections between popular culture and pedagogy.

<div align="center">

Lynnea Chapman King   **A. S. CohenMiller**
Editor in Chief   Associate Editor

</div>

In addition to the new works presented here, we also find ourselves at a new crossroads with the Journal itself.

A word from the Editor in Chief:

In 2011, when the Southwest Popular/American Culture Association began discussions regarding the creation of *Dialogue*, we knew that there was a place in the academic publishing world for a journal devoted to the intersection of popular culture and pedagogy. Also in 2011, we were approached by Anna CohenMiller, who likewise recognized the potential for interdisciplinary scholars seeking a venue in which to share their experiences with popular culture in the classroom. The result of those conversations and negotiations is, of course, this journal, which concludes its fourth year of publication with this issue. As the profile of *Dialogue* has increased and as we have worked through the numerous logistics of launching a new publication, I have had the privilege of working closely with Anna, whose enthusiasm and creativity have served the journal well. As we look to our forthcoming issues, I am pleased to announce that Anna has agreed to step into the position of Editor in Chief, assisted by Kurt Depner as Managing Editor. *Dialogue* remains in the excellent, capable hands of this team, and I look forward to its continued growth and innovation under Anna's direction.

Lynnea Chapman King
Founding Co-Editor,
Editor in Chief, 2011-2017
Advisory Board, 2017-

The Pedagogy and Politics of Racial Passing: Examining Media Literacy in Turn-of-the-Century Activist Periodicals

Tara Propper
University of Texas at Tyler
Tyler, Texas, USA
taralynne1984@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This article explores how we can use African American activist media to theorize the role of pedagogy in the public sphere. Focusing on how racial passing stories expose the limiting (and often tropic) binaries through which racial identity is deciphered, this analysis further highlights the extent to which these binary constructions of identity are learned through media narration..

Using the December, 1912, issue of W.E.B. Du Bois's *Crisis Magazine* as a touchstone for investigation, this analysis considers how pedagogy is taken up as both a theme and project in the magazine. Foregrounding the degree to which *Crisis* critiques and counternarrates the demeaning and derogatory portrayals of African American identity in early twentieth-century media, this article suggests that Du Bois's magazine not only indicts dominant visual systems of seeing and evaluating African American identity but also reveals the extent to which such systems of seeing and interpreting blackness are learned and can be remediated through media intervention.

The ultimate aim of this article is to derive an interpretive framework that understands pedagogy as not simply a method for inscribing pre-existent dominant norms but rather as a means for intervening, questioning, and challenging dominant systems of representation and public articulation. Moreover, this analysis intends to reveal the hidden pedagogies within dominant cultural paraphernalia for the purposes of advancing an approach to media literacy that recognizes and endeavors to transform the tropes and archetypes applied to marginal and minority communities.

Keywords: Media Activism, Pedagogy, Public Sphere, Race, Giroux, Du Bois, African American, Print Culture

In a *New York Times Magazine* article chronicling the public shaming of Rachel Dolezal, the former head of the Spokane Washington chapter of the N.A.A.C.P. who came under fire for allegedly "misrepresenting" herself as African American, author Daniel J. Sharfstein writes:

> ...Dolezal's exposure comes at a time when racial categories have never seemed more salient. The same social media that is shaming Dolezal has also aggregated the distressingly numerous killings of African Americans by the police into a singular statement on racism and inequality. In this moment, when blackness means something very specific—asserting that black lives matter—it follows for many people that categorical clarity has to matter, too. (Sharfstein)

Asserting that Dolezal's story is not as anomalous as mainstream media outlets have claimed, Sharfstein's article, entitled "Rachel Dolezal's 'Passing' Isn't So Unusual," frames Dolezal's case among countless historical incidents of passing.[1] Citing genealogist Paul Heinegg, Sharfstein traces the phenomenon of passing to a 17th-century Virginia law that assigned racial classification based on the status of the mother. According to Heinegg, passing was initially a matter of deciphering the identity of mixed race individuals. In order for mixed race families to access the resources associated with white privilege, which included being kept out of bondage, white mothers were compelled to prove their whiteness through legal means. However, as racial categories and tensions became more stringent, passing garnered greater cultural attention in magazines and newspapers and came to be understood as a phenomenon in which individuals misrepresent their purported racial, ethnic, or gender identity for cultural, intellectual, material, or personal advancement. Yet what is especially noteworthy about Sharfstein's genealogy of racial passing is his case for "categorical clarity," which is symptomatic of a larger gesture by mainstream presses to evaluate and interpret blackness (and not whiteness) as an intuitive and fixed racial category.

We can see this trend in many of the headlines announcing and exposing Dolezal's reverse passing. News about Dolezal treated the activist as either a punching bag, punchline, or both, placing an inordinate amount of attention on Dolezal's physical appearance by focusing on her hair, nose, and lips. *Gawker* even published an article entitled, "Rachel Dolezal Identifies as Medium Spray," which poked fun of Dolezal's spray tanning habits. Other media outlets focused on the existential requirements of racial identification, as the *Daily Mail* ran an article entitled "Race Faker Rachel Dolezal Talks Racial Identity on Chat Show and Says She Ticks Both the Black AND White Box on Forms." Less vitriolic media coverage tended to define authentic blackness through the lens of cultural and institutional marginalization and historical discrimination, experiences that Dolezal's biography was ostensibly lacking (see *The Guardian*'s "I Became a Black Woman in Spokane. But Rachel Dolezal, I Was a Black Girl First" by Alicia Walters; *Salon*'s "What We Can't Afford to Forget About Rachel Dolezal: A Master Class in White Victimology" by Chauncey Devega; and the *New York Times*'s "The Delusions of Rachel Dolezal" by Charles Blow).

The goal of this article, however, is not to answer these concerns about racial identity with a definitive framework through which to understand blackness and whiteness as either authentic or constructed subject positions. Instead, this analysis is framed with Dolezal's example because it exposes the central role that media plays in teaching citizens what constitutes appropriate or "authentic" racial identity. While one might take

---

[1] Sharfstein's article primarily focuses on reverse passing cases, such as those of Rachel Dolezal, Dan Burros, the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan whose family identified as Jewish and who was considered a "star bar mitzvah student," and Forest Carter, also a member of the Ku Klux Klan and speechwriter for George Wallace who authored a Native American "memoir" under the penname Asa Earl Carter (Sharstein). Although Burros and Carter's cases derived some media attention, the purpose of this article is to unpack how the phenomenon of passing exposes larger cultural assumptions about racial identity, particularly the extent to which we rely on aesthetic or phenotypic markers as a means for interpreting racial identity.

issue with Sharfstein's assumptions about the necessity to solidify racial boundaries, this analysis builds upon his genealogy of passing by considering how the phenomenon of passing is taken up by activist media for the purposes of challenging the institutional bodies that have traditionally defined racial performance. Focusing the analysis at the turn of the twentieth century—a moment in which categorical clarity retained particular import in determining who could inhabit certain public spaces—this article suggests that popular media outlets provide a consequential pedagogical arena for learning, interpreting, and evaluating race identity. Concentrating on three articles written for the December, 1912, issue of W.E.B. Du Bois's *Crisis Magazine,* the primary media organ of the N.A.A.C.P., this article suggests that stories of passing (which become visible through our media outlets) intuitively teach readers how to inhabit and perform racial identity, assigning what Sharfstein defines as "categorical clarity" to these purportedly different identity formations.

It is important to note that this analysis is not offering a comparative view of white versus black passing. Rather, this article addresses the role of activist media in calling attention to reductive characterizations of race identity and in revising (and counternarrating) how blackness comes into view within public forums. This analysis locates itself at the turn of the twentieth century for two reasons. First, the twenty-five years between 1890 and 1915 is especially fertile ground for examining the role of African American media activism. The commercialization of periodical literature and the growing popularity of monthly magazines in this period marked a sea change in American aesthetic values, political consciousness, and forms of public engagement, which stimulated conversations about social justice and marginal and minority activism. These conversations also inspired dialogue about and among marginal and minority activists. Second, studying how these cultural transitions offered space for marginal and minority bodies to theorize the terms on which one could engage and become visible within a public sphere of representation can help shape our own thinking about contemporary mass media technologies, including digital technology. Especially relevant to contemporary scholarship are concerns about how these technologies contour our notions of who gets to participate within a public sphere of representation, where we find and engage this space, and how to make this space more open and accessible to a wider range of readers and writers. Such questions were also taken up by African American activist presses nearly a century earlier as a result of the growing accessibility of print magazines and the increasing regularity of print advertising and half-tone printing technologies, which significantly altered not only who could access these texts but how these texts were consumed (see Anne Ardis and Patrick Collier's *Transatlantic Print Culture: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms* and Amy Helene Kirschke's *Art in Crisis: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Struggle for African American Identity and Memory*). Moreover, concerns surrounding the stakes of making oneself, one's suffering, and one's experience visible through public writing was highlighted by African American media in reaction to the increasing influence of visual imagery on print media, such as lynching photographs. It is therefore productive to turn to such texts in order to outline how African American media activism intervened in these consequential questions regarding race and public visibility.

Public Culture, Public Pedagogies, and Media as an Object of Analysis

Mainstream public culture, viewed through the lens of magazines, newspapers, and social networking sites, not only offers an arena for understanding how race identity comes into view (or is made viewable) through dominant systems of representation and articulation but also acts as an alternative pedagogical forum, one that grants access to the means of literary production and consumption outside of traditionally academic venues. Therefore, magazines and newspapers can be seen as pedagogical or "teaching" texts—that is, texts that either critique or instantiate structures of power by introducing and inculcating new, popular, or alternative habits of mind. Using Henry Giroux's "Cultural Studies, Public Pedagogy, and the Responsibility of Intellectuals" as a touchstone for unpacking the latent pedagogical functioning of public culture, this

analysis suggests that activist periodicals both expose and reinscribe the pedagogical imperative of cultural paraphernalia through the production of counterdiscourses. These counterdiscourses help to construct new pathways for accessing educational resources beyond dominant and hegemonic institutions of knowledge.[2]

According to Giroux, public culture is a fluid and dynamic arena for understanding the performative dimensions of identity and agency, rendering visible the political forces influencing identity construction. In other words, public culture is a space for mediating, accommodating, and contesting dominant social hierarchies by highlighting the material relations informing and constructing a politics of representation. Framing this politics of representation through a discourse of pedagogy, Giroux's "Cultural Studies" points to the hyper-fabricated nature of subject formation and, more specifically, citizen subjectivity. As Giroux notes, "the primacy of culture and power should be organized through an understanding of how the political becomes pedagogical" (62). Thus, political agency necessitates a process of learning whereby individuals come to understand themselves in relation to cultural artifacts and institutions.[3]

Consequently, Giroux's formulation attaches pedagogical significance to this process of subject formation.[4] More pointedly for Giroux, the pedagogical encounter reveals the political forces influencing how individuals come to articulate themselves within cultural institutions by underlining the degree to which these systems of power are artificial and ideologically driven. Making explicit connections among public culture, pedagogy, and subject formation, such work highlights the centrality of pedagogy in understanding and revising systems of power.

Recognizing the pedagogical imperative underlying the circulation of print media allows print culture scholars to better account for the ideological function of such material, especially as such material engages in the work of narrating which bodies can and cannot retain and garner visibility within a public sphere of representation. In other words, paying attention to the ways in which print culture teaches its readers how to *be in the world*—particularly in terms of how to differentiate oneself from gendered, racialized, and ideological others—is a fundamental aspect of acquiring and advancing a progressive approach to media literacy. Primary, however, to these questions regarding identity formation, pedagogy, and public culture is

---

[2] My use of the term "counterdiscourse" borrows from Nancy Fraser's "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." "Subaltern counterpublics," according to Fraser, are "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (Fraser 67). In this context, counterdiscourses are simply discourses that offer "oppositional interpretations of marginal identity, interests, and needs." Seeing as turn-of-the-century African American periodicals offered alternative portrayals of blackness that countered the often-derogatory stereotypes found within mainstream media in this period, I argue that these periodicals are counterdiscursive.X

[3] Without veering too far from my central argument, we can see the stakes inherent in Giroux's ideas in our current socio-political climate. That is to say, concerns over immigration and what constitutes American assimilation reveals the ways in which popular media (from all ends of the political spectrum) have a direct hand in shaping the types of identities that are visible or are not visible within a social sphere by teaching a media-consuming public normalized identity formations. For example, viewing an immigrant as either a foreign other to be feared, maligned, and banned from American participatory democracy or a "raw material" to be shaped and molded into a model for American exceptionalism or progressivism are archetypes that derive consistent media currency in our contemporary moment.

[4] In this article, I am suggesting that subject formation is tied to one's capacity to become visible within a public sphere of representation. Here, I am gesturing toward the work of Jeffery Nealon and Susan Giroux. In *The Theory Toolbox: Critical Concepts for the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences,* Nealon and Giroux define subjectivity as a collection of discursive and physical actions that allow for individualized identities to develop and become culturally visible. Subjectivity happens at the intersection of individual agency and larger cultural values. The larger cultural values that help dictate and discern racial subjectivities, for instance, are explicitly tied to political forces. Therefore, political agency is the medium through which new racial subjects can emerge, develop, and become visible within mainstream culture and within wider public spheres of influence and representation.

how the asymmetrical deployment of political, cultural, and social power shapes the pedagogical encounter. Revealing this asymmetry and chronicling how activist campaigns offer alternative forums for enunciating identity formation and political agency is thus fundamental to countering dominant systems of power.

Turn-of-the-Century African American periodicals are especially useful sites for exposing asymmetrical deployments of cultural and political power, as such periodicals interrogated the deep racial divides buttressing public and social norms. A landscape in which news, advertisements, opinion pieces, political commentary, personal letters, and literary critique sat alongside and in conversation with one another, African American print media offers a particularly unique staging ground for historicizing and contextualizing the multi-voiced and inter/intratextual nature of modern mass media. As Anne Ardis posits in "Making Middle-Brow Culture," turn-of-the-century African American magazines like W.E.B. Du Bois's *Crisis* highlight "the complex relationships between printed artifacts, the dazzlingly, distractingly visual cultures of modernity, and the world of things for purchase commercially in a modern consumer culture..." (21). Similarly, Anne Carroll's "Protest and Affirmation: Composite Texts in *Crisis*" suggests that *Crisis's* "large cultural presence in the early twentieth century was due, in part, to its multimedia format and layout, which has drawn scant scholarly attention" (89). This "multimedia format," characterized by the intermingling of news, photographs, advertisements, and critical and opinion commentary (and which is akin to contemporary media layouts both online and in print), provided a forum for readers to experience and engage with different genres of writing. For example, the Table of Contents for the December, 1912, issue of *Crisis Magazine* lists the following four titles under its "Articles" section: "Emmy" (a short story by Jessie Redmon Fauset), "Sackcloth and Ashes" (an editorial detailing the trauma of lynching and mob violence), "The Club Movement in California" (featuring biographical sketches of members of the National Association of Colored Women's California chapters), and "The Christmas Sermon" (a poem by Robert J. Laurence), in addition to its featured departments, including "Along the Color Line," "Men of the Month," "Opinion," "Editorial," and "National Association for the Advancement of Colored People." Such offerings represent a range of critical, literary, and journalistic prose, from poetry and short stories to investigative journalism and political commentary.

Readers of magazines like *Crisis* were therefore presented with various textual genres and images that required a multimodal literacy, one that took into consideration how the structural and design features of these periodicals coalesced to make meaning. Even print advertisements, which were reflective of a growing consumer culture, cultivated a style of reading and interpretation that compelled audiences to deduce meaning from an economy of words and images. This multimodal reading experience was shaped by the various linkages and relationships one might find between different media paraphernalia, as such relationships could be found between images and copy, or copy and advertisements, or advertisements and opinion commentary. Editors also took advantage of multimedia formatting by positing arguments based on the internal staging of different, sometimes competing, media paraphernalia.[5] In short, African American newspapers and magazines advanced a multimedia format that privileged inter- and intra-textual dialogue, exposing the internal juxtapositions informing how we making meaning from a range of cultural and media artifacts. Additionally, African American newspapers and magazines offered an approach to literacy where readers were able to participate in, contribute to, and enact new outlets for democratic engagement.

Passing, A Pedagogy: Artificial versus Embodied Passing

One of the more insightful observations made about the media flurry surrounding Rachel Dolezal's

---

[5] In "Beauty Along the Color Line: Lynching, Aesthetics and the 'Crisis,'" Russ Castronovo argues that *Crisis's* multimedia format was used deliberately by editors to build connections between politics and aesthetics. Castronovo's work focuses specifically on how the internal staging of lynching photographs alongside of literary articles worked to renegotiate both the standards on which art was evaluated and the conditions on which bodies came into and out of view (and the extent to which these bodies were considered beautiful).

public outing was by a columnist for *The Guardian.* In an article entitled "Rachel Dolezal Exposes our Delusional Constructions and Perceptions of Race," Steven W. Thrasher suggests that Dolezal's failed passing reveals the artificiality of binary constructions of whiteness and blackness. Thrasher notes that what makes Dolezal's case so "fascinating" is its exposure of the "disquieting way that our race is performance — that, despite the stark differences in how our races are perceived and privileged (or not) by others, they are all predicated on a myth that the differences are intrinsic and intrinsically perceptible" (Thrasher). Thrasher's article presents two premises. Thrasher suggests that the ostensible intuitiveness with which we perceive racial characterization is learned. Thrasher additionally notes that we can learn to see and *unsee* these visual markers given our cultural and social training. In other words, although our racial constructs are arbitrary (as Thrasher points out), the features and categories that we associate with such constructs are learned and serve an ideological purpose, as such constructs are policed through legal legacy (Plessy v. Ferguson), social doctrine (de facto segregation), and institutional forums.

Historically, *Crisis Magazine* has played a role in narrating the linkages between artificial and embodied passing, enabling early twentieth-century readers to recognize the hidden pedagogies within dominant cultural paraphernalia. The editors of *Crisis* made revealing these "hidden pedagogies" a fundamental project of the magazine—a project that is productively illustrated in Jessie Redmon Fauset's "Emmy."

Arranged around two instances of passing—(1) Emmy, the protagonist, becoming "passable" as a black body within the protopublic sphere of the classroom; and (2) Archie, Emmy's love interest, passing as someone of "Spanish decent" in order to excel in the field of engineering—Fauset's story is largely a mediation on the role of public institutional settings in defining and standardizing blackness.[6] Making visible the discriminatory and derogatory lens through which black identity was visualized in turn-of-the-century American culture, "Emmy" endeavors to "mend" these dominant and problematic ways of discerning black identity by calling attention to the arbitrary nature of such identity markers, foregrounding the role of pedagogy in inculcating these dominant modes of evaluation and interpretation. Passing is treated as a pedagogical practice, one that requires African American subjects to perform arbitrary racial markers for the purposes of attaining legibility within our public forums. Yet passing is cast from two differing vantage points, artificial and embodied passing. A comparative example between artificial and embodied passing, as each are noticed through Fauset's Emmy and Archie, clarifies how Fauset, and in a larger sense the editors of *Crisis Magazine* as a whole, undertake the work of redefining passing as not simply a process of misrepresenting one's race identity. Rather, passing in this context is defined as a cultural procedure in which black Americans acquire legibility within a larger public sphere of representation by performing "acceptable" racial characteristics (as defined and delimited by dominant visual and discursive systems).

Consumed with the stakes and consequences associated with disguising his racial identity, Archie's narrative follows many of the tropes and themes associated with a traditional passing story, referred to in this analysis as "artificial passing." Posing as white man in order to ascend the ranks in the field of engineering, Archie is plagued with interior deliberations about whether or not he wants to marry Emmy and "out" himself as an African American, thereby limiting his chances of professional fulfillment and wealth. It is not until Archie is met with the prospect of professional advancement at the expense of his romance with Emmy that he realizes success cannot be achieved without self-acceptance and race pride. Archie accomplishes these forms of acceptance when he exposes his "true" identity and *comes out* to his superiors, risking his career as

---

[6] I borrow this term from Rosa E. Eberly. Eberly refers to school spaces as protopublic spheres where students can practice participatory democracy within a low-stakes learning environment. Eberly notes that these "protopublic spaces...[allow] students to form and enter literary public spheres and choose whether to join wider public spheres" (162). For a more detailed account of the relationship between classroom spaces and public spaces, see Christian Weisser's *Moving Beyond Academic Discourse: Composition Studies and the Public Sphere.*

an engineer for the interior reward of self-actualization.

Although Archie's narrative aligns with standard passing stories, Emmy's storyline extends the notion of passing to account for the process in which racialized bodies are taught and expected to disguise specific identity markers in order to *pass through* public space, even if they do not intend to pass as white. Thus, Emmy's narrative explores passing-as-learned-identity as opposed to passing-as-deception. In drawing Emmy's narrative, Fauset is perhaps more concerned with and critical of the white gazing subjects that delimit and authorize how racialized bodies can be seen or come into view within public spaces. Emmy's story therefore serves to illuminate "embodied passing," which is the primary focus of this article insofar as it underscores the material and cultural forces influencing subject formation.

For the purposes of this discussion, "embodied passing" denotes the physical experience of passing into and out of different public arenas as a racialized body, a term employed to underline the extent to which mainstream culture places specific conditions on how blackness can be seen and received within public spheres of representation. Black bodily presence is therefore mediated through certain assumptions about blackness; these assumptions dictate and discern how blackness can be performed in public space. Although embodied passing does not necessitate disguising one's racial identity for the purposes of seeking professional or social advancement (artificial passing), it does suggest that in order to "pass" through different public venues *unscathed* (that is, without the chronic fear of bodily harm and harassment), racialized bodies must contend with and acquiesce to dominant visual systems for seeing and evaluating blackness. Such dominant and problematic systems of representation are made explicit in the story's initial scenes, which are staged within the schoolhouse and revolve around the pedagogical relationship between teacher and student. In an assignment for class, Emmy is asked to name the world's "five races" (Fauset 79). After naming the "white or Caucasian, the yellow or Mongolian, the red or Indian, the brown or Malay, and the black or Negro," Emmy's instructor, Mrs. Wenzel, demands that Emmy identify the race to which she belongs (79). This question, however, is harder for Emmy to navigate, "not because hers was the only dark face in the crowded schoolroom, but because she was visualizing the pictures with which the geography had illustrated its information" (79). Emmy deliberates that "she was not white, she knew that—nor had she almond eyes like the Chinese, nor the feathers which the Indian wore in his hair and which of course, were to Emmy a racial characteristic" (79). Finally, Emmy concludes that she "belongs to the black or Negro race," much to her teachers "relief" (79). Emmy too is relieved, as "the Hottentot, chosen with careful nicety to represent the entire Negro race, had," as Emmy notes, "on the whole a better appearance"(79).[7]

Visualizing iconic representations of racialized bodies, Emmy undertakes a process of logical deduction, reading her race identity in relation to these other representative identities. Although none of these iconic race representations adequately articulate her experience as a racialized body, Emmy chooses the least problematic minority appearance as her own. Emmy's participation and legibility within the public institutional sphere of the classroom is predicated on these representative icons (for example, the Venus Hottentot). Thus, Emmy becomes intelligible and "passable" only when she complies with these racial representations. Moreover, passing within this context holds a double significance, since Emmy is both receiving a passing grade for Mrs.

---

[7] The Hottentot Venus was the stage name assigned to Saartjie Baartmann (also referred to as Sara Baartman), a South African slave who was sold to a Scottish doctor named Alexander Dunlop. Dunlop compelled Baartman to perform in carnival slideshows throughout Europe. Considered a major "attraction" in Britain and France between 1810 and 1815, Baartman would draw large crowds interested in her "exotic" anatomy. Baartman was also used as an object of scientific examination both during her life and after her death by Georges Cuvier, a professor of anatomy at the *Museum of Natural History* in Paris. After Baartman's death in 1815, Cuvier dissected her body and displayed her remains, including her brain, skeleton, and genitalia in Paris's *Museum of Man*. Fauset uses the legacy of Baartman in order to highlight the extent to which blackness was treated as an object of public scrutiny and scientific examination, and to further elucidate the degree to which black public presence was marked by an erasure of subjective identity.

Wenzel's assignment, as well as *passable* as a black body within a public institutional sphere. By introducing her story with a schoolhouse "lesson," Fauset underlines the extent to which dominant visual systems are learned and artificial. Pedagogy therefore acts a medium through which dominant visual systems are articulated and enacted, as educators are the primary interlocutors for policing racial categories.

Throughout "Emmy," Fauset is concerned with how racially marked bodies come to know, see, and value themselves within and in relation to dominant visual systems, as the story reaches its climax when Emmy and Archie learn to reject the racial hierarchies and stereotypes that define blackness in order to realize and fully recuperate their love for one another. Each character undergoes a process of becoming intelligible both within and against these dominant characterizations of blackness. One reviewer, Claire Oberon Garcia, describes the story as "permeated by problematic tropes of recognition in the verbal and visual arts" (Garcia 101). This chronic and consistent squaring of embodied identity with dominant standards for seeing blackness is further explicated in the illustration of a young African American woman gazing at her reflection in a vanity mirror, which momentarily interrupts Fauset's text and works to create a collage effect in the layout of the page. This juxtaposition of image and text underlines the visual qualities implicit within the process of imagining identity: identity, through this discursive and visual vantage point, is contingent upon and pivots from the image. In other words, the visual field through which bodies become viewable works to determine one's access to and acceptance within public culture. As a consequence, racial icons such as the Venus Hottentot—a public identity singularly circumscribed by the visual field—set certain and specific limitations on how blackness could be seen, received, and responded to within mainstream culture and its publics. In Fauset's fictional account of passing, the image works to police, circumscribe, and substantiate racial identity. Race is treated as an aestheticized object of public consumption, interpretation, and analysis, and racial articulation is mediated by public figures, specifically educators. Furthermore, racial iconicization in "Emmy" works to reify binary constructions of race, asserting categorical clarity through the visual field, through artificial enactments and visual presentations of race.

The primacy of the image in discerning racial identity finds further elucidation in an editorial preceding Fauset's "Emmy," entitled "The Black Mother" (TBM). Reporting on legislation to erect a mammy monument in the National Mall, "TBM" complicates the legacy of the mammy figure, which at the turn of the century derived particular cultural currency as a happy and benign relic of the "Old South."[8] Noting that such iconography "existed under a false social system that deprived [real black mothers] of husband and child," "TBM" suggests that such caricatures dehumanize and negate the subjective experience of Black mothers—as the mammy figure signifies a moment in African American history when Black women were deprived of interiority and barred from cultivating a private life outside of white supremacist systems of servitude and surveillance ("TBM" 78).

"TBM" also points to the degree to which our public memorials are spaces of learning, as public memorials both instruct citizens what our nation's values are and which citizens (and civic actions) are valuable. Erecting a mammy statue in the National Mall would therefore teach African American women that their value as citizens stems from their capacity to identify with and live into these demeaning tropes of representation. In both "Emmy" and "TBM," dominant pedagogies (such as those that happen in the

---

[8] This notion of the "Old South" is firmly connected to Lost Cause Mythology, a nostalgic misreading of plantation life prior to the Civil War. In the half century after the Civil War, Lost Cause sentiment grew in popularity. Rooted in plantation literature (including *The Leopard's Spots* in 1902, *The Clansman* in 1905, and *The Traitor* in 1907), Lost Cause mythology romanticized Southern paternalism, uplifting the plantation as a utopian space in which racial binaries were fixed and natural. The mammy figure played a central role in clarifying such binaries.

schoolhouse and those that are derived through public memorialization) are associated with submission. That is, Emmy must submit to her teacher's reading of race in order to pass through and become legible within the classroom space. Likewise, public memorialization of mammy works to instruct white and black citizen subjects how to read and evaluate African American identity through the lens of submission, as the legacy of the mammy is one of servitude and submission. However, the editors of Crisis challenge these dominant pedagogical practices by teaching readers how to recognize and depart from these systems of seeing and evaluating blackness.

Critiquing the extent to which black bodies were encouraged, expected, and to some degree even required to identify with and through these iconic and hypervisible racial caricatures, the editorial describes the mammy figure as a "perversion of motherhood" and compels "present-day mammies [to] suckle their own children...walk in the sunshine with their own toddling boys and girls and put their own sleepy little brothers and sisters to bed" ("TBM" 78). Compelling African American women to contest the cultural legacy of these hyperbolic and problematic tropes of representation, "TBM" asserts that the mammy caricature (probably one of the more iconic and visually pointed images of black iconography) works to abstract and erase the embodied and felt experiences of black women.

Particularly noteworthy is the article's positioning. Directly preceding Fauset's story about passing, "TBM" contextualizes the drama of "Emmy" with real-world prefatory material, drawing connections between passing and racial caricatures. By juxtaposing Fauset's fictive story of passing (which emphasizes the primacy of the image in objectifying and aestheticizing racial identity) with a critique of the hypervisible legacy of the mammy figure, the December, 1912, layout of Crisis links the phenomenon of passing to an oversimplification and caricaturization of racial subjectivity. Passing is therefore associated not with the breakdown of racial categories but with the solidification of racial boundary lines—lines that, regardless of the racial identity performing the passing, associate racial identification with phenotypic categorization.

Scholar Baz Dreisinger, who has written prolifically on the phenomenon of passing, suggests that passing privileges and reiterates the presence of the white gazing subject. In an interview for the Atlantic Monthly, Dreisinger suggests that the phenomenon of passing underlines the white gazing subject's "long legacy of fetishizing blackness" (Dreisinger). Such fetishistic imagery is "based upon caricatures, and not characters...on idealized or cartoonish notions of what blackness is" (Dreisinger). These cartoonish portrayals of blackness work to obfuscate the interiority of racialized subjects. Although traditional stories of passing tend to emphasize the psychological consequences of performing whiteness (notably the pain associated with breaking familial ties for the purposes of social or professional advancement), both "Emmy" and "TBM" highlight the extent to which *passing as black* within a white public sphere of representation is equally risky. In other words, passing takes on a dual context: passing is treated as both a phenomenon in which individuals transition from one race identity to another and a process through which African Americans learn how to see, identify, and contend with dominant visual systems. Consequently, the editors at Crisis sought to re-define passing as a social and psychological process of erasing embodied experience and aestheticizing racial identity. The metaphoric erasure of subjectivity that becomes visible through the fetishizing imagery of the mammy figure is made literal and explicit in the article directly succeeding "Emmy," which chronicles the lynching of Zackaria Walker.

Walker's identity, as well as his purported crime, is not specified in the report. Instead, the article, entitled "Sackcloth and Ashes," vaguely notes: "On August 18, 1911, a black man was burned to death by a mob in Coatesville, Pa" ("Sackcloth" 87). From here, the editorial details a speech by John Jay Chapman to a prayer gathering in Coatesville. In his speech, Chapman interprets a newspaper account of Walker's death:

> ...I read in the newspapers of August 14...about the burning alive of a human being—
> and of how a few desperate fiend-minded men had been permitted to torture a man

chained to an iron bedstead, burning alive, thrust back by pitchforks when he struggled out of it, which around about stood hundreds of well-dressed American citizens, both from the vicinity and from afar, coming on foot and in wagons, assembling on telephone calls...hundreds of persons watching this awful sight and making no attempt to stay the wickedness. ("Sackcloth" 87)

Making many references to sight and seeing, Chapman describes his personal reaction to the violent scene reported in the paper: "I seemed to get a *glimpse* into the unconscious soul of this country. I *saw* a seldom-*revealed picture* of the American heart and of the American nature. I seemed to be *looking* into the heart of the criminal [...] What I have *seen* is not an *illusion*. It is the truth" ("Sackcloth" 87). The "truth" that Chapman gleans from this tableau is the commonness of racial violence in American public culture. For Chapman, the black body comes into view publicly through the frame of the lynching spectacle. Signifying the erasure of black bodily presence, the lynching spectacle (circulated through lynching photographs and media depictions) works to further abstract black subjective experience. Like "Emmy" and "TBM," "Sackcloth and Ashes" examines the role of dominant visual systems in narrating and filling in black identity. "Sackcloth and Ashes" does not describe the lynching spectacle firsthand; rather, the lynching spectacle comes into view through media narration and visual language.

By appropriating how lynching was narrated and depicted in popular media, the editors of *Crisis* perhaps hoped to disrupt popular depictions of lynching as either a "just" response to black criminality or a benign enactment of popular sovereignty. Furthermore, lynching reporting and imagery within mainstream presses was implicitly pedagogical; that is, such coverage acted as a grotesque and deeply problematic mode of teaching white and black readerships the risks associated with black public visibility. The circulation of lynching imagery in Southern States made explicit the consequences of questioning or challenging segregationist policies. However, in *Crisis*, the circulation of lynching stories (and photographs) inverted this pedagogical initiative.

Drawing connections between artificial representations of racial performance (vis-a-vis passing and racial iconography) and the erasure of black subjectivity, *Crisis Magazine (*as observed through its intratextual linkages) brings to light the extent to which our modes of seeing, understanding, and evaluating blackness is learned. Furthermore, the aestheticization of racial identity (as is noticed in passing narratives, as well as in racial caricatures) directly informs—and is in dialogue with—the most extreme examples of black erasure. That is, the erasure of black subjective identity exemplified in the popularity of iconic caricatures such as the Venus Hottentot ("Emmy") and mammy ("TBM") finds its most disgusting manifestation in the wholesale erasure of black subjectivity in the lynching spectacle. Thus, the lynching spectacle, as Chapman notes, offers a harrowing insight into the political and social pulse of the country.

This analysis has touched on the relationship between passing and pedagogy by discussing the central role popular media plays in the construction of public identities. Considering how binary constructions of race rely on and privilege phenotypic identification, this article historicized the ways in which the phenomenon of passing is interpreted and re-defined by activist media. By highlighting intratextual linkages, W.E.B. Du Bois's *Crisis Magazine* takes up the pedagogical incentive to teach readers our own cultural biases and assumptions regarding racial identity, underscoring the extent to which such biases and assumptions are learned and *can be re-learned* for the purposes of pursuing a more progressive agenda towards race, racial performance, and racial legislation. What "Emmy," "The Black Mother," and "Sackcloth and Ashes" clarify is the primacy of the image in envisioning and legislating identity. Of course, this brief analysis of Fauset's story and the two editorials bordering her work cannot fully articulate the extent to which questions of citizenship are built into this collective imagining of how to see and receive blackness within public institutional spaces. However,

this analysis begins to identify the ways in which black citizenship comes into view both within and against these dominant visual systems. These dominant visual systems are taught and learned through popular media in stories of passing, which expose the artificial boundaries defining and circumscribing who and how we see. Each of the articles chronicles the contours of these systems of seeing black identity while at the same time aiming to respond back to the white gazing subject through whom these depictions are authored and authorized.

What turn-of-the-century activist periodicals can teach—or at least model—for us today is the pedagogical nature of these media representations. Periodicals such as *Crisis* call attention to the pedagogical imperative to write and legislate identity. Mainstream pedagogies of representation *can* work to foreclose the potential for new citizen subjects and subjectivities to emerge. Yet, the texts referenced in this article offer an historical framework for understanding how media invention and intervention by marginal and minority communities works to re-shape the borders and boundary lines characterizing dominant discursive and visual fields of representation.

Although this article focused on historical accounts of periodical activism, such work opens up new avenues for discussing media literacy, defined here as identifying, critiquing, and even modifying the pedagogical dimensions underpinning popular culture. By considering what media landscapes make visible (or not visible) in terms of racial subjectivity, gender expression, and citizenship, such work uses a discourse of pedagogy as a lens for understanding the various popular forums where teaching happens. Making racial passing stories a focal point, this article suggests that such narratives expose the many ways in which different forms of social representation are learned through public culture and public media and the extent to which media landscapes "teach" us normalized identity categories. Such categories have the potential to influence not only how we visualize blackness, but the ways in which blackness is legislated in public spaces, as stories of passing tend to derive specific cultural currency in moments of social and cultural upheaval (moments in which the policing of racial identities in public space is particularly incisive).

While it is important to be sensitive to the cultural particularities and nuances surrounding the policing of black bodies today, the antecedents of such skepticism towards "foreignness" and "otherness" within public forums can be traced to segregationist legislation and deeply-rooted anxieties about modernity at the century's turn. Furthermore, these anxieties can be connected to current fears surrounding globalization and immigration, which have manifested in the rise of nativist populist rhetoric. Thus, it is no surprise that questions of "categorical clarity" with respect to racial identity were re-introduced alongside of nativist concerns about "shoring up our borders" and surveilling foreign others. Conversations about the pedagogy and politics of racial passing are therefore not divorced from more modern concerns regarding how popular media narrates difference and which counternarratives derive media currency.

This article proposes the following three questions for further research seeking to use a discourse of pedagogy for the purposes of better understanding the critical and cultural relevance of examining popular media and media activism: How can a discourse of pedagogy that does not singularly privilege traditional classroom settings and practices further highlight the political dimensions associated with reading and interpreting media texts, texts that explicitly and implicitly teach us the degrees of visibility available to marginal and minority communities in the face of dominant or hegemonic structures? How might this expanded view of pedagogy allow us to balance political concerns with an aesthetic and literary experience of Otherness and passing? How might we use different forms of media expression as a means for intervening in this process of visibility—or changing and counternarrating dominant media tropes?

WORKS CITED

Appelbaum, Yoni. "Rachel Dolezal and the History of Passing for Black." *The Atlantic Monthly*, 15 June 2015. https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/rachel-dolezal-and-the-history-of-passing-for-black/395882/.

Ardis, Ann L. "Making Middlebrow Culture, Making Middlebrow Literary Texts *Matter: The Crisis*, Easter 1912." *Modernist Cultures vol. 6, no. 1,* 2011, pp. 19-36.

—and Patrick C. Collier, eds. *Transatlantic Print Culture 1880-1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Blow, Charles. "The Delusions of Rachel Dolezal." *The New York Times*, 17 June 2015. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/18/opinion/charles-blow-the-delusions-of-dolezal.html.

Caroll, Anne Elizabeth. "Protest and Affirmation: Composite Texts in the Crisis." *American Literature* vol. 76 no. 1, March 2004, pp. 89-116.

Castronovo, Russ. *Beautiful Democracy: Aesthetics and Anarchy in a Global Era.* The U of Chicago P, 2007.

Devega, Chauncey. "What We Can't Afford to Forget About Rachel Dolezal: A Master Class in White Victimology." *Salon*, 22 June 2015. http://www.salon.com/2015/06/22/what_we_cant_afford_to_forget_about_rachel_dolezal_a_master_class_in_white_victimology/.

Eberly, Rosa A. *Citizen Critic: Literary Public Spheres.* U of Illinois P, 2000.

Fauset, Jessie R. "Emmy." *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races* [New York]. December 1912: 79-87.Modernist Journals Project Archive. Brown and Tulsa Universities, ongoing. <http://www.modjourn.org>.

Garcia, Claire Oberon ."Jessie Redmon Fauset Reconsidered." *The Harlem Renaissance Revisited.* Edited by Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar. Johns Hopkins UP, 2010.

Giroux, Henry A. "Cultural Studies, Public Pedagogy, and the Responsibility of Intellectuals." *Communication and Critical Cultural Studies* vol. 1, no. 1, 2004, pp. 59-79.

Graham, Regina F., and Khaleda Rahman. "Race Faker Rachel Dolezal Talks Racial Identity on Chat Show and Says She Ticks Both the Black AND White Box on Forms." *The Daily Mail*, 30 October 2015. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3297068/Rachel-Dolezal-talks-racial-identity-guest-The-Real.html.

Jones, Allie. "Rachel Dolezal Identifies as Medium Spray." *Gawker*, 17 June 2015. http://gawker.com/rachel-dolezal-identifies-as-medium-spray-tan-1711927604.

Kirschke, Amy H. *Art in Crisis: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Struggle for African American Identity and Memory.* Indiana UP, 2007.

Nealon, Jeffrey T., and Susan Giroux. *The Theory Toolbox: Critical Concepts for the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences.* Rowman and Littlefield, 2011.

Sharfstein, Daniel J. "Rachel Dolezal's 'Passing' Isn't So Unusual." *The New York Times Magazine*, 15 June 2015. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/25/magazine/rachel-dolezals-passing-isnt-so-unusual.html.

Thrasher, Steven W. "Rachel Dolezal Exposes our Delusional Constructions and Perceptions of Race." *The Guardian*, 12 June 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/12/rachel-dolezal-delusional-construction-perception-of-race>.

Walters, Alicia. "I Became a Black Woman in Spokane. But Rachel Dolezal, I Was a Black Girl First." *The Guardian*, 15 June 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jun/14/became-a-black-woman-spokane-rachel-dolezal-black-girl.

"The Black Mother." *The Crisis Magazine: A Record of the Darker Races* [New York]. December 1912: 78. Modernist Journals Project Archive. Brown and Tulsa Universities, ongoing. <http://www.modjourn.org>.

"Sackcloth and Ashes." *The Crisis Magazine: A Record of the Darker Races* [New York]. December 1912: 87-88. Modernist Journals Project Archive. Brown and Tulsa Universities, ongoing. <http://www.modjourn.org>

AUTHOR BIO

Tara Propper received her PhD in Rhetoric and Composition from the University of Pittsburgh. She is currently a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Literature and Languages at the University of Texas at Tyler. Her research focuses on the relationship between literacy and identity, specifically the ways in which the production and consumption of newspapers and magazines in the long nineteenth century allowed marginal and minority voices to participate within a public sphere of representation. This research applies a historic framework to investigate the concept of "the public" and what it means to write into or outside of this sphere.

REFERENCE CITATION

MLA

Propper, Tara. "The Pedagogy and Politics of Racial Passing: Examining Media Literacy in Turn-of-the-Century Activist Periodicals". *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2017. www.journaldialogue.org/issues/v4-issue-1the-pedagogy-and-politics-of-racial-passing-examining-media-literacy-in-turn-of-the-century-activist-periodicals

APA

Propper, T. (2017). The pedagogy and politics of racial passing: Examining media literacy in turn-of-the-century activist periodicals. *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy.* *4*(1). http://journaldialogue.org/issues/v4-issue-1the-pedagogy-and-politics-of-racial-passing-examining-media-literacy-in-turn-of-the-century-activist-periodicals.

Eastern Imaginaries

Erika Quinn
Eureka College
Eureka, Illinois, USA
equinn@eureka.edu

ABSTRACT

Orientalist tropes shaped Western ideas about the East in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries through travelogues and fiction, and have persisted into the twenty-first. One central set -piece of these stereotypes is the imaginary Eastern European country, "Ruritania." The advantages and drawbacks of such an imagined place are explored more thoroughly through two recent pieces of pop culture, Wes Anderson's film "The Grand Budapest Hotel", and China Miéville's novel *The City and the City*. While Anderson's film entertains and sustains Orientalist stereotypes, Miéville's novel demands the reader go deeper to empathize with characters and grapple with key issues about collective identity, power, corruption and violence.

Keywords: Wes Anderson, China Miéville, World War Two, Stefan Zweig, Bruno Schulz, Identity, Kitsch, Ruritania, Holocaust, Orientalism

Popular culture artifacts often reveal the "terrain" of social and political conflict (Mukerji and Schudson 1). In the West, fantasies about the mysterious, dangerous, inscrutable world of the East have played a central politico-cultural role since the nineteenth century. Travelogues, novels, operas and other works have perpetuated a particular understanding of the East that underlines Western rationality, civilization and power, and such ideas have persisted into the twenty-first century, articulated in film, fiction and by the mass media. It seems that when conflict arises in a part of the world coded Eastern, this Orientalist Western view gains a new voice and audience. Its most recent iteration is media coverage of the rhetorical and physical violence that broke out in Ukraine in 2014. Ukrainians accused each other of being fascists or stooges of oppressive Russian power, replaying conflicts from the 1930s and 1940s (Snyder). It was difficult for U.S. Americans to understand why World War II seemed so unresolved in that part of Europe. While coverage has generally been more sympathetic and contextual than that during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, when Western media all too often talked about "age-old ethnic hatreds" as the cause of genocidal violence (Wachtel 14; Glenny xxi), the popular view of the East as a confusing, nonsensical place peopled with irrational hotheads persists.

A central set piece of these stereotypes is the imaginary Eastern European country. Such countries resulted from Westerners' ignorance of Eastern realities, given license by those lands' alleged illegibility and irrationality. Because Westerners perceived on-the-ground conditions as impossible to understand, making up details about the region was a solution for easy "comprehension" through Orientalist codes.

Edward Said's pioneering *Orientalism* of the late 1970s argued that Western imperial powers looked at the East through distorting, self-interested lenses. The nineteenth-century study and scrutiny of colonial holdings, an exercise in knowledge acquisition and domination, was not a project solely of the Western powers vis-à-vis their imperial lands. This core-periphery dynamic was also at play within Europe itself.[1] German-speakers looked at Slavs and Magyars as lesser peoples, and the West generally viewed Eastern Europe as "irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'; thus the [Western] European [was] rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'" (Said 40). The violence of World War I, as well as its outbreak in the Balkans, plus the rise of authoritarian regimes and the final catastrophe of the Holocaust seem to give credence to these ideas. After World War II, communism appeared to anchor Eastern Europe in a quagmire of oppression, ignorance and backwardness anew. These projections and stereotypes have persisted past the Cold War era, which itself presented one of the most striking displays of Orientalist thought (Wolff 3), and have only been bolstered in the Western imagination since 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Two recent popular culture artifacts which work with ideas about Eastern Europe by creating imaginary locations, Wes Anderson's acclaimed film, *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014)), and China Miéville's novel, *The City and the City* (2009), display the pitfalls and promises popular culture can offer the student of the region. Are these imaginary locations just more "ambiguity about the definition of Eastern Europe," a place which "is still so often defined in terms of pathology as much as geography" (Zahra 786)? While both artifacts were inspired by the works of Central European Jewish writers of first half of twentieth century and explore the powerful and all too often destructive nature of nationalism, only Miéville's does so in a three-dimensional way that can actually illuminate human motivations and fears. Anderson's alluring film features a dazzling array of actors, from F. Murray Abraham and Ralph Fiennes as the leads, to Bill Murray, Jude Law, Tilda Swinton and Jeff Goldblum as supporting cast. What the viewer actually finds in the film is a disappointment, however. Yes, Anderson's world is fully imagined, but he fails to grasp the magnitude and gravity of the events and decisions facing Eastern Europeans in the late 1930s and 1940s. Choosing to set his film in "Zubrowka," Anderson simply recasts old Western stereotypes of fear and longing onto Eastern Europe. Miéville's novel, on the other hand, imagines cities of uncertain location but whose features clearly conjure the history of and current challenges facing East Central Europe, inviting readers to think more deeply about the region's past and future by exploring questions of collective identity, the origins of conflict, and the possibility of

transcending it. Miéville's imagined world evokes historic and current conflicts in a suggestive, open-ended fashion, inviting the reader to be a participant in understanding.

Imagining Eastern Europe

The "family of ideas" (Said 41) propagated by the Orientalist mindset dates back to the Enlightenment of the late 1700s. Larry Wolff's brilliant study explores how Enlightenment travelers and thinkers created the image of Eastern Europe—: backward, undeveloped, barbaric, in relation to the civilized, enlightened West. The idea of Eastern Europe as a foil to Western European enlightenment and progress was "produced as a work of cultural creation, of intellectual artifice, of ideological self-interest and self-promotion" (Wolff 4). Ideas about the lack of freedom of Eastern peoples, their sexual violence and promiscuity, their superstition and ignorance all clearly reflect back on an enlightened bourgeois agenda. Not only did these ideas serve to bolster Western confidence, they also forwarded a real project of extending Western power. Making Eastern Europe more "legible" by flattening out details and creating broad categories, the West enhanced its ability to extract labor and resources (Scott 25).

Travelers were essential to this constructive work of defining spaces culturally. As they wrote letters and essays about what they saw and encountered in the East, Western travelers participated in constructing the image through the Orientalist lenses they were unwittingly wearing. Often, travelogues attempted to sort out or "unscramble" the populations living in the East into clean, distinct ethnic categories (Wolff 286). Since "so many little wild peoples" settled the region and anthropological and archaeological data was scarce, writers often telescoped time between that of the area's original settlement and their own period, creating a perpetual primitivism (Wolff 305). In the late 1800s, at the height of European imperialism, travel books created "domestic subjects" to engage metropolitan reading publics with expansionist enterprises. Writing, then, helped to produce "the rest of the world" (Pratt 5).

Popular fiction strengthened the trope of the dangerous, barbaric East by the authors' blending of geographic, historical and imagined details. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) begins as a travel narrative with Jonathan Harker's diary excerpts in which he records his journey to Dracula's castle in Transylvania. The pedantic Harker, after assuring the reader of his knowledge of the region, notes that "Buda-Pesth" serves as a gateway to the East, and then lists the regions that make up East Central Europe as well as "unscrambling" their inhabitants by ethnic or national group (Stoker 9). He complains that when he arrived in the country, "we seemed to dawdle" through it, and the peasants are "very picturesque," even though the Slovaks are "more barbarian than the rest," wearing cowboy hats and wide leather belts studded with brass nails. Harker's sense of the slow passage of time (and therefore, of his movement through space) betrays his Western perspective about the ancient, backward East, unchanging and eternal, as well as the inhabitants' lackadaisical ways. Upon nearing the castle, he is surrounded by a crowd of people all making the sign of the cross and pointing two fingers at him, which one man reluctantly explains is a charm against the evil eye. While this detail works as foreshadowing, it also portrays the locals as superstitious, ignorant people (14). His host Dracula welcomes him with the observation, "We are in Transylvania, and Transylvania is not England. Our ways are not your ways, and there shall be to you many strange things" (27). This statement underlines Dracula's dangerousness. He is a threat from the East—, a powerful, well educated creature who possesses an uncertain but dangerous heritage; he is not easily legible. The vampire recounts his lineage in a long monologue: "We Szekelys," he boasts, "when the Magyar, the Lombard, the Avar, the Bulgar, or the Turk poured his thousands on our frontiers, we drove them back" (33). Dracula, too, telescopes time between the conquest of the region and his own present; as he is a vampire, perhaps they are one and the same. Passages like these fall back on "a Western tradition of seeing unrest in Eastern Europe primarily in terms of racial strife" (Arata 628). Dracula himself has a hybrid racial identity of Székely and vampire, two lineages that cannot be unscrambled.

Imaginary people and places that were nonetheless coded "Eastern" were a favorite among British

authors of popular fiction. Like imperial adventure stories, these mysteries and stories of mistaken identity paint "the Other" as backward, particularly in the political realm. Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes story "A Scandal in Bohemia" (1891) echoes many of the clichés and concerns expressed by Stoker. Doyle's story indulges the Western tendency to blend fact and fiction regarding the East, contributing to the idea of Eastern illegibility. The story revolves around Holmes' introduction to the scion of the imaginary House of Ormstein, the hereditary kings of Bohemia. When Holmes first meets the aristocrat, Sigismond von Ormstein is dressed richly, "akin to bad taste" with a cape lined by "flame-colored silk," a "brooch of flaming beryl," and riding boots halfway up his calves, which were trimmed at the tops with fur. Ormstein embodies, in short, "barbaric opulence" (Conan Doyle 244). The case which the King wants Holmes to resolve is one of sexual impropriety that could bring earthshaking scandal to Europe.

A similar story unfolds in *The Prisoner of Zenda*, first published in 1894 by Anthony Hope. Readers may be more familiar with the 1937 screen adaptation starring Ronald Colman, Madeleine Carroll and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. It revolves around competition and plotting for the throne of a fictional Eastern European country, Ruritania. This idea of an imaginary Eastern kingdom—these stories are populated by aristocrats and monarchs, never republicans and liberals, since freedom has not arrived yet—is so pervasive in the West that an entire genre of adventure stories known as "Ruritanian romances" exists, and the term "Ruritania" is used in academia to refer to a hypothetical country.[2] The Ruritanian trope—a collection of stereotypical characteristics applied without any regard for the actual because of its allegedly nonsensical irrationality—is by its nature a hegemonic construct.

World War II and the Holocaust in the Orientalist Imagination

The fraught 1930s and 1940s continue to fascinate audiences, as the ongoing flood of fiction, film and other forms of popular culture addressing Nazism, World War II and the Holocaust illustrates. It is important for this devastating historical material to reach a broad audience and its events to be addressed in a myriad of ways. The primary purpose of popular culture is entertainment, but it can, as above, also illuminate contemporary cultural values and mentalities. Popular culture also makes claims to artistic status at times, and sometimes achieves it. When pop culture treats the interwar and war periods, the collision of entertainment and historical accuracy can often be disturbing, for example, in the 1997 film *Life is Beautiful*. As Ruth Kluger recently observed, "the arts . . . promise pleasure" (392-393) and taking on serious, morally complex and disturbing topics like World War II and the Holocaust sets up a possible dynamic of conflict. Can horrific historical content still sit comfortably with pleasing or beautiful aesthetics? In short, should we enjoy reading about death camps and gas chambers? For American consumers of popular culture, the mainstream triumphalist understanding of World War II and the Holocaust particularly lend themselves to a kitschy, that is, historically ungrounded or inaccurate, aesthetics. Kluger asserts that art, whether literature or film, "can both enlighten and obfuscate, but if the subject is the Holocaust, it cannot be judged apart from history" (400). If historical truth is not present or if the author relies on well-worn stereotypes, the film "denotes contempt vis-à-vis the very horror for which the author professes his or her humanitarian concern" (403). Unfortunately, Anderson's Golden Globe best picture winner is guilty of exactly that.

The Grand Budapest Hotel creates an entire world, one that reproduces a Mitteleuropean style and atmosphere through Anderson's customary highly stylized, lovingly detailed production values. The film is set in the late 1930s as his fictional country Zubrowka, "on the farthest Eastern boundary of Europe" faces occupation by hostile German forces and war. The hotel itself, one of the finest in Europe, is situated in the town of Lutz in the Alps. The film combines the genres of "war films, prison break movies, and screwball comedies" (Gross) to produce a kitschy, campy Orientalist result.

The film follows its protagonist, Gustave H., the concierge of the hotel, played by Fiennes, as he trains a new lobby boy, Zero, and seduces elderly ladies passing through the hotel as guests. When one of them

with whom he has conducted an affair for many years, Madame D. (played by Tilda Swinton), dies under suspicious circumstances, Gustave and Zero attend the visitation and reading of the will at her castle. There, the possibility of the existence of a second will is aired and her children are outraged. They are also incensed because she has bequeathed a valuable painting, "Boy with Apple," to Gustave. Because he knows the heirs hate him, Gustave steals the painting and secures Zero's aid in hiding it. Gustave is framed for Madame D.'s murder, arrested and thrown into prison. He meets a gang of motley prisoners, plies them with pastries and breaks out of prison. Thereafter he and Zero are rescued by his colleagues from the Brotherhood of the Crossed Keys. Meanwhile, Dmitri, Madame D.'s fascist son, played by Adrien Brody, is searching for the second will. Gustave and Zero make their way back to the hotel, rescue the painting, engage in a shooting match with Dmitri, find the second will and after much struggle, secure "Boy with Apple."

In an interview with Terry Gross, host of National Public Radio's *Fresh Air* program, Anderson explained that his choice to create an imaginary country was grounded in the desire to reinvigorate over-familiar World War II material. He claimed, "this series of events in Europe are somehow still right in the middle of our lives . . . we feel the impact in a daily way somehow" (Gross). In order to create the world of Zubrowka in the late 1930s and 1960s, he and his creative team traveled throughout Europe. They made a Ruritanian "pastiche of the greatest hits of Eastern Europe," casting people they met in Budapest, Prague, Berlin and Poland. The fictional city Lutz was modeled on Budapest, Prague and Vienna. The team found a department store in Görlitz in Saxony, very close to the border with Poland and twenty minutes from the Czech Republic, which they transformed into the hotel itself. The Alpine backgrounds were inspired by Caspar David Friedrich's paintings, especially his majestic landscapes (Gross). This rich imagination created a visually stunning, complex, entertaining film.

The sets and miniatures do strongly evoke aspects of the German-speaking former Habsburg world. For instance, at Madame D.'s castle, the grand foyer's rug is adorned with crowns and an eagle. The large marble staircase, encased in dark, carved wood paneling on which coats of arms and antler wreaths hang, could be anywhere in Central Europe. The reading of the will seems to take place in a hunting lodge or the gentlemen's salon, where there are more mounted heads as well as preposterous stacks of rifles. When Gustave is arrested, he is sent to a "criminal internment camp" whose enormous metal gate reads "Check-point 19," evoking a gulag. When Gustave steals "Boy with Apple," he and Zero replace it with a very Egon Schiele-like painting of two women pleasuring each other. While some details do ring with authenticity, many others simply evoke tired clichés and prejudices, such as Gustave's insistence on wearing his favorite perfume, which is included in several scenes.

Anderson was inspired by the Austrian-Jewish writer Stefan Zweig's work, and some parallels stand out immediately. Zweig was a cosmopolitan figure known for his popular short stories, essays, and novels of the early twentieth century. The film's narrator is probably meant to be Zweig, but Zweig's style shows up more strongly in the character of Gustave H. Gustave's elegant, formal speech and diction, refined artistic taste (Gustave is an aficionado and writer of Romantic poetry), and sense of despair about the decline in taste and comportment echo Zweig's *World of Yesterday* (1942). As Gustave's protégé Zero later observes, "To be frank, I think his world had vanished before he ever entered into it. But I will say, he certainly sustained the illusion with a marvelous grace." The setting at the hotel, with its moneyed, cosmopolitan clientele, could also be inspired by the fact that Zweig elected to live in Salzburg upon his return from traveling in Russia in the 1920s and 1930s. He and his wife enjoyed offering hospitality as a hotel does to a huge "variety of visitors" while living there (Zweig 347). So while Zweig's writing and life may have inspired some details and the general diction of the film, Anderson has failed to really understand his source material, particularly in terms of tone. For example, Anderson chooses to punctuate Gustave's dialogue with unexpected obscenities, sprinkled in for laughs. This is a kind of vulgarity Zweig would likely not have embraced. More serious are the facts of Zweig's

despair and ultimate suicide. He described in horrified, outraged detail the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, the heated nationalism of the time and, tragically, the arrival of German National Socialists in Austria and the anti-Semitic violence they encouraged there in the 1930s. To make slapstick comedy from this material misses the mark; making a joke out of Gustave H's fussy, particular taste, love of poetry and elegant diction seems to mock Zweig as well.

Comedic moments generally overwhelm and undermine the film's serious content, primarily through comic-book violence and two-dimensional morality. When Gustave is taken away to prison on murder charges, Zero next sees him with two badly blackened eyes. Given the gulag-like setting, Anderson's reversal, to make those black eyes the result of a prison fight for dominance won by Gustave, who declares you cannot let people think "you're a candy-ass," both relieves the tension and trivializes the violence. Another scene, when Zero and Gustave are interrogated and beaten on a train, has a similar choreographed, comic-book violence about it. An important point about fascism—its contempt for the law—is raised in a scene between Dmitri, Deputy Kovacs and Dmitri's enforcer Jopling. Dmitri wants Kovacs to disregard the possibility of a second, more recent will. Kovacs sternly replies, "I'm an attorney . . . I'm obligated to proceed according to the rule of law." Dmitri angrily gestures to Jopling, who throws Kovacs' cat out the window. This is all filmed in a comic fashion. Perhaps one could accept and enjoy the film simply as comic entertainment had Anderson not evoked Zweig's memoir. In addition, given Anderson's claim that such films as *The Sorrow and the Pity* and *Shoah* "triggered something" in him and "made [him] want to enter into this area" (Gross), his films seems all the more kitschy and immature. In addition to the comic-book violence, the film's morality is also immaturely straightforward and black-and-white, as far from Central European reality during the twentieth century as possible. It is crystal clear who the villains are; they wear black, literally. As the leader of the "Zig Zag Division" modeled on the SS, Dmitri wears long, sabot-like black gowns, a pointed mustache and towering wavy black hair. He is homophobic as well. Jopling, played by Willem Dafoe, is an even more two-dimensional caricature with his death's head rings (or brass knuckles) on all ten fingers, his black leather jacket, sunken cheeks and fangs.

As with costume and set design, Anderson and his team enjoyed playing with names of people and places: a sign in front of a gas station reads "Fuelitz"; one of the local mountains is called Gabelmeister's Peak; the local paper is called the Trans-Alpine Yodel; a famous spa Nebelsbad; and the surrounding forest, the Sudetenwald. Because of these careful appropriations and word play, cognoscenti will enjoy the loving attention to detail, but the pleasure of Anderson's film is only skin deep.

While *The Grand Budapest Hotel* prettifies and trivializes the region's history, Miéville's novel, also set in an imaginary location, invites the reader to think more deeply and empathize with its characters. The novel is a noir-style police procedural. It opens with the discovery of an unidentified young woman's body. While they try to identify the body, Inspector Tyador Borlú and his assistant Lizbyet Corwi learn it was taken to the drop site by a van. Once the body is identified as Mahalia Geary, an American doctoral student studying archaeology, her parents claim her dissertation topic may have led to her death. She had antagonized many scholars at conferences by asking impolitic questions and making unpleasant claims. As Borlú tracks her killer, tracing her connection to other foreigners, extremist groups, historians and politicians, he raises vexing questions about the past and how it is remembered, exposes political corruption and the existence of terrorist cells and ultimately identifies a villain who violates the most basic codes and taboos of the fictional world in which he lives.

The novel is set in two city-states, Beszel and Ul Qoma, which share identical geography. "Grosstopically" then, they are the same location (Miéville 66). Yet within the territory on which the cities are situated, two separate metropolises exist. They exist in a state of permanent tension and distinction deeply imbued in their citizens' minds. The two-in-one territory requires that each city's population fails to perceive the other. They are deeply committed to the differences between the cities and one can see this refusal to perceive as a deep

kind of respect for sovereignty or as the abrogation of civic decency and responsibility. Inhabitants "unsee" features of the other city: its roads, buildings, people, even plants. When Borlú leaves work, he describes his route.

> As I turned, I saw past the edges of the estate to the end of GunterStrász, between the dirty brick buildings. Trash moved in the wind. It might be anywhere. An elderly woman was walking slowly away from me in a shambling sway. She turned her head and looked at me. I was struck by her motion, and I met her eyes. I wondered if she wanted to tell me something. In my glance I took in her clothes, her way of walking, of holding herself, and looking.

> With a hard start, I realized that she was not on GunterStrász at all, and that I should not have seen her.

She was in Ul Qoma; Borlú was in Beszel (12).

Like Anderson's film, Miéville's novel was also inspired by the interwar writing of a Central European Jew. Bruno Schulz's 1934 short story collection, *The Street of Crocodiles,* chronicles his family's life in a Galician town, inhabited by Poles, Ukrainians and Jews, that is undergoing slow but visible change. The respectable areas seem to lie in gloom and decay, which relates to Schulz's own family of textile merchants and the decline of their business brought on by the early twentieth-century oil boom. In the titular story, a sense of mystery, illusion and even deceit linger in the town. "There open up, so to speak, double streets, doppelganger streets, mendacious and delusive streets" (49). The narrator continues, "One's imagination, bewitched and misled, creates illusory maps of the apparently familiar districts, maps in which streets have their proper places and usual names but are provided with new and fictitious configurations by the inexhaustible inventiveness of the night" (49). Miéville's cities emphasize the illusory and constructed nature of identity and that apparently evident truths may in fact obscure the true nature of things. As a boy, Schulz's narrator was obsessed with a wall map his father kept in a desk drawer.

> On that map, . . . the area of the Street of Crocodiles shone with the empty whiteness that usually marks polar regions or unexplored countries of which almost nothing is known. The lines of only a few streets were marked in black and their names given in simple, unadorned lettering, different from the noble script of other captions. The cartographer must have been loath to include that district in the city and his reservations found expression in the typographical treatment. (58)

The blank spot on the map, a classic image of European exploration of Africa, conjures associations with imperial power and the backwardness of the town. Maps represent not only physical space, but also, often, its contestation by different demographic groups. Perhaps, already in the early 1930s, Schulz already possessed a sense of foreboding about impending ethnic tensions and his own fate. Caught up in a revenge cycle between two Gestapo officers, Schulz was shot while walking through the "Aryan quarter" of his German-occupied hometown Drohobych in 1942.

Miéville's cities, corrupt, decaying and mysterious, and full of the foreboding of Schulz's work, possess a myriad of potential internal frontiers, "where crossing from one side to the other means switching the sovereign political authority under which one lives" (Bartov and Weitz 1). The cities control this process very tightly by creating only one legal method to perform such a crossing, through Copula Hall. Any other crossing constitutes Breach—the transgression of territorial and social boundaries, the cities' deepest and most terrifying taboo. The two cities depend on their utter discreteness and their citizens' ability to live in this kind of fiction. Children have to learn early to "unsee" the other city; in places of crosshatching, where the cities interact in a Swiss cheese-like fashion, "Ul Qoman children and Besz children clamber past each

other [on the same tree], each obeying their parents' whispered strictures to unsee the other" (195). Both cities' inhabitants live under intense psychological pressure to deny the reality their senses take in, much as inhabitants of Soviet Communist or other totalitarian states did.

While Miéville is reluctant for readers to "identify" where Beszel/Ul Qoma is located, the cities strongly evoke Central Europe, although this is by no means definitive: some may see parallels to the Middle East. In an interview, Miéville cautions readers that his novel is not allegorical. He suggests the cities are a metaphor; unlike Anderson's film, the reader's task is not to simply decode (320-21). Miéville's invented languages, Besz and Illitan, nonetheless echo many patterns of Central European spelling and names, for example GunterStrász and KünigStrász in Beszel, as well as its Venceslas Square (9, 65, 44). One can fly direct from Beszel to Budapest, Skopje, and Athens, and Bucharest and Turkey are also close by (72, 31).

The air of paranoia that pervades both cities, as well as Borlú's somewhat hard-boiled affect, contribute to the noir atmosphere. The fact that there is a mysterious entity—Breach—that polices the borders between the cities deepens the sense of diffused Foucauldian power, and Breach is a kind of bogeyman possessed of "powers . . . almost impossible . . . to make out" (66). Here, morality is much more ambiguous than in Anderson's film; the villains are revealed only at the end. One of them is simply a corrupt, greedy politician, while the other, his puppet master, truly has destructive designs.

The political landscape of the city-states features collective identity as a key issue. Both sides are troubled by ultranationalists and unificationists, those who wish the two cities to become one. When talking about the Dissident Units on the police force, Corwi explains that their focus is "all Nazis and reds and unifs and so on" (39). Both Beszel and Ul Qoma have extremist groups willing to use violence to forward their programs: Borlú is sent a mail bomb, and Mahalia Geary faced several death threats for investigating the cities' shared past and origin myths. Because there is no physical frontier demarcating them, the cities' overlapping geographies heighten typical nationalist fears of internal fifth columns; the borderland, so to speak, is inscribed in every minute detail of daily life for the cities' inhabitants, and their own instincts and reflexes can betray them and their cities in turn. It takes great effort to uphold the artificiality of the cities' discreteness.

The languages spoken in the two cities are the anchors for their different national identities and went through the kind of engineering most Eastern European languages did during the nineteenth century. Nationalists "forced linguistic differences to stand for a host of alleged qualitative differences" because the cultures were actually very similar (Judson 20-21). Borlú comments on the cities' languages, Besz and Illitan:

> If you do not know much about them, Illitan and Besz sound very different. They are written, of course, in distinct alphabets. Besz is in Besz: thirty-four letters, left to right, all sounds rendered clear and phonetic, consonants, vowels and demivowels decorated with diacritics—it looks, one often hears, like Cyrillic (though that is a comparison likely to annoy a citizen of Besz, true or not). Illitan uses Roman script. That is recent. . . . Read the travelogues of the last-but-one century and those older, and the strange and beautiful right-to-left Illitan calligraphy—and its jarring phonetics—is constantly remarked on. . . . The script was lost in 1923, overnight, a culmination of Ya Ilsa's reforms: it was Atatürk who imitated him, not, as is usually claimed, the other way around. (41)

But language is perhaps only a surface detail: Borlú continues that

> these distinctions are not as deep as they appear. Despite careful cultural differentiation, in the shape of their grammars and the relations of their phonemes (if not the base sounds themselves), the languages are closely related—they share a common ancestor, after all. It feels almost seditious to say so. Still. (41)

The cities share an unknown origin. Mahalia Geary's archaeological research at the Bol Ye'an dig in Ul Qoma makes nationalists defensive because it challenges their origin myths. The "uncertainties of history" have been transformed into "readable spaces" (Silberman, Till and Ward 4) by ironing out nuance and uncertainty with totalizing categories. Borlú muses,

> It may or may not be Beszel, that we built, back then, while others may have been building Ul Qoma on the same bones. Perhaps there was one thing back then that later schismed on the ruins, or perhaps our ancestral Beszel had not yet met and standoffishly entwined with its neighbor. (42)

The importance of history for shaping identity for both those in Besz and in Ul Qoma is all too present for Borlú. His awareness of the historical revisionism at work in both cities only deepens his pessimism about their futures.

> That beginning [of the two cities] was a shadow in history, an unknown—records effaced and vanished for a century either side. Anything could have happened. From that historically brief quite opaque moment came the chaos of our material history, an anarchy of chronology, of mismatched remnants and delighted and horrified investigators. (50)

It is clear that the cities' official arrangement is meant to manage some kind of problem, and the "solution" mirrors that which was common in postwar peace treaties of the twentieth century. Where once diversity and plurality existed, strict segregation was put in place, in Beszel and Ul Qoma's cases, more a "wall in the head" than a border fence; the distinction is enforced every moment by how people "act, dress, or move" (Silberman, Till and Ward 1-2). Both cities at one point worked together at least tacitly to develop the system. Both adhere to it, accept it, although they also need the supervisory power of Breach to enforce the distinction between them. Like Havel's greengrocer, everyone is complicit—all participate in perpetuating the system (Havel 132).

Rather than reifying them, Miéville directly engages the stereotypes and prejudices the West projects onto the East. When Mahalia Geary's parents arrive, clueless and disbelieving not only about their daughter's death but also about the nature of the city where she lived, they have an encounter with James Thacker at the U.S. embassy in which Miéville directly addresses those prejudices and seeks to debunk them. The Gearys want to know why they can't simply go to Ul Qoma immediately, lacking an understanding of the strict diplomatic and security protocols that exist between the cities. As recounted by Borlú, Thacker says,

> 'Inspector Borlú, I'll be happy to explain this.' He hesitated. He wanted me to go. Any explanation carried out in my presence would have to be moderately polite: alone with other Americans he could stress to them how ridiculous and difficult these critics were, how sorry he and his colleagues were for the added complications of a crime occurring in Beszel, and so on. He could insinuate. It was an embarrassment, an antagonism. (78-79)

Thacker, an agent of the imperial metropole, has adjusted to the unusual local conditions, but he still sees them as unnecessary, irrational, and indicative of their inhabitants' basic otherness. Miéville also addresses the instrumentalization of developing countries during and after the Cold War when the inspectors Dhatt (from Ul Qoma) and Borlú compare each city's socio-economic development. Borlú observes, "Washington loves us, and all we've got to show for it is Coke" (194). Dhatt thinks that the cities are pawns of international power plays, and Ul Qoma's apparent wealth compared to Beszel's is but a temporary condition. "All this is old Cold War bullshit. Who gives a fuck who the Americans want to play with, anyway?" (194). The backwardness

of Beszel in particular reflects Schulz's sense of his town being left behind by the forces of history, neglected to molder into meaninglessness.

Miéville's novel ends much more ambiguously than Anderson's film, with Borlú becoming deracinated in a fashion, as he becomes Breach, the all-powerful authority that enforces the separation of the two cities. What this suggests is unclear—perhaps that national difference and hatred can be transcended? Or perhaps clandestine, authoritarian powers are pulling nationalist strings to serve their own interests, an interpretation presently circulating in East Central Europe? The novel lends itself to myriad interpretations, both historical and contemporary through its fully imagined world, its serious investigation of questions of national identity, borders, political violence and power.

Imaginary places in Eastern Europe have a long history as orientalist tropes. The alleged illegibility, backwardness and barbarity of Eastern lands tempted Westerners to "unscramble" them as well as dominate them. Depicting the East bereft of its full historical context is to be guilty of creating kitschy art, something that may be aesthetically pleasing yet historically inaccurate and therefore, irresponsible. Not only does Anderson's film miss the mark in those terms; it also reifies national identity by perpetuating stereotypes through his exaggerated characters. Miéville's novel avoids this trap through its fully imagined world and its serious investigation of questions of national identity, borders, political violence and power. Miéville seems to suggest that we need to remember how artificial collective identity is and that we can alter it. That hopeful vision has me thinking about it yet again as events in Ukraine and East Central Europe unfold.

WORKS CITED

Anderson, Wes, and Terry Gross; March 12, 2014: Wes Anderson: 'We Made a Pastiche' of Eastern Europe's Greatest Hits. http://www.npr.org/2014/03/12/289423863/wes-anderson-we-made-a-pastiche-of-eastern-europes-greatest-hits, accessed 6 July 2014.

Arata, Stephen. "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization," *Victorian Studies* vol. 33, no. 4, Summer 1990, pp. 621-645.

Bartov, Omer, and Eric D. Weitz. *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands*. Indiana UP, 2013.

Berman, Nina. *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne: Zum Bild des Orients in der deutschsprachigen Kultur um 1900*. J.B. Metzler, 1997.

Doyle, Arthur Conan. "A Scandal in Bohemia," in *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*, vol. 1, Bantam, 1986, pp. 239-262.

Glenny, Misha. *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804-2011*. Penguin Books, 2012.

Gross, Terry, and Wes Anderson. "Wes Anderson: 'We Made a Pastiche' of Eastern Europe's Greatest Hits." *Fresh Air,* 12 March 2014, http://www.npr.org/2014/03/12/289423863/wes-anderson-we-made-a-pastiche-of-eastern-europes-greatest-hits, accessed 6 July 2014.

Goldsworthy, Vesna. *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination*. Yale UP, 1998.

Havel, Vaclav. "The Power of the Powerless," in *Open Letters: Selected Writings 1965-1990.* Edited, edited by Paul Wilson, Vintage Books, 1991, pp. 125-214.

Hope, Anthony. *The Prisoner of Zenda: Being the History of Three Months in the Life of an English Gentleman*. Dent, 1894.

Judson, Pieter M. *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontier of Imperial Austria*. Harvard UP, 2007.

Kluger, Ruth. "The Future of Holocaust Literature," *German Studies Review* vol. 37, no. 2, 2014, pp. 391-403.

Kontje, Todd. *German Orientalisms.* U of Michigan P, 2004.

Marchand, Suzanne. *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship.* Cambridge UP, 2010.

Miéville, China. *The City and the City*. Ballantine Books, 2009.

Mukerji, Chandra and Michael Schudson, *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*. U of California P, 1991.

Pratt, Mary Jo. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Routledge, 1992.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books, 1979.

Schulz, Bruno. "The Street of Crocodiles," in *The Collected Works of Bruno Schulz*. Edited and translated, edited by Jerzy Ficowski, Picador, 1998, pp. 18-99.

Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale UP, 1998.

Silberman, Marc, Karen E. Till, and Janet Ward. *Walls, Borders, Boundaries: Spatial and Cultural Practices in Europe*. Berghahn Books, 2012.

Snyder, Timothy. "Fascism, Russia, and Ukraine." *The New York Review of Books*, 20 March 2014, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2014/03/20/fascism-russia-and-ukraine/, accessed July 11, 2014.

Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. Edited by Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal, Norton, 1997.

Wachtel, Andrew Baruch. *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia*. Stanford UP, 1998.

Wolff, Larry. *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. Stanford UP, 1994.

Zahra, Tara. "Going West," *East European Politics & Societies* vol. 25, no. 4, September 2011, pp. 785-791.

Zweig, Stefan. *The World of Yesterday*. Translated by Anthea Bell, The U of Nebraska P, 1964.

ENDNOTES

[1] My thanks to Alexander Vari and the journal's anonymous readers for their helpful suggestions on this piece. See Berman, Kontje, and Marchand.See Nina Berman, *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne: Zum Bild des Orients in der deutschsprachigen Kultur um 1900* (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 1997); Todd Kontje, *German Orientalisms (*Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004); Suzanne Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[2] See Goldsworthy.

AUTHOR BIO

Erika Quinn is an Associate Professor at Eureka College. Her research interests lie in Central European cultural history, focusing on the formation of subjectivities and the history of emotions. Her book *Franz Liszt: A Story of Central European Subjectivity*, was published by Brill in 201. She has also published articles on twentieth-century bereavement, with an emphasis on discourses and practices of grief and war widowhood. Quinn's work can also be found at Academia.edu, https://eureka.academia.edu/ErikaQuinn.

REFERENCE CITATION

MLA

Quinn, Erika. "Eastern Imaginaries." *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2017 http://journaldialogue.org/issues/v4-issue-1/eastern-imaginaries/

APA

Quinn, E. (2017). Eastern imaginaries. *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy. 4*(1). http://journaldialogue.org/issues/v4-issue-1/eastern-imaginaries/

More Than Simple Plagiarism: Ligotti, Pizzolatto, and *True Detective's* Terrestrial Horror

Jonathan Elmore Ph.D.
Savannah State University
Savannah, Georgia, USA
elmorej@savannahstate.edu

ABSTRACT

Of course, *True Detective* is neither a philosopher's bedtime story nor supernatural horror, and yet there remains a productive affinity between Ligotti's work and the HBO series. Where Ligotti provides substantial portions of the hallmark character's identity and dialogue, *True Detective* puts Ligotti's thought experiment to far more practical uses than does Ligotti himself. By intertwining hurricanes and flooding alongside industry and pollution into the background and negative space of the setting, the series implicates the urgent material reality of climate change and environmental collapse into the setting: "all of this is going to be under water in thirty years" ("Long Bright Dark"). In doing so, the series employs Southern gothic conventions to look forward rather than backward in time. Rather than the decay and degeneration of the landscape as reflective of the past, such squalor points forward to a time, rapidly approaching, when the setting will itself be swallowed by the sea. Hence, *True Detective* enacts a more practical approach to Ligotti's horror, one I'm calling terrestrial horror.

Keywords: True Detective, Terrestrial Horror, Thomas Ligotti, Pessimism, Ecocriticism, Cosmic Horror

It is no secret that Nic Pizzolatto, the writer of *True Detective*, "borrowed" sections of Thomas Ligotti's *The Conspiracy Against the Human Race*. Whether this use of Ligotti's text constitutes plagiarism or merely allusion caused a minor furor in the media during the first season. Pizzolatto acknowledges that "in episode one there are two lines in particular (and it would have been nothing to re-word them) that were specifically phrased in such a way as to signal Ligotti admirers" (Calia 2). Mike Davis and Jon Padgett see Pizzolatto's "signaling" as far more problematic. Davis points out that, "writers work hard to produce original ideas, stories, and dialogue, and it is unfair for another writer to pawn off those ideas as their own. Pizzolatto has been nominated for an Emmy for writing *True Detective*, while Thomas Ligotti labors in near obscurity" (1). Padgett explicitly addresses Pizzolatto's claims that his use of Ligotti is a kind of homage to the writer:

> 'Homage' suggests that Pizzolatto was honoring Ligotti or showing him respect of some
> sort. Lifting Ligotti's work without permission or attribution may have or may not have
> been a consciously malicious decision, but in any case it was neither honorable nor
> reverential." (Davis 4)

While it seems dated to pass judgement on Pizzolatto's use of Ligotti, Padgett is undeniably right when he claims, "in no uncertain terms, the pessimism and anti-natalism of Rust Cohle as articulated by Ligotti is the hallmark element of the show" (Davis 5). Given this, we should be further exploring the implications of such close affinity between the series and Ligotti's work.

Ligotti's project, in *The Conspiracy Against the Human Race*, is quite simple on its face: he considers the possibility that being alive is NOT necessarily better than being otherwise: "For thousands of years a debate has been going on in the shadowy background of human affairs. The issue to be resolved: 'What should we say about being alive?' Overwhelmingly, people have said, "being alive is all right" (20). While conversational in tone, even flippant, Ligotti's target is nothing less than humanity's ontological positivism about itself. Ligotti takes seriously the notion that being alive is not "all right;" in fact, being alive may be tantamount to "inhabit[ing] a nightmare without hope of awakening to a natural world, to have our bodies embedded neck-deep in a quagmire of dread, to live as shut-ins in a house of horrors" (216). In short, Ligotti's project explores the stakes of considering human existence as a burden rather than a blessing.

Ligotti grounds his considerations in the earliest stirrings of human consciousness: "For ages they had been without lives of their own. The whole of their being was open to the world and nothing divided them from the rest of creation. How long they had thus flourished none of them knew" (19). A species without self-awareness and without history, Ligotti paints pre-humans as inseparable from the natural world: "Then something began to change. It happened over unremembered generations. The signs of a revision without forewarning were being writ ever more deeply into them" (19). Citing a "change" toward consciousness, Ligotti marks this occurrence as itself outside of pre-humanity; as something that happened to them and not something they initiated or controlled. Furthermore, this change was ontological; it would become a constitutive property of what would later become human. As early humans "moved forward, they begin crossing boundaries whose very existence they had never imagined. After nightfall, they looked up at a sky filled with stars and felt themselves small and fragile in the vastness. Soon they begin to see everything in a way they never had in older times" (19). The ontological change overtaking early anthros, the very change that, in part, would make them human, also changed the way they perceived the reality within which they lived.

> They begin to take bodies that were stiff and still to distant places so they could not find
> their way back to them. But even after they had done this, some within their group did
> see those bodies again, often standing silent in the moonlight or loitering sad-faced just
> beyond the glow of a fire." (19)

Ritual and symbolism crept into the world alongside temporality, which, in turn, spawned self-consciousness:

> Everything changed once they had lives of their own and knew they had lives of their
> own. It even became impossible for them to believe things had ever been any other way.
> They were masters of their movements now, as it seemed, and never had there been
> anything like them. (19)

Consciousness separates humans from the rest of existence. Humanity then becomes, by definition, that which is outside of nature, that which is unnatural. "The epoch had passed when the whole of their being was open to the world and nothing divided them from the rest of creation. Something had happened. They did not know what it was, but they did know it as that which *should not be*" (19-20). From its inception, the conditions of possibilities for human consciousness place humanity outside of the natural order, as a kind of violation of how existence otherwise functions.

Aside from clearly providing fodder for Rustin Cohle's rambling monologues, Ligotti's conception of human consciousness, and subsequently, of humanity, is that which "Because of consciousness, parent of all horror, became susceptible to thoughts that were startling and dreadful to us, thoughts that have never been equitably balanced by those that are collected and reassuring" (27). In such a conception, Pandora's Box is the human mind itself:

> One minds now begin dredging up horror, flagrantly joyless possibilities, enough of
> them to make us drop to the ground in paroxysms of self-soiling consternation should
> they go untrammeled. This potentiality necessitated that certain defense mechanisms
> be put to use to keep us balanced on the knife-edge of vitality as a species. (27)

In order to set up defenses against our own consciousness, Ligotti offers an ontologically paradoxical version of humanity:

> What we do as a conscious species is set markers for ourselves. Once we reach one
> marker, we advance to the next--as if we were playing a board game we think will never
> end, despite the fact that it will, like it or not. If you are too conscious of not liking
> it, then you may conceive of yourself as a biological paradox that cannot live with its
> consciousness and cannot live without it. And in so living and not living, you take your
> place with the undead and the human puppet. (28)

Limiting our own consciousness becomes crucial for survival. Setting insignificant goals for our lives, we must deceive ourselves into believing that these goals define our lives. Hence our consciousness of our lives must be turned to the task of obscuring our state of existence from ourselves. This state of "living and not living" results in human existence as a kind of dark parody of itself made manifest as the undead or the human puppet.

Ligotti's use of horrific figures for conceptualizing humanity's existence is no accident. He accords "supernatural horror" a privileged place in the diagnosis of the human condition: "we are crazed mimics of the natural prowling about for a peace that will never be ours. And the medium in which we circulate is that of the supernatural, a dusky element of horror that obtains for those who believe in what should be and should not be" (222). And within this medium of the supernatural is where we must exist,

> one thing we know is real: horror. It is so real, in fact, that we cannot be sure it could
> not exist without us. Yes, it needs our imaginations and our consciousness, but it does
> not ask or require our consent to use them. Indeed horror operates with complete
> autonomy. Generating ontological havoc, it is mephitic foam upon which our lives
> merely float. And, ultimately, we must face up to it: horror is more real than we are. (182)

A far-reaching claim to be sure, but once granted, Ligotti's project then privileges the literature of supernatural

horror as a site wherein we can contemplate our true plight of existing.

Of course, this contemplation can only be fleeting and fragmented. Closing his book, Ligotti remarks, "The hell of human consciousness is only a philosopher's bedtime story we can hear each night and forgot each morning when we awake to go to school or to work or wherever we may go day after day after day" (226). In the end, Ligotti's project is a thought experiment; in fact it cannot be anything else, since human consciousness paradoxically creates and cannot abide the horror of human existence. Certainly, Ligotti conceives of supernatural horror fictions as privileged sites of ontological insight. Yet, the book ends with humanity's own inability to act on the only conclusion left:

> …might we not bring an end to the conspiracy against the human race? This would seem the right course. [...] Overpopulated worlds of the unborn would not have to suffer for our undoing [...] that said, nothing we know would have us take that step. What could be more unthinkable? We are only human beings. Ask anybody. (228)

Still, *True Detective* is neither a philosopher's bedtime story or supernatural horror, and yet there remains a productive affinity between Ligotti's work and the HBO series. Where Ligotti provides substantial portions of the hallmark character's identity and dialogue, *True Detective* puts Ligotti's thought experiment to far more practical uses than does Ligotti himself. By intertwining hurricanes and flooding alongside industry and pollution into the background and negative space of the setting, the series implicates the urgent material reality of climate change and environmental collapse into the setting: "all of this is going to be under water in thirty years" ("Long Bright Dark"). In doing so, the series employs Southern gothic conventions to look forward rather than backward in time. Rather than the decay and degeneration of the landscape as reflective of the past, such squalor points forward to a time, rapidly approaching, when the setting will itself be swallowed by the sea. Hence, *True Detective* enacts a more practical approach to Ligotti's horror, one I'm calling terrestrial horror: "it's all one big gutter in outer space" ("Long Bright Dark").

It is worth noting that several television critics and scholars have cast *True Detective* into the traditional "cosmic horror," and that I'm further refining that distinction with the label, "terrestrial horror." "Cosmic Horror" has come to refer to a body of horror fiction related to and stemming from the work of H.P. Lovecraft, but also including other late 19th and 20th century writers, most noteworthy of them for discussions of *True Detective* being Robert Chambers and his *The King in Yellow*. The label originates, at least loosely, in the two editions of Lovecraft's own essay, "Supernatural Horror and Literature." As Vivian Ralickas explains, drawing on the work of Bradley Will, "the force of cosmic horror is based upon Lovecraft's presentation of the unknowable rather than merely the unknown in his fiction" ("Cosmic Horror" 364). Elsewhere, Ralickas continues,

> it has become commonplace in Lovecraft scholarship to affirm that his antihumanistic creation narrative asserts that our social bonds, religious beliefs, and cultural achievements are not only irrelevant if considered from outside the limited scope of human affairs, but are based upon a false understanding of the cosmos and of our place in it. ("Art" 297)

Donald Burleson echoes this sentiment: stories of cosmic horror "form a sort of conceptual web, interlacing to provide a potential for expression of the one major idea that always emerges; [...] self-knowledge, or discovery of one's own position in the real fabric of the universe, is psychically ruinous" (137). To think of Cthulhu is to risk one's sanity. To read even a short passage from "The King in Yellow," the fictional play occupying the negative space in the center of Chamber's volume of the same name, is to lose one's mind. Cosmic horror focuses on human limitations and irrelevance and traffics in questions of scale. From a cosmic perspective, both in terms of sheer size and in terms of deep time, humanity does not meaningfully exist at all.

There are obvious reasons why critics and scholars have aligned *True Detective* with cosmic horror: Cohle's pessimistic soliloquies; the various ruminations about time circular and otherwise; the primeval imagery of death, and Cohle's cosmic hallucination in his final encounter with Billy Childress. However, because cosmic horror positions humanity as irrelevant, it also relieves humans of any real culpability towards the conditions of its existence. Not so with *True Detective*, and therefore, the series needs a more precise set of terminology for codifying the elements of horror at work.

Terrestrial horror offers three things: (1) it employs the gothic setting so common to horror to look forward rather than backward, thus repurposing gothic conventions to the service of foreshadowing; (2) it implicates all of humanity in corruption rather than an individual or group; and (3) it changes the setting's echo of the physical, mental, and moral corruption of the inhabitants from the symbolic to the literal. The end game of terrestrial horror is simple. It opens a space wherein humans must confront the end of humanity. This confrontation is not softened by a comforting conceptual veneer (i.e., theoretically humanity will end as all species must), nor does the terrestrial horror dilute its posthumanism with safe temporal space (i.e., of course humanity will end in the distant future). Moreover, terrestrial horror blames human corruption for the demise of humanity. Unlike Cosmic horror, wherein humans are irrelevant, terrestrial horror implicates human activity directly in the destruction of the environment and the horrors that ensue. Terrestrial horror uses the traditional conventions of gothic horror to confront the real and immediate end of humanity as we have known it. Human life will discontinue as it has been existing within a generation or two. Terrestrial horror takes up the intellectual project of horror fiction more generally by forcing its audience to consider a radical and immediate posthumanism.

Gothic Conventions Look Forward

Certainly, *True Detective* offers traditional elements of gothic horror and of the Southern gothic more specifically: dusky swamp scenes, labyrinthine structures and neighborhoods, uncanny primitive symbols and markings, and erotized violence and death. In fact, the two central confrontations of the entire season are thoroughly encoded as gothic encounters. We get a rather heavy-handed preview of the first showdown, wherein Hart kills Reggie Ledoux and the Dora Lange case is supposedly solved. As "The Locked Room" concludes, Cohle offers a gothically inflected rumination on the comforts of death: "It was all the same dream, a dream that you had inside a locked room, a dream about being a person and like a lot of dreams there's a monster at the end of it" ("The Locked Room"). As he talks, the scene cuts to Ledoux and his compound. The compound is literally the center of a labyrinth set into the Louisiana low country. Complete with concealed traps and cryptic, primitive stick made "devil nets," the labyrinth contains a compound of decaying structures at its center, as a kind of perverse mad scientist's lab containing captive children and the chemistry of 21st degeneration. Ledoux himself first appears in this scene as the monster at the end of humanity's collective dream. Cohle's lengthy voiceover, offering the audience the monster incarnate, the dissonant music, the striking body of the "monster itself" dangle at the end of the episode inviting speculation on Ledoux not as human but as monster.

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen reminds us that the physicality of monstrosity, the body of the monster itself is a primary node of meaning:

> The monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy (ataractic or incendiary), giving them life and an uncanny independence. The monstrous body is pure culture. A construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read: the *monstrum* is etymologically "that which reveals," "that which warns," a glyph that seeks a hierophant. (199)

The monster's body is nothing but text; it exists only to convey. This machete wielding, tattooed, monster

at the end of humanity's dream in "a locked room" serves also as a critical turning point in the series' use of animality.

Wearing only a makeshift loincloth and gas mask, carrying a machete, Ledoux, at this moment, functions as lycanthrope, as hybrid, as a figure suspended between human and monster, between man and beast. The mask protrudes from his face offering the suggestion of a snout and deformed trunk swinging under glassy, impenetrable eyes. In a series filled with humans sporting animal heads, Regional Ledoux recalls both the antlers crowning Dora Lange's corpse, the paganized masks of the abusive collection of men driving the violence behind the plot, and enacts an important departure at the season's midpoint. His animality results not from the performance of biological hybridity between human and animal but from technological hybridity between human and pollution. His "animal face" looks not backward in time toward an ancient paganism but forward to a horrific, present and future industrialism. The labyrinth at the center of the season houses an avatar of terrestrial horror: a human/animal made hybrid by a piece of technology rendered necessary by the advent of chemical warfare, pollution, and the chemical/commercial reality of street drugs. While terrestrial horror employs traditional gothic images and themes, it is the industry, technology, pollution, and climate change of the 21st century that actually haunts the series.

Repeatedly, even insistently, images of industry: smoke stacks, commercial boats, nondescript industrial buildings silently manifest in the *mise en scene* of *True Detective* largely unnoticed by the characters themselves; the audience is often the only witness to these ghostly avatars of industry. As Andrian Van Young has observed, "This gorgeously dilapidated region—every year more worried away by hurricanes, the oil-drilling erosion of protective wetlands, and sinking clay foundations—is the perfect earthly limbo for staging *True Detective*'s elemental drama" (2). The silent presence of these industrial sentinels embedded in the setting point to the presence and immediate future of the region, and consequently of the Earth itself. While the individual corruption of specific bodies and specific humans plays out, the harbingers of industry gesture to the global corruption that is underway marching toward the inevitable demise of the human race itself.

Only a few minutes into the pilot, Rust and Cohle visit the staging site of Dora Lange's body. As their car arrives, a series of massive power lines tower over the scene silently stretching away out of sight. Subtle and seemingly part of the background, this line of giant steel towers strung together by electrical lines appears again as Cohle walks away from the scene contemplating his daughter's birthday. Set in Erath, an obvious anagram for "Earth," these giants, recalling crucifixes and industrial "devil nets," themselves preside over the scene of a specific corrupted body but point towards the corruption of the planet itself as the cane still smolders under the industrial power that courses through the lines hanging above the entire scene.

The critical presence of industrial pollution and corruption in the setting of *True Detective*, recalls traditional gothic horror conventions but does so to different effect. As Sharla Hutchison and Rebecca Brown articulate, traditional gothic horror settings and monsters represent "repressed transhistorical fears," but they go on to elucidate the changing nature of horror fiction in the late 20th and early 21st centuries (1). "Monster" derives from *monstrum*, meaning "that which reveals" or "that which warns" (Cohen 4), and monstrous indeed is the industrial corruption seeping into nearly every aspect of the show. Unlike the traditional uses of the gothic setting, which look backward toward repressed cultural fears, and unlike cosmic horror which takes a temporal perspective measured in eons looking both to the impossibly ancient or the impossibly distant future, *True Detective*, as an example of terrestrial horror, uses its setting to look to the immediate future, to events just a generation or so away. The setting, then, of terrestrial horror is the ever looming spectre of environmental collapse brought about by industrial pollution and corruption. Not only is the series about posthumanism, it is literally set in the final days of humans living in industrial societies.

All of Humanity is Corrupt

Cohle further aligns the specific corruption of the murder with a general corruption of humanity itself.

Following their investigation of Dora Lange's body in the cane fields, Rust offers his version of pessimism casting doubts as to the tenability of humanity ontologically. Yet the scene ends not philosophically but again industrially: "I get a bad taste in my mouth out here. Aluminum, ash, like you can smell the psychosphere" ("The Long Bright Dark"). If we take psychosphere literally as the atmosphere of human thought or human consciousness, that atmosphere is itself permeated by the pollution of industry. Our collective destruction of the planet is seeping into the thoughts and consciousness of humanity as a whole.

While the corruption of the actual murders and local politicians remains at the center of the season, *True Detective* implicates every character in some degree of corrupt behavior. For example Tuttle, and his cousin the governor, using his position and relationship to steer the investigation away from the truth; Geraci and the boys "canvass[ing] the bars pretty good;" or "a Man's game charg[ing] a man's price." ("Seeing Things" and "Haunted Houses"). Marty's philandering and murder of Reggie Ledoux, and their systematic cover-up of the true events surrounding their "big 419" implicate the detectives themselves in the corruption rampant throughout the series. In fact there are no "innocent" characters to be found in *True Detective*.

A particularly instructive example of this is Maggie. The long suffering wife of Marty Hart certainly has cause to be angry with her husband; however, even she is finally guilty of violence as she destroys the relationship between Hart and Cohle. Following Marty's final infidelity, Maggie takes matters into her own hands and attempts to reciprocate the infidelity. However she "couldn't do it:" couldn't "go home with a stranger" ("Haunted Houses"). Instead, she approaches a recently suspended Cohle, and they consummate her plans. She then explains, "Now, he'll have to leave. He won't stand for this" ("Haunted Houses"). Herself a victim of Marty's indiscretions, she perpetuates the degeneration of relationships.

Along with the absence of innocent characters, the series is rife with corrupted human bodies. Opening with the posed corpse of Dora Lange, the series parades various mutilated corpses across the screen, underscoring that the corruption of humanity (as represented by the bodies), is epidemic and largely manmade. The pitcher's "cerebral event" implies steroid abuse. However, the family was never told what really happened. Dora's mother's body has been wrecked by the chemical exposure associated with years in dry cleaning. Her ruined nails and tremors offer an outward sign of a damaged mental state made worse by the gruesome murder of her daughter. Burt did his time in Angola where he was mutilated due to "bad medicine." Cohle himself has hallucinations caused by prolonged drug use, and Billy Childress's oft remarked upon face results from his father's violence and is a permanent living reminder that the corruption of flesh in this series extends far beyond the actual murders driving the plot.

Traditional gothic corruption localizes itself around an individual, family or small group wherein the evil, alienated, or traumatized individual(s) become the nexus of the gothic horror of the narrative. For example Dr. Frankenstein and his creature, Lord Ruthven, The Usher family, or Count Dracula. The fascination of the traditional gothic works in the collapse of the individual human mind and body. María Negroni looks back to the original gothic narrative:

> In 1748 [Walpole] begin obsessive constructing Strawberry Hill. For more than sixteen
> years, he labored at that collage, constantly tacking new structures onto his mansion.
> [...] One day, while fighting a fever, he dreamed of another castle and the Imperative to
> bring it to be. The second castle, *The Castle Otranto* (1764), is a book that he wrote in a
> single sitting, by channeling the excesses of his dream. And so, he finally built a house
> not for himself but for his desire and finally grasped the imagined--that is real-- form
> for his castle. (6)

Herein lies the individuality of gothic horror. One troubled mind, forging for itself an expression of that abnormality, the abomination residing within the singularly corrupted mind and body: "this episode is

crucial. It shatters, for the first time, the effective myth of the Enlightenment. Here its confidence wilts; night tinges its sunshine. His intuition was simple: if reality exceeds what is observable, then darkness is a gift, as is awareness of the darkness in the world" (6-7). As The Enlightenment and its handmaiden, Liberal Humanism, glorified the individual human and individual human accomplishments as central to existence. The gothic was ever the dark side of that equation. Wherein individuals could be exceptional, they could just as easily be exceptionally corrupt.

Cosmic horror alternatively positions the corruption on a cosmic scale, rendering questions of individual or communal human corruption mute. As Lovecraft himself explains,

> The unknown, being likewise the unpredictable, became for our primitive forefathers a terrible and omnipotent source of boons and calamities visited upon mankind for cryptic and wholly extra-terrestrial reasons, and thus clearly belonging to spheres of existence whereof we know nothing and wherein we have no part. (1)

Lovecraft's Old Ones and his extraterrestrial beings exist so far from human experience that it is the very unknowing that renders them terrifying and generates the horror of cosmic horror.

True Detective falls between traditional gothic horror and cosmic horror. While the series offers the gothic cult of a few corrupt individuals at its center, by implicating every character in corruption, the series uses the convention of gothic horror to point to the general corruption pervasive throughout humanity. However, this is not horror on a cosmic scale. Industrial pollution has seeped into humanity twisting bodies and destroying communities. The horror of *True Detective* is not classical gothic, nor cosmic; rather, it is terrestrial.

Setting goes from Symbolic to Literal (haunted by real ships and industry)

Traditional gothic horror relies heavily on its setting to convey its terrifying meanings. The house of Usher is symbolically a representation of its inhabitant's decaying mind. At the moment of Dracula's death, it is his castle that draws attention: "The Castle of Dracula now stood out against the red sky, and every stone of its broken battlements was articulated against the light of the setting sun" (Stoker 325). Mr. Rochester's attic becomes his mind locking away his first wife from the world and from his own thoughts. In America, lacking the long medieval history and architecture onto which writers could map their gothic visions,

> the swamps helped solve the problem. American writers of the bizarre and macabre, such as Edgar Allan Poe, could utilize the dark fens of the new world--particularly in the South--to create the appropriate symbolic landscape upon which the quintessential gothic tale depends. (McIntyre 39)

Cosmic gothic, too, relies heavily on its setting to function symbolically. The very title of "The Mountains of Madness" foreshadows the connections between the alien, Antarctic landscape and the sanity shattering discoveries waiting under the ice.

While the setting of *True Detective* certainly contains the swamps and decaying structures of gothic fiction, these are not merely symbolic representations of moral or social corruption, but also literal markers of impending environmental collapse. The presence of hurricanes, for instance, prove central to the plot not as symbols but through the destruction of records and the disruption of social order. The entire pretense of bringing Hart and Cohle back after to rehash their "big 419" is that hurricane Rita destroyed the case files.

In fact, hurricanes figure prominently in the backdrop of the series. The swirling symbol left on the victims' bodies recall the cyclonic storms. When Rust shows the minister of the "predominantly African American congregation" the symbol, he remarks that it "looks like something might be carved into the trunk of a tree, subtly suggesting human corruption of the natural world ("Seeing Things"). The swirling spiral repeatedly pops up throughout the season. Marty comes home and finds that Rust has mowed his yard, and a

paper plate hangs on his kitchen wall colored into the same spiral, presumably by one of his daughters. When the detectives come upon the burned out church, a flock of birds flies up from the marsh and assumes the same spiral shape momentarily. While these recurring spirals certainly allude to the cult markings of Carcosa's followers, they also, and more importantly, alert viewers to the literal coming horror of climate change and massive flooding via strong and more frequent hurricanes. The series achieves this through reference to famous storms of the recent past.

The storms provide opportunities for corruption to occur or erase the evidence of its happening. Hurricane Andrew apparently washed out the school Dora Lange attended, which was also no doubt attended by other victims of the Carcosa cult's violence. Flooding and hurricanes are repeatedly blamed for destroying files and evidence, covering up potential leads and erasing victims and predators alike. Hurricane Katrina figures perhaps most prominently, when Rust conjectures that the killer they pursue, "had a real good time after [Katrina]. Chaos. People missing and people gone. Cops gone. I think he had a real good year" ("Form and Void"). In many ways the literal setting of the series is the presence and effects of hurricanes.

Furthermore, the series implicates humanity and human action in the impending disaster. Rather than placing the horror of climate change at the feet of formidable Nature, red in tooth and claw, as Cosmic horror does, *True Detective* blames human industrial pollution, and it does this, in part, through the literalness of the industrial backdrop of the season.

Concluding by Looking Forward

This piece began with the affinity between Ligotti's *Conspiracy Against the Human Race* and *True Detective,* yet there is a broader conversation underway. Eugene Thacker, Thomas Ligotti, David Peak, John Gray, Maria Androni, and Michel Houellebecq, among others, have been, in various ways, sounding the call for approaching horror fiction as a research program. However, the parameters, scope and methodologies of such a program have yet to be determined. The humanities, as a collection of disciplines, contributing to the recent interest in horror fiction, must stop merely calling for horror as a research program and must formalize, theorize, and practice this research. The water is rising and time is literally running out.

The task of formalizing this research program is already underway performatively. That is to say, that horror fiction itself, defined broadly, is formalizing our research program for us, and we need to follow that lead and theorize our research program from there. For example, Victor Lavalle's *The Ballad of Black Tom* and Matt Ruff's *Lovecraft Country: A Novel,* both set Lovecraftian supernatural horror and mythos in Jim Crow era racism and productively connect the horrors of white supremacy and institutional racism with the supernatural terrors so emblematic of Lovecraft's mythology. In doing so, these authors have initiated the most productive engagement to date with the profound racism of Lovecraft and his writings and, more importantly, implicitly demonstrate how Western notions of monstrosity powerfully manufacture the demonized black, male body. These authors take the next logical step, and in so doing, point scholars in the humanities toward the formalizing of horror as research program: Horror fiction can be a powerful tool for undermining the demonized black male figure that institutional racism relies upon so heavily.

Similarly *True Detective*, and terrestrial horror more generally, perform the same kind of formalizing; in this case circulating around the cultural and social implications of climate change. While researching the scientific elements of climate change is best left to the STEM fields, horror as research program is particularly well suited for investigating the social and cultural changes that environmental collapse will bring. In this case, *True Detective* begins to lay the groundwork for the kinds of cognitive and practical preparations called for by the imminent collapse of social and civil order following the coming climatic changes.

WORKS CITED

Austin, Wendy Warren. "What We Can Learn from Two Plagiarism Accusations in 2014: Slavoj Žižek's and Nic Pizzolatto's Summer Scandals.» *The CCCC-IP Annual: Top Intellectual Property Developments of 2014*, 2015, pp.11-17.

Burleson, Donald R. *Lovecraft: Disturbing the Universe*. University Press of Kentucky, 2015.

Calia, Michael. "The Most Shocking Thing about HBO's *True Detective*." *The Wall Street Journal*, 30 January 2014, p. 7.

Cavallaro, Dani. *Three Centuries of Horror, Terror, and Fear*. Continuum, 2002.

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. "Monster Culture (seven theses)." *Gothic Horror: A Guide for Students and Readers,* edited by Clive Bloom, Palgrave, 2007, pp. 198-216.

Davis, Mike. *True Detective* Creator Nic Pizzolatto Accused of Plagiarism." *The Week,* 5 August, 2015, p. 1.

"Form and Void." *True Detective*: *Season 1*. written by Nic Pizzolatto, directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga, HBO, 2014.

Gray, John. *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals*. Macmillan, 2007.

Harman, Graham. *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy*. John Hunt Publishing, 2012.

"Haunted Houses." *True Detective*: *Season 1*. Written by Nic Pizzolatto, directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga, HBO, 2014.

Hutchison, Sharla and Rebecca A. Brown. *Monsters and Monstrosity from the Fin de Sièle to the Millennium*. McFarland, 2015.

Ligotti, Thomas. *The Conspiracy Against the Human Race: a Contrivance of Horror*. Hippocampus Press, 2011.

"The Locked Room." *True Detective*: *Season 1*. Written by Nic Pizzolatto, directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga, HBO, 2014.

"The Long Bright Dark." *True Detective*: *Season 1*. Written by Nic Pizzolatto, directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga, HBO, 2014.

Lovecraft, H.P. "Supernatural Horror in Literature." Courier corp., 1945.

Mcintyre, Rebecca. "Promoting the Gothic South." *Southern Cultures*, Vol 11, No. 2, 2005, pp 39-51.

Negroni, María. *Dark Museum*. Translated by Michelle Gil-Montero, University of Notre Dame, Press, 2015.

Ralickas, Vivian. "'Cosmic Horror' and the Question of the Sublime in Lovecraft." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, Vol 18, No, 3, 2008, pp 364-379.

--"Art, Cosmic Horror, and the Fetishizing Gaze in the Fiction of HP Lovecraft." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, Vol 19, No, 3, 2008, 297-310.

"Seeing Things." *True Detective: Season 1*. written by Nic Pizzolatto, directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga, HBO, 2014.

Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. Norton Critical Edition, 1977.

Thacker, Eugene. *In the Dust of This Planet: Horror of Philosophy: Vol. 1*. John Hunt Publishing, 2011.

Van Young, Adrian. "Santeria and Voodoo All Mashed Together." *Slate*. 4 March, 2014, pp 16-24.

AUTHOR BIO

Jonathan Elmore is Managing Editor of *The Watchung Review* and Assistant Professor of English at Savannah State University where he teaches composition, British and contemporary literatures. His research interests include composition theory and pedagogy, 19th and 20th century literature, Gothic and horror fiction, modernism, multimodal literacies, and the future of English departments. He has published and presented work on speculative fiction, dystopian fiction and on figures such as Cormac McCarthy, James Joyce, Joseph Conrad, Iris Murdoch, H.G. Wells, H.P. Lovecraft, Bram Stoker, and others.

REFERENCE CITATION

MLA

Elmore, Jonathan. "More Than Simple Plagiarism: Ligotti, Pizzolatto, and *True Detective*'s Terrestrial Horror." *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy.* vol. 4, no. 1, 2017 http://journaldialogue.org/issues/v4-issue-1/more-than-simple-plagiarism-ligotti-pizzolatto-and-true-detectives-terrestrial-horror/

APA

Elmore, J. (2017). More than simple plagiarism. Ligotti, Pizzolatto, and *True Detective* terrestrial horror. *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy. 4*(1). http://journaldialogue.org/issues/v4-issue-1/more-than-simple-plagiarism-ligotti-pizzolatto-and-true-detectives-terrestrial-horror/

Hyping the Hyperreal: Postmodern Visual Dynamics in Amy Heckerling's *Clueless*

Andrew Urie
York University
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
andrew-urie@rogers.com

ABSTRACT

An iconic staple of 1990s Hollywood cinema, director-screenwriter Amy Heckerling's *Clueless* (1995) is a cult classic. This article examines the film's postmodern visual dynamics, which parody hyperreal media culture and its connection to feminine teen consumerism amidst the image-saturated society of mid-'90s era Los Angeles.

Keywords: *Clueless*; Amy Heckerling; Jane Austen; *Emma*; Popular Culture; Visual Culture; Film Studies; Media Studies; Postmodernism; Hyperreal

A contemporized reworking of Jane Austen's 1816 novel, *Emma*, director-screenwriter Amy Heckerling's *Clueless* (1995) stands out as a notable cultural artifact of 1990s Hollywood cinema. While an abundance of scholarly articles exist on how Heckerling adapted the key plot dynamics of Austen's novel for a postmodern audience,[1] this article will largely eschew such narrative analysis in favor of focusing on the film's unique postmodern visual dynamics, which constitute an insightful parody of hyperreal media culture and its particular connection to feminine teen consumerism amidst the image-saturated society of mid-'90s era Los Angeles.

Less an adaptation of *Emma* than a postmodern appropriation, *Clueless* pays parodic homage to an oft-overlooked thematic element embedded in its source text. Transposing the decadence of *Emma*'s upper echelon Regency-era society for the *nouveau riche* decadence of Beverly Hills and its attendant culture of conspicuous consumption, the film focuses on the travails of its affluent sixteen-year-old heroine, Cher Horowitz (Alicia Silverstone), whose narcissistic preoccupations revolve around consumerism and fashion. By emphasizing the spectacular nature of postmodern consumerism in mid-'90s era Los Angeles, the film reworks a key theme from the novel, which draws attention to the historic onset of consumerism and the bourgeois practice of shopping for luxury goods. Set in the fictional village of Highbury, *Emma* draws attention to how both the town's gentry and its rising bourgeoisie partake of the then relatively new ritual of shopping for luxury goods at Ford's, the village's local store.

As literary critic Adela Pinch notes, "Historians of shopping have seen the era of *Emma* as a crucial moment in the development of consumer culture, one in which luxury shopping could become in [Sir Walter] Scott's phrase, 'social habit' – habit that allowed for an everyday sense of connection to the larger social world" (Pinch xxii). Pinch's comments can of course be related to the realm of the visual, for Regency-era consumer culture was not just about purchasing goods, but also about being *seen* within the larger social sphere. As both the director and screenwriter of *Clueless*, Heckerling appears to have picked up on this consumerist theme from Austen's novel, for her film cleverly explores a postmodern culture in which image has become everything. To borrow an insight from Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1967), one might say that *Clueless* offers a depiction of a corporate-dominated spectacular society in which social relationships have become "mediated by images" (Debord 12).

Clueless and Amy Heckerling: A Brief Overview

The sleeper hit of the summer of 1995, *Clueless* was a Paramount production that cost thirteen million dollars to make but ended up grossing nearly fifty-seven million dollars at the North American box-office alone (Douglas 101). A critical success as well as a commercial one, the film went on to win the 1995 National Society of Film Critics Award for Best Screenplay. In addition to inspiring a popular television series of the same name that aired on ABC from 1996-1997 and UPN from 1997-1999, *Clueless* revitalized the then sagging teen movie genre by igniting a filmic wave of youth-oriented adaptations of literary classics like Baz Lurhmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1997), Alfonso Cuarón's *Great Expectations* (1998), Gil Junger's *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999 [an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* (c. 1593-1594)]), and Tim Blake Nelson's *O* (2001 [an adaptation of *Othello* (c. 1603-1604)]).

Marked by vibrant visual dynamics that simultaneously complement and parody consumer culture, *Clueless* was also a notable influence on the visual style of such future so-called "chick flicks" as *Legally Blonde* (2001), *Legally Blonde 2: Red, White, and Blue* (2003), and *Mean Girls* (2004). Indeed, *Clueless*'s enduring popularity and influence have been most recently materially attested to in Australian pop star Iggy Azalea's music video "Fancy" (2014), which functions as an overt simulational homage to some of the film's most

---

[1] Previous scholarship on *Clueless* includes examinations of the film's relationship to adaptation (see Parrill; Galperin), genre (see Mazmanian), and feminism (see Hopkins).

famous scenes. In this regard, *Clueless* has proven to be of such popular historical significance that Heckerling is now currently in the process of working on a treatment for a spectacular Broadway musical adaptation (Handler).

Bronx born and raised, the prodigiously talented Heckerling (b. 1954) studied film at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and then earned an MFA in Directing from the American Film Institute Conservatory in Los Angeles. A teen comedy veteran when she began working on *Clueless*, Heckerling had first risen to prominence with her Hollywood directorial debut, *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982), which significantly influenced '80s-era American popular culture by helping ignite the decade's teen comedy craze upon which director John Hughes would subsequently secure his fame. An adaptation of Cameron Crowe's 1981 novel of the same name, *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* is today regarded as iconic for its depiction of 1980s Southern California teen culture. In 2005 the Library of Congress selected the film for preservation in the United States Film Registry.

Clueless and Teen Consumerism

Clearly, Heckerling found the American youth landscape had changed by the time she began drafting *Clueless* in the early '90s, for she had not depicted the lives of Ridgemont's students as being anywhere near as colonized by consumerism as those of her teen characters in *Clueless*. While, for example, the teens in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* spend time at the local mall, they experience a far more ambivalent relationship to this corporate space than do Cher and her friends, who view the mall as a consumerist haven. Taking note of this distinction in *Branding: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers* (2003), cultural critic Alissa Quart notes, "The Sherman Oaks Mall in *Fast Times* is strange to the movie's characters: a giddily forbidding fortress of mirrored walls, a place where one practices a future of wasting one's life in dead-end jobs or being hit on by older men. . . . In *Clueless*, by contrast, the mall is the film's safe space . . ." (Quart 86).

This seismic shift towards teen consumerism was undoubtedly influenced by the increasing popularization of MTV music videos and teen-oriented commercials that developed throughout the '80s and early '90s. Whereas *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* had been released in 1982, roughly one year after the launch of MTV, *Clueless* seems both a byproduct of and a commentary on the hypercommodified, image-driven teen culture that had since developed in MTV's wake. Indeed, as a film produced at the dawn of the '80s, *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* was itself out of sync with the more stylized MTV-oriented youth fare that would come to define American popular culture throughout the decade. As cultural critic Susannah Gora writes in *You Couldn't Ignore Me If You Tried: The Brat Pack, John Hughes, and Their Impact on a Generation* (2010), the film conveys a "laid back 1970s feel" that makes it seem "more like an important predecessor to the later eighties teen movies than a true part of that canon" (Gora 5).

Hyping the Hyperreal: Postmodern Visual Dynamics

By the time of *Clueless*'s inception, MTV had become an internationally recognized logo that was part and parcel of corporate America's burgeoning global expansionism. This increasing omnipresence of American corporate capitalism and its attendant culture of advertising and conspicuous consumption had not gone untheorized in academic quarters, for the '90s witnessed the relative popularization of such postmodern theorists of so-called "late capitalism" as the American Marxist critic Fredric Jameson and the French poststructuralist Jean Baudrillard. While Jameson's 1991 book, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, was read by academics and intellectually curious readers alike, Baudrillard had been embraced as something of an academic superstar in America from roughly the mid-'80s onwards. In 1986 he even authored a popular travelogue entitled *America*, which offered his philosophical meditations on his travels throughout America's media-saturated consumer society.

Commenting on Baudrillard's emergence as a public intellectual, scholar Richard J. Lane notes, "During

the 1980s and 1990s, Baudrillard travelled and lectured around the world, putting most of his energies into the 'non-academic' side of his work" (Lane 2). It was somewhere within this period that Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality began to gain popular intellectual currency as a term used to denote a postmodern simulational culture composed of advertising, filmic, and televisual images that seemingly improve on reality while also simultaneously and paradoxically leaving it behind. Characterizing this hyperreal condition in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), Baudrillard associates the "aesthetics of the hyperreal" with "a frisson of vertiginous and phony exactitude, a frisson of simultaneous distancing and magnification, of distortion of scale, of an excessive transparency" (Baudrillard 28).

An intensely visually attuned filmmaker who formally studied her craft in an academic setting, Heckerling has alluded to her familiarity with Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality and its influence on *Clueless*. Discussing her film in a retrospective 2006 interview, Heckerling described *Clueless* as possessing an overtly hyperreal visual texture, noting, "I wanted to treat high school the way Merchant Ivory films treated England in the 1800s. I wanted a *hyperreal* [emphasis added], stylized, more elegant vision of reality" (qtd. in Rapkin). Yet if the visually sumptuous Merchant Ivory adaptations of various literary classics have blurred the boundaries between historical reality and fantasy, then *Clueless* takes things a step further by parodying the youth-oriented media images of its era via its "hyperreal hyperrealism." To this end, the film functions as both a parody of hyperreal media culture and an incisive critique of hyperreality's own relentless excess. Indeed, as sociologist Michael Ryan has wryly observed, "Even hyperreality has the ability to become hyperreal. . . . In other words, the beautiful as more beautiful than the beautiful in fashion, the real as more real than the reality of television, sex as more sexual than the sex in pornography" (Ryan 387).

Alluding to *Clueless*'s distinct hyping of hyperreal media culture in his glowing July 19, 1995 review of the film, Roger Ebert writes,

> "So, OK, you're probably like, what is this, a Noxzema commercial?"
>
> First words of *Clueless*. That's exactly what I was like. The hand-held camera was tilting crazily, showing the sun-blessed teenager of Southern California, and I'm like – what is this, an MTV video? Then Cher, the heroine of the movie, says the line and breaks the ice. Not Cher who won the Oscar. Cher the heroine of this movie. A little later she explains that she and her friend Dionne "were both named after great singers of the past who now do infomercials". . . . *Clueless* is a smart and funny movie, and the characters are in on the joke. (Ebert)

Ebert's indication of initial befuddlement at the MTV-like camerawork that frames *Clueless*'s opening shots speaks volumes about the film's stylized visual dynamics, which parody the hyperreal, jolt-dominated MTV music videos that had become a staple of '90s-era popular culture.[2]

By the dawn of the '90s, MTV was known not just for its jolt-dominated televisual effects, but also for the apparent influence these media effects were having on the neurocognitive processes of American teens. As Gora notes, MTV "changed, fundamentally, the way in which narrative was presented, notoriously reducing the American attention span in the process" (158). Fittingly, *Clueless* includes a sly, self-reflexive scene that humorously illustrates the influence of such jolt-driven media fare on Cher's neurocognitive state. The scene occurs as Cher, the perennial matchmaker, surveys the teachers' lounge of her high school with the intent of finding a suitable female love interest for her debate teacher, Mr. Hall (Wallace Shawn). Presented from

---

[2] As *Adbusters* magazine founder and anti-consumer activist Kalle Lasn notes in his book *Culture Jam* (1999), a jolt is "any 'technical event' that interrupts the flow of sound or thought or imagery." Referencing cultural critic Jerry Mander's 1978 book, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, Lasn notes that while Mander's 1978 statistics had indicated an average of ten jolts per minute in regular television programs, '90s-era MTV programming had reached an astounding average of "sixty events [jolts] per minute" (Lasn 15).

Cher's point-of-view, the scene incorporates jerky MTV-like camera movements that emphasize her erratic gaze, which is symbiotically linked to her haphazard voiceover in which her thoughts easily wander from the ostensible task at hand to a conspicuously placed chocolate bar: "The trolls in the math department were actually married. Ooh, Snickers."

Throughout *Clueless*, Heckerling places verbal and visual elements within a particularly accentuated symbiotic relationship, for a good deal of her film's witty dialogue is heavily dependent on references to visual culture. In having Cher compare the film's opening images of her West Coast lifestyle to a Noxzema skin wash commercial, Heckerling was obviously catering to the visual literacy of "hip" young audiences of the era given that Noxzema's '90s television commercials were famous for featuring beautiful, trim, flawless skinned young girls who were presented as the very paragons of girlish perfection. Every such Noxzema commercial of the era concluded its display of hyperreal, idealized girlish beauty with the same superficial, sloganeering voiceover, which proclaimed, "Noxzema girls get noticed."

Postmodern Visual Dynamics and the Female Teen

Getting noticed within the spectacular realm of Los Angeles's vainglorious, youth-obsessed culture is, of course, the main concern of Cher and her female friends. One of the most interesting aspects of *Clueless* resides in how it slyly draws attention to how young women have been conditioned to cultivate themselves for visual presentation. As art critic John Berger notes in *Ways of Seeing* (1972),

> To be born a woman has been to be born, within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men. The social presence of women has developed as a result of their ingenuity in living under such tutelage within such a limited space. But this has been at the cost of a woman's self being split into two. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself… She has to survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to others, and ultimately how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life. Her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another. (Berger 46)

While *Clueless* may chiefly be a film about being young and female, it is obvious that the image-deluged postmodern society that Cher and her female friends inhabit is very much a man's world, in which women are subject to the implicit surveillance of an overarching male gaze.

It was the British film theorist Laura Mulvey who famously defined and schematized this male gaze in her essay "Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema" (1975), in which she argued that a patriarchal unconscious had "projected its fantasy onto the female figure, which is stylized accordingly" (Mulvey 33). By harnessing Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and applying it to the domain of classic Hollywood cinema, Mulvey argued that Hollywood had been historically complicit in perpetuating patriarchy by consigning women to disempowered cinematic roles in which they were rendered mere passive objects of an active, objectifying male gaze. Intriguingly, *Clueless* includes a scene that rather notably anatomizes the core principles of this male gaze, while also implicitly challenging its patriarchal, heteronormative foundations.

The scene occurs as Cher sits in Mr. Hall's class seductively crafting her attire so that a hint of her bare shoulder will be visible to her handsome new high school classmate, Christian (Justin Walker). Coyly waiting for Christian to take notice of her sexualized appearance, Cher makes the following comments via voiceover: "Sometimes you have to show a little skin. This reminds boys of being naked, and that makes them think about sex." Given that Cher is at this point unaware of the fact that Christian is gay, she does not realize that he is romantically and sexually immune to her crafted appearance. In essence, the scene reinforces how the heteronormative male gaze has been historically constructed and privileged at the expense of the gazes or

viewing pleasures of others (i.e., in this instance gay men).

An inherently self-reflexive text, *Clueless* is as much concerned with images as it is with image making and the consequent manner in which mass media has the ability to influence and shape popular conceptions of social reality. In one of the film's early scenes, Cher sits in her bedroom and uses her desktop computer to preview and select the clothes that she will wear for the day. Given that *Clueless* was released just prior to the popularization of the World Wide Web and the attendant Internet boom that would occur in the mid-'90s, the film's sardonic conceptualization of this link between technology and fashion was uncannily prescient. By following a template of computer-generated images in order to determine how she should dress, Cher is engaging in a form of third-order hyperreal simulation in which the model has come to precede and determine the real, for as Baudrillard notes in *Simulacra and Simulation*, "the simulacra of simulation" is "founded on the information, the model, the cybernetic game" (121).[3]

This issue of the model preceding the real is also suggested via the Barbie-like physiques for which Cher and her African American best friend, Dionne (Stacey Dash), strive. The duo seemingly suffer from what has been colloquially termed "Barbie syndrome" to refer to the manner in which young girls seek to emulate the physical appearance and lifestyle associated with Mattel Corporation's iconic Barbie doll. As they venture throughout Los Angeles's consumer-driven landscape clad in their flamboyant clothing, these perpetually body-image-conscious ingénues evoke the notion of Barbie and her early '90s African American companion doll, Shani. In consummate hyperreal fashion, the pair have seemingly mistaken dolls based on non-existing existing female anatomical measurements for the real. Indeed, the Barbie mold bears no feasible relation to the anatomical reality of a woman's body given that its designer, Jack Ryan, engineered it to accord with a male fantasy of the female form.

Although Heckerling presumably chose not to address this Barbie theme too directly given the notoriously protective copyright zeal with which Mattel Corporation has historically presided over its Barbie products, *Clueless* contains one overt reference to the doll.[4] It occurs in a notable context when Josh (Paul Rudd), Cher's father's ex-stepson (the child of his ex-wife, whom he married after Cher's mother died), accuses Cher of treating the tomboyish Tai (Brittany Murphy) as her personal "Barbie doll" via an elaborate makeover project, in which she attempts to transform the Brooklyn born and bred girl into a West Coast debutante.

While *Clueless* takes evident glee in mercilessly parodying the popular mass-mediated visual culture of its era, it is also very much a social satire of Los Angeles's superficial West Coast society. As Cher remarks of her gaudy, *nouveau riche* mansion's faux neoclassical architecture, "Isn't my house classic? The columns date all the way back to 1972." In this sense, *Clueless*'s setting provides yet another avenue for Baudrillardian theorization, for Los Angeles was a favorite source of analysis for Baudrillard. As he famously contends in *Simulacra and Simulation*, Los Angeles is home to Disneyland, which is "presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest [of society] is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation" (12). Elaborating further upon Los Angeles's hyperreal geography, Baudrillard notes, "Enchanted Village, Magic Mountain, Marine World: Los Angeles is surrounded by these imaginary stations that feed reality, the energy of the real to a city whose mystery is precisely that of no longer being anything by a network of incessant, unreal circulation" (13).

---

[3] Summarizing Baudrillard's orders of simulation in *Jean Baudrillard* (2000), Richard J. Lane writes, "With first- and second-order simulation, the real still exists, and we measure the success of the simulation against the real. Baudrillard's worry with third-order simulation is that the model now generates what he calls hyperreality – that is, a world without a real origin. So with third-order simulation we no longer even have the real as part of the equation" (86-87).

[4] Discussing the issue of copyright in *Popular Culture: A User's Guide* (2010), Susie O'Brien and Imre Szeman note, "Mattel, which jealously guards its major product, Barbie, has been one of the companies to press its [copyright] claim over its product the farthest" (144).

Los Angeles is, of course, also home to Hollywood's celluloid dream factory, which generates the hyperreal filmic, televisual, and advertising images of feminine perfection that have played a crucial role in shaping North American femininity's skewed perceptions of social reality. The power such media-generated images possess to adversely affect young women's feelings about their own bodies had reached a particularly disturbing point by the early '90s. As Lasn notes in *Culture Jam* (1999),

> Nine out of ten North American women feel bad about their bodies. A 1992 survey of eleven- to fifteen-year old Canadian girls revealed about 50 percent thought they should be thinner. . . . If you randomly survey North American women, you'll find that around 50 percent of them are on a diet. If you ask adolescent girls and young women, you'll find that figure around 60 percent. Healthy young women are sometimes led by magazines or unscrupulous cosmetic surgeons to believe they suffer from such "afflictions" as "violin deformity" (a flaring of the hips, which is in fact many women's natural body shape) or "batwing disorder" (loose skin under the arms, which is in fact quite normal) – and feel compelled to go under the knife to remedy them. Some models have removed their bottom ribs to accentuate the thinness of their waists. (Lasn 75)

Despite its status as a popular teen comedy, *Clueless* drew surprisingly marked attention to this then burgeoning North American issue of negative female body image.

In scenes at Cher's Beverly Hills high school, for example, Heckerling includes numerous incidental shots of teenage girls whose noses are obscured by bandages. Such shots constitute an obvious satirization of the emerging consumer culture of cosmetic surgery, which was becoming increasingly targeted towards young girls during the '90s via such procedures as rhinoplasty, breast augmentation, and liposuction. In one of *Clueless*'s most oft-quoted scenes that also appeared in its original theatrical trailer, Cher's high school nemesis, Amber (Elisa Donovan), explains to her female physical education teacher (Julie Brown) why she can't participate in gym class, noting, "My plastic surgeon doesn't want me doing any activity where balls fly at my nose," to which Dionne sardonically replies, "There goes your social life." Humorous as such scenes may be, they suggest a compelling point about cosmetic surgery. In drawing such marked attention to the bandaged visages of Cher's female classmates, Heckerling presents cosmetic surgery not as surgical enhancement but rather self-mutilation.

As Virginia L. Blum observes in *Flesh Wounds: The Culture of Cosmetic Surgery* (2003), "Young children and adolescents receive their body images wholly from the outside. The adolescent girl, especially, enters the world tentatively and waits for it to say yes or no to her face and body" (2). The roles that Hollywood and consumer culture play in affecting the body ideals of young women are in this regard undeniable, for as Blum writes, "The body is nothing until it is jolted into being by the image of something it could become – a movie star, a supermodel, a beautiful body" (54). In hyperreal fashion, aesthetically manipulated images of beautiful actresses and models have come to be accepted as real in contemporary society, for as Blum notes, "The beauty of images symbolizes what is now experienced as their essential lure, and plastic surgery is the cultural allegory of transforming the body into an image, an allegory that is deeply linked to the effects of a celebrity culture" (61).

A link between the fashion industry and female body image is implicitly foregrounded as Cher and Dionne primp Tai during the film's makeover sequence, which is set to Jill Sobule's satiric pop song "Supermodel" (1995), which features the following lyrics:

> I don't care why my teachers say,
>
> I'm gonna be a supermodel.

> Everyone is gonna dress like me,
>
> Wait and see. (Sobule)

Obsessed with comparing their daily food intakes, Cher and Dionne strive to maintain lithe, trim bodies, which they accentuate with revealing, form-fitting fashions. When Cher prepares to depart her mansion for a date wearing a tight white dress that could pass for a slip, her father, Mel (Dan Hedaya), expresses incredulity, and the following exchange occurs:

> MEL. What the hell is that?
>
> CHER. A dress.
>
> MEL. Says who?
>
> CHER. Calvin Klein.

The designer *du jour* of the era, Calvin Klein is today notorious for having pushed female body image to a new low during the '90s. Throughout the decade one of his star models was the waif-like Kate Moss, who was known for her seemingly prepubescent body that spawned what came to be known as the "heroin chic" look in fashion.

Reflecting on Calvin Klein's borderline exploitative commodification of the teenage form throughout the '90s, Lasn writes,

> As no other company in the last fifteen years, Calvin Klein has commodified sex, and in the process brutalized our notions of sexuality and self-worth… Most people remember his 1995 campaign in which young models were crudely filmed in cheesy wood paneled basements as an adult voice called instructions from the wings. The ads reeked of chicken-hawk porn. Advertising Age's Bob Garfield called it "the most profoundly disturbing TV campaign in TV history." The spots so offended public sensibility that they prompted an investigation by the U.S. Justice Department to determine if the models were underage or child-porn laws were violated. (Lasn 176)

As the key player in '90s fashion, Calvin Klein, Inc.'s advertising campaigns promoted hyperreal images of the very teen-lean forms for which Cher and Dionne strive. Obviously Heckerling was conscious of the significant impact Calvin Klein was having on youth culture of the era. While at least two of the slip-like dresses Cher wears are Klein designs, *Clueless* is also peppered with references to the rapper Marky Mark (today known as the actor Mark Wahlberg), who was then known for his 1992 appearances in popular Calvin Klein underwear advertisements.

Popular Pedagogy: Postmodern Visual Dynamics and Teen Culture

Marked by a pastel-drenched color scheme, *Clueless* parodies the popular visual style of various teen-oriented advertisements, films, music videos, and television programs of its era. The film's Los Angeles setting and its shots of Cher's high school, for example, evoke the overall mise-en-scène of the popular Fox television series Beverly Hills, 90210. As scholar E. Graham McKinley observes in her book, *Beverly Hills 90210: Television, Gender, and Identity* (1997), this television series was especially popular with teenage girls: "In 1992, a startling 69 percent of female television viewers watched this show" (16). To be sure, teens picked up on the these hyperparodic elements, for as John Wiltshire notes in *Recreating Jane Austen* (2001), when Los Angeles teens were questioned as to what they thought about *Clueless*, they remarked that it was "way exaggerated" (qtd. in Wiltshire 53).

Obviously, Heckerling was under no illusion about the type of film she was making, for *Clueless* is first and foremost a rather gleeful teen comedy, which contains a requisite happy ending in which Cher ends up with her love interest, Josh. In this regard, *Clueless* stands apart from such later critical postmodern filmic fare of the '90s as *The Matrix* (1999) and *Fight Club* (1999), which offer radical critiques of consumer culture.[5] While *Clueless* may not constitute a postmodern *détournement* of spectacular society given its rather conscious status as a popular commercial text, Wilthshire's comments suggest that the film clearly did succeed in parodying the spectacular, hyperreal images of postmodern teen visual culture to which youth audiences had grown accustomed.[6]

Clearly, Heckerling recognized that young people can be entertained by popular visual culture and yet also learn something from it – a fact evidenced by the scene in *Clueless* in which Josh's pretentious university girlfriend, Heather (Susan Mohun), misattributes Polonius's line "To thine own self be true"(1.3.78) from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (c. 1600) to Hamlet himself, thereby triggering the following exchange with Cher:

> CHER. Hamlet didn't say that.
>
> HEATHER. I think I remember *Hamlet* accurately.
>
> CHER. Well I remember Mel Gibson accurately, and he didn't say that. That Polonius guy did.

It is surely appropriate that Cher should in this instance cite not Shakespeare but rather Mel Gibson, a popular leading man of the '90s, for one could indeed argue that the visual medium of film had by this point emerged as the dominant literature of a postmodern era.

Although *Clueless* is today routinely studied in university and college English courses, pedagogical emphasis is generally placed on how Heckerling adapted the plot dynamics of *Emma* for a contemporary setting rather than on her film's status as a rich visual text. Filled with an assortment of overt and veiled allusions to various figures drawn from the history of both "high" and "low" visual culture throughout the ages, *Clueless* stresses the cultural power of images via nods to such visual maestros as Renaissance painter Sandro Botticelli, French impressionist Claude Monet, director Stanley Kubrick, pop artist Claes Oldenburg, children's writer and cartoonist Dr. Seuss, and classic Hollywood film star Betty Grable – amongst numerous others. While some may contend that such intertextual referencing is mere confirmation of Fredric Jameson's view that late capitalism entails an ahistorical postmodern culture of pastiche in which "depth is replaced by surface" (Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* 12), I would argue that *Clueless*'s intense visual awareness stems from its production at the cusp of a pictorial turn during the mid-'90s when American society approached the Internet boom, which would result in the proliferation of an online culture n which social relationships would become increasingly mediated via images. [7]

---

[5] Jean Baudrillard's influence on *The Matrix* is hinted at in an early scene in the film in which the character Neo / Thomas A. Anderson (Keanu Reeves) conceals money and discs of illegal software inside a hollowed out simulacrum of Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981). In later describing the nature of the Matrix to Neo, Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne) remarks, "Welcome to the desert of the real." The lines are, of course, a thinly veiled allusion to Baudrillard's following lines in *Simulacra and Simulation*: "It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges persist here and there in the deserts that are no longer those of the Empire, but ours. *The desert of the real itself* [sic]" (Baudrillard 1).

[6] A technique embraced by Guy Debord (1942-1994) and the neo-Marxist Situationist International (1957-1972), the *détournement* was characterized by Debord as "the fluid language of anti-ideology" (Debord VIII.208, 146). By removing an image from its intended context and repositioning it, the Situationists sought to rupture the spectacle by jarring individuals out of ideology.

[7] The phrase "pictorial turn" was coined by visual theorist W.J.T. Mitchell, who uses it to refer to a "turn to the visual" during "specific moments when a new medium, a technical innovation, or a cultural practice erupts in symptoms of panic or euphoria (or both) about 'the visual'" (Mitchell 94).

To this end, it is useful to turn again to Jameson, who in *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), proposes that postmodern subjects have lost the ability to map their positionalities amidst late capitalism's "great global multinational and decentered communicational network" (44), and thus require "[a]n aesthetic of cognitive mapping – a pedagogical political culture which seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system" (54). Although *Clueless* does not hide its obvious complicity with capitalist consumerism, it does succeed in parodying the postmodern media culture of its era via its hyperreal hyperrealism. In this regard, the film is amenable to Jameson's notion of instilling cognitive mapping via pedagogy, for in keeping with Russian literary critic Viktor Shklovsky's notion of defamiliarizing readers via language designed to "render[] the everyday unfamiliar" (Sim 168), Heckerling was perhaps attempting to visually defamiliarize young people's – and in particular young women's – accustomed perceptions of mass media images so that they might be "clued in" to viewing them more critically.

CONCLUSION

Similar to how Anita Loos's 1925 novel, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes,* satirized female consumerism during the roaring 1920s just prior to the stock market collapse of 1929, Heckerling's film offers an exaggerated visual depiction of the culture of American girlhood amidst the consumer-driven, image-saturated society of the economically booming 1990s. [8] As Lesley Stern observes in her article "*Emma* in Los Angeles: *Clueless* as a Remake of the Book and the City" (1997), Heckerling's film is a "movie about movies, about the place where movies and dreams are manufactured, and about what it is like to be young and female in today's multi-media world" (Stern). By employing a hyperparodic, hyperreal take on the nature of hyperreal media itself, Heckerling ultimately crafted a clever, historically prescient film that employed keen postmodern visual dynamics to shed light on the popular visual culture of its era. In this regard, *Clueless* surely deserves recognition for being a far more clever film than its moniker might initially suggest.

---

[8] Heckerling has acknowledged that Loos's novel *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1925) helped inspire *Clueless* (Saito).

WORKS CITED

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. 1981. Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser, Michigan UP, 1994.

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. British Broadcasting Corporation, 1972.

Blum, Virginia L. *Flesh Wounds: The Culture of Cosmetic Surgery*. 2003. U of California P, 2005.

Clueless. Directed by Amy Heckerling. 1995. Paramount, 2005. DVD.

Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. 1967. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith, Zone Books, 1995.

Douglas, Susan J. *Enlightened Sexism: The Seductive Message that Feminism's Work Is Done*. Times Books, 2010.

Ebert, Roger. Review of *Clueless*, directed by Amy Heckerling. *rogerebert.com*. 19 Jul. 1995, www.rogerebert. com/reviews/clueless-1995. Accessed 5 July 2017.

Galperin, William. "Adapting Jane Austen: The Surprising Fidelity of '*Clueless*.'" *Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 42, no. 3, pp. 187-193. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/24043146.

Gora, Susannah. *You Couldn't Ignore Me If You Tried: The Brat Pack, John Hughes, and Their Impact on a Generation*. Random House, 2010.

Handler, Rachel. Interview with Amy Heckerling. "Director Amy Heckerling on *Clueless The Musical*, Stacey Dash, and 'Absolutely Necessary Boobs.'" 11 May 2016, www.mtv.com/news/2879412/director-amy-heckerling-on-clueless-the-musical-stacey-dash-and-absolutely-necessary-boobs/. Accessed 5 July 2017.

Hopkins, Susan. "*Clueless*." *Philosophy Now*. Aug.-Sept. 2015,www.philosophynow.org/issues/109/Clueless. Accessed 5 July 2017.

Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. 1991. Duke UP, 2003.

Lane, Richard J. *Jean Baudrillard*. 1999. HarperCollins, 2000.

Lasn, Kalle. *Culture Jam*. 1999. HarperCollins, 2000.

Loos, Anita. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. 1925. Liveright Publishing, 1998.

The Matrix. Directed by Andy and Larry Wachowski. 1999. Warner Bros., 2009. DVD.

Mazmanian, Melissa. "Reviving *Emma* in a *Clueless* World: The Current Attraction to a Classical Structure." *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal On-Line*, Occasional Papers, no. 3, 1999, http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/opno3/mazmanian.html. Accessed 5 July 2017.

McKinley, E. Graham. *Beverly Hills, 90210: Television, Gender, Identity*. U of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.

Mitchell, W.J.T. "Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture." *The Visual Culture Reader*, edited by Nicholas Mirzoeff, Routledge, 2007, pp. 86-101.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." 1975. *Issues in Feminist Criticism*, edited by Patricia Erens, Indiana UP, 1998, pp. 28-49.

O'Brien, Susie, and Imre Szeman. *Popular Culture: A User's Guide*. 2nd ed., Nelson Education, 2010.

Parrill, Sue. "Metaphors of Control: Physicality in *Emma* and *Clueless*." *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal On-Line*, vol. 20, no. 1, 1999, www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol20no1/parrill.html. Accessed 5 July 2017.

Pinch, Adela. Introduction. *Emma*, by Jane Austen, 1816, Oxford UP, 2008, pp. vii-xxix.

Quart, Alissa. *Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers*. Perseus Books, 2003.

Rapkin, Mickey. Interview with Amy Heckerling. "The Unbearable Awkwardness of Being." *GQ.com*, 12 Oct. 2006, www.gq.com/story/amy-heckering-clueless-fast-times-ridgemont-high-devon-friedman. Accessed 5 July 2017.

Ryan, Michael. "Hyperreality." *The Encyclopedia of Social Theory*. Edited by George Ritzer, Sage Publications, 2005.

Saito, Stephen. Interview with Amy Heckerling. "Amy Heckerling on '*Clueless*' – the Movie and Hollywood Execs – and the State of Women in Film." *The Moveable Fest*, 12 July 2011, www.moveablefest.com/moveable_fest/2011/07/heckerling-clueless.html. Accessed 5 July 2017.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Circa 1600. Edited by G.R. Hibbard, Oxford UP, 1998. Sim, Stuart. *Introducing Critical Theory*. Edited by Richard Appiganesi, Icon Press, 2001.

Sobule, Jill. "Supermodel." *Clueless: Original Motion Soundtrack*, Capitol, 1995. CD.

Stern, Lesley. "*Emma* in Los Angeles: *Clueless* as Remake of the Book and the City." *Australian Humanities Review,* no. 7, 1997, www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-August-1997/stern.html Accessed 5 July 2017.

Wiltshire, John. *Recreating Jane Austen*. Cambridge UP, 2001.

AUTHOR BIO

Andrew Urie is a PhD candidate (ABD) in the interdisciplinary graduate program in Social and Political Thought at York University (Canada). He specializes in American intellectual history and popular culture. His research interests include literary studies, textual sociology, and cultural political economy.

REFERENCE CITATION

MLA

Urie, Andrew. "Hyping the Hyperreal: Postmodern Visual Dynamics in Amy Heckerling's *Clueless.*" *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy.* vol. 4, no. 1, 2017 www.journaldialogue. org/issues/v4-issue-1/hyping-the-hyperreal-postmodern-visual-dynamics-in-amy-heckerlings-clueless/

APA

Urie, A. (2017). Hyping the hyperreal: Postmodern visual dynamics in Amy Heckerling's *Clueless. Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy. 4*(1). http://journaldialogue.org/issues/ v4-issue-1/hyping-the-hyperreal-postmodern-visual-dynamics-in-amy-heckerlings-clueless/

Four Decades, Three Songs, Too Much Violence: Using Popular Culture Media Analysis to Prepare Preservice Teachers for Dealing with School Violence

Edward Janak
University of Toledo
Toledo, OH, USA
edward.janak@utoledo.edu

Lisa Pescara-Kovach
University of Toledo
Toledo, OH, USA
lisa.kovach@utoledo.edu

ABSTRACT

Since teacher education has morphed from normal schools into colleges of education, the goals of preparing teachers have expanded. While it is essential to prepare teachers to utilize scientifically proven methods as well as to read and use research in the field, there are ever-expanding other goals that must be met as well. For one example, with the increase of school violence taking place in the United States, it is imperative to include preparation for preservice teachers on how to prevent bullying and how to handle traumatic events, such as school shootings, with their future students. However, broaching such a sensitive subject is a challenge: how can teacher educators lead into such discussions without alienating students or raising overwhelmingly powerful emotions? This article examines one preservice educator's attempt to prepare preservice teachers for the worst; by using media analysis of songs and videos, preservice teachers can launch into discussion of societal recognition of school violence and thereby ease into discussion of how to prepare themselves. Included is an appendix of online resources available to help educators at all levels help their students deal with these tragedies.

Keywords: school shooting, violence prevention, teacher education, media studies

Columbine. Virginia Tech. Sandy Hook.

These were all horrible, senseless tragedies that struck at the very hearts of people in the United States. Thanks to a variety of factors, the media have ensured those names remain emblazoned in the memories of Americans. These factors include proximity to large media outlets (allowing quick access for camera crews) and demographics of the student population (largely white, middle class).

Red Lake. Northern Illinois. Oikos. Casper. Umpqua.

These were all equally horrible, senseless tragedies. However, they did not strike home with the same level of profound angst as those aforementioned. In sad fact, there has been a wiki page devoted to keeping track of acts of school violence. A glance at the School Shooting Timeline Wiki ("School Shooting Timeline") reveals the extent of shootings, including incidents about which some readers might have not heard. Indeed, in the years 2014-2015 the U.S. saw eleven incidents of school violence as well as one significant one in Kenya, and the assumption that "it can't happen here" is rapidly disappearing; the shootings that took place in 2013-2014 occurred in sixteen different states (California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia and Washington). In fact, it is easier to report the eleven states that have not experienced a school-related tragedy (Arizona, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, West Virginia) than those that have been impacted. This is not to say school violence is a uniquely American thing: three provinces of Canada and fifteen foreign countries on three continents have also experienced the tragedy. In addition, mass stabbings have become an alarming occurrence in China. This trend began in 2010; there were 18 children killed in four separate school incidents.

The point of this comparison is not to attempt to rank the scope and damage of these incidents; the loss of any human life, let alone that of a child, is always a tragedy regardless of where it takes place and what the social identity of the victim. The point is to demonstrate that there have been an inordinate number of acts of violence on public school and university campuses in the United States, seemingly growing every year. And, as the number of incidents continues to increase, more and more often teachers are being called upon to serve as first responders—if not to put themselves in the line of fire to save their students like heroes, such as Nevada's Michael Landsberry and Georgia's Antoinette Tuff, then to keep them safe during the event and help them heal in the aftermath.

However, there remains a stunning lack of any kind of institutional, bureaucratic support for the notion. This article presents one teacher educator's attempt at filling this void using popular culture to gain entrée into the greater conversation. This is intended to serve as a pedagogical tactic, not a formal research study of the effects of this approach. While there was no formal gathering of data, this piece examines the culmination of several semesters' use of this method. Beginning with a brief history of the development of teacher education in the United States, this article presents a media analysis framework useful for future teachers and details a series of lessons used by the instructor to get preservice teachers thinking about infusing anti-bullying throughout their future curricula and what to do if the worst happens.

This approach admittedly is somewhat limited. The ideal approach would be holistic in nature, providing preservice teachers (students enrolled in an education program on a path towards certification) with knowledge on bullying and school shooting prevention, intervention, active response, and recovery. Prevention should take the form of integrating discussion about the social, school, family, and personal dynamics of the majority into preservice curriculum. Preservice teachers also need to know how to work with at-risk students to intervene when warning signs are present and how to respond if an incident unfolds. Of utmost importance in preservice training is recovery. Those who witness and survive a school shooting suffer tremendous mental health issues with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder being a common outcome among survivors. However, due to the constraints of the course curriculum, the instructor used available

prefatory materialand provided resources to the preservice teachers for future use. Due to its location in the Rocky Mountain region, each year there are preservice teachers enrolled in the class who are survivors—of Columbine, of Casper, of Umpqua or other incidents. With emotions and tensions raw, the topic must be somewhat eased into—and popular culture provides a means of doing such.

Unfortunately, the frequency of the incidents may be one factor leading to the lack of societal outrage over these events. For example, on the same day (April 13, 2013) that a shooter at New River Community College in Christianburg, Virginia, shot and wounded two girls on campus, online and print news media focused on the episode of *Glee* that dealt with a school shooting with the almost offensively flippant title "Shooting Star" rather than reporting an actual school shooting, at least in the outlets that chose to address the topic at all. For example, a simple Google search of "Shooting Star + Glee" returns 177,000 results, coming from both entertainment and more formal news outlets; a simple Google search for "New River Community College + shooting" only returns the relatively few 7,630 results, mainly from local news outlets. It seems as a society we are more comfortable talking about school violence when debating its entertainment value than in reality, one of the many reasons for the popular culture approach outlined in this article.

At the time of the "Shooting Star" episode's initial broadcast, many critics lauded the producers of the show for taking on such a topic; however, the show failed to actually examine the issue of school violence in any meaningful way. Indeed, as argued by Kyra Hunting and Amanda McQueen (2014), the show simply used an accidental discharge of a gun—and the terror it caused—merely as a means of forwarding on its multiple serial plot lines and introducing one plot twist: "'Shooting Star' thus appears to center on a singular episodic theme, and one that is largely unique to teen dramas—the school shooting—but the episode blends that narrative with elements of comedy and melodrama to move serial storylines forward" (293).

While there was widespread praise for the episode, many articles written in entertainment blogs and websites questioned the morality behind the use of a school shooting to move plot elements forward. Typifying the criticism, Autostraddle.com detailed the failings of the episode and the media's unwarranted praise. One blogger, writing soon after watching the episode, wrote a scathing indictment of the show and its intent:

> Everyone is so busy praising *Glee* for the appropriateness and emotion with which they handled school violence that few seem to see that *Glee* didn't address the issue of school violence at all. They held us captive to their characters emotions regarding the potential of violence, but in the end the students were never actually in danger. It just feels emotionally manipulative…I'm sorry, *Glee*, but you do not get to bask in your own glory just because you wrote an episode about a serious issue and showed shaky-cam crying kids. You do not escape criticism simply because you attempted to tell a story about something which is scary and fills us all with queazy [sic] dread. I refuse to jump on the bandwagon of praise. Here's the issue: this country doesn't have a problem with intellectually disabled students accidentally firing off guns in school. This country has a problem with students bringing guns to school with the specific intent to harm other students. To conflate the two scenarios is inexcusably offensive. (Lizz. "Why I Think Glee's 'Shooting Star' Missed The Mark On Gun Violence")

Why the Need? The Changing Face of Teacher Education

While the media has lost sight of these tragedies, scholars across academe have begun to assume the mantle. Indeed, in recent years, much educational scholarship has begun centering around the topic of school violence. In the aftermath of the Columbine shooting in 1999, journal articles in the hard sciences (Beldean-Galea, et al, 2012; Fisher & Ketti, 2003; Johnson & Fisher, 2003; Jones et al, 2012; Olsen, et al, 2014), social sciences (Bon et al, 2006; Brown et al, 2009; Crews, 2014; Eitle & Eitle, 2003; Furlong et al, 2006; Hawkins,

2004; Shafii & Shafii, 2003), law (Lintott, 2004; Peterson et al 2002; Pierre-Louis, 2008; Time & Payne, 2008; Volokh, 2000), and even theology (Hartsig & Wink, 2001) began looking at the issue of school violence. Education journals took up the mantle in earnest: *The Journal of School Violence* began publishing in 2001. Beyond its scope, administrator journals looked at the legal and preventative issues (Blaya, 2003; Debarbieux, 2003; McCarthy & Webb, 2000), while theoretical journals debated the sociocultural elements involved (Ayot, 2000; Haselswerdt & Lenhardt, 2003; Malaby, 2007; Rutkowski et al, 2013; Speaker & Peterson, 2010; Watson, 2007; Willert & Lenhardt, 2003; Yablon, 2012).

Journals aimed towards PreK-12 and post-secondary practitioners as well as School Resource Officers (SROs) examined past incidents to develop best practice on addressing causes, prevention, and intervention in school shootings (Morrison & Skiba, 2001; Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002; Drysdale, Modzeleski, & Simons (2010); Robers, Zhang, Truman & Snyder, 2010; Doll, 2013; Pescara-Kovach 2015). Today's more progressive school administrators, SROs and educators follow the rules of threat assessment, which arose shortly after Columbine. Behavioral Threat Assessment is utilized by numerous institutions throughout the United States and beyond. In fact, threat assessment is now mandated in Illinois, New Jersey, and Connecticut. It involves an examination of the school, personality, social, and family dynamics in effort to reach a prospective shooter before it's too late. In truth, many incidents can be prevented if we follow the suggestions put forth in the practitioner journals.

Unfortunately, like many other areas of education, there often exists a disconnect between scholarship and classroom practice. While teachers are being called upon more and more often to prepare for the unthinkable, they are not being trained to fulfill this function: at the time of this writing (2016) neither of the two accreditation groups that oversee teacher education in the United States, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council, have coping with bullying or violence in their standards. In 2010, the two groups agreed to merge as one umbrella organization, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). While the group is still determining its standards for accreditation, a draft is available for review and comment. Of the five proposed standards, it is only Standard One that deals with Content and Pedagogical knowledge.[1] Within that standard, which demands that "Candidates demonstrate an understanding of the critical concepts and principles in their discipline, including college and career-readiness expectations, and of the pedagogical content knowledge necessary to engage students' learning of concepts and principles in the discipline;" there is no call for preparing teachers to understand their moral imperative to ensure the safety of their students if and when the worst happens ("Standard 1: Content and Pedagogical Knowledge").

Teacher education is a relatively new phenomenon when compared to the history of universities, or even the history of public schooling in the United States. As summarized by historian of education James Fraser, teacher education began with seminaries for women teachers beginning in the early 1800's but truly blossomed in the 1830's with the rise of normal schools, a means to try and standardize the preparation of teachers as much as a means to perpetuate the feminization thereof and summer teacher's institutes. The Normal School movement would see its heyday between 1870 and 1920 (Fraser 114). However, all of these movements were extensions of the nation's secondary schools; typically, normal school training would either be additional courses taken by high school students or an additional one to two years after high school done in teacher preparation. While some normal programs became affiliated with colleges and others evolved into

[1] The other four standards are: Standard 2: Clinical Partnerships and Practice, which deals with practicum placements and student teaching opportunities; Standard 3: Candidate Quality, Recruitment, and Selectivity, which deals with admissions standards; Standard 4: Program Impact, which deals with collecting data from schools in which graduates teach to prove program effectiveness; and Standard 5: Provider Quality, Continuous Improvement, and Capacity, which deals with how the college uses data gathered to monitor and improve its program. ("The Caep Standards").

either junior colleges or small, liberal arts colleges in their own right, the majority had no postsecondary affiliation; there were no "colleges of education," so to speak.

The aforementioned structure was prevalent until the turn of the Twentieth Century, when universities began offering four-year training programs to better prepare teachers. Generally speaking, these programs were organized differently for future elementary teachers and secondary teachers. Elementary teachers would do essentially two years of liberal arts education, followed by two years of training in education, including significant time in a practice or demonstration school. Secondary teachers would earn a degree in their field, their senior year spent in education courses and some practice teaching. As James Fraser further explains, it wasn't until the period between 1920 and 1965 that there was a push to get every teacher in the nation to earn a college degree, not just a normal certificate (174). It was this period that many normal schools became Teacher's Colleges or Schools of Education.

Out of this evolutionary process, a theme of disconnection between pedagogical theoreticians and practitioners emerged. As delineated by Fraser,

> If being a member of a university faculty means being a specialist, education professors have tended to develop their own specialized research, and their own impenetrable jargon. They, too, have distanced from practice…[as a result] the deep commitment to the work of teaching and the success of teachers—has virtually disappeared from professional preparation in education. The words of normal school students and professors from a century ago often seem quaint, but their sense of passion for a high calling, a calling that included doing whatever needed to be done to ensure student success, would be a welcome addition to the curriculum of many a 21st-century school of education. (Fraser 5)

This critique is not new. Indeed, in his 1963 work *The Education of American Teachers*, James Bryant Conant warned that the trend in Colleges of Education and state departments of education could be accused of forming "a national conspiracy on the part of certain professors and their friends to use the processes of teacher certification as a device for protecting courses in education and for maintaining a 'closed shop' among teachers of the public schools." The unfortunate byproduct, which Conant warned in 1963 and has arguably come to pass, is that "highly talented people are kept from the classrooms, and responsible laymen and distinguished scholars in the academic fields have been denied a voice in the formulation of programs of teacher education" (15). As a scholar of the foundations of education, cautions such as Fraser's and Conant's ring in my ears as I develop and design courses to help prepare classroom teachers. Regardless of the course I teach, I always keep one eye on the practical, giving students "real-world" examples and applications for their studies.

The course from which material in this article is drawn is titled "Teacher as Practitioner." Accordingly it is programmatically the perfect place to achieve praxis—merging of theory and practice. In this case, students involved are at the junior level. At this stage in their professional preparation, they have taken a variety of coursework both foundational (child and adolescent psychology and development, social foundations) and practical (working with students with special needs, incorporating instructional technology). However, their junior year is where they begin to put the elements together; the course that this unit took place in, required of all preservice teachers elementary and secondary, is where they get their first exposure to elements of planning, instructional strategies, and classroom management. In addition, students spend an extensive amount of class time on practicum, working with one teacher/class for five weeks culminating in the preservice teacher presenting a lesson/unit to the class. With such an explicitly practical focus and extensive classroom exposure, it is a natural fit to begin preparing teachers to deal with crisis.

Media Analysis Framework: Ohler and Postman

Teacher as Practitioner is loosely designed into three segments of five weeks each. The first segment, the most information intensive, is preparing them to enter classrooms. Topics therein include lesson and unit planning, instructional strategies, and classroom management, amongst others. The second five weeks are spent on practicum with students spending all their class time in PreK-12 classrooms observing and working with students. The third five weeks focuses on contemporary topics of importance for future teachers, but not necessarily specifically pertaining to pedagogy, curriculum, or management. It is in this final third of the course that students are introduced to the concept of thinking about themselves as the frontline of violence prevention and as first responders. Violence prevention is much needed in schools, as students deal with stressors brought on by normative and non-normative life events. Programs such as ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate) are drilled now required lockdown procedures in a number of states. As such, teachers must be exposed to the issues to better prepare them for school violence prevention and response.

It is also in this last third of the course that students are introduced to the media and technology analysis of Neil Postman and Jason Ohler. Students coming in to Teacher as Practitioner have completed a prerequisite course on instructional technology which provides students a good opportunity to work with a variety of software and hardware that they might encounter as teachers. However, what is not covered extensively in that course is approaching technology from a somewhat more philosophical point of view. In short, the preservice teachers get much information on *how* to use technology in their classrooms, but almost nothing on *why*, which becomes the starting point for the conversation in Teacher as Practitioner.

Cultural critic and media theorist Neil Postman highlights the philosophical utility of technology in teaching. In his book *Building a Bridge to the 18th Century*, Postman essentially argues that everything we need to know to be successful came about during the Enlightenment and that if we return to the lessons of that period, life will be much more effective. Each chapter deals with a different topic of analysis, from Progress to Language to Children to Education. However in his chapter on Technology, he provides a set of questions, echoing the work of Marshall McLuhan, to provide an analysis regarding technology. Postman argues that before adopting a new piece of technology, we must ask the following questions:

- Whose problem is it?
- Which people and what institutions might be most seriously harmed by a technological solution?
- What new problems might be created because we have solved this problem?
- What sort of people and institutions might acquire special economic and political power because of technological change?
- What changes in language are being enforced by new technologies, and what is being gained and lost by such changes? (Postman 45-53)

In classroom discussion, first I model applying the questions to instructional strategies regarding use of PowerPoint and daily music selections. Next, students working in groups apply Postman's questions to both classroom technology ("Do I need to use a smart board or class set of tablets to get this across?") and personal technology ("Do I really need that new smart phone or game console?"). Initially students struggle with the concepts in Postman's last two questions, which ask them to contemplate issues of economic and political power in ways that they have not and analyzing language with critical lenses; however, a robust class discussion typically helps to clarify.

Once students are comfortable thinking about the *why* behind technology, the conversations shift into a focus on how technology has created a new literacy. Jason Ohler explains that there are "shifts in literacy" taking place today that must be addressed by teachers. Ohler argues that we must redefine what it means to be literate in today's world: "being able to both read and write narratives in the media forms of the day, whatever they may be." We live in the age of digital expression, however, with three core assumptions: first,

"new media demand new literacies"; second, "new media coalesce into a collage"; and third, "new media are largely participatory, social media" (205-206). In short, educators must redefine the word literacy to include image and pictorial representations as well as letter and word. Ohler admits that his definition is ahistorical, as historians typically "object to the use of the word *literacy* to denote anything than literacy with one medium: letters." Ohler continues: "Generally speaking, a literate person is still considered to be someone who has the ability to read, write, and understand words" (205).

As such, I try to design some lessons that tap into this new literacy, getting students to actively engage in messages that incorporate linguistic, visual, and auditory media to create the message. It is Ohler's new literacy that dictates the methods and structure of the following lessons, getting students to begin thinking about the potential for school violence-related tragedy in their future practice. It is one of the times I am able to practice media analysis with my students. Part and parcel of this analysis is an exploration of how it can be effective; as explained by the editors of *Rethinking Schools*, "[e]ducators have a particular responsibility to take up media issues. We see the impact of media on young minds" (Marshall & Sensoy 16).

Bullycide: Shouldn't *It Get Better* Now?

To open the unit, students watch the teaser trailer for the documentary *Bullycide: The Voice of Complicity*.[2] Class discussion begins with an analysis of the trailer focused around a set of questions which they discuss in small groups:

- Which of the adults in the clip most resonated (positively or negatively) with you? Why?
- Which of the children? Why?
- Is bullying worse in this generation than in previous generations? If so, how/why? If not, why not?
- What is your job as teachers in regards to this issue?

This discussion becomes free ranging and widely divergent. Some students choose to reveal how they were victims of bullies or had siblings who were targeted. There is typically a wide discussion on the impact of social media and how the nature of bullying has changed from physical to relational, and whether current forms of bullying are equally or more traumatic to its victims than forms of the past. The class discussion tends to expand from the teaser trailer to discuss responses which typically surround bullying, whether in the form of comments to online stories or discussions with friends and family; as students point out, the all-too typical response of many posters is that kids just need to "get over it." Students in the class question why so many people tend to believe this and whether "getting over it" is even possible.

This discussion feeds into an examination of the Center for Disease Controls' work in preventing bullying, particularly via social media. Students often comment that the name of the documentary trailer, "Bullycide", is a bit too harsh; however, when looked at in light of the work of the CDC, particularly in light of preventing violence to youth on social media ("Violence Prevention and Social Media"), students begin to soften their stance. Ultimately the conversation comes around to strategies in which they, as future teachers, can engage the students they will teach some day in their own classrooms to prevent this bullying in person. Part and parcel of this conversation are the legal and ethical limits to which they as future teachers can engage with their future students online.

Eventually and inevitably, at least one student brings up the "It Gets Better" project. Initially started by Dan Savage in an effort to combat the rising tide of suicides amongst LGBT teens, it became a movement in and of itself. From YouTube channel to its own webpage and project to a book edited by Savage and Terry Miller, millions of Americans have wanted to have their voice heard, that they had experienced bullying and

---

[2] Later iterations of the lesson replaces the documentary with the video for the song by Rise Against, "Make It Stop." As opposed to many other videos on bullying, while this one depicts three teens precariously close to commiting suicide, all three get flashes of their potential futures; all three see themselves as having worth and therefore choose to live. It is extremely impactful.

violence, but that they persevered and life improved. The most popular testimonials on the website include those of President Obama, Chris Colfer of *Glee*, comedienne and actress Sarah Silverman, R&B artist Ciara, actor Zachary Quinto, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and pundit Stephen Colbert. While the celebrity contributions of *It Gets Better* are heartfelt and have resonated with the general public, it holds little in terms of practical applicability to preservice teachers. Issues of relatability proved problematic to the preservice teachers. For example, a student who grew up on a Montana ranch had little in terms of practical applicability to preservice teachers; issues of relatability proved problematic as well. For example, a student, hearing from Lady Gaga or Adam Lambert, David Sedaris or Al Franken is alien; when it comes to bullying, the power of celebrity holds no sway. In addition, all too often preservice teachers are left to wonder how it is possible that those who have wealth and fame could have been bullied.

Shootings through the Ages

Once students have discussed bullying and potential anti-bullying elements they can infuse in their future classrooms, the conversation turns even more serious. One of the potential outcomes among those who externalize the pain of being bullied is the victim reacting violently, as happened in Littleton, Colorado, at Columbine High or in Fredericksburg, Virginia, at Virginia Tech. In previous semesters, I attempted to bring in numbers and statistics; however, it became apparent that the impact of the numbers was lost in white noise. I had to bring home the point to students in a powerful, yet meaningful, manner. Thus, Bob Geldof of the Boomtown Rats, Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam, and Mark Foster of Foster the People enter into the discussion. The songs are not chosen for being contemporary or even necessarily familiar; they are chosen for their powerful thematic elements that reflect the violence in U.S. schools.

Students are given handouts that include a timeline of school shootings and lyrics to three songs with quotes from the songwriters about the inspiration. After presenting an overview of the frequency of school violence, students are a bit taken aback. Then the discussion turns to social reaction and whether this has changed over time. To demonstrate this point, the first example shown is the video for the Boomtown Rat's song "I Don't Like Mondays." Released in the summer of 1979, we begin with this song for its historical significance: it was one of the first songs that achieved great popularity, particularly abroad, to look at the issue of school violence.[3] According to writer/lead vocalist Bob Geldof, he was making an appearance at a radio station when a news report came in over the telex machine detailing the San Diego shooting perpetrated by Brenda Ann Spencer, in which two adults were killed and eight children injured. When asked why she opened fire on an elementary school playground, Spencer's reply was "I don't like Mondays. This livens up the day." She is considered by many to be the "mother of such schoolyard massacres as Columbine and Newtown," and even admits in interviews to feeling "partially responsible" with each passing shooting (Bovsun, "Justice Story"). Geldof was shocked by the incident, as were most Americans at the time. As he later recounted in an interview with *Smash Hits* magazine:

> I was doing a radio interview in Atlanta with Fingers and there was a telex machine beside me. I read it as it came out. Not liking Mondays as a reason for doing somebody in is a bit strange. I was thinking about it on the way back to the hotel and I just said 'Silicon chip inside her head had switched to overload'. I wrote that down. And the journalists interviewing her said, 'Tell me why?' It was such a senseless act. It was the perfect senseless act and this was the perfect senseless reason for doing it. So perhaps I wrote the perfect senseless song to illustrate it. It wasn't an attempt to exploit tragedy. (Clarke 6-7)

---

[3] For another example, Harry Chapin's "Sniper" centers on the Bell Tower shooting at U of Texas in 1966. That song was released in 1972.

The video[4] features the band singing choir-like, in a schoolhouse, then moving to a stereotypical working class flat and watching themselves on television, then to an all-white studio wearing costumes that can best be described as very 1980's. Likely due to their regional and temporal unfamiliarity with many of the images utilized in the video, for the most part students believe Geldof was not trying to exploit tragedy but simply illustrate it. They agree that there is a sense of senselessness[5] not only about the images of the video, but the lyrics as well, particularly in the song's bridge: "And he can see no reasons/'cos there are no reasons/what reasons do you need to be shown?" ("I Don't Like Mondays")

Once a tone of awe over the flippant nature of a perpetrator has been set, the second video is shown: "Jeremy," by Pearl Jam. Released on the band's 1991 debut album, *Ten*, the video would earn multiple awards—and would be the last video made by the band for almost a decade. Lyrically, the song is fascinating as it draws inspiration from two sources. The first was the story of a teenager, Jeremy Wade Delle, who shot himself in front of his second-period English class. At the time, the story didn't receive much national attention—typically a paragraph summary buried in newspapers in sections such as "Around the Nation"—which bothered singer/songwriter Eddie Vedder. In a 1993 interview with Seattle's KISW radio, Vedder commented:

> It came from a small paragraph in a paper which means you kill yourself and you make a big old sacrifice and try to get your revenge. That all you're gonna end up with is a paragraph in a newspaper. Sixty-four degrees and cloudy in a suburban neighborhood. That's the beginning of the video and that's the same thing is that in the end, it does nothing … nothing changes. The world goes on and you're gone. The best revenge is to live on and prove yourself. Be stronger than those people. And then you can come back. (Vedder, *Rockline Interview*)

The story also triggered negative emotions for Vedder: it reminded him of another incident with which he was familiar involving a junior high schoolmate. The boy, with whom Vedder had gotten into frequent fights, brought a gun to school and repeatedly discharged it into a classroom, though nobody was injured. These memories give the song a perspective not only of the senselessness of such tragedies, but also a taste of the perspective of the bully: "Clearly I remember/pickin' on the boy/seemed a harmless little fuck/But we unleashed a lion" ("Jeremy").

Beyond the power of the lyrics, this piece is chosen due to the incredible imagery of the video, which contains a videographic collage conflating images of the band (though save the singer not performing the song) intercut with images of Americana, religious typography, isolation and the neglect of a young boy. The overall effect is to create a troubling, discordant feeling in the viewer. Students watching the video, many for the first time, find themselves needing time to process and interpret what they just watched as they analyze the lyrics. The tenor of the conversation moves from shock to anger, even outrage, at a society that can create children willing to commit such acts.

The mood of the room changes, however, when the third song is cued. "Pumped Up Kicks" is ostensibly by the band Foster the People, though the recording featured the song's writer, Mark Foster, playing every instrument and mixing it himself. Initially released as a free download on the band's website in 2010, the song

---

[4] All videos are found on the popular video sharing site Youtube.com.

[5] Admittedly, The stylistic choices within the video such as the temporal/clothing of a past era, the blurring of vaudevillian/choir performance to school, the British Hammer horror treatment of eyes/communal brainwash of audience, the sitcom-esque familiarity of the everyday being intruded upon by the band, etc. are far from empty signifiers. However, students are unfamiliar with these so the intent is lost upon them.

was quickly licensed for television and commercial outlets, leading to the commercial signing of the band. The song was then featured both on the 2011 EP *Foster the People* and that same year's full-length album *Torches*.

There has been some controversy to the origin of the lyrics. Foster argues that the lyrics are an attempt to get behind the mind of a young person that would be so isolated, so denigrated, or so tormented that they would either fantasize or act out a revenge fantasy. The lyrics to bear this out: "All the other kids with the pumped up kicks/better run, better run, outrun my gun/all the other kids with the pumped up kicks/better run, better run, faster than my bullet" ("Pumped Up Kicks"). In the aforementioned lyrics "pumped up kicks" is analogous to expensive shoes. To date, at least two of our nation's most notorious school shooters (e.g., Seung Hui Cho and Elliot Rodger) released videos, which criticized the wealthy, spoiled nature of their potential victims, prior to engaging in the Virginia Tech and University of California Santa Barbara shootings. There has been much speculation, hotly denied by Foster, that the song was based on an actual incident. In December 2007, 19-year-old Robert Hawkins entered a mall in Omaha, Nebraska, killing nine (including himself) and injuring five (CNN, "Police: Nine Killed in Shooting at Omaha Mall"). The song's opening lines, "Robert's got a quick hand/He'll look around the room, he won't tell you his plan" ("Pumped Up Kicks") seem to allude to this incident, though it could be coincidence.

This song is chosen because it is often familiar to the students, but most of them never paid attention to the lyrics or meaning. While lyrically, the song ruminates on the state of youth violence, the tonal contrast of mood proves anomalous. Driven by a catchy hook and up-tempo chorus, the song sounds downright chipper, leading one to question the significant disconnect between lyric and melody. In interviews, in spite of a band member being related to a Columbine survivor, Foster admits there was an element of flip-ness to the song: ""It's a 'fuck you' song to the hipsters in a way—but it's a song the hipsters are going to want to dance to" (Doyle, "Band to Watch"). And it's this interpretation preservice teachers cannot quite get over; whether Foster intended irony or camp, the students become irate.

The cheerful tone is echoed in the video as well. In spite of the song being essentially recorded by a solo artist, the music video is an amalgamation of Foster and his bandmates playing live and having fun. They are shown drinking, dancing, playing Frisbee, and using a rope swing to dive into a natural pool. As students read the lyrics and watch the video, there emerges a sense of incongruity, even disbelief on some parts. Many students clearly—and angrily—see how youth violence has been commercialized and trivialized due to the flippant tone set by the video.

Reactions and Conclusions

Students are often angry at the perceived shift away from outrage regarding youth violence. These lessons typically leave a stunned, silent classroom, unusual for this instructor; the preservice teachers tend to file out in quiet, thinking and digesting. However, as time has passed since I started these lessons, I have learned that for most students, the course topic moves into their daily lives. Dinner conversations, student group meetings, even their own postings on social media are all shaped by what was discussed in class.

In one case a student returned to class after the weekend and explained that the topic had become a discussion item in her sorority. She wanted to make all of her sorority sisters aware of the lyrics of "Pumped Up Kicks" and what it meant to her as a future teacher. In sympathetic response, her sorority agreed to a ban on playing the song at parties. In another case, a student approached the instructor and asked for the lesson to be taught as a professional development segment for a student group of which she was a member. In yet another, a student returned from a holiday break to tell the story of witnessing bullying of the student's younger brother—and how the student was able to teach the brother, and her parents, how to be proactive in combatting it.

I knew these lessons were impactful but didn't know how much until my teaching load changed. I was being asked to move from this course to its immediate predecessor, the course in social foundations. On my

last day of class, I asked students to complete an informal course evaluation, one question of which was if there were any lessons they believe I should put on my "must teach" list for the foundations course. Almost all students listed the lessons in media awareness and/or bullying and violence in this manner; therefore, while somewhat more condensed, these lessons are on my syllabus and will remain as such. For educators seeking help in these issues, a list of online resources is provided in an appendix to this article.

Far too often, the real impact of teachers upon their students is essentially immeasurable. Elementary school teachers don't see how the choices they make produce high caliber students once those students have moved on to the secondary grades. High school teachers don't see how the choices they make prepare students for careers, college, or both. And university professors, particularly those in professional schools such as colleges of education, don't see what an impact we have on the future professionals we produce. I have no idea if there will be a long-term drop in youth violence as a result of these lessons; I have no idea how many teachers will witness an incident of bullying and hear a few bars from "Jeremy" or "Pumped Up Kicks" in their mind as they make a teachable moment out of it. However, I can sleep well at night knowing that I have given the preservice teachers some of the tools they will need to make this impact and thank Bob, Eddie, and Mark for providing an entrée to the discussion.

WORKS CITED

Ayot, Gloria. "Preventing School Violence by Valuing All Students." *Multicultural Education,* vol. 8, no. 1, 2000, p. 26.

Beldean-Galea, Ioana Elena, et al. "Efficacy Study of a Primary Intervention School Violence Program." *Applied Medical Informatics*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2012, pp. 47-54.

Blaya, Catherine. "School Violence and the Professional Socialisation of Teachers: The Lessons of Comparatism." *Journal of Educational Administration*, vol. 41, no. 6, 2003, pp. 650- 68.

Boomtown Rats. "I Don't Like Mondays." *The Fine Art of Surfacing,* Columbia, 1979.

Bovsun, Mara. "Justice Story: 16-Year-Old Girl Shoots Up School, Tells Reporter 'I Don't Like Mondays.'" *New York Daily News*, 13 November 2013. www.nydailynews.com/news/justice-story/justice-story-don-mondays-article-1.1504277.

Brown, Ryan P., Lindsey L. Osterman, and Collin D. Barnes. "School Violence and the Culture of Honor." *Psychological Science*, vol. 20, no. 11, 2009, pp. 1400-05.

Bon, Susan C., Susan C. Faircloth, and Gerald K. LeTendre. "The School Violence Dilemma: Protecting the Rights of Students With Disabilities While Maintaining Teachers' Sense of Safety in Schools." *Journal of Disability Policy* Studies, vol. 17, no. 3, 2006, pp. 148-57.

Clarke, Steve. "The Fastest Lip on Vinyl." *Smash Hits*, Oct. 1979, pp. 6-7.

Conant, James B. *The Education of American Teachers*. McGraw-Hill, 1963.

Crews, Gordon A. "School Violence Perpetrators Speak: An Examination of Perpetrators Views on School Violence Offenses." *Journal of the Institute of Justice & International* Studies, vol. 14, 2014, pp. 41-59.

Debarbieux, Eric. "School Violence and Globalisation." *Journal of Educational Administration*, vol. 41, no. 6, 2003, pp. 582- 602.

Doll, Jonathan J. *Ending School Shootings. A Guide to Prevention and Action.* www.endingschoolshootings.org. Accessed June 2016.

Downs, Steve. Interview with Eddie Vedder. *KISW Rockline*, 18 October 1993, www.fivehorizons.com/archive/articles/rockline.shtml.

Doyle, Patrick. "Band to Watch: Foster the People's Pumped-up Psych-Pop". *Rolling Stone*, 8 June 2011, www.rollingstone.com/music/news/band-to-watch-foster-the-peoples- pumped-up-psych-pop-20110608.

Drysdale, Diana A., William Modzeleski and Andre B. Simons. *Campus Attacks: Targeted Violence Affecting*

Institutions of Higher Education. U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Department of Education, and Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2010, https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/campus-attacks.pdf.

Editors of Rethinking Schools. "Moving Beyond Media Literacy." *Rethinking Popular Culture and Media*, edited by Elizabeth Marshall and Özlem Sensoy, Rethinking Schools, 2011, pp. 14-16.

Eitle, David, and Tamela McNulty Eitle. "Segregation and School Violence." *Social Forces*, vol. 82, no. 2, 2003, pp. 589-616.

Fein, Robert A. *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates*. DIANE Publishing, 2002.

Fisher, Kathleen, and Paul Kettl. "Teachers' Perceptions of School Violence." *Journal of Pediatric Health* Care, vol. 17, no. 2, 2003, pp. 79-83.

Foster the People. "Pumped Up Kicks." *Foster the People*, Columbia, 2010.

Fraser, James. *Preparing America's Teachers: A History*. Teacher's College Press, 2007.

Furlong, Michael, et al. *Issues in School Violence Research*. Routledge Press, 2006.

Hartsig, Jo Clare and Walter Wink. "Stemming School Violence." Fellowship, vol. 67, nos. 5-6, 2001, p. 24.

Haselswerdt, Michael V. and Ann Marie C. Lenhardt. "Reframing School Violence: Listening to Voices of Students." *The Educational Forum*, vol. 67, no. 4, 2003, pp. 326-336.

Hawkins, Nikki A. et al. "Early Responses to School Violence: A Qualitative Analysis of Students' and Parents' Immediate Reactions to the Shootings at Columbine High School." *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, vol. 4, nos. 3-4, 2007, pp. 197-223.

Hunting, Kyra, and Amanda McQueen. "A Musical Marriage: The Mash-Up Aesthetic as Governing Logic in Glee." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2014, pp. 289-308.

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. *Introduction: The CAEP Standards*. www.caepnet.org. Accessed June 2016.

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. Standard 1: Content and Pedagogical *Knowledge*. www.caepnet.org. Accessed June 2016.

Johnson, Shelley A., and Kathleen Fisher. "School Violence: An Insider View." *MCN: The American Journal of Maternal/Child* Nursing, vol. 28, no. 2. 2003, pp. 86-92.

Jones, Sandra N., Roberta Waite, and Paul Thomas Clements. "An Evolutionary Concept Analysis of School Violence: From Bullying to Death." *Journal of Forensic Nursing*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2012, pp. 4-12.

Klebanoff, Richard and Jordan Silver. "Bullycide: The Voice of Complicity." *AG Media Solutions*, www.agmediasolutions.com/argentium-films---bullycide--the-voice-of-_complicity-.html. Accessed January 2014.

Lintott, Joseph. "Teaching and Learning in the Face of School Violence." *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law & Policy*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2004, pp. 553-80.

Lizz. "Why I Think Glee's 'Shooting Star' Missed The Mark On Gun Violence." *Autostraddle: News, Entertainment, Opinion, Community and Girl-on-Girl Culture*, 18 August 2014, www.autostraddle.com/glees-shooting-star-missed-the-mark-172544/.

Malaby, Mark. "Elite Males and School Violence." *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue*, vol. 9, nos. 1 & 2, 2007, pp. 157-170.

McCarthy, Martha M., and L. Dean Webb. "Legal Principles in Preventing and Responding to School Violence." *NASSP Bulletin*, vol. 84, 2000, pp. 32-45.

Miller, Bobbi and Annette Nevins. "Richardson teen-ager kills himself in front of classmates." *The Dallas Morning News*, 1 August 1991, www.fivehorizons.com/songs/aug99/jeremy_article.shtml.

Ohler, Jason. *Digital Community, Digital Citizen*. Corwin Publishing, 2010.

Olsen, Emily O'Malley, et al. "School Violence and Bullying Among Sexual Minority High School Students,

2009–2011." *Journal of Adolescent Health,* vol. 55, no. 3, 2014, pp. 432-38.

Morrison, Gale M., and Russell Skiba. "Predicting Violence from School Misbehavior: Promises and Perils." *Psychology in the Schools,* vol. 38, no. 2, 2001, pp. 173-84.

Pearl Jam. "Jeremy." *Ten,* Epic, 1991.

Pescara-Kovach, Lisa. "Working Harder to Prevent School Shootings Before They Start." *Newsletter of the International Bullying Prevention Association,* 2015, pp. 1-2.

Peterson, Reece L., Jim Larson, and Russell Skiba. "School Violence Prevention: Current Status and Policy Recommendations." *Law & Policy,* vol. 23, no. 3, 2001, pp. 345-371.

Pierre-Louis, Mac-Arthur. "School Violence and Students' Free Speech Rights after *Morse v. Frederick*." *Thurgood Marshall Law Review*, vol. 34, 2008, pp. 257-281.

"Police: Nine Killed in Shooting at Omaha Mall, Including Gunman." *CNN.com, http://www.cnn.com/2007/US/12/05/mall.shooting/.* Accessed February 2014.

Postman, Neil. *Building a Bridge to the 18th Century: How the Past Can Improve Our Future*. Vintage Books, 1999.

Robers, Simone et al. *Indicators of Crime and Safety 2010.* National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, and U.S. Department of Justice, 2010, https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011002.pdf.

Rutkowski, Leslie, David Rutkowski, and Laura Engel. "Sharp Contrasts at the Boundaries: School Violence and Educational Outcomes Internationally." *Comparative Education Review,* vol. 57, no. 2, 2013, pp. 232-259.

Savage, Dan and Terry Miller, editors. *It Gets Better: Coming Out, Overcoming Bullying, and Creating a Life Worth Living*. Plume Press, 2012.

"School Shooting Timeline." *Left Space*, http://left.wikia.com/wiki/School_Shooting_Timeline. Accessed June 2016.

Shafii, Mohammad, and Sharon Lee Shafii. "School Violence, Depression, and Suicide." *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies,* vol. 5, no. 2, 2003, pp. 155-169.

Speaker, Kathryne M., and George J. Petersen. "School Violence and Adolescent Suicide: Strategies for Effective Intervention." *Educational Review,* vol. 52, no. 1, 2000, pp. 65- 73.

Time, Victoria, and Brian K. Payne. "School Violence Prevention Measures: School Officials' Attitudes About Various Strategies." *Journal of Criminal Justice,* vol. 36, no. 4, 2008, pp. 301-06.

"Violence Prevention and Social Media." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/Violenceprevention/socialmedia/index.html. Accessed June 2016.

Volokh, Alexander. "A Brief Guide to School Violence Prevention." *Journal of Law & Family Studies,* vol. 2, 2000, pp. 99-151.

Watson, Sandy White. "Boys, Masculinity and School Violence: Reaping What we Sow." *Gender and Education,* vol. 19, no. 6, 2007, pp. 729-737.

Willert, H. Jeanette, and Ann Marie C. Lenhardt. "Tackling School Violence Does Take the Whole Village." *The Educational Forum*, vol. 67, no. 2, 2003, pp. 110-18.

Yablon, Yaacov B. "Social Goals and Willingness to Seek Help for School Violence." *International Journal of Educational Research,* vol. 53, 2012, pp. 192-200.

APPENDIX: INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS PREK-16

1. University of Toledo Center for Education in Targeted Violence and Suicide (http://www.utoledo.edu/education/centers/targeted_violence_suicide/)

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Division of Violence Prevention (www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention)

3. STRYVE (http://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/stryve/)

4. Stop Bullying (www.stopbullying.gov)
5. Surgeon General's Report on Youth Violence (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK44294/)

AUTHOR BIOS

Dr. Edward Janak is Chair of the Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership, Judith Herb College of Education, University of Toledo. He earned his B.A. (English, '92) from SUNY Fredonia and his M.Ed. (Secondary Education, '96) and Ph.D. (Foundations of Education, '03) from the University of South Carolina. Primarily a scholar in the fields of historical foundations of education and educational life writing/biography, he is the co-editor of both *The Pedagogy of Pop* and *Educating through Popular Culture*. His work on teaching with popular culture has appeared in the edited collection *How Television Shapes our Worldview: Media Representations of Social Trends and Change* as well as *The Journal of Popular Culture*. He also serves as national chair of the "Education, Teaching, History and Popular Culture" area of the Popular Culture Association. His most recent monograph is *Politics, Disability, and Education Reform in the South: the Work of John Eldred Swearingen.*

Dr. Lisa Pescara-Kovach, is an Associate Professor of Educational Psychology. She currently teaches courses in the field of human behavior and development as well as graduate level seminars on the causes, consequences, and prevention of extremes of intrapersonal and interpersonal school violence. She is the Director of the Center for Education in Targeted Violence and Suicide and also serves as the co-chair of The University of Toledo's Anti-Bullying Task Force. She authored *School Shootings and Suicides: Why We Must Stop the Bullies* and serves as Ohio Director of Bully Police USA, a grassroots organization geared toward assisting state officials in developing bullying-related legislation. She works as a bullying, suicide and school violence prevention consultant in several school districts and hospital-systems. She has given invited presentations on the topic of behavioral threat assessment as well as causes and consequences of bullying at the regional, state, national, and international levels. She served as Hiram College's Margaret Clark Morgan Scholar, an award reserved for scholars who make a considerable difference in their fields. She is curriculum expert for the BRAVE (Bullying Resources and Anti-Violence Education) initiative and is a campus prevention and protection trainer and K-12 behavioral threat assessment trainer through a grant funded by the United States Department of Justice.

REFERENCE CITATION

MLA

Janak, Edward, and Lisa Pescara-Kovach. "Four Decades, ree Songs, Too Much Violence: Using Popular Culture Media Analysis to Prepare Preservice Teachers for Dealing with School Violence." *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy* vol. 4, no. 1, 2017, www.journaldialogue. org/issues/v4-issue-1/four-decades-three-songs-too-much-violence-using-popular-culture-media-analysis-to-prepare-preservice-teachers-for-dealing-with-school-violence

APA

Janak, E. & Pescara-Kovach, L. (2017). Four decades, three songs, too much violence: Using popular culture media analysis to prepare preservice teachers for dealing with school violence. *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy.* 4(1). (http://journaldialogue.org/issues/ v4-issue-1/four-decades-three-songs-too-much-violence-using-popular-culture-media-analysis-to-prepare-preservice-teachers-for-dealing-with-school-violence)

Applications in the Classroom: Teaching Disney/Pixar's *Inside Out* within the Tradition of Allegorical Personification

Jason John Gulya
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, NJ, USA

jasongulya@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Several years ago, I noticed that the widespread distinction between high and low culture was wreaking havoc on my classroom. My students would read and analyze texts like *Robinson Crusoe* and *Pride and Prejudice* with little to no prompting because (in their minds) these texts were already part of the recognized canon and it was therefore permissible to pick them apart and analyze them closely. But I would get strange looks when I asked undergraduates to think critically about how the mock-news programs *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* worked or when I asked them to discuss how the popular TV show *Once Upon a Time* adapts and revises certain fairy tales for its modern audience. Because of these looks, I started searching for ways that I could use popular culture to encourage my students to think about how literary forms and texts persist through time and about how they could turn their ever-sharpening acumen on the world around them. This article focuses on the use of Disney/Pixar's Academy Award-winning film, *Inside Out* (2015), as a powerful pedagogical tool for getting students to think about just how writers and filmmakers reimagine and reformulate earlier forms for modern purposes. I argue that instructors can usefully teach this film within the frameworks of literary precedent and modern film and, by so doing, encourage their students to think differently about texts they encounter every day.

KEYWORDS

Allegory, Personification, Popular Film, Disney/Pixar, Film and Literature

I recently taught a course at my home institution titled "Allegory from *Piers Plowman* to *Inside Out*." The project of the course was to study how the allegorical form changed over time. We began by reading medieval allegories, including William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (c. 1370-90) and the anonymous play *Everyman* (late 15th century). Then we moved to the knights and ladies of Book I of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590) and to John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), a religious allegory that goes even further than Spenser's in its use of empirical, concrete detail. In the final section of the course, the students and I turned to modern uses of the allegorical form. We read C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950) and watched Ingmar Bergman's masterpiece *The Seventh Seal* (1957). Towards the end of the course, we also watched the very recent and very popular Disney/Pixar film, *Inside Out* (2015). We spent a great deal of time teasing out how this text works with and within the tradition of allegorical personification and, in so doing, treated the recent film as fundamentally (and surprisingly) connected to what medieval, early modern, and eighteenth-century writers were doing with the allegorical form.

Many scholars believe the allegory died as a viable narrative form shortly after the Renaissance.[1] *Inside Out* provides my students with a powerful example of how literary forms like allegory do not simply fade away. Writers, filmmakers, singers, painters, etc. continue to adapt those literary forms to their own historical and cultural surroundings, giving them new life even if doing so results in cultural products that look strikingly different than, for instance, *Piers Plowman* and *Everyman*. To give my students a strong sense of how modern writers and artists reconceptualize and reformulate the allegorical form, I taught *Inside Out* within two major contexts. The first was within literary precedent. I asked them to think through how the film compares to earlier uses of personified abstractions ranging from the medieval period to the middle of the eighteenth century. The second context was modern film. My students and I discussed Victor Fleming's *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* (1957) before moving on to Pete Docter's *Inside Out*. This article will work through my experiences teaching the animated film within these two contexts and then will open up to think more generally about how the film can be used to demonstrate to students how they can use their critical thinking skills to analyze the world around them.

The goal in working through my experiences is not only to talk about *Inside Out* in particular but to enter an ongoing conversation about designing a course syllabus that extends from the medieval period to the present day. My course ranging from the medieval *Piers Plowman* to the recent *Inside Out* models one such way: though it focuses primarily on Restoration and eighteenth-century British Literature, it focuses on a single literary form in order to encourage students to test their ability to think transhistorically. It uses my students' current historical moment as a lens through which to see earlier texts, while also using those earlier texts as a lens for seeing—and reseeing—their own historical moment.

TEACHING *INSIDE OUT* WITHIN LITERARY PRECEDENT

The truly exciting thing about teaching a course like "Allegory from *Piers Plowman* to *Inside Out*" is that it encourages students to think about how literary forms and texts persist and adapt. When I went over the syllabus on the first day, I found myself mounting an argument: the course will push against the tendency they might have to regard texts such as *Piers Plowman* and *Everyman* as far removed from their own historical and literary moment. Reading earlier allegorical texts should improve their understandings of what is going on in more recent texts. The question, for me, was how to design a course that would emphasize the continuities as well as the discontinuities between older and more recent uses of the allegorical form.

I decided to begin my students with one of the most influential scholarly books on allegory to date, Angus Fletcher's *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (1964, reprinted in 2012), coupled with the *Everyman*. Fletcher creates a spectrum between, on the one end, "persons" and, on the other end, personified

abstractions. Persons exhibit agency and self-possession: in Fletcher's words, the literary person has "freedom of choice in action" (Fletcher 65). The reader cannot accurately predict what the literary person will do from moment to moment based on their identity within the text. Personified abstractions, on the contrary, perform what Fletcher calls "*fated actions*" (33), which directly relate to what that abstraction embodies. *Everyman* gave my students some strong examples of how the notion of fated action works. The characters Death and Fellowship, for instance, speak and act in a way that is in accordance with what they represent. We are not shocked when Death asks Everyman to come with him to God or when he claims that everyone must die. Talking about death is squarely within Death's wheelhouse, as it is indicated by his name (Anonymous 39). We likely would have been shocked if Death resurrected a character or went to the supermarket because his name puts certain limits on what he can and cannot do and say within the play.

Fletcher does not mean for the distinction between person and abstraction to be hard and immovable. In fact, the reason Fletcher's formulation was so helpful for my students was that it was a flexible tool for thinking about traditional as well as modern uses of the allegorical form. My students regularly referred to Fletcher's book in discussing the vast majority of our texts, often placing particular authors' depiction of allegorical personifications on his scale between persons and abstractions. This was particularly true when they talked about Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and Samuel Johnson's *The Vision of Theodore* (1748). The perpetual question was how different authors treated certain personifications: for *The Pilgrim's Progress*, for instance, my students reasonably argued that Christian and Hopeful are much closer to Fletcherian persons than are abstractions such as Obstinate and Pliable.

When my students and I turned our attention to *Inside Out*, we justifiably talked about how the film represents different personified abstractions, especially Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear, and Disgust. Each of these personifications perform actions that are somehow associated with the concepts they embody, and in this way my students could readily see how *Inside Out*'s use of personifications is continuous with the fated agents they had encountered in earlier literary texts. For example, early on in the film Joy describes the use of each personified abstraction for the purposes of keeping Riley Anderson, the girl they inhabit, healthy and happy. She explains that Fear is "really good at keeping Riley safe," that Disgust "basically keeps Riley from being poisoned, physically and socially," and that Anger "cares very deeply about things being fair." In each of these explanations, Joy works through the benefits of Riley feeling each emotion from time to time. However, Joy runs into a problem when transitioning to Sadness, saying that "she…well, she…I'm not actually sure what she does." Joy's inability to pinpoint the usefulness of Sadness sets up the film because *Inside Out* is largely about Joy trying to figure out when and why it is important for Riley to be sad. My students worked through this scene and discussed how the movie opens by assigning real-life uses for each emotion besides sadness and by having each emotion act in accordance with what they represent.

Then, something very interesting happened. I prompted my students with the question, "Is Riley a fated agent?" Addressing this question required my students to apply the reading from Fletcher's book to the modern film. My students started to work through how the film represents the relationship between the actions of the personifications and the actions of the girl they inhabit. To help them push their ideas and questions further, I asked them to home in on a particular scene. They chose one that takes place relatively early on in the movie, after the Andersons move to San Francisco and Sadness starts to feel inexorably compelled to touch memories and give them an element of sadness:

> [*Riley approaches a stairway*]
>
> Joy to Sadness: Just don't touch any other memories until we figure out what's
>
> going on.

Sadness: Ok.

Joy: All right. Get ready! This is a monster railing and we are riding it all the way

down.

[*Joy turns around and looks at Goofball Island, which is functioning. Then, she*

looks back at the window representing Riley's eyes, to see what happens. Riley sits on the railing and looks down it with a smile, ready to slide down. Her smile suddenly fades away and Riley gets off of the railing.]

Joy: Wait, what happened?

[*A core memory rolls from behind Joy and hits her in the back of her leg.*]

Fear: A core memory!

Joy: Oh no!

[*Joy picks up the core memory and turns to see that Sadness is where the core*

memory used to be and that Goofball Island is now down.]

Joy: Sadness! What are you doing?

Sadness: It looked like one was crooked, so I opened it and then it fell out.

[*Joy puts the core memory back in, and Goofball Island become functional again.*

Riley— who is walking down the stairs sadly—stops, gets back on the railing and slides down it.] (Docter)

My students and I were in a position to appreciate how truly bizarre and perplexing this moment is, precisely because we had encountered such a wide variety of personified abstractions by this point in the course. Riley has very little agency. *Inside Out*, in fact, duplicates the idea of fated agency so that 1) the personified abstractions themselves only perform actions that are in accordance with what they represent and 2) the person whom they inhabit can only act in accordance with what those abstractions do. *Inside Out* thus features a range of characters who are compelled to action. Riley wavers between sliding down the railing and sullenly walking down the steps because of the actions performed by Joy and Sadness, just as these personifications are tied to certain actions because of their identities. The movie, to take this slightly further, brings the actions of Riley and the personifications into an analogy with one another.

I ended my session on *Inside Out* by asking my students what the movie gets out of expanding the notion of fated agency so common in allegorical personification to include even literal characters. My students pointed out that the movie effectively makes Riley's actions redundant. We watch the events happening in Riley's mind and then we see how those events manifest themselves in Riley's behavior: there is thus a significant lag between the world of allegorical personification and of literal persons. It shifts the Fletcherian scale that ranges from persons to abstractions, making Riley into more of an abstraction than a person by shining a light on Riley's inability to behave in a way independent of her emotions. My students, for instance, focused on that strange moment in the film when Anger, Fear, and Disgust decide to put a light bulb in the control panel—which encourages Riley to run away from her parents and go back to Minnesota—and are

then unable to remove it. At this point in the narrative, the emotions are not able to stop what Riley is doing nor is Riley able to get the idea of running away out of her head.

Together, Fletcher's scholarship and literary precedent provided a fruitful, flexible framework for thinking about the place of *Inside Out* within the tradition of allegorical personification, and any successful framework needs to be flexible because this flexibility is what will encourage our students to connect seemingly disparate texts.

TEACHING *INSIDE OUT* WITHIN MODERN FILM

In the section on contemporary uses of the allegorical form in my class, I started by giving students three films to analyze: *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Seventh Seal*, and *Inside Out*. The point was to give students three examples of dramatically different uses of the allegorical form. *The Wizard of Oz* creates a set of corresponding figures, using characters in Oz to register commentary on literal persons. The first eighteen minutes of the film focuses on real occurrences in Dorothy's life. For instance, the film describes a series of scenes revolving around three farmhands: Hunk accuses Dorothy of acting as if her head were filled with straw; Zeke tells Dorothy to have courage, before he saves Dorothy when she falls into a pigsty; and Hickory is described as "tinkering" with an old contraption instead of fixing the wagon. The movie uses the language of these scenes to justify representing these characters as, respectively, the scarecrow, the cowardly lion, and the tin man. My students and I talked about how the film modifies the kind of political allegory we encountered in texts like John Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), using characters to comment on and even criticize literal persons. We also talked about how *The Wizard of Oz* manages the transition from Kansas to Oz, using the shift into Technicolor as a way to distinguish the literal events in Kansas to the allegorical events in Oz. The point was not to classify the movie as an allegory—since there is not nearly enough evidence to do so—but to think about how the movie uses various components of the allegorical form without necessarily being an allegory in and of itself.[2]

The Seventh Seal was especially fruitful for returning my students' focus to personification. This movie toggles back and forth between the literal journey of Antonius Block, a Swedish knight who is returning from the Crusades during the breakout of the Black Death in fourteenth-century Europe, and a chess match between Block and Death. Death makes eight appearances in the film, most of which take place in the last thirty minutes of the film. He is introduced from 4:01 to 5:25; he masquerades as a priest from 19:15 to 23:30; he continues his chess match with Block from 57:26 to 58: 44; he kills Skat, an actor travelling with Jof and Mia, by cutting down a tree from 1:08:43 to 1:09:55; he poses as a monk from 1:15:36 to 1:15:50; he continues his game with Block from 1:22:04 to 1:25:10; he claims the lives of Block and his friends from 1:32:07 to 1:34:15; and he lead Block and the others in the Dance of Death from 1:35:20 to 1:35:37. For the majority of the film, no one besides Block and Jof is able to see Death, whose invisibility keeps him somewhat separate from the literal persons.

The Wizard of Oz and *The Seventh Seal* use two fundamentally different ways of managing the distinction between the literal and the allegorical. The first uses the convention of the dream vision—so popular within the allegorical tradition—and the transition from black-and-white to Technicolor to keep Kansas and Oz mostly separate from one another. The second uses Death's invisibility in order to keep his actions distinct from those of literal characters like Block, Jöns, and Jof. The desire to keep the literal separate from the allegorical—here, manifested in two modern films—very much emerges out of the eighteenth century's focus on literary decorum and correctness.

Like *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Seventh Seal*, *Inside Out* distinguishes allegorical from literal characters, though in a slightly different way. It does not, like *The Wizard of Oz*, create a dream vision that comments

on real-life occurrences nor does it, like *The Seventh Seal*, focus on a mostly invisible personification that comes in and out of the story. *Inside Out*, rather, toggles between the intrapersonal world of Riley's mind and the interpersonal world of Riley's surroundings. The first of these worlds is strikingly mechanical, with fixtures such as a major control panel, an apparatus that moves the core memories from Riley's eyes to a small compartment in the middle of her mind. The latter of these, on the contrary, is inhabited by other people who—the movie shows from time to time—are behaving in certain ways because of their own thoughts and emotions.

What did my undergraduates gain from analyzing *Inside Out* within the context of films such as *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Seventh Seal*? They gained a stronger sense of how certain elements of the allegorical form have been appropriated for visual storytelling. Allegory is not merely a form of writing. It is, on the contrary, a narrative form that cuts across literature, art, music, and many other kinds of cultural production. They also improved their ability to work from two different frameworks—one from literature and one from film—in order to better understand a single modern text. By the end of my students' discussion of *Inside Out*, the fields of literature studies and film studies were much closer to circles on a Venn diagram than distinct disciplines.

I believe, first, that one of the most important jobs of college-level instructors is to push against the all-too-common distinction between high and low culture and, second, that the use of popular culture within the classroom is an invaluable tool for pushing against this distinction. Working against the distinction is so important because it encourages students to think critically about the world around them. Instructors need to find ways to point out to their students that they can analyze anything critically, including recent texts and films, television shows, and the advertisements they encounter on trains and subways. A lot of what I do in the classroom involves emphasizing the complexity of the texts making up our surrounding environment, whether the text is an eighteenth-century poem, a modern novel, a song released this year, or a recent film. Setting up a course similar to my "Allegory from *Piers Plowman* to *Inside Out*" is one such way to do this because in asking students to connect a wide range of seemingly dissimilar texts, it asks students to develop the skills they will need to turn their ever-sharpening acumen on the world at large. By the end of the course, my students had been trained to see the ongoing relevance of the allegorical form and had started to understand the ways in which contemporary writers and filmmakers reformulate, rather than abandon, traditional narrative forms. They had also improved their ability to think critically about modern culture.

WORKS CITED

Anonymous. *Everyman and Other Miracle & Morality Plays*, edited by Candace Ward, Dover Publications, 1995.

Brown, Jane K. *The Persistence of Allegory: Drama and Neoclassicism from Shakespeare to Wagner*. U of Pennsylvania P, 2007.

Fletcher, Angus. *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode*, 1964. Princeton UP, 2012.

Francus, Marilyn. *Monstrous Motherhood: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Ideology of Domesticity*. The Johns Hopkins UP, 2012.

Hansen, Bradley A. "The Fable of the Allegory: The Wizard of Oz in Economics," *Journal of Economic Education*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2002, pp. 254-64.

Honig, Edwin. *Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory*. Brown UP, 1959.

Inside Out. Directed by Pete Docter, performances by Amy Poehler, Phyllis Smith, Richard Kind, Lewis Black, Bill Hader, and Mindy Kaling. Walt Disney Studios, 2015.

Johnson, Gary. "Introduction," *The Vitality of Allegory: Figural Narrative in Modern and Contemporary Fiction*, edited by Johnson. Ohio State UP, 2012.

Kelley, Theresa. *Reinventing Allegory*. Cambridge UP, 1997.

Littlefield, Henry. "The Wizard of Oz: Parable on Populism," *American Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1964, pp. 47-58.

Murrin, Michael. *The Veil of Allegory: Some Notes Toward a Theory of Allegorical Rhetoric in the English Renaissance*. U of Chicago P, 1969.

—. *The Allegorical Epic: Essays on its Rise and Decline*. University of Chicago Press, 1980.

The Seventh Seal. Directed by Ingmar Bergman. Performances by Max Von Sydow, Bengt Ekerot, Gunnar Björnstrand, Nils Poppe, Bibi Andersson. Janus Films, 1957.

The Wizard of Oz. Directed by Victor Fleming. Performances by Judy Garland, Frank Morgan, Ray Bolger, and Bert Lahr. Loew's Inc., 1939.

ENDNOTES

[1] The notion that allegory dies is ubiquitous in literary criticism. For particularly influential examples, see Edwin Honig's *Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory* and Michael Murrin's *The Veil of Allegory: Some Notes Toward a Theory of Allegorical Rhetoric in the English Renaissance* and *The Allegorical Epic: Essays in its Rise and Decline*. Marilyn Francus, more recently, argues for the demise of allegory in *Monstrous Motherhood: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Ideology of Domesticity*, 41. For a brief discussion of accounts of allegory's supposed death, see Gary Johnson's introduction to *The Vitality of Allegory: Figural Narrative in Modern and Contemporary Fiction*, 1-5. Only relatively recently have scholars begun to rethink the supposed demise of allegory. See Jane K. Brown, *The Persistence of Allegory*; Theresa Kelley, *Reinventing Allegory*.

[2] I introduce my students to the scholarly debate about *The Wizard of Oz* as a monetary allegory but do not go through it in much detail. This is a conscious decision on my part, because there is not enough evidence to argue that *The Wizard of Oz* itself encourages reading it as a monetary allegory. But for some influential discussions of how the film may be an allegory in this sense, Henry Littlefield, "The Wizard of Oz: Parable on Populism." Bradley A. Hansen provides a counterargument in "The Fable of the Allegory: The Wizard of Oz in Economics," *Journal of Economic Education*.

AUTHOR BIO

Jason John Gulya earned his Ph.D. in English Literature from Rutgers University in 2016. He currently teaches at Rutgers, Raritan Valley Community College, and Brookdale Community College. He specializes in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British literature as well as pedagogy, writing studies, the relationship between literature and composition studies, and the origins of Children's Literature. His writing has appeared or is scheduled to appear in *Literary Imagination*, *Pedagogy*, and the book *Reflections on Academic Lives* (Palgrave Macmillan). He is always looking for innovative ways to teach reading and writing to his college students.

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/jason-gulya-3344a280?trk=nav_responsive_tab_profile
Academia.edu: https://rutgers.academia.edu/JasonGulya
MLA Commons: https://commons.mla.org/members/jjgulya/

REFERENCE CITATION

MLA

Gulya, Jason John. "Applications in the Classroom: Teaching Disney/Pixar's *Inside Out* within the Tradition of Allegorical Personification." *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2017 www.journaldialogue.org/issues/v4-issue-1/applications-in-the-classroom-teaching-disneypixars-inside-out-within-the-tradition-of-allegorical-personification/

APA

Gulya, J. J. (2017). Applications in the classroom: Teaching Disney/Pixar's Inside Out within the tradition of allegorical personification. *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy.* *4*(1). http://journaldialogue.org/issues/v4-issue-1/applications-in-the-classroom-teaching-disneypixars-inside-out-within-the-tradition-of-allegorical-personification/

Review: Copyright for Scholars: Osmosis Doesn't Do the Trick Anymore

REVIEWS OF:

Smith, Kevin L. *Owning and Using Scholarship: An IP Handbook for Teachers and Researchers*. American Library Association, 2014. 240 pp. 978-083898747-6. $54.00.

Crews, Kenneth. *Copyright Law for Librarians and Educator: Creative Strategies and Practical Solutions*. 3rd ed. American Library Association, 2012. 192 pp. 978-0-8389-1092-4. $59.00.

Butler, Rebecca P. *Copyright for Academic Librarians and Professionals*. American Library Association, 2014. 278 pp. 978-0-8389-1214-0. $82.00.

Russell, Carrie. *Complete Copyright for K-12 Librarians and Educators*. American Library Association, 2012. 172 pp. 978-0-8389-1083-2. $52.00.

Janet Brennan Croft
Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey
New Brunswick, New Jersey
janet.b.croft@rutgers.edu

Under a new Librarian of Congress with progressive ideas about copyright and an incoming White House likely to be fully on the side of big business intellectual property interests, it is hard to tell what direction copyright in the United States will wind up going. The code has long been in need of serious reform to catch up with changes wrought by the Internet and globalization, but we are already seeing proposals to make the copyright office independent of the Library of Congress and thus more vulnerable to financial interests and less focused on the original Constitutional basis for copyright in this country: "To promote the progress of science and the useful arts, by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries."

For academics at all levels, who are always both consumers and producers of intellectual property, it is important to both know the current law and what is permitted under it and to develop a deeper understanding of IP history, concepts, and trends. Academics need to be able to function within the law as instructors, writers, and advisors, but they also must be able to defend the gains made so far and intelligently advocate for the changes that will best benefit teaching, research, and creative activity in the future. Understanding the changing landscape of scholarly publishing is now as much a part of this essential skill set as knowing what is permitted in the classroom and how to make decisions about citing the work of others. Yet these topics are, alas, not usually part of graduate school instruction (and even if available, not required), and academics wind

up making choices that imperil their rights to their own work, hold back their research careers, or put them at risk of litigation when using the work of others. Fortunately, there are books like this group of four, all from the American Library Association, that are ideal guides to this intimidating territory.

Kevin L. Smith has long been one of the most reliable and articulate voices in the academic and library copyright arenas. With *Owning and Using Scholarship*, he has written a beautifully-organized primer suitable for anyone working in higher education, which delves just deeply enough into the caveats and complications of copyright law, trademarks, patents, contracts, and licenses to be informative but not overwhelming. The aim of this book is "to facilitate [the] day-to-day activities that scholars engage in, including the creation of scholarly works, teaching, and publication" (19).

Smith lays out one of the fundamental problems with copyright from the start: copyright law as currently encoded is fundamentally about the concept of creating economic incentives, which does not always "fit comfortably with the needs and concerns of scholars" (2). As Smith explains later in the book, "[T]he rewards for academic authorship come from a system that is entirely separate from, and almost alien to, the economic rewards that are the incentive of commercial creators" (135). What is more important to academics than economic reward, which is provided mainly by salaries at their institutions, is wide exposure of their work among their peers and proper attribution of their work, both essential for taking part in the scholarly conversation. This is at odds, then, with "legal rules based on analogies with personal or real property" (3)—which don't hold up well to scrutiny, because "intellectual property is not diminished as it is distributed" (13). As Smith further observes, copyright does not always make sense in the "economy of abundance" the Internet makes possible (14).

But this is the system we must live with at present, so it behooves us as users and creators of knowledge to understand it. Smith starts with the basics—copyright exists as soon as something is fixed in tangible form, it protects the expression of an idea and not the idea itself, material freely available on the Internet is most likely copyrighted, publishing is made possible by assigning certain elements from the bundle of author's rights to an outside party, and so on. After an introductory chapter laying out some of the basic contemporary issues, Smith begins a technical and legal review of copyrights, patents, and trademarks, and how they are likely to be encountered and used in academic settings. He goes on to consider legal aspects of ownership of IP, including the more complicated cases of joint authorship, work for hire, and implications for newer forms of scholarship and teaching like data mapping projects, MOOCS, and so on.

The next section considers IP from the perspective of using someone else's copyrighted works in scholarship. Smith lays out the five questions one should ask before using copyrighted material in the classroom or in one's own research:

1. Is the work I want to use subject to copyright protection?
2. Is there a license in place that governs my proposed use?
3. Is there a specific exception in the copyright law that allows my proposed use?
4. Is my proposed use a "fair use"?
5. Who should I ask for permission? (84)

Smith demonstrates why and how to work through these questions in this particular order, always keeping in mind the basic principles of "good faith and reasonable analysis of risk" (84), as well as considering how you would react if someone were to use your own work in the manner you propose. Guidelines and best practice codes are discussed as ways of providing "safe harbors" in areas particularly open to interpretation.

The third key foundation for a solid understanding of copyright in academia is understanding your own rights as a creator and how to best leverage them throughout your career, which is too frequently neglected in books of this type. Chapter five is about managing and disseminating your own intellectual property and covers topics such as the deficiencies of the traditional publication model, reading and optimizing your

publication contract to preserve your own best interests, the advantages and disadvantages of open access models, self-archiving and direct-to-web publishing, and impacts on the tenure process. Smith provides checklists of the pros and cons of traditional publication in a subscription-based journal, in a wholly open-access journal, in a hybrid open-access journal with a traditional publisher, through green open access (self-archiving after traditional publication), and by direct web distribution. While the reader needs the foundation of the earlier chapters to fully grasp the nuances, this chapter alone is worth the price of the book for writers and researchers, particularly for the advice on reading contracts.

The final chapters deal with issues of database and program licensing, technological protection measures, Creative Commons licensing, text mining, orphan works, and international copyright. This last was particularly interesting; I have not encountered another copyright book that presented this information in its proper context and in such a concise and informative manner. Smith writes in conclusion, "For better or worse, it is no longer possible to ignore the environment created by [intellectual property] laws or to assume that scholarly pursuits will always be allowed in precisely the way we would like to proceed" (216). Armed with this book, academics can better understand their current rights and the interests of parties that would limit them, and develop better-informed practices and opinions about intellectual property.

When a textbook has gone into a third edition, the author has had time to work the kinks out, refine sections that weren't working, and update information and interpretation when necessary. Kenneth Crews is another of the major names in library and academic copyright; his form for making fair use assessments is a staple of copyright education workshops and I have used it myself for many years. *Copyright Law for Librarians and Educators* is a compact copyright course in a book. In the opening sentences Crews promises a "graceful and systematic walk through the principles and functioning of copyright law" (1). This book is well laid out and Crews provides a good outline for getting a grasp on copyright with realistic scenarios, boxes highlighting important information, charts, checklists, and templates (the famed fair use checklist IS included). There is a guest chapter on music and copyright, and an overview of the special exceptions for libraries that would make an extremely useful introduction for the non-librarian seeking to understand the limits of what libraries can provide. A particular strength is the chapter on the use of archives and unpublished materials in teaching and research, an important topic not as well covered in the other books under consideration here. There is also a very useful chapter on seeking permission from rights holders, as well as an excellent model permissions request letter.

Rebecca Butler's *Copyright for Academic Librarians and Professionals*, alas, suffers somewhat in comparison. Her writing style is too much like a classroom transcript (far too many sentences starting with "Well," for one thing) and her flow charts for copyright decision-making are often either too simplistic or needlessly complex (and sometimes, I feel, inaccurate or poorly proofread). I am somewhat disturbed, for example, that she left consulting the appropriate professional organizations' Codes of Best Practices off her list of ways to avoid copyright problems (234) and neglected to mention the specific exemptions for organizations providing disability services in converting materials for visually and physically impaired users (197-198). However, as she points out, not all copyright authorities agree on their interpretation of the laws, codes, and guidelines (237), and having her book on the shelf to provide a slightly more conservative interpretation may be a good strategy. Like Carrie Russell, below, Butler lays out very specific examples of uses educators may want to make of copyrighted material. Her section on "How and Why to Teach/Train Students, Colleagues, Administration, and Others About Copyright Law" (236-238) is a useful call to arms, and as she observes, "For some reason, once you become an adult, it is assumed that you will—by osmosis?—know when you are infringing on an owner's copyright and when you are not, as well as how to tell the difference. Obviously, nothing is further from the truth" (236). Indeed.

Carrie Russell's *Complete Copyright* belongs on the office shelf of every K-12 librarian and administrator and would not be the least bit out of place in most higher education offices, either. It is clear, reassuring, and up to date on the recent shift we're seeing away from adherence to strict guidelines and in favor of transformational use. Russell mixes a factual review of copyright code, a summary of current thinking and case law, and true-to-life examples of situations likely to be encountered in today's K-12 schools and libraries. She goes well beyond simple questions about classroom handouts or showing movies and concentrates on new media, services to the print-disabled, and extracurricular activities like performances and clubs. Copyright, as she frequently reminds us, can be a confusing and sometimes scary topic, and there are misconceptions on all sides. "Copyright never catches up to technology," as she observes; "Consistency can be found only in our dedication to professional values" (vii). One thing she is very reassuring about is the possible consequences of infringement, and the protections available to educators against litigation and damages.

Russell places great emphasis on the desirability of doing a four-factors analysis rather than relying on the guidelines we have long been trained to use, which are for the most part outdated, have not kept up with technology, do not have the force of law, and do not reflect the current legal climate. Reliance on guidelines can lead to an overly conservative interpretation of copyright, so while doing a four factors analysis for everything one wants to use is more of a challenge, it is far more technology-neutral and, in current interpretation, more supportive of the actual aims and needs of education.

All of these books are worthy introductions to the topic of copyright in higher education; all provide a decent overview of current law and most provide useful appendices like texts of the law, checklists, forms, bibliographies, web links, and definitions of terms. I have spent the most time on Kevin Smith's book here because, if you must choose only one, I believe it is the best choice for academics who are also writers and researchers, covering as it does the general rules and philosophy of copyright, how to fairly use the works of others in the classroom and in research, and how to figure out the best way to both protect and disseminate one's own research when faced with today's variety of publishing choices. You could try osmosis – but sitting down with one or more of these books, highlighter and pen in hand, is a far better choice.

AUTHOR BIO

Janet Brennan Croft is Head of Access and Delivery Services at Rutgers University libraries. She earned her Master of Library Science degree at Indiana University in 1983. She is the author of *War in the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien* (Praeger, 2004; winner of the Mythopoeic Society Award for Inklings Studies) and several book chapters on the Peter Jackson films; has published articles on J.R.R. Tolkien, J.K. Rowling, Terry Pratchett, Lois McMaster Bujold, and other authors, and is editor or co-editor of many collections of literary essays, the latest being *Baptism of Fire: The Birth of British Fantasy in World War I* (Mythopoeic Press, 2016). She has also written widely on library issues, and is the author of *Legal Solutions in Electronic Reserves and the Electronic Delivery of Interlibrary Loan* (Haworth, 2004). She edits the refereed scholarly journal *Mythlore* and serves on the board of the Mythopoeic Press.

REFERENCE CITATION

MLA

Croft, Janet Brennan. "Review: Copyright for Scholars: Osmosis Doesn't Do the Trick Anymore." *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2017 www.journaldialogue. org/issues/v4-issue-1/copyright-for-scholars-osmosis-doesnt-do-the-trick-anymore/

APA

Croft, J. B. (2017). Review: Copyright for scholars: Osmosis doesn't do the trick anymore. *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy. 4*(1). http://journaldialogue.org/issues/v4-issue-1/copyright-for-scholars-osmosis-doesnt-do-the-trick-anymore/

Using Popular Culture in the Classroom in High Schools and Universities

REVIEWS OF:

Janak, Edward, and Ludovic A. Sourdot, editors. *Educating through Popular Culture: You're Not Cool Just Because You Teach through Comics*. Lexington Books, 2017. Hardback, 341 pp. $120.00. ISBN: 9781498549372;

Buckingham, David, editor. *Teaching Popular Culture: Beyond Radical Pedagogy*. Routledge, 1998. Paperback, 207 pp. $43.95. ISBN 1857287932;

Reiser, Elana. *Teaching Mathematics Using Popular Culture*. McFarland, 2005. Paperback, 235 pp. $29.95. ISBN 9780786477067;

Dong, Lan, editor. *Teaching Comics and Graphic Narratives: Essays on Theory, Strategy, and Practice*. McFarland, 2012. Paperback, 272 pp. $35.00. ISBN 9780786462462.

Laurence Raw
Baskent University,
Ankara, Turkey
l_rawjalaurence@yahoo.com

Lexington has recently released a very large anthology of essays on teaching popular culture. Most of the contributions came from the Popular Culture Association conferences – both national and regional – so it should be of interest to all readers of *Dialogue*. It's very pricey, unfortunately ($120), so unless you are fortunate enough to receive a review copy, it is predominantly destined for library use. It is divided into five sections, each devoted to some aspect of teaching popular culture: Looking Behind, Looking Around, Looking Globally, Looking Ahead, and Looking Theoretically. They provide an effective way to organize the book but only incidentally reflect the content of the essays themselves. *Educating through Popular Culture* is best approached as a text to dip into as and when required, with many points appearing regularly in different essays.

However, the book as a whole raises a bigger question facing all educators and learners in popular culture, which relates to how the subject should be taught. Should educators approach popular culture in similar fashion to more conventional subjects as a primarily top-down subject, with learners regularly given lectures, worksheets and other teacher-initiated material, from which they can make judgments? Or should popular culture make use of its advantages as a wide-ranging subject and essay a bottom-up approach, with learners given a full say in how the course (or courses) should be structured, delivered and assessed? Whilst

it might be attractive to embrace this form of learning, several teachers reject it, fearing a loss of control and potential censure from their senior managers. In this piece I want to address the topic of learning, using extracts from *Educating through Popular Culture* as well as extracts from previously published books on the topic, in an attempt to see whether teachers at all levels are prepared to let go the reins and allow the class to be truly collaborative. It's a risky strategy to be sure, but one that can pay dividends if boldly implemented.

In the late Nineties, the spirit of Cultural Studies was dominant, especially in the anthology edited by the Briton David Buckingham. His *Teaching Popular Culture* was full of bold statements, inviting teachers to experiment with new methods of learning, including video production that not only taught children production skills but produced the pleasure in "exploring the boundaries between work and freedom" (Grace and Tobin 54). This approach created extensive debate among educators about the "naughty, resistant and transgressive behaviours of students," which to some were neither emancipatory nor progressive but simply reinforced existing gender divisions, with the boys aggressively asserting their authority (55). Such beliefs overlooked the potential for establishing transgressive and carnivalesque elements in the curriculum: "sexual, grotesque, and violent ways of working can be ways of working through rather than just reproducing dominant discourses and of undesirable social dynamics, and of building a sense of community in the classroom" (Grace and Tobin 56). There was a fundamental ambiguity about this apparently libertarian spirit: while giving students the power to experiment with their own material, it was circumscribed by a Bakhtinian paradigm that was determinedly educator-oriented. Because Bakhtin favored the carnivalesque spirit as a way of liberating learners, this approach was justified. What the authors did not address, however, was how teachers could encourage the "sexual, grotesque, and violent ways of working," without losing control of what they were doing during the lesson.

In general books about teaching tended to be slightly more conservative in their scope, concentrating on how popular culture could enhance the impact of certain classes on learners. Elena Reiser's *Teaching Mathematics Using Popular Culture* offers a series of strategies drawn from film and television for improving the quality of Mathematics teaching. The book is divided into sections, including algebra, geometry, probability and modeling, and offers examples from US television programs to illustrate particular points about each subject. The book has obviously been designed as a series of resources for educators to draw upon while creating their own individual classes, rather than as a course-book. I am not a mathematician, so I cannot comment on the quality of the materials, but the book as a whole conforms to what most educators expect from popular culture: to provide a vindication for what they have already done in the subject. Educators offer the theory; textbooks like *Teaching Mathematics Using Popular Culture* offers examples of that theory in practice. In such learner/educator exchanges, the educator retains overall control of the classroom. The same basic principle applies to Lan Dong's *Teaching Comics and Graphic Narratives*, which incorporates a series of suggestions about classic graphic novels and how to teach them. There is nothing wrong with this approach, especially for the tyro educator, but this kind of volume limits learner potential for implementing their own approach fundamentally different from that of their educators.

In *Educating Through Popular Culture*, the views of the writers are much more cautious: learner-centered activities are encouraged but within a framework that is educator-centered. The general consensus seems to be that this approach is the only one that can orient the semester's work towards examinations. Tonia A. Donsay's "Karma in Comics" offers a case-study of her class in which learners have freedom to choose texts but are expected to follow a series of guidelines relating to the primary and secondary source documents and the folklores they involve, and how the comic renditions of such texts are constructed, with special attention paid to the storyboard as well as the individual frame. Paul Chaozon Bauer and Marc Wolterbeek want to "made academia cool" (61) by combining traditional literary study with popular culture in the form of comic books. This involves relating such texts to literary criticism as well as involving processes of genre comparison

(77). Learners have the freedom to bring in texts that they might like to study, but the focus is very much on the educator directing classes towards a predetermined end – the exams.

Yet there are alternatives. Cadey Korson and Weronika Kusek explore patterns of internal and external migration in the US through popular media. They have devised their own critical pedagogical approach with its particular aims and objectives, but learners embark on a series of discovery learning projects to understand the power of stereotyping, complemented by a use of social media to understand other people's feelings about the topic (123). Educators guide but try and refrain from offering too many comments – not at least until the papers are marked. Maha Al-Saati has a more difficult task while working in a Saudi university as he had to provide some cultural context for his activities before encouraging learners to work on their own (127-45). Any form of learner empowerment is a step forward on the road to independence, according to Chad William Timm, who persuasively argues for popular culture-related activities in all forms of classroom to develop individual philosophies of education (221-41).

However much we admire the contributors' accounts, there still remains a feeling that compared to the pioneering spirit of Buckingham's *Teaching Popular Culture*, the articles in *Educating Through Popular Culture* are somewhat muted, that the potential for liberating learners has been limited somewhat by institutional forces such as exams or the need to keep justifying the subject to heads of department and other opinion-formers. Partly this can be explained by context; when Buckingham's book was first published, tuition fees did not exist in British universities and there wasn't the emphasis on providing subject-specific outcomes for each course. Educators could get away with relating their popular cultural work to more general issues, that involving the learners in the planning stage of a course would produce a greater feeling of being responsible for their own learning, especially if they could negotiate about the content and form the assessment would take. If educators were brave enough, they could go out on a limb and co-create a course with learners and justify it to their superiors. At that point it seemed as if popular culture embraced much of cultural studies' pioneering spirit in creating new learning approaches.

Now the atmosphere is no longer so conducive to experiment. Most students have to find their own money for fees and accommodation and hence have become more concerned with value in education. It is up to the educators to provide the stimulus for them through educator-initiated activities. Meanwhile the educators have to justify their courses in numeric rather than pedagogical terms; if a program does not attract sufficient numbers, then it will be closed down. The desire to experiment has been replaced by the instinct to survive. Courses should have their own subject-specific aims and objectives; the fact that a Popular Culture course can improve the abilities acquired in the world of work is considered less of a priority. There may, of course, be exceptions to this rule, but I believe that institutional changes have been fundamental in limiting popular culture's potential to encourage learner independence and therefore encourage a top-down view of learning amongst educators desperate to survive.

Some readers might consider my views too negative; after all, there are related disciplines such as Fan Studies that actively encourage learner participation, and the effect of such courses should impact Popular Culture courses as well. However Paul A. Crutcher and Autumn M. Dodge sound a cautionary note at the end of the *Educating Through Popular Culture* anthology; however much we might want to promote Popular Culture in the curriculum, learners might not feel the same way, having been brought up in a world where value for money counts more than intellectual and personal development (313). Clearing that obstacle might be more difficult than we anticipate.

REFERENCES

Grace, Donna J., and Joseph Tobin, "Butt-Jokes and Mean-teacher Parodies: Video Production in the

Elementary Classroom." *Teaching Popular Culture: Beyond Radical Pedagogy*, edited by David Buckingham, Routledge, 2005, pp. 42-63.

AUTHOR BIO

Laurence Raw teaches in the Department of English, Faculty of Education, Başkent University in Ankara, Turkey. A long-time contributor to popular cultural journals on the subject of teaching, he is the author of *Adaptation Studies and Learning - New Approaches with Tony Gurr* (Scarecrow, 2013). He recently wrote *Six Turkish Filmmakers* (U. of Wisconsin P., 2017).

REFERENCE CITATION

MLA

Raw, Lawrence. "Using Popular Culture in the Classroom in High Schools and Universities." *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2017, www.journaldialogue.org/issues/v4-issue-1/using-popular-culture-in-the-classroom-in-high-schools-and-universities/

APA

Raw, L. (2017). Using popular culture in the classroom in high schools and universities. *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy. 4*(1). http://journaldialogue.org/issues/v4-issue-1/using-popular-culture-in-the-classroom-in-high-schools-and-universities/

Review: The Design Museum, London, and "Fear and Love: Reactions to a Complex World."

Michael Samuel
University of Leeds,
Leeds, England, UK.
mlmsa@leeds.ac.uk

Keywords: The Design Museum, Exhibition, Design, Architecture, Technology

In his address at the School of Architecture at McGill University, Arthur Erickson, modernist architect and urban planner, declared that "whenever we witness art in a building, we are aware of an energy contained by it. The intensity of that energy reflects the intensity of the creative act, the degree of devotion invested in the work, that is communicated immediately to the viewer." Erickson's words, in the opinion of this reviewer, perfectly communicate The Design Museum in London: from visitors' first impressions entering the immense foyer, continuing up to the top-floor and permanent gallery.

Reopened November 24, 2016, The Design Museum already feels comfortable in its new surroundings, situated in the trendy and upmarket location Kensington High Street (from its previous address at the former 1940s banana warehouse on the south bank of the Thames). Yet, it does everything in its efforts to stand out. The Design Museum, in the spirit of Erickson's ideas (as expressed in his McGill address), exuberates the "energy contained by it." Specifically, the architecture and space perfectly captures, and moreover curates, the energy and ambition of designers of the twentieth and the twenty-first century in one successful public space. This is entirely due to the unique vision for the museum by British minimalist architect John Pawson and Rem Koolhaas' OMA (Office for Metropolitan Architecture) group.

Of particular note are two exhibitions on display at the time of The Design Museum's opening: "Designer Maker User," the permanent collection situated on the top-floor, and "Fear and Love: Reactions to a Complex World," which was situated in the ground-floor gallery between 24 November 2016 – 23 April 2017.

Illustrating the interconnectedness of design, production and the end user experience, "Designer Maker User" takes advantage of its proud display of over a thousand items – ranging from engineering, product design, fashion, graphic design and architecture – from the twentieth and twenty-first century. Standout features include the simple yet effective (and seemingly timeliness) designs of British road signs by Margaret Calvert and Jock Kinneir, a standard of design that is experienced daily by drivers and pedestrians, nationwide, alike; American technology giant Apple's technological breakthroughs which, especially at the

helm of British designer Sir Jonathan Ive, have had a profound influence on how we access computers, music and mobile devices since the 2000s; and a range of timeless products like the Vespa Clubman (by Corradino d'Ascanio, 1946), the Phonosuper SK5 record player (by Hans Gugelot and Dieter Rams, 1956) and Japanese entertainment giant Sony Computer Entertainment's paradigm shifting PlayStation 1 games console (1994). The success of the "Designer Maker User" exhibition is that it communicates, with clarity, not only the value of the fusion between design, production and the end user, but it invites its audiences, with the aid of nostalgia, to experience the demonstration of the twentieth and twenty-first century's contribution to not only technology, architecture and graphic design, but to lifestyle and society.

Whilst the permanent exhibition displays technological progress alongside societal change with a positive message, successfully rekindling a relationship between the objects and their audience, The Design Museum's inaugural show, curated by former design critic and writer Justin McGuirk,1 interrogates the complicated nature of design in the 21st Century. McGuirk's selection of the work of eleven designers includes OMA/AMO, the international practice co-founded by Rem Koolhaas; Hussein Chalayan MBE; Madeline Gannon of ATONATON, a studio which researches human interactions and communication with machines; the art-director of *MUJI* Kenya Hara; Neri Oxman; Andrés Jaque; architecture collective Arquitectura Expandida; the Rural Urban Framework (RUF); Metahaven, a creative collaboraion founded by Vinca Kruk and Daniel van der Velden; influential Chinese designer Ma Ke; and Christien Meindertsma.

"Fear and Love" carefully considers its exploration of both the positive and negative effects of design and technology socially and politically, as the collection explores themes such as identity, culture, sexuality and geography; everyday life, such as fashion and home furnishings; lifestyle, notably nomadism, and commerce, whilst also ruminating on pressing contemporary issues, which connect as well as divide, such as globalization, the environment, technological anxiety and privacy. Notable pieces, in the opinion of this writer, include OMA's reaction to the Brexit vote, "Pan-European Living Room," in which the group furnished a space with designs from each of the member countries, the room colourfully illuminated by the pouring of light through the striped blind, the colours of a flag designed by the firm for the EU in 2001; Jaque's "Intimate Strangers," an audiovisual installation made up of four films that explores the impact of social networking culture, specifically gay dating apps, on identity, the pursuit of love and sex, the body, and perception of the urban spaces; and finally, Gannon's installation "Mimus," a 1200 kg robot that has been programmed, using custom software, to sense and respond to the presence of people near its glass enclosure as they stand or move past it. Gannon's piece, with the support of software company Autodesk, addresses head-on our increasing anxieties about technology and specifically robots, an anxiety at the fore of a string of recent (and not so recent) science fiction films such as *I, Robot* [Alex Proyas 2004] and *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* [Steven Spielberg 2001], for example, and attempts to demonstrate that we, as humans, have the capacity to develop empathy and companionship with machines.

On a last note, one must consider and commend the setting of the exhibition, within the Sam Jacobs Studio designed space. Sam Jacobs Studio deserves merit, as with its careful design, it attempted, and moreover succeeded, to overcome some of the environmental obstacles that museums sometimes place between its exhibitions and its viewing (and in this case, interacting) public. The ambition of Sam Jacob Studio's design is intelligent from the start: from with the firm's creation of the huge 2.5 meter glass box containing the fantastic neon "Fear Love" sign at the entrance to the exhibition space, to the translucent and minimalistic drapes that guide visitors through the exhibition; the bespoke steel and glass cases and cabinets that not only house

---

[1] Justin McGuirk's writing – which covers various subject matters including architecture, design and cities – has appeared in a range of mainstream news outlets, such as *The Guardian* and *Al Jazeera*, and notably design-centred publications, such as Dezeen and Icon magazine, which he was also the editor of. He is also the writer of *Radical Cities: Across Latin America in Search of a New Architecture* (Verso, 2015).

and display the installations; to the framing of the information and the mounting of iPads to allow for ease of accessibility and promote interaction. "Fear and Love," whilst problematising the relationships between design, technology and the modern world and provoking numerous concerns over the impact of globalisation and technology on identity, society, politics, commerce and culture, never seeks to answer such questions. Rather, as architect and designer Edwin Heathcote suggests in his *Financial Times* review, it "creates another set of complications."

WORKS CITED

The Design Museum. designmuseum.org. Accessed 23 Jan. 2017.

Erickson, Arthur. "McGill University School of Architecture." *Arthur Erickson.* 21 Oct. 2000. www.arthurerickson.com/about-arthur-erickson/speeches/1/. Accessed 31 Jan. 2017.

"Fear and Love: Reactions to a Complex World." *The Design Museum.* designmuseum.org/exhibitions/fear-and-love. Accessed 23 Jan. 2017.

Heathcote, Edwin. "Fear and Love, Design Museum, London – 'Big questions.'" *Financial Times.* 16 Nov. 2016. www.ft.com/content/5c0b36a4-abf7-11e6-9cb3-bb8207902122. Accessed 20 Jan. 2017.

AUTHOR BIO

Michael Samuel is a doctoral researcher at the University of Leeds. His research examines the deployment of British heritage across a variety of British non-fiction television series and how they function in the wider context of the current heritage climate. He was awarded both a Masters by Research in Media Studies and a BA in Screen Studies from Swansea University, and a PGCE from the University of Wales Newport. He has published widely on British and American television and contemporary television viewing cultures, video games, fiction and reviews. His work has been featured in edited collections, *The New Western, 10 Years After Katrina* and *Exploring Downton* and journals, *University of Toronto Quarterly, Birmingham Journal of Literature and Language, Journal of Popular Culture, Journal of Popular TV* and *Studies in European Cinema.* He is the co-editor (with Dr Scott F. Stoddart) of *True Detective: Critical Essays on the HBO Series* (Lexington Books 2017).

REFERENCE CITATION

MLA

Samuel, Michael. "Review: The Design Museum, London, and 'Fear and Love: Reactions to a Complex World.'" *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2017, www.journaldialogue.org/issues/v4-issue-1/the-design-museum-london-and-fear-and-love-reactions-to-a-complex-world/

APA

Samuel, M. (2017). Review: The Design Museum, London, and "Fear and love: Reactions to a complex world". *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy.* *4*(1). http://journaldialogue.org/issues/v4-issue-1/the-design-museum-london-and-fear-and-love-reactions-to-a-complex-world/

Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy is the official journal of the **Southwest Popular/ American Culture Association (SWPACA)**.

The mission of the **SWPACA** is to promote an innovative and nontraditional academic movement in Humanities and Social Sciences celebrating America's cultural heritages. To provide an outlet for scholars, writers, and others interested in popular/ American culture, to share ideas in a professional atmosphere, and to increase awareness and improve public perceptions of America's cultural traditions and diverse populations.

Visit us online at: www.southwestpca.org