



Challenging the Normative in Popular Culture and Pedagogy

Cultural and educational paradigms shift over time. Currently, we are amidst changing mindsets within American society, as well as internationally. As part of these changes, attitudes and practices also evolve, with effects and important considerations for teaching and learning. The once “traditional” or “normative” notions of culture and learning are shifting. Here I draw from Niall Richardson’s (2010) description of “normative,” as referring to something culturally imposed and suggested as “normal.” These shifts in representations of normativity have been shown in varied ways, such as in TV series’ changing narratives of motherhood, infertility and surrogacy (Le Vay, 2019) or in YouTube’s beauty community (García-Rapp, 2018). As audiences and scholars, we have an opportunity to learn from popular culture’s changing ideals of normativity.

In this issue, *Bodies in Motion: Rethinking Imagery, Tradition, and Teaching*, I am pleased to present a collection of eight rich articles. These works explore and evolve our understanding of popular culture and pedagogy to meet the needs of current and future generations. They critically engage with cultural expectations and pedagogical practice related to literary, musical, visual, textual and digital understanding. What we see, what we experience, and what and how we learn all provide means for challenging the normative in popular culture and pedagogy.

The first two essays both draw from a critical theoretical perspective of bell hooks and reconceptualize thinking about normativity in representation in body presentation and in musical form. The first of the essays, written by Marie Gethins reconceptualizes disability through an examination of *The Tin Woodman of Oz*. The author applies Chopfyt to show “the psychological effects of limb loss and the concept of usefulness.” Gethins explores the ways L. Frank Baum was influenced by the Civil War and World War I amputees while addressing essential “cultural lessons” of “characterizations of prostheses, physical normalcy, and what constitutes a sense of self.” Moving beyond “flat characters” portraying disability in children’s literature, Gethins details how Baum’s work in the *Tin Woodman* challenges cultural perceptions.

Subsequently, in Robert Tinajero’s essay, *Relandscaping the Rhetorical Tradition through Hip Hop*, he repositions rap music and hip hop culture from the margins of rhetorical studies to a central locus of discussion. Applying the term “relandscaping,” Tinajero argues for a “dynamic and inclusive rhetorical tradition.” In the article, he emphasizes a shifting: of perspective, of rhetorical subject, of circle of practice and shifting of theoretical frame, to reconceptualize rhetorical studies with rap music and hip hop culture involved.

The next two articles examine pedagogical practice. First, in Kyle Hammonds and Karen Anderson-Lain’s, *The Batman Comes to Class: Popular Culture as a Tool for Addressing Reflexive Pain*, the authors use a case study to examine culture through the application of comics and graphic narratives within the undergraduate classroom. Hammonds and Anderson-Lain demonstrate how critical pedagogy and “comics as a learning tool” can be applied in effective ways for teaching and learning in higher education. Then in Erin Guydish Buchholz’s article, *Pedagogy, Ideology, & Composition: Is There a Better Way to Teach?*, she presents valuable insights about stimulating students’ critical thinking. As demonstrated through a research study integrating

“significant learning experiences,” Guydish Buchholz concentrates on student growth, drawing connections between the development of a new pedagogical practice and real-world learning and application.

The final four essays re-examine the visual and literary in film, written text, cultural event, and video games. In Natasha Chuk’s, *A Gaze of Cruelty, Deferred: Actualizing the ‘Female Gaze’ in Cate Shortland’s Berlin Syndrome (2017)*, the author upends the concept of the male gaze to reexamine the female gaze. In her essay, Chuk uses Cate Shortland’s *Berlin Syndrome (2017)* to lead the reader through a mechanized and reinforced cinematic construct. In Kristin Leonard’s essay, the author discusses the “delicious sensory smorgasbord of grammar and syntax strategies” presented in Virginia Tufte’s *Artful Sentences: Syntax as Style*. She notes in *First-Person Adolescent Storytellers and Virginia Tufte’s Artful Sentences: Syntax as Style* that amidst the excellent text there is a general lack of first-person adolescent storytellers. As such, Leonard uses two first-person adolescent narrators, one from Laurie Halse Anderson’s *Fever 1793* and another from Moira Young’s *Blood Red Road* to extend the utility of Tufte’s syntax to a yet fully explored genre. Then in Luc Guglielmi’s, *Finding the Sacred in the Profane: The Mardi Gras in Basile, Louisiana*, the author links spirituality around Ash Wednesday to the celebratory nature of Mardi Gras. He reconsiders the aesthetic event through folklore and analysis to show how it is “tolerated” and “accepted” by the Church. The final essay, by Graham Oliver, rethink how to analyze video game storylines. In *Renegade or Paragon?: Categorizing Narrative Choice in Video Game Storylines*, Oliver suggests a “nuanced” manner for “dissection of gaming narratives.” He argues for the need to “push the boundaries” to better understand narrative for audiences and narrative change in general, presenting a new typology for game studies.

Lastly, in addition to the eight articles delving deeply into issues of popular culture and pedagogy, we are pleased to share a *Musing* on pedagogy and three *Book Reviews*. The *Musing*, by B Mann and Meg Greenberg Sandeman, shares pedagogical practice with high school students to support teaching and learning about problematic narratives. The *Book Reviews* include Julie Watts review of Ebony Elizabeth Thomas’s *The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games (2019)*, and Laura Davis’s review of Angie Manfredi’s edited collection, *The (other)F Word: A Celebration of the Fat & Fierce*. Forthcoming is a review by Holly Chung of Anna Tso’s *Hong Kong Stories (2017, 2018, 2019)*. Across these three reviews, the authors take readers across worlds: from fantasy, to worldly travels, to embodied personal experiences.

As with any product, it is only as good as the individual parts and the people involved. To that end, I would like to thank the exceptional work of our *Dialogue* team for this issue: Managing Editor, Kelli Bippert; Book Review Editor, Karina Vado; Creative Designer, Douglas CohenMiller; Copy Editors, Miriam Sciala and Robert Gordyn; and the peer review team and authors.

Overall, *Bodies in Motion: Rethinking Imagery, Tradition, and Teaching*, provides insightful commentary and innovative approaches for taking another look and reflecting on our own academic and personal lives. As we move into 2020 with the release of the first issue of the year, we look forward to your feedback about the articles, *Musing*, and *Reviews*. Moreover, we look forward to continuing moving beyond “traditional” and “normative” ways of practice and thinking and encourage you to think creatively about ways you can contribute to *Dialogue: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy*.

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SUGGESTED REFERENCE

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