Aesthetic archives: Pre-service teachers symbolizing experiences through digital storytelling

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"What happens in a school has much more to do with psycho/social forces that cannot be captured by, and are much more powerful, than the imagined bounded unities of individuals exchanging knowledge in a seemingly rational and intentional circuit of communication" (Taubman, 2012, p. 29).

Day 1, Post-practicum Reflection on a Critical Incident

When I began my [leadership] initiative and a parent made it her initiative to destroy the project, it even came to the point where she attempted to sue the school. Thankfully, she didn't have a case and was unsuccessful. Nonetheless, it was a draining process that was extremely uncomfortable to deal with.

The pinnacle of stress for me was when we had portfolio night and this parent cornered me and began yelling at me about the project. I had to be quick on my feet in calming her down and dealing with the subject in an appropriate manner. I was able to calm her down and convince her that there was a more appropriate time and place to discuss the project, and that this evening was about her daughter.

What was interesting to me was that, as this mother progressed in her mission to destroy the project, it became more and more difficult to separate her child in my class from her. Her mother was causing my [sic] so much stress and grief, that it was hard not to attribute that to the daughter.

The situation really opened up my eyes and made me realize the impact that one person can have on a project. Positive or negative. Unfortunately, this situation was negative, but this women [sic] still made quite the impact. We were able to continue with the project, but only after numerous meetings with her, my associate teacher, and the principal. It took away much needed time and energy that should have been going towards the students and teaching.

I also learned from my principal in this situation, how to still be respectful of the parent and their particular needs, even if they are unreasonable. We re-wrote the letter to send home to the students three times before it met this particular parents needs.

The above passage, which we will return to later in this essay, is written by Mary, a student who was asked to reflect on her practicum and to identify a critical incident or uncomfortable moment that she experienced while learning to teach. This reflective practice is a first step in having students work in a sustained manner with the beliefs that they

hold about knowledge, the purpose of education, and the self in relation to others. In recent years, we asked students to engage with these incidents via the method of digital storytelling.

The context for the digital storytelling project is a 72-hour interdisciplinary capstone course taken by all pre-service teachers who are in the final year of four or five-year degree programs in education. The moving image component involves the production of a three-minute film that incorporates an approximately 300-word script, still images, video, and a sound track. Following the production period, the digital stories are screened with the full class; in the following days, a post-screening response is submitted. These pedagogical interventions have the purpose of helping students to explore the significance of the identity-making venture of becoming teachers (Brown, Atkinson & England, 2006). While the production phase of the digital representation takes place in the final weeks of the course, the preparatory activities are carried out over several months. During this time, pre-service teachers engage in a series of activities largely focusing on contemporary social issues, education for a sustainable future, teachers' role in transformation, a critical examination of subjectivity, and the teacher self.

As we involve the students in the aesthetic endeavor of digital storytelling we wrestle with the question of how to work within this archive in such a way that spaces are created for them to question their own desires for particular pedagogies and to explore issues of power and authority in education. Equally, we are interested in the capacity of digital storytelling – in its own ways and by its own means – to attend to what Taubman (2012) describes as *forbidden* in education, that is, "knowledge of and from the unconscious" (p. 9).

The use of digital storytelling in higher education is increasingly documented (Benmayor, 2009; McLennan, 2006; Opperman, 2008; Savvidou, 2010); yet, there are few mentions in the literature of the production of such stories by pre-service teachers in the venue of teacher

education. When evident, it would appear that the process provides a new guise for the familiar practice of self-driven reflection (Tendero, 2006; Long, 2011) or a new product to be assessed using the regulatory frameworks of teacher education (Barrett, 2008; Kearney, 2009; Kerin, 2009). There are limited traces of the long-documented, community-focused work of the *Center for Digital Storytelling* (*CDS*), which calls on individuals to find their own stories and foregrounds the belief that "sharing and bearing witness to stories can lead to learning, action, and positive change" (*CDS*, nd). Nonetheless, in some cases, the *CDS* process (Lambert, 2010) is adapted or a similar process is used, such that pre-service teachers may be asked to capture a teaching journey or event (Long, 2011; Skouge & Rao, 2009). However, in these examples, key research in education notes a paucity of evidence documenting the ambivalences, contradictions, and unconscious processes that are mentioned elsewhere (see for instance the seminal work of Brushwood-Rose, 2009; Brushwood-Rose & Granger, 2012). We intend to restore precisely these missing links in the context of teacher education.

In this paper we turn to Lacan's writings because of his focus on the nature of subjectivity and the three intrapsychic realms - the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic – especially as we try to theorize digital storytelling in relation to the interplay of the internal and the external. And, like film theorists before us (Ben Shaul, 2007; Heath, 1993; Metz, 2000; Sarup, 1992), we find that Lacan's work has a particular pertinence for digital storytelling. For the film[1] producer, who is both in front of and behind the lens of the camera, the film-making experience is like a return to the mirror stage. As Lacan (1977) writes, "We have only to understand the mirror stage as a an identification in the full sense that analysis gives the term, namely the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image" (p. 2). As Lacan theorizes, this transformation becomes part of the imaginary order; he underlines that what takes place during the mirror stage extends into the experiences that adults have of

others and of the exterior world (Sadler, 2006; Sarup, 1992). Throughout the digital storytelling project, we see the drama of the mirror stage continuing; like the infant who can be observed recognizing the self as whole for the first time in the mirror while experiencing the body as fragmented, for beginning teachers the film functions as a mirror. As Mark Pizzato (2004) writes, "Children and adults play at becoming whole selves, through the Other's desires, especially through the mirror stage rites of today's mass media screens" (p. 85). For instance, through the medium of Facebook or YouTube people can create an idealized image of themselves that they can project out and then identify with.

In this paper, we unfold how the beginning teachers we worked with - who are faced with the struggle of negotiating the psychic and social demands of practicum - use the digital stories to stage a fantasy ideal of the self as teacher. The digital story screen expresses the desires of the Other[s] beyond the teacher education classroom. Captured in the digital form, a story of the self can be screened publically, returned to privately, and read and reread, possibly in ways that allow for considering one's inner landscape and the demands of educational discourses. This is what we believe Taubman (2012) points to as the possibility of emancipatory work in education. He writes that:

> The emancipatory project works toward deepening and helping us understand and articulate our inner lives without promising the result will be a happier, more beautiful, or more just life…[It] eschews efforts at control and cure, offering questions and an interminable analysis, rather than answers and solutions. (pp. 6-7)

Such work, Taubman notes, contrasts with the prevalent direction in education, which might be characterized by standardized curricula, prescriptive plans, "test preparation, [and] training for the global workforce" (Taubman, 2012, p. 10). As teacher educators, this trend concerns us; it is what Taubman (2012) names as the therapeutic project,

which "focuses on the practical or clinical and aspires either to scientific certainty, so that it can control if not predict its effect, or to truth, so that it can rightfully persuade others of its ideals of health, normalcy, or political rectitude" (p.26). Through the digital storytelling project we seek to disrupt the therapeutic by engaging with what we are blinded by, or defend against thinking about.

Over the course of the movie-making project, students select and discuss critical incidents in their teaching, view films, write and discuss their viewing experiences, work with different aesthetic elements, and engage in a public viewing and response process. In the development of this pedagogical approach, we have taken into account research on critical incidents in teaching (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005), a *currere* approach (Pinar, 2004), and curriculum theorizing (Yates & Grumet, 2011); we also turn to the use of Judith Robertson's "screenplay pedagogy" (2004), which calls on viewers to note and work with deeply felt emotional or somatic moments experienced during the screening of a film. These moments, we suggest, signal the unconscious at work. Robertson (2004), who has worked with transferential provocations in the teacher education classroom, suggests that "having viewers represent, discuss and revisit screen experiences can function as a form of digestion, as they learn to become attentive to meaning making, participants learn to think more analytically about those processes" (p. 5). Our belief is that having students return to their critical or uncomfortable moments in relation to the screenplay process will increase their understanding of that which resists symbolization. Screenplay pedagogy supports viewers as they think about their identifications, resistances, and exhilarations; equally, it creates a context for discussing one's meaning-making processes with others. Through the different elements of the project, the students are immersed in the backward and forward movement, "the working through of one's own unresolved conflicts" (Britzman & Pitt, 1996, p. 118), leading to the

possibility that something of significance – both personal and social, with implications for self, other, and for teaching and learning – may take shape.

Drawing on our experiences and observations from the first two years of the project, we turn now to the story of Deanna, who participated in our first uses of the digital storytelling described above. In the initial year of the project, students like Deanna produced three minute digital self-portraits, intended to capture who they are, and who they will be as teachers (Aitken, forthcoming); they viewed the feature-length film, *Rabbit Proof Fence* (Winter & Noyce, 2002), which depicts how government policy served the colonial drive in Australia. The feature-length film aptly captures the therapeutic project, demonstrating the role of educational structures in the process. The film made by Deanna is relatively short, at two and a half minutes in length. It would be difficult to identify it as a 'teaching philosophy' without the voice over to provide a framework, given that among the eighteen images used, there are no pictures of classrooms, students at work, nor the materials of Deanna's discipline. Most of the images depict different features of nature: sunlight filtering through the forest, the curve of the leaves of a plant, a close-up of the petals of a wildflower, a small handful of shells. Even the few images that include youth are largely taken outside, in nature. The soundtrack Deanna has chosen is a song entitled *Burning Feet* by the Banjo Consortium. It is an acoustic number that begins slowly with a simple rhythmic beat. One guitarist joins in and the tempo picks up as an accordion, banjo, xylophone, and handclaps are introduced one by one. When Deanna's voiceover comes to an end and the credits begin to roll, we hear the lines that become a refrain in the final part of the song, "All that I know is that I care about you, I care about her, I care about him, I care about everyone, I care about everything, except for the sun that is burning my feet" (Banjo Consortium, 2009).

When reading the different elements and layers of Deanna's digital self-representation, we think of Zizek's (1989) assertion that there is a "surplus of the Real over every symbolization that functions as the object cause of desire" (p. 3). In Lacanian terms of subjectivity, the Real is a difficult concept. It conceptualizes both a developmental stage and a psychic place where there is no language. On this ancient, pre-symbolic, infantile landscape of the mind and being, "there is no absence or loss or lack; the Real is a fullness and completeness, where there's no need that can't be satisfied" (Klages 2001, p. 3). While Deanna attempts to articulate how teaching meets a deep desire but escapes language, we also see that she appears like the young child looking into the mirror and seeing herself whole and integrated, an image that she is able to put together by drawing, in her spoken text, on the discourse of Christianity and layering this with images of pastoral settings. In the voiceover she says:

> I love the little things in life, which give it colour. For me teaching is very natural. I love to learn, I love to talk, and I love to share my ideas. I feel that these loves have flowed through me in my burgeoning understanding of what it is to teach. I am very grateful for the things that have happened to me and have led me to this place, and have led me to being a teacher. I have been blessed with many experiences working with youth, in a variety of ways, and this has culminated in my position as youth worker for the United Church. For me, being involved in the ministry, and justice-seeking, are integral to who I am as a person and have shaped my plans for the future. I make a lot of mistakes because I like to do things fast. I rush through things, so I can get to the next, always excited and anticipating the next challenge or activity. I know it will be a challenge to use my gifts to teach the art of slow

understanding or careful reflection. I want to foster in my
students not only an appreciation of how beautiful the
world is, but also how precious and fleeting that beauty
can be.

Deanna's film tells a very different story about being and becoming a
teacher than the one she expressed prior to the movie-making, when she
worked with her critical incident and read it once more through
screenplay. The incident in question involved an unexpected reprimand
at the end of a day at which time the supervising teacher confronted her
about what Deanna describes as "jesting words" made earlier on in the
staffroom. Deanna notes the teacher's discomfort at the interaction, and
states her own response; "I felt stupid but I could not even remember
what I said as an innocent joke to inspire such judgment. I was at a loss."
She indicates that her "big mouth," which she has viewed as a one of her
"greatest gifts," is viewed as a "flaw," which incites "shame,
embarrassment and dismay." She is told that the "solution" for the
problem provoked by her jesting words is to "be quiet" in the future and
even hold back her questions. She wonders how to hold back;
"Questions are how I learn," she writes. "I felt like a failure."

   With this event Deanna is faced with an image portrayed back to her
by her supervising teacher, in whose gaze she feels "like a shamed child
who had no one to confide in." Confronted with the disruption of the
imaginary, her idealized image of the self as teacher, she defends against
this, as we see in her description of her comment as "innocent." She then
questions the supervising teacher's "solution"- to be quiet - which calls
for suppressing what she sees as her 'nature'. With a literal reference to
driving away from the school, she describes feeling "very far away from
being a teacher," underlining a new consciousness of the image of the
teacher, outside of her reach.

   It appears that following this, Deanna uses the screenplay pedagogy
experience to digest the injury, by examining relationships of power and

authority; in her written post-screenplay submission, she hearkens back to a state of her own lost innocence while picking up a thread from her critical moment with her supervising teacher. She writes, "I used to believe that empathy and human kindness was [sic] an innate condition in all people; unfortunately I have come to learn that our world is such that not every person develops a sense of community and understanding. This makes our connection to our students an even greater responsibility."

She notes that she experiences "despair and regret," during the viewing of *Rabbit Proof Fence*, which she connects with the uncomfortable "history of oppression in our education system." She lacks the government and religious institutions' "broken and lofty goals" of "civilizing" others in a troubled past, thus distancing herself from any identification with such work. Yet, with her digital story, Deanna reveals her own involvements in the "ministry" and what she terms "justice seeking." These are facets of her life that she had – until producing her film – hidden from her classmates. She writes:

> The first draft of my write-up [script] was much more censored and closed than my ultimate version. I had to go back and add more details about myself because I realized how much I was holding myself back. I realized that there were spiritual elements of myself I often leave out of the education classroom because of the overwhelming distain towards religion and the deep divide and fear of spirituality being misused in the classroom. I am troubled by this but I felt liberated sharing some of my feelings to the class. It is an important part of me and it deserved mention.

By documenting her transcendence through the film-making process, she works with the injury that she describes in her critical incident. A new reality is structured: a fantasy that becomes projected in her film. It is the

aesthetic representation of the transformation that takes place, portraying her identification with the teacher image once more.

It is possible to say that Deanna takes up the position of reflective practitioner who assumes that she can be "a rational agent engaged within a single hermeneutic process to reflect upon events in the classroom, or to improve practice" (Brown et al., 2006, pp. 62-63). However, our intention was to disrupt this with the digital story project, given that the production process and non-compositionally linked layers of the film can reveal gaps that open the possibility of a different order of thinking. Instead, following Salvio (2009), we questioned whether our work with Deanna had "unwittingly reduced" her troubling experience to a "narrative that fit neatly into the structure of normalizing discourses" (p. 526). While we are aware of the psychological usefulness and necessity of the identify-forming operations evidenced in Deanna's work, her production concerned us because it flattened the difficult terrain of education and captured an idyllic and unchallenged version of the teacher.

As we prepared for the second year, we faced changes to scheduling the course in which the digital storytelling is located. Instead of lasting one semester, the course is now stretched over two. Within the same time frame, it also includes the final 13-week practicum, after which students return to the university for two weeks, spent solely in class with us for multiple blocks of time.

In restructuring the course in light of these changes, we situated the digital story work within the two-week block following their practicum, allowing students to draw a critical incident from their final placement. We also chose to ask students to place their critical incident at the center of the film-making process. Finally, in returning to Brushwood-Rose (2009), who describes the unexpected in her experience of viewing and reading her own digital story, we considered the importance of creating our own films, We then produced our own digital stories about critical

incidents and decided to use our films as provocateurs, with our students, in the screenplay process (Robertson, 2004).

In both cases, the films we produced were around difficult moments in our early years as classroom teachers. For Linda, it was in a college English classroom setting in which she asked students to engage in an analysis of literary texts within the context of critical pedagogy. For Avril, it was in a classroom in a remote First Nations community, where she was carrying out critical action research in and out of the classroom with students. Our digital stories, addressed later in this paper, focus on our responses to aggressive incidents in our classes, which resulted in questioning the discourses that drove our work. Similarly, the students' critical incidents revealed experiences of learning that are deeply significant, some of which are traumatic. For instance, the pre-service teachers describe that they have no response to the sudden and unexpected display of racist behavior and hatred for others; one wrote of the paralysis of finding out that a student had witnessed his mother's murder. While some focus on fears of being unable to respond to the needs of vulnerable children, others speak of being repelled by students, their families, or their home lives. Some write of discovering that students might threaten, or actually physically harm them, while others write about the concerns related to students not caring about what they thought or said.

Other pre-service teachers discuss difficulties that surface when the pedagogical advice provided by their associate teachers conflicts with that provided by university supervisors. Additionally, they write about their worries of working with different teachers who do not share the same values in the school context. They also explore their anxieties over the subject content of lessons and approaches to teaching and learning to which they are expected to subscribe in their practicum schools. All point to how they begin to acquire an understanding of themselves as teachers;

however, most of these experiences are not considered in any depth within official training practices or discourses.

An important point in the process was the shift from the analysis of critical incidents to the production of movies of those incidents. This provoked a range of responses. There was initial resistance to the use of these moments for film. Some students questioned the utility of the process, imagining that a product to be shared with future employers would be of greater value. While not all students created an explicit representation of the critical incident, we were struck that those who did not narrativize the actual incident in the film appeared instead to have shifted the angle of their gaze, as if the experience was viewed through a different lens – much as we had seen in Deanna's work. Thus, while there may not have been a one-to-one correspondence between the critical incidents and the films, it was clear that these pre-service teachers were working with questions provoked by the incidents. The shifts in perspective were not necessarily evident to the students, who appeared to say, "I didn't 'do' my critical incident."

Another space of resistance was evident in the silence, which punctuated the polite applause that followed the screening of our own digital stories. At a later point, one student shared what emerged in conversation among students following the class on the day Linda's story was screened. She said, "It really made everyone see you in a totally different light. It showed you when you were vulnerable. We usually see you in front of the class and in charge…Wow. Many of us were saying, 'Can you believe that happened [to Linda]?' " In addition to this comment, there were a few remarks about reluctance to comment on our technical skills, as well as silence. We were left wondering if these responses were a defense against identifying with our vulnerabilities, of which were acutely aware.

On the day of the class viewing of the pre-service teachers' films, some students chose to not participate, while others vacillated wildly

about whether they should be part of the public screening. In the previous year, the class viewing had been perceived as a risky act. In both years, students were concerned about their peers' understanding of their stories, and the prospect of judgment. Their fear performed in a number of ways: heightened emotions, including anticipation and anger. This anger was expressed with forgotten copies of a film, a sudden absence from the class, or through reprimanding a professor about breaches of perceived student confidentiality. Some suggested that a safe enough space had not been created in the classroom.

Pitt and Brushwood-Rose (2007) write about "the making of emotional significance" (p. 334) and the importance of what they call emotional storms. What we witnessed were more like emotional squalls from which students were able to find shelter though sharing their fears and identifying with each other's experiences and congratulating each other on the success of their films.

The viewing revealed that some students, like Deanna, drew on regulatory discourses to create comforting narratives, through which they appeared to respond to their critical incidents with "particular pedagogical discourses in which certain power relations manifest themselves in the form of didactic and instructional pedagogy" (Brown et al., 2006, p. 65). There are several examples that clearly illustrate Taubman's (2012) notion of the therapeutic project of schooling, mentioned earlier in the paper. In repeated cases, we could see the vulnerable child rescued by the caring teacher. In one such case, a pre-service teacher – subsequent to having mistreated a child, constructs herself as a moral guardian of him, against a parent, a home and a social context, the sort of context that she suggests renders children "broken." In her film, she appears to occupy a transcendent position, and while she has identified the weaknesses of her teaching strategy, the discourse is used as a defense, such that reasons for the student's shortcomings are now provided. As well, she sees this experience as a second chance to act

and a new frame for how she will intervene on his behalf as rescuer. In these cases, it seemed that instead of opening the questions of issues around authority and power, there was a return to the regulatory discourse of social justice. Taubman (2012) describes this "problem," drawing on Pinar (2009), as the "collapsing into a sociological, psychological, and political gaze that renders subjectivity epiphenomenal to power relations and articulates it in terms of socio-cultural identities and group psychology" (p. 26). With these students, we wondered about our hope to involve them in working to locate the truth around their own experiences of loss and desires.

During the digital storytelling process, we each found that the digital stories of particular students held significance for us, given the uncanny experience associated with our recognition of how we were returned to the incidents captured in our own digital stories. In Avril's story, she appears preoccupied with tensions around seeking emancipation of First Nations' youth through critical literacy and place-based learning. In the movie, she portrays how the wholeness she achieved through this is disrupted as some students challenge her practices. She comments on how the tension of seeking efficient teaching versus emancipation, and the pull of the therapeutic (Taubman, 2012), now continue to echo through her work in teacher education. However, she had missed the more nuanced reading of how her own desires were operating through her pedagogy, and how her need to constitute herself as radical, yet caring, reflected her turbulent inner world. The screening of her movie with pre-service teachers opened up new questions for why the event disturbed her so much. And until working with the future teachers regarding their stories, she did not connect the event in the film in any way to a troubled relationship she had with a mature student who had been in four classes she had taught over three years – and who was at that time in the class in which the digital stories were produced.

Until this course, the relationship was uncharacteristically difficult, marked by apparent misunderstandings, which Avril attempted to minimize through increasingly detailed instructions and feedback. The student's frustration and emotional outbursts grew, leading to two meetings involving a third person in which the student pleaded with Avril to like him, only to follow this with increased anger and written accusations of neglect. Before the semester began, she was anxious about his presence in the class in which the digital stories were situated; however, the tensions of the previous years were not evident. In reading his work around his own critical incident, his script, and, then in viewing his film, she finally recognized that her preoccupation with his uncontained emotions were the disavowal of the way his painful feelings paralleled her own psychological struggles. Additionally, her preoccupation with the challenge that this future teacher posed was an uncanny return, as Freud (1919/2003) might say, to repressed desires that had been troubled in the earlier experience depicted in her digital story.

Like Avril, Linda's film making experience was similarly uncanny. She engaged in some memory work regarding an incident with a college student who questioned her ethics and fairness. The student challenged her practice of critical pedagogy in the Canadian literature classroom. He took issue with having to read texts as a means to engage in issues around the historical, cultural, political and personal ramifications of gender, race, ethnicity, class, ability, age, region, sexuality, hierarchy of power relations, and politics of language. During this time in her teaching career, Linda held fast to Paulo Freire's ideas of the dialectical exchange between teacher and student, whereby:

> [T]he teacher-of-the students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself

taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while

being taught also teach. (1990, p. 72)

Yet this young man, who was very bright and articulate, threw the classroom space into turmoil as he was constantly upstaging this framework by arguing that Linda's version of social justice was equally as oppressive. After the return of a reaction paper to which Linda had responded by questioning his remarks, he crumpled up his paper, went to the front of the classroom, threw it in her face, and stomped out the door. Explaining in her video how she both wanted to run after him and did not want to run after him, Linda shared how she felt torn apart, and no longer saw herself as the 'good teacher.'

During the course, a similar dynamic appeared to be playing out with a beginning teacher, Mary, whose critical incident we use to open this essay. Throughout the course Mary had disrupted Linda's class with late, noisy arrivals. When participating in discussions with peers, she would go into lengthy descriptions of her own observations and successful experiences. Additionally, her absences were followed by repeated demands for clarification on assignments during class time. The impact her actions were having on others in the class, including Linda, was privately drawn to Mary's attention. She expressed shock, and this event was followed by a series of increasingly difficult challenges to Linda regarding her ethics and fairness, which ended up involving the administration. Later, in her practicum, Mary experienced her own struggles around perceptions of ethics and fairness, as is shown by her critical incident, which we used in the introduction to this paper. Referring to an initiative that she attempts to take up after the tragic loss of one her students, Mary struggles with a parent who challenges her project as consumer-driven and inappropriate in light of the circumstances. While acknowledging that the daughter is caught within this space, Mary focuses on the negotiation with the principal around the demands of the parent, forming strategies for engaging in a battle she

perceives as waged against her initiative. In Mary's account we noted an unexpected repetition: her encounters with the parent appeared to be echoed by the encounters with Linda.

Mary's movie does not directly represent her critical incident; however, like Deanna's film, described above, Mary's film appears to defend against feelings of fragmentation provoked by the critical incident with the parent and her earlier experiences with Linda. For instance, the film is introduced with a short animated clip of the Peanuts characters, Sally and Linus, seated at desks in a classroom. In the clip, Linus turns to Sally and exclaims, "I'm feeling like Miss Othmar likes me." Sally replies, "Don't be ridiculous; you're just another student." This incites Linus' proclamation, "On the contrary, I have the feeling I'm somebody special." This invocation sets the scene for a representation of the imaginary – Mary's wish for wholeness, completeness, and mastery. Lacan explains the significance of this wish, in the following, "The imaginary economy has meaning, we gain some purchase on it, only in so far as it is inscribed into the symbolic order" (1988, p. 255). As Thacker clarifies:

> It is the entry into language assigned to Lacan's mirror stage that reveals the loss of unity represented by the 'plentitude of the maternal body' of which the infant is part, in what Lacan terms the imaginary. The symbolic order imposes the law of language and, in so doing, reveals the arbitrariness of meaning embodied in the sign. Thus there is a gap between the signifier "I" and the actual I of the subject who speaks. The two can never cohere, and it is the desire for an irredeemable wholeness prior to this split that motivates all encounters with language and is continually played out in fiction, which performs a consoling function. (2000, p. 3)

We would argue that this is the case for Mary, who "armors" herself, creating "an illusion or misperception of wholeness, integration, and totality," (Klages, 1997, n.p.) and perhaps what we see within the story is a history of desire that resonates within her own sense of self, development, and need to be consoled. Through this imaginary mode of relating to her situation, Mary maintains an idealized image of herself.

Mary's film weaves together short animated clips of school-related cartoons and still images and video footage from her practicum experience; we often see Mary in a variety of still images and video footage from inside and outside of school. Through still images, these reappearances in the mirror are punctuated by multiple black and white video clips showing bust-like images of Mary's head and shoulders, which appear bare. She gazes expressively upward to the right where she engages the lens of the camera, contributing to the film's strange effect. Mary appears to be watching the spectator watch her, through the film. In the black and white video clips, Mary appears like a silent film heroine in a melodrama, with little more than her eyes to communicate the message. We turn here to thinking about Linda Williams' redefinition of melodrama; she speaks of it in terms of "moral legibility" and the presentation of a hero (or heroine) 'who is also a victim' and whose moral worth is revealed to all in the course of the narrative (Williams, 1998). For Mary, who felt she had been wrongly accused at the university and in her practicum, the storytelling makes possible the visualization of herself as a victim-hero, who follows the trajectory of the quest for lost innocence (Radford, 2009 & 2008). "Pathos and action are the two most important means to the achievement of moral legibility" as Williams (1998, p. 59) argues, and Mary uses both to tell her story.

Following the introductory prologue of the Peanuts' clip, Mary's story begins with new revelations of what she believes is an ideal learning environment[2]; into this spoken text, she weaves comments about her practicum experience. There is a shift in the narrative as she

introduces the death of a student. Here the element of pathos is engaged. Mary has chosen an instrumental soundtrack that is effectively enlisted to build the dramatic tension of the story, further provoking pathos. The music increases in intensity at the two-minute mark when the student's death is introduced. At this point orchestration is added to the slowly driving beat and the tempo picks up, aligning with a fast-paced register of suspenseful action. As Ben Shaul (2007) writes, "The audio mirror completes the video mirror," (p. 112). We pick up her script, below, at that point.

> I was in the middle of my practicum figuring out how to make this paradigm shift when tragedy occurred. One of the students in my class, Rob, tragically and suddenly died. When Rob passed away, I had to confront issues and demons in the class far greater than how to best create an interactive classroom. I realized that teaching went so far beyond the curriculum. I had to teach compassion, empathy, hope. It made me realize that what mattered more to me in my classroom was not if the desks were in rows, but if true humanity was learned. I began placing an emphasis on teaching social responsibility, and ensuring that my students were becoming active global citizens. My students began to recognize my genuine, and quite transparent love and belief in them. This in turn, created courage for the struggling students, and also high achieving students. Every student in my class began *adapt*ing *a sense of self-empowerment*. I watched as they grew and bloomed. And in the end, they *became willing to tackle bigger goals with more confidence and such belief in themselves that it* became *hard to imagine they would be anything but successful*[3].

While the spoken text describes the successes the students achieve at Mary's hand, the images running parallel capture her own successful story, making visible moral legibility through her deeds. The final image of the film is a message spelled in marquee-style lights: 'The World Is Yours,' a symbolization that powerfully evokes the imaginary -- wholeness based on virtue. For the digital storyteller, like Mary, the film captures a dream-like wish.

Film's "inducement of the mirror stage in viewers" has been traced in other studies in particular, "and its effects upon their positioning as peeping Toms in dominant continuity-styled filmmaking" (Ben Shaul, 2007, p. 111). We found that the student viewers watching Mary's digital story appeared rapt, which was similar to our responses. This might be described as an "aesthetic of astonishment" (Brooks, 1976/1995, as cited in Williams, 1998, p. 6), as Mary's film functions like historical melodramas do, employing "a dramaturgy which tends toward such spectacular moments of public homage to virtue" (Brooks, 1976, p. 26). Just like the early staged melodramas that used a range of available effects, the technology available to the novice filmmaker in the 21st century offers extensive possibilities that can be employed for representation. This digital storyteller's use of these effects unveils a desire for wholeness with an intensity that exceeds all of the other digital stories produced. We were both drawn in and repelled by this. The desire to rescue and to be rescued through teaching was an uncanny return to our own trajectories as beginning teachers; yet, we defended against this identification given our particular histories with Mary.

The above case deeply underscores the urgency of questioning one's own work in spaces such as classrooms where subjectivities collide. Like Brushwood-Rose (2009), we hold that with the aesthetic elements of digital storytelling, that which is resistant to symbolization is more evident and readable, making way for emancipatory work in education. The possibility of reading is notably as a result of the non-

compositionally linked layers, where, for example, visual imagery may appear to tell a different story than the voiced text.

While the unspoken is always traced against the spoken, the digital stories of the future teachers are potential containers that symbolize the negotiation of residues of time, loss, desire, and authority for the tellers of the stories, and the making of themselves at that certain time and place in their evolution as educators. Further, we propose that the process creates possible spaces for future teachers to work with their own desires for particular pedagogies, for power and authority, for rescuing and being rescued, or to work through conflicts that may emerge at this formative time.

What we witnessed with the future teachers was a process of wrestling with and questioning the significance of the fundamental processes that they experience in the identity-making venture of becoming a teacher, the "conscious actions, unconscious processes, interactions, conversations, impulses, responses, plans, actions, disruptions, and unexpected events and situations" (Brown et al., 2006, p. 62). Moreover, the research has returned us to thinking about the capstone course in which the film-making is located; we are trying to conceptualize how to create spaces for students to critically analyze contemporary discourses of education that have the potential of acting as Other. We believe that being teacher researchers complicates our work in productive ways; where Robertson (1994) speaks of "'*the uncanny moment'* in research", this process of making our own digital stories, and supporting our students in producing their own, created new spaces of reading for us and heightened our awareness of the unconscious dynamics of our work. It engaged us in thinking about issues of authority and power, as well as our experiences of loss and desire, which fuel our own quests for lost innocence, manifested in our struggles with the push and pull of the therapeutic and the emancipatory in education (Taubman, 2012). We wonder how the adventure of learning has

continued for the students, as we have heard that students revisited and discussed each other's digital stories long beyond the end of the course, having used social media to share them with their peers.

We are aware that with the novelty of digital storytelling, there is increased enthusiasm in taking up forms of filmmaking in teacher education as "a process of personal introspection" (Cho, 2009, p. 102). Such uses of digital stories may not take into account the non-symbolizable, which drives emancipatory work. As Taubman writes, such work "aspires to free us from our taken-for-granted views of ourselves and others, to loosen the psychic knots and intellectual nuts we find we are stuck in, and to broaden and deepen the meanings we make of our experiences" (2012, p. 28). Despite the disavowal of this work, we remain invested in it, and in the importance of creating spaces for future teachers where they begin to explore the knowledge that is difficult to think, or to return to Lacan, "knowledge that can't tolerate one's knowing that one knows" (Lacan, 1974, as cited in Felman, 1987, p. 77).

Notes

[1] The digital stories are produced using either Apple's iMovie or Final Cut, or Microsoft's MovieMaker; each of these programs allows for assembling digital layers of images and sound as well as video editing. In relation to this, we use the terms digital story production, film making, and movie making interchangeably throughout the paper.

[2] On close reading we found that Mary had borrowed liberally from an online text, such that over 130 words of her short script were drawn from the source.

[3] Italics are used to show the phrasing that the student drew directly from Silverthorn's (2006) original text on interactive classrooms.

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