SCREENING THE PSYCHO-DYNAMICS OF LEARNING TO TEACH: A STUDY OF
DEPRESSION IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Screening the Psycho-Dynamics of Learning to Teach is a psychoanalytic study about the status of depression in teacher education. How do films that depict depressed teachers and students offer educationalists a resource for working through depression in pedagogy? I suggest that the interminable process of learning to teach requires teachers to encounter loss, vulnerability, and sadness. Yet, the ubiquity of these emotional conditions means that depression, as a psychical defense against strong emotions, pervades the profession of teaching and prevents teachers and learners from thinking creatively. With the problem of the teacher's depression in mind, I turn to three recent films about depressed educational subjects, Monsieur Lazhar (2011), Half Nelson (2006), and Mona Lisa Smile (2004) to examine both how popular representations of education depict depression in teaching and how these representations may be used as a resource for making significance of the extraordinary and mundane emotional conflicts of learning to teach.

I frame my discussion of depression using the psychoanalytic theories of the dead mother (Green, 1980) and the dead teacher (Farley, 2014) in order to think about how new teachers' (lost) desire affects teaching and learning relations. In each chapter, I analyze one film using one psychoanalytic concept that is relevant to pedagogy: transference in Half Nelson, identification in Mona Lisa Smile, and melancholia in Monsieur Lazhar. Alternatively, these chapters each analyze one depressed figure who haunts the scene of education: the teacher in Half Nelson who is in transference with a caring student repeats the unconscious fantasy of the emotionally dead mother; the new teacher in Mona Lisa Smile identifies with feminist historical fantasies in order to sustain her teaching desire for the depressed student(s); and, the depressed teacher in Monsieur Lazhar finds a surviving maternal teacher through whom he learns to symbolize and

mourn his losses in teaching. The final chapter turns from visual analysis of the films to a discussion of the films as sites of viewer pedagogy. I suggest finally that viewer emotional responses to the films often repeat the psychodynamics of pedagogy represented on screen. Film pedagogy thus creates a space for viewers to remember, repeat, and work through the emotional conflicts of teaching and learning.

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Chapter One: Introduction to Screening the Psycho-Dynamics of Learning to Teach

Description of Research Problem and Questions

How does the teacher develop and sustain desire for teaching? This question centres not only new and seasoned teachers as they lose and re-find what they love about teaching, but also the students who learn (and resist learning) from them. Students, too, often become the impetus for the teacher to continue teaching even, or perhaps especially, when the institutional constraints of education threaten the teacher with loss of meaning. The teacher's loss of meaning prompts questions from the teacher such as: does anything I do matter? Why can't I seem to make a difference? And if I did, would anyone notice? The teacher's loss of meaning, then, is not only a problem of lost desire but also a catastrophe of lost significance which may lead to depression. In my study, I think about both the problems of lost teaching desire and the teacher's lost meaning—the impetus for pedagogical depression—using the concept of psychical deadness. In psychoanalytic theory, psychical deadness refers to the unconscious fantasy the teacher may develop of not being able to survive a breakdown of meaning in teaching. In ordinary terms, deadness describes the feeling that nothing (I do) matters. The concept of psychical deadness is particularly useful because it describes not only the emotional qualities of the teacher's inner life, but it also defines lost teaching desire—one possible effect of the teacher's breakdown of meaning—as a relational and pedagogical problem that implicates the student.

I define teaching desire according to three principles: the teacher's wish to teach which is constructed through narration, the teacher's belief that one has unique insight to offer that will benefit other learners (or, "the furor to teach" as I discuss in my literature review), and an emerging confidence the teacher develops as one learns to teach that one will psychically

survive—by learning to think creatively—the rigours of pedagogical interaction and classroom life. I use the phrase teaching desire, a *double entendre*, intentionally to suggest that while desire cannot be taught, the quality of the teacher's desire for teaching shapes pedagogy through which students learn to make meaning about the world they inhabit. From a psychoanalytic perspective, I am suggesting that the teacher's desire profoundly influences the psychical environment between teacher and students and in turn affects the emotional situation of teaching and learning.

The term teaching desire is a close relative of learning desire, a term that forms the title of education theorist Sharon Todd's (1997) anthology about the paradox that, on one hand, many teachers want to instill a love of learning in students and, on the other hand, desire is required in order for students to learn in the first place. And, in the context of transformative pedagogy in particular, Todd explains that learning desire also refers to educators' desire to engage and develop a desire in students (and others) to act on knowledge to effect social change. "Indeed, educators acknowledge on a daily basis," Todd writes, "that the scene of education, the scene of learning, is fraught with tensions, pleasures, ambivalences that are connected to the kind of subject matter being taught, to teacher-student interaction, and to the images and representations that shape how we think about education" (p. 1). So, my research on teaching desire builds on Todd *et al.*'s discussion of learning desire by inquiring about how the teacher's inner life— specifically, the quality of the teacher's desire for teaching—shapes and complicates educators' attempts to develop and engage learners' passion, commitment, and appetite for learning: a project that Todd defines as both "intangible" and "ineffable" (p. 1). In the following paragraphs, I outline four prongs of my research problem on teaching desire: the quality of the teacher's desire (or loss thereof) affects students and the learning environment; teaching desire is formed from the teacher's history as a learner, before teacher training begins; desiring implies risk and

requires confidence which may conflict with the emotional situation of learning to teach; and, in a study of teaching desire that uses film, the object of study is also part of the research method.

First, the problem of (lost) teaching desire affects teachers, students, and the learning environment. In psychoanalyst Andre Green's (1999) concept of the dead mother—a close relative of the dead teacher—the psychical image of the mother's deadness actually begins in the child who notices the mother's bereavement. The child creates an unconscious fantasy of the dead mother as a way to cope with being cared for by someone who is bereaved—read: distracted—and, in turn, the image shapes the maternal environment, or the relational space between mother and child. To extend this principle to teaching, the fantasy of deadness also colours the pedagogical environment between teacher and student who, like the child in Green's concept, observes the teacher's bereavement and begins to feel as if one's learning and development are a threat to the teacher's recovery. So, one prong of my research problem is how the teacher's lost teaching desire—far from affecting only the teacher—shapes the entire pedagogical environment and everyone who inhabits it.

Farley's work (2014) on the dead teacher complex is similarly instructive. Farley introduces Green's concept to the context of education where the dead mother becomes the dead teacher. In pedagogy, the teacher's depression matters because it shapes the psychical and emotional environment between the teacher and student, and in turn depression affects pedagogy. The psychical environment that teacher and student co-create determines in part whether and what learners (including the teacher) may learn. In a pedagogical environment touched by the teacher's depression, the student—like the child in Green's theory—is called on to care for the teacher. The reversal of demands may interfere with the student's capacity to think and symbolize creatively: the cornerstone of teaching and learning. In education, the dead teacher

appears to us in a variety of expected and unfamiliar forms: the frustrated teacher who expresses sexual desire for a student may be calling on the student to provide incentive for the teacher who does not feel adequately compensated for her work, or as I suggest in my chapter on transference in <u>Half Nelson</u>, the teacher who is paralyzed by drug use requires the thirteen-year-old student's help to get off the floor.

Second, teachers also begin as students. A study of desire in teaching, therefore, must consider the teacher's history as an educated and desiring subject—revising Freud's famous slogan "where id is, there ego shall be" to "where the student is, there teacher shall be." The teacher's fantasy of teaching begins from an image of the student she was. The reconstruction of the teacher's history as a student will shape the teacher's identifications, conflicts, and attachments to others in teaching—albeit unpredictably. In her study of teacher education, education theorist Deborah Britzman (2003b) explains that "because teachers were once students in compulsory education, their sense of the teacher's world is strangely established before they begin learning to teach" (p. 1). And, teachers often call upon their histories of learning to account for the original wish to teach. "Teaching is one of the few professions," Britzman writes, "where newcomers feel the force of their own history of learning as if it telegraphs relevancy to their work" (p. 1). A teacher's lost love objects may be recalled in the teacher's encounters with students. So, the second part of the research problem I am outlining here is the complexity of psychical history in (re)constructing teaching desire.

The positions of 'teacher' and 'student' are psychically unstable and require thinking about how teaching desire is connected to interiority—which is at once timeless and an historical relation to learning, infancy, and loss—and to crises of authority which are a consequence of having a psychical history of desire. Transference, or the subject's unconscious positioning of

others in the role of one's parents (the child's first desired objects), is the precursor for the crisis of authority that the pedagogical encounter contains. Re-finding in teaching what has been lost can be particularly bewildering if in the student the teacher finds a former lover or mentor. But how or why might a student ever resemble an authority figure to the teacher? What desires must be lost in order for a new teacher to transform her identification with students into confidently claiming the role of teacher?

In other words, there are all kinds of losses for teachers to confront: material, conceptual, relational, institutional, and psychological. Students don't come to class, or they don't seem to care about their learning, teachers are expected to enforce anxious policies which assume students' laziness and dishonesty, colleges and universities profit from teachers' professional training and emotional investment in teaching but only offer precarious employment as contract faculty in return. These are the conditions, the losses that so easily pile up and create the ground for depression—in addition to the emotional situation of learning to teach which restages professional training as an infancy, full with the new teacher's fantasies of omnipotence and utter helplessness. In these moments, the use of aesthetic objects—the things which invite teachers and learners to observe beauty and to consider how the world matters differently in light of what we have lost—is essential to supporting vibrant pedagogical environments between human beings who are fully alive to ourselves and to each other.

In films about education, viewers are asked to bear witness to how the teacher's interiority, history of desiring, and problems of authority complicate pedagogical relations. In The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie and Mona Lisa Smile, for example, female teachers are represented as part of an historical relation in which women and girls are educated into marriage and reproductive work. Katherine Watson, the main character in Mona Lisa Smile, travels to

Wellesley College in the fall of 1953 to begin work as an Instructor of Art History while she finishes her doctoral thesis about Picasso. When she arrives at the school, she encounters female students who are different than she imagined: they have already read the text book and they can recite facts about art but they do not know how to think about it. One student in particular, Betty Warren, insists upon the importance of school tradition and Katherine is bothered by the student's uncritical conservatism. Katherine and Betty experience deep conflict over their differences of opinion about marriage and childbearing as the necessary ends of women's university education. On the surface, the cultural and institutional anxieties about educating girls and women seem to provide the impetus for Katherine Watson to struggle against the repressive demands by school administration on her personal and professional conduct: she must turn in her syllabus for approval, she cannot teach the students about Abstract Impressionism (the movement she loves and about which she is an expert), and she cannot be romantically involved with a male teacher at the school. The school's prohibiting Katherine from teaching the students about Abstract Impressionism is significant because the film depicts Katherine's early attempts to use impressionistic paintings to teach the students as a successful way to engage the students' desire and curiosity for thinking about the art they encounter. When the administrators create the rule as a way to insist that Katherine follow the proscribed curriculum, they deny the teacher's need of meaningful curriculum. Katherine's deep knowledge of Abstract Impressionism otherwise bolsters her confidence and shapes a relational space between teacher and students that promotes creative inquiry. But, the significance of teaching desire to pedagogy is highlighted by a re-reading of the film with the teacher's psychical life in mind. Katherine's desire to rail against President Carr also arises in response to the teacher's ambivalent identification with

precocious female students who challenge the teachers' claims to know about what they teach. These knowledge claims are also implicit claims to authority and belonging in school.

Third, my study is concerned with the difficulty of desiring. On one hand, teachers need desire in order to compel their work and, on the other hand, excessive desire—or the excessive regard for it—can ruin one's chances in education. That is, idealizing desire—or, prioritizing an insatiable appetite as the best evidence of a successful education—deadens the sense of possibility that keeps teaching and learning from being merely the repetition of routines or application of skills. To my mind, teaching desire is significant to the scene of education because, without desire, educators cannot be vibrant social actors or stage the grounds for creative inquiry with their students. Yet, without the capacity to think about our desires for the insight they offer into the conditions of our relationships with ourselves, other people, and the institutions in which we participate, the promotion of desire as an educational value is empty and does nothing to position education as a meaningful intervention in the lives of learners, who are already desiring. In this vein, I want to foreground a distinction between following and questioning desire: on the one hand, all learners (including teachers) require the freedom enough to follow some of their desires in order to lead purposeful lives, and on the other hand, the very ideas of human development and civilization depend on learners' growing capacity to question desire. To put it simply: living with others means a person cannot always do what one wants, and not everything I desire will sustain me.

Teachers must claim and follow their desires in order to survive the often precarious material, social, and institutional circumstances of their work, and at the same time to be certain about one's desires is misleading. The tension between the need to follow and to question one's desires for teaching returns me to the relational dimensions of education at stake in my research

problem: how does an ambivalent teacher (expect to) use the passionate student's love of learning to re-find her professional purpose? And, to turn the question: what is to be made of the teacher's transference with the disillusioned student's loss of desire for learning?

The formulation of desire as a psychical apparatus invites a question about thinking: why does the capacity to think about one's (capacity for) teaching desire matter? Here, I am suggesting that while the work of thinking is not untouched by the stirring effects of desiring (perhaps they are inseparable), thinking might be one way to engage desire as an educational issue, to consider desiring as an integral part of pedagogy without treating the desires themselves as the heart of the matter (though they are also significant). I am also suggesting that thinking and desiring are both processes that require a lot from human beings. Desiring is demanding. To desire is to take a risk if one must entertain uncertainty that she will ever get what she wants and then that the acquisition of what she wants will be satisfying, if only for a short time. Desiring also requires confidence if the subject is to believe that what she wants is worth pursuing, that she can get it, and that she is strong enough to survive losing it. And, each of these thoughts contains its opposite, so desiring also has the potential to confront us with unsettling questions: what if I don't get what I want? What if I am unworthy of what I desire? Will I be destroyed by what I want? In desiring, subjects wager a sense of coherence and autonomy in favour of the unruly inner conditions of attaching to something outside the self—beyond our control. In encountering the possibility that we might change our minds about what we want, there is also the possibility that education can transform desire. Is it possible to educate one's desiring? And if so, what is the criteria for such an education? These are only a few of desire's provocations. To further complicate matters, the difficult work of treating desire as an object of study might also mean that teachers and researchers must be able to contain many competing and contradictory

impulses—and the feelings they conjure—without taking direct action apart from trying to discern how the teacher's desiring and desires instruct teaching.

Fourth, my study of teaching desire emerges from and responds to theoretical conversations about film representation. That is, I explore the relationship between teaching and desiring by looking at films about education. Since looking is an expression of desire, film study transforms my interest in teaching desire to a question of implication as a viewer: how do films about education construct meaning about teaching desire? And, how might films invoke teaching desire in the viewer? Worded differently, how can representations of education be useful for the teacher who has lost her desire and so has lost her way in teaching? The four prongs of my research problem about teaching desire (the teacher's history as a learner, the unstable positions of 'teacher' and 'student' that psychical relations disrupt, the process of learning to tolerate the conflicts of desiring, and the use of films as contrived, visual representations) are informed by three theoretical fields that have deeply shaped my research interests and the way I think about teaching and learning. To frame the concerns of my research project, I engage psychoanalytic theories of learning to teach, feminist theories of pedagogical desire and relationality, and educational theories of film and visual culture. I discuss selected texts from each of these fields in the next chapter. For now, a personal anecdote about my history of learning to teach offers some additional context for the relationship between film representation, desire, and teaching in my research.

Autobiographical Account: The Researcher's Archive

I began researching film for this project unknowingly when, after my first year of doctoral studies and a recent transition from Women's Studies to Education, I became sick from schooling. I entered the PhD program on the heels of having finished my Master's degree which I pursued directly after completing my undergraduate studies. I was exhausted and felt that I couldn't bear to learn anymore. During that year, I struggled to fulfill the minimum criteria of my assignments. I lost my curiosity and became uninterested in asking questions. And, I felt suspicious of my new professors who were quite unlike the teachers I had loved and learned from previously. I lacked purpose. When my supervisor at the time called a meeting with me to suggest that I leave graduate school, I felt shocked and hurt and like I wanted to rip her to shreds but I knew she was right. That summer, I found myself without school for the first time and, without it, I fell into a deep depression that I had been resisting. I retreated into my apartment alone, succumbing to the feeling of being totally unmoored without having the rhythm and imperatives of formal schooling to follow anymore. What would I do with my time? Who would I become?

My feeling of being dead as a student coincided (though perhaps it was not a coincidence) with my first opportunity to work as a Teaching Assistant, which inaugurated my experience of learning to teach. As a TA, the seminars I led were a mess. I struggled to speak with authority or conviction, and as a result my students didn't trust me. I had no idea of how to communicate my needs as a teacher to the course director or the other people who might support my work. So, the problem of being dead in my education extended in two directions: to learning and to teaching. Being without curiosity is a crisis for the teacher at least as much as for the student since, without questions, the teacher is extremely limited in what she can use to furnish

her classroom or to build a relationship to students. Part of what was initially difficult about trying to find my way in Education is that I entered the field with the flimsy hope that Education would substitute for a political identity and disciplinary training that was failing me—that I wanted distance from—but without the explicit desire to learn to teach. My introduction to Education, then, shares an important similarity with Deborah Britzman's (2003) interview participant "Jamie Owl," a young woman struggling through her teacher education in a high school. Jamie "did not think about how becoming a teacher might change her," Britzman writes, "and in fact she did not perceive herself as wanting to learn to teach. But she decided to go into teaching" (p. 84). The difference between wanting to learn to teach and merely deciding to become a teacher is important. Britzman emphasizes that Jamie's lack of desire limits Jamie's ability to theorize how and what she comes to know as a teacher, which is an essential resource in times of pedagogical distress. Like Jamie, I suffered a lack of desire which reverberated through my graduate education and my experience of learning to teach as an inability—or a psychical refusal—to symbolize my conflicts. Without the ability to live creatively, which is one thing desire makes possible, I didn't know what or how to think. So, I needed to re-find my appetite.

During my absence from school, I had recently moved and one of the ways I found to fill my time was by taking long solitary walks through my new neighbourhood. On one of these journeys into the world, I happened to pass one of the last remaining movie rental stores in the wake of online streaming. The building that housed the store was falling to ruin and the store had giant posters in its windows advertising for a going out of business sale. (Like me, the movie store had also lost its purpose.) I went in to see what I could find and emerged with a collection of films—most of them popular, some I already knew well, and some I had meant to see but

never made time for. I spent the summer watching and re-watching this collection of movies alone in my apartment, too exhausted to think about anything else and too depleted to go out or invite anyone in. At first, I watched passively—literally laying down on my couch in the dark. At first, I didn't think about what these films had to do with the significant loss I had experienced in my departure from school. But, as I continued to re-play them, I began to notice that watching them had become a way for me to commune with the people I deeply missed who I had to leave behind to pursue my graduate education: my teachers, certainly, but also the friends I had lost on my move to the city, and my brother and parents with whom my relationship became strained by my search for independence. Among the wealth of its other gifts, I learned that the cinema is also a hospitable place to mourn. With these lost objects in mind, I found eventually that I could also use film to think about my education—specifically, what went wrong. Among the films I used to initiate that thinking, my interest in Half Nelson survives here.

I look at the films Mona Lisa Smile (2004), Half Nelson (2006), and Monsieur Lazhar (2011) to analyze teaching desire, which in the context of my study expresses a double meaning, pointing both to the formation of teaching desire (specifically, through viewership) and then to questions surrounding how the teacher's desire is transferred and expressed in the pedagogical encounter. I chose to study these films because they offer ambivalent depictions of teachers and their desires and in so doing, I find that they offer to educational uses of film an important counterpoint to a more popular set of films that position the (too often white and male) teacher as a hero and saviour of marginalized children and students (Stand and Deliver, Dangerous Minds, Freedom Writers, To Sir with Love, The Dead Poets Society.) While many of the teacher-as-hero films are entertaining and provide access to significant fantasies about teaching that shape education (Robertson 1997), I find that these films are less useful in providing a resource for

viewers who are learning to teach to mine the unconscious conflicts surrounding the formation, transfer, and loss of teaching desire. Because teaching desire is at once necessary to and unruly in teaching, an investigation of teaching desire requires resources that construct teaching and desiring as conflicted and uncertain processes rather than depictions that reify the teacher as omniscient, benevolent, and involved in a linear struggle to master their professional practice.

In their construction of ambivalent representations of deeply conflicted teachers, Mona Lisa Smile, Half Nelson, and Monsieur Lazhar create the grounds for viewers to entertain complex fantasies about the relational, psychical, and emotional demands of teaching and then to think about how their teaching desire is shaped by these fantasies. I elaborate in greater detail a discussion of the viewer's relationship to teaching desire in watching films about pedagogy in the last chapter of this dissertation. For now, I turn back to my autobiographical account of learning to teach through encountering ambivalent films about teachers. Then, I move to a discussion of method and methodology to offer an explanation of how I conduct my analysis of the films and how my work is situated in relation to two prominent fields that inform my study: psychoanalytic theories of the relationship between looking and the subject's inner life (specifically through Sigmund Freud's concept of the screen memory), and to theories of visuality and visual culture. Finally, in this introduction, I summarize the conceptual analysis and arguments of each of the analytic chapters of my dissertation.

Through film I returned many times to think about the scene of my supervisor's office in which she suggested I leave school. Although at the time of its utterance, I could only think of this suggestion as an injurious rejection and as humiliating evidence of my failure, watching films about ambivalent relationships between teachers and students helped me to re-imagine this encounter as an inciting incident, or more to the point: as a challenge, to consider how my

response to my supervisor's invitation to leave graduate school (and so to leave the process of learning to teach) might reflect some of my earliest conflicts as a learner and as a human being. I could let my loss of desire ruin my education, giving my supervisor who I hated the final word on the matter, or I could commit to doing the hard work of finding something that matters to me and then take the risk of actually caring about it. In choosing to do the latter, I chose ironically to embrace my supposedly despised supervisor's interpretation of my problem, a choice which also expresses my love and dependence. Of course, in constructing my narrative around this dramatic provocation by a teacher for whom I had aggressive feelings, I am also borrowing a familiar narrative from the films about education that position the teacher as a hero: the dispassionate student has almost struck out of her education when a bold teacher intervenes, reigniting the student's passion for learning and in so doing, re-finds her sense of purpose.

In my research about teaching desire in film, questions about influence extend in two directions: learning to teach and learning to work with film. How can films be used to develop and think about teaching desire? And as a consequence of using film to research desire in teaching: why might it be important that my account of re-finding an appetite for education reproduces some combination of the films' depictions of education? On one hand, my cinematic transference is productive. My engagement with film allows me to ask the question, which is the heart of my dissertation: how does one construct a teaching self that can survive the conflicts of desiring? The films help me to engage in what Anna Freud refers to as a self-subversive investigation, a kind of research she argues teachers must conduct into their inner lives in order to avoid repeating in pedagogy the psychical conflicts that interfere with students' learning and development. On the other hand, however, films—regardless of how ambivalent they are— construct fantasies about education and teaching that do not reflect teachers' lived realities and

the meaning about education that they produce is not neutral. The messages that films

(re)produce and circulate are interested and privilege particular perspectives of education and

social life over others. So, by arguing that popular films about pedagogy can be used as resources

for thinking about unconscious relational dynamics in learning to teach, I must also grapple with

the question of how teaching desire is mediated by the way films depict teaching. If one uses

film as a resource for thinking about education, how does one learn to see the film as contrived?

This question centers the work of visual analysis—specifically through Stuart Hall's concepts of

encoding and decoding visual material—which I elaborate in the following discussion of my

research methods and methodology. The dilemma of how to study film as a set of contrived

representations also implies a larger conflict about the use of the transference, which appears in

my relationships to my teachers and is recast in relation to students: if teaching desire contains 'I

hate you, I love you' how does the teacher learn to encounter her educational others (who are

human beings and objects of fantasy) and sustain her desire for teaching?

I have learned since my summer of movie watching that films work to produce specific

emotional responses in the viewer. As objects of research, films need to be studied for their audio

and visual content—what goes into each scene?—in order to make fuller meaning about the

emotional qualities the films elicit from the spectator. Thinking about how sight and sound work

with a film's narrative is central to understanding how feeling is connected to knowing in the

process of viewership. Attending to these details is important for understanding not only how

complex films are as a medium of communication, but also how particular assumptions and

understandings from the cultural and psychic imaginary are called upon to make meaning about

what viewers see and hear on screen. Studying films to uncover these meanings, then, supports

the hard work of learning to think about desiring that is the heart of both projects (learning to

teach and creating a surviving feminist self) at stake in this dissertation. Undertaking this research requires that I re-think the experience of laying alone in the dark watching films from lost time as a passive spectator to a dynamic engagement that—passive as it may seem—is significant to my development as a teacher and researcher. I offer this study, then, to existing conversations in the field of education about what is difficult about learning to teach and to more recent discussions (Sandlos, 2009; Joyrich, 1994) about how film might provide a resource for making meaning about education. At the same time, my study of the relationship between teaching desire and films about pedagogy stands apart from recent thinking about film as an educational resource by its approach. There are many qualitative studies of film in education that offer valuable thinking about how to teach using particular texts and that document the outcome of those strategies. My study draws on the field of visual studies to offer a reading of some ambivalent representations of teacher-student relationships to think about how ambivalent depictions of pedagogy might allow teachers to access their creative minds and to think more expansively about what constitutes the teacher's education. What is significant to the work of learning to teach about laying alone in the dark with a movie? This question comes to me from several important studies of film in education (Sandlos 2009, Robertson 1997, Joyrich 1994), which I discuss in the literature review chapter that follows this introduction.

Methodology

In this section, I discuss the theoretical approaches I use to look at the films. Specifically, I begin by reviewing Sigmund Freud's concept of "screen memories," or the process by which the mind conflates unconscious fantasy with events from the past. The idea of screen memories helps me to make a relationship between the tenets of psychoanalysis that inform my study of

desire and the realm of visual studies by conceptualizing the mind's (re)production of images—through memory and fantasy—as central to psychical life. Then, I turn to a discussion of cultural myth through semiotician and cultural theorist Roland Barthes in order to elaborate how films about pedagogical relationships draw on and reproduce widespread and deeply seated ideas about who teachers are and what they desire. Barthes's theory of cultural myth helps me to articulate, in addition to the psychoanalytic emphasis on the psychical creation and use of images, that the representations films offer are contrived and produced in a larger social context which includes individual spectators but is not limited to them. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall's work on the processes of encoding and decoding are instructive here in helping me to elaborate two ideas about the social context of film production and interpretation: first, I turn to his argument about how discursive production (of which film is a part) differs from material production, and second, his discussion of decoding implies viewer agency and highlights the dynamic relationship viewers have to interpreting, or "decoding" rather than merely receiving, encoded televisual messages. While Freud's work gives me a language and framework for thinking about the singularity of individuals' desiring, Barthes and Hall offer a way to think about how desire is also shaped socially and materially. Here, I do not aim to settle or contribute to a debate about whether desire is ultimately a matter of the individual or the social; rather, by using both theories of the screen memory and cultural myth, I am suggesting that educationalists think about the significance of desire to internal and external life.

Sigmund Freud first elaborates the concept of screen memories in 1899 after dealing in clinical practice with patients' memory fragments of childhood. "Screen memories" refers to the idea that the human mind attempts to filter or block entirely from consciousness intolerable thoughts or memories which carry unpleasant feelings by combining elements of unconscious

fantasy with conscious traces of events from a person's past. Freud introduces the idea of the screen memory, which is an ordinary event in psychical life, by explaining how the mind attempts to deal with difficult or painful encounters by producing a screen—or, more literally translated, "a cover" (Adam Phillips, 2006, p. 560). Freud begins his discussion by denaturalizing the pervasive assumption that adults suffer amnesia of their childhoods simply because children lack the ability for complex mental processes on which the capacity to remember is built. "The truth is that any child who has developed normally already exhibits, at the age of three or four," Freud writes, "a great many highly complex mental acquirements—an ability to make comparisons, to draw conclusions, to express his feelings—and there is no obvious reason why these mental performances which are no less valuable than those that come later, should be subject to amnesia" (Freud, (2006) 1899, p. 542). If children acquire early in life the capacity for complex mental processes, an inability to remember infancy or early childhood is not necessarily the natural consequence of cognitive development but is related to the interaction between the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind. Freud's argument about childhood amnesia, then, offers important context to the work of understanding screen memories: repression, like remembering, is one way the mind attempts to mitigate psychical conflict.

Screen memories are the manifestation of an internal dilemma between, on the one hand, the feeling of needing to remember a painful experience in order to avoid repeating it, and on the other hand, a psychical desire to protect the self from having to re-encounter through memory the difficulty of what happened. In order to balance the demands of this conflict, Freud explains, the mind devises a compromise in which an innocuous detail associated with the scene that triggers intolerable feelings is remembered—even emphasized—and the difficult experience itself is forgotten—or, more accurately, repressed—and therefore hidden from consciousness. "The

upshot of this compromise," Freud writes, "is that it is not the experience itself that supplies the memory image—in this respect the resistance carries the day—but another psychical element, which is closely associated with the one that proved objectionable" (p. 545). Freud's concept of screen memories, then, suggests that it is precisely the significance of the experience that makes it objectionable and so the mind makes an image only of seemingly banal details associated with the difficult content of the experience. To complicate matters, screen memories also contain elements of fantasy. Although early Freud attributes the force and function of screen memories to provide wish-fulfillment, Freud later changes his mind about how to read dreams or memories. Therefore, I am proposing that screen memories may be read as expressions not only of the subject's desires, but also of anxiety and conflict.

Moreover, Freud's discussion of screen memories offers a way into thinking about the use of images in psychical life. Specifically, the theory of the screen memory suggests that images are important to human memory and that images—either the ones humans create internally or those taken from film—are necessary resources for mining repressed psychical material and for making new meaning from old conflicts. The concept of the screen memory is particularly useful to my study for its description of the conflict that humans must navigate repeatedly: on the one hand, wanting to remember upsetting experiences to avoid repeating them, and on the other hand, the desire to distance oneself from the painful events of one's past. In elaborating the dual motivation for the creation of screen memories, Freud also outlines a pedagogical orientation to the creation and use of images. That is, 'the screen,' or the part of the memory that is manufactured from fantasy as a compromise formation, suggests that both memories and films are sites for working through.

As visual objects, films promote the work of psychical processing by supplying images that are also a screen for viewer conflicts. Film images are different (and so seemingly innocuous) enough to invite viewer attention. As screens, films also provide a site for the viewer to project—to direct outward onto an external object—both conscious and unconscious conflicts. By inviting the viewer's psychical projections, the film-as-screen allows the viewer to externalize the emotional traces of old conflicts and thus creates an interior condition for the viewer that is necessary to begin the hard work of encountering and thinking about one's old conflicts by way of her response to what she sees and hears in the film. By permitting viewers to direct outward the emotional conditions of psychical conflicts that are hard to bear, films levy viewer anxiety and in so doing promote the conditions of human interiority that are necessary for learning. I have just reviewed Freud's theory of the screen memory in order to suggest that the concept of the screen—or, the compromise formation that arises from the analysand's psychical conflict of memory—is useful in understanding the viewer's relationship to the visual material of film as pedagogical. From a psychoanalytic perspective of viewership, I now move to discussing Roland Barthes's theory of cultural myth and then to Stuart Hall's theory of encoding/decoding to help me think in a different (and related) way about how viewers interpret images as signs in a system that produce and constitute both explicit and covert meanings.

Visual culture can contribute to a theory of pedagogical desire the range of experience that cannot be captured by words. In short, many of our most profound experiences are only ever seen or felt, and a study of visual culture can best attend to these moments. On film and in the everyday, slight cues—a held glance, a long shadow, a misplaced object—can convey meaning which otherwise escapes the spoken word. But there is also a debate about the capacity of the image to convey meaning: some think that the image is too simplistic when it is compared with

language, and there are others who think that the image exists in excess of signification. Barthes (1964) explains that what is most important about these competing perspectives is that they comprise an understanding of the image as a site that resists meaning, and he asks: "how does meaning get into the image? Where does it end? And if it ends, what is there beyond?" (p. 33). These questions provide a prompt for his description of myth as a form of communication. Where myth is concerned, the signifier and signified become one stage—the sign—and it points viewers (often subconsciously) to a discourse that existed before the image, just beyond the frame. In Barthes's notion of myth, the meaning associated with the external discourse is heavily but subtly implied by the relationship created between the signifier and the signified. "For what we grasp," Barthes writes, "is not at all one term after the other, but the correlation which unites them: there are, therefore, the signifier, the signified and the sign, which is the associative total of the first two terms (p. 52).

Barthes explains the relationship between the three terms by using the example of a bunch of roses as an expression of a person's passion. The flowers are the signifier and the passion is the signified. Both the roses and the passion existed before they were merged to make what he calls 'passionified' roses, or the sign. "It is as true to say," Barthes continues, "that on the plane of experience I cannot dissociate the roses from the message they carry, as to say that on the plane of analysis I cannot confuse the roses as signifier and the roses as sign: the signifier is empty, the sign is full, it is a meaning" (p.52). But, Barthes argues that myth transforms the conventional semiological order. In his view, the mode of myth creates a signifier from the image sign (here, the "passionified" roses) and points to an additional signified, carried by cultural discourse or, what exists beyond the frame, to create a more complex sign. When myth enters the picture, as it were, the signifier and the signified in the image combine to further

signify another meaning: the "passionified" roses might signify the myth that sending someone roses is the most romantic expression of love. Together, the bunch of red roses, the sender's passion, and the cultural myth about what sending someone red roses means combine to create a new sign. Thus, Barthes's theory of cultural myth suggests that images carry and invoke added meaning when they are interpreted with an awareness of the social context in which they are constructed and according to what existing cultural messages viewers ascribe to them. For Barthes, one of the major implications of cultural myths is the importance for the spectator to keep a clear distinction between what is real and what is presented to us in mass entertainment and popular culture. The suspension of disbelief refers to his insistence that in theatre, literature, and film audiences pretend what we are watching or reading is real and, on the basis of that momentary pretense, we allow ourselves to be affected even though we also know that what is being staged is contrived. This distinction both preempts and is the point of departure for a cultural studies perspective of visual culture.

Stuart Hall (1980) argues that the study of images must acknowledge the complex interplay between visuality, subjectivity, bodies, institutions, and apparatus in the production of meaning. Specifically, cultural studies contributes to the plurality of this acknowledgment that the viewer is socially positioned, and the viewer's social positions shape one's capacities for meaning-making. The meaning of images and viewers is mutually constitutive; subjects are equally produced through their engagement with visual culture as specific images are given meaning according to the subject's interpretation. One of the major effects of visual culture from a cultural studies standpoint is the construction and reification of normative ideals, which in turn influence what forms of knowledge and its expression are considered legitimate. The effects of seeing therefore implicate discourse as a term and process in which language, thought, and

practice are confused and can never be fully separate from one another. And this means that discourse, or 'myth' as Barthes might like to call it instead, works through images and film in complex ways and has myriad consequences that can never be fully expressed by the viewing subject.

Stuart Hall's (1980) discussion of encoding/decoding contributes to an understanding of film as a form of discursive production through his suggestion that mass-communication involves distinctive and connected practices. Hall's theory builds on and critiques traditional mass-communications research that posits communication in terms of a circuit or loop. Hall argues that the concept of mass communication as a simple circuit reduces complex modes of production, distribution, and consumption to a linear concept of sender-message-receiver. The idea that mass communication is a process "sustained through the articulation of connected practices, each of which, retains its distinctiveness and has its own specific modality, its own forms and conditions of existence" also distinguishes discursive production from other forms of material production (p. 163).

For my purposes in this dissertation, Hall's distinction between discursive and material production is important because it highlights viewership as a particular form of consumption that is different from purchasing material goods in a store, for example. The viewer, as a consumer, engages not only what is intended or encoded by the people who produce the film, but also the range of cultural and perceptual messages to which the film refers both consciously and unconsciously. In particular, Hall suggests that rather than the unilateral communication implied by the sender-message-receiver concept, mass communication—including film—involves processes of encoding and decoding. Encoding refers to the ways that producers of mass communication create a story from an event—fictional or historical—and in so doing, convert a

message into code that makes a meaningful discourse from the raw event. And, viewers do not simply receive or absorb this encoded message, but play an active role in making sense of the event by decoding—or, interpreting—the discursive meaning of the encoded message. For Hall, the effect or the meaningfulness of a message is not automatic but depends to some degree on a relationship between the encoder-producer and the decoder-receiver. In other words, the structural differences of position between broadcasters and audiences can influence how the codes are communicated and interpreted. The practice of making meaning of a (film's) discourse is subjective and relies partially on the viewer's social location, her knowledge of other texts, and her positioning within existing institutions and structures of power.

Data Collection and Analysis

Before I began my research, I had seen each of the films I selected for the study more than once. I selected the films from a larger list I had been compiling of films about ambivalent relationships between teachers and students, based on my memory of relevant scenes the films contained that I might use to elaborate the psychoanalytic concepts (transference, historical identification, and the teacher's melancholia) in teaching desire. The selection according to memory, therefore, also implies the concept of the screen as part of my criteria.

After I had selected the films for corresponding chapters and written the theoretical front matter to each of the chapters, I re-watched each of the films (Half Nelson, Mona Lisa Smile, and Monsieur Lazhar) one time, taking no notes, but trying to discern through a general viewing which of the scenes in the film offered the most material for analyzing the psychoanalytic concepts transference, historical identification, or melancholia in relation to teaching desire. The

questions that guided this round of viewing were: which scenes trigger strong feelings of desire in me? Which scenes depict the teacher's desire as most acute? What information is being communicated to the viewer in quiet scenes or scenes with the least action? Thinking about these questions while watching the films helped me to pinpoint the scenes that contain the most psychical material for me to mine—both through my response to the film and through the film's construction of the teacher's desire. Attending to the quiet or more passive scenes helped me to determine which moments in the film were constructed to develop the film's characters and/or to establish a relationship between the viewer and the character. At this first stage, I also read more widely across film studies, looking to academic but not necessarily educational studies of film (San Fillipo, 2012; Benson-Allott, 2012; Karlyn, 2011), as well as periodical reviews by Emily Nussbaum, Anne Helen Petersen, and Heather Havrilesky of popular film and television series, to see how other theorists and critics are writing about cultural and visual objects.

After I selected the scenes that were most important to analyze in my study, I completed a second round of viewing. This time, I paid particular attention to how each of the films constructed point-of-view for the characters and the audience. From which character's perspective does the audience see and why? To do this, I consulted some guides about how to write about films and visuality (David Bordwell and Thompson, 2013 [2004]; Corrigan, 2010; Jones, 2003) that instructed me how to consider the various details of a film's composition, including *mise en scene*, or the details that go into making a scene seem realistic or authentic such as setting, costuming, staging, and lighting. Attending to these details also helps me to think about the expanded definition of *mise en scene*, or the project of trying to notice everything that appears in the frame after the final cut. Both definitions of *mise en scene* helped me to learn to look at the frame for clues about how messages were encoded in the film: is the composition of a

film image balanced? The staging of objects and characters in the film communicate to the viewer how to see the image and how to understand what is important or who is powerful in the frame. This was a much slower and directed form of viewing than the first time. I asked questions like: where is the light coming from in this shot and what does it emphasize? How are the characters positioned in the frame? Who is on the margins and who is at the centre of the frame? Who physically dominates the shot? Who is closer to the camera? How does the positioning of the camera affect how the viewer sees the character? (i.e. is the camera positioned at eye-level, or is it shooting from above or below the character's eye-line?) The questions regarding *mise en scene* helped me to interpret how the films shape viewer identification and with whom, in which moments. In this round of viewing, my notes were much more detailed and I often paused or re-played scenes of the films as I was watching alone in my apartment, with full command of the remote control, in order to take more time in writing rich, detailed descriptions of what I was seeing and hearing.

In the second round of viewing, David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson's guide taught me about the difference between *mise en scene* and cinematography, or the way the filmmaker manipulates the camera to affect viewer experience and understanding of the film. While cinematography refers to technical details such as contrast, exposure, and speed of the camera, I use the language of cinematography mostly to discuss camera perspective, including focus and camera angle, in the film's encoding process. Through my analytic chapters, I refer often to various kinds of camera shots including: wide shots, or images in which objects appear smaller and farther away from the camera, and tight shots or close-ups, in which objects appear larger, more prominent, or closer to the camera. Additionally, I sometimes refer to a medium-wide camera angle, or a shot in which a character is framed from the waist up so that the viewer can

see part of the character's body but not all of it. This distinction is often important in my analysis of the film because a character's distance or closeness to the camera often informs viewer identification. A character's regular appearance in tight shots may shape the viewer's impression that one has intimate knowledge of the character yet, in some cases, extreme close-ups can also be read as threatening or anti-social (Iedema, 2011 [2001]).

My third round of viewing was more sporadic and was even characterized by a feeling of playfulness. I re-watched scenes I needed to see again in order to complete scene readings I had started after my second viewing. But I also experimented with muting scenes in order to understand better, through silence, what sound contributed to my analysis. I took from Timothy Corrigan's (2010) guide to writing about film (p. 76-7) the recommendation about watching films on mute and, alternatively, playing a film with the screen turned away so that I could focus on how sound and music manipulate the viewer's emotional responses to the film. I found conducting the audio experiment to be surprisingly helpful and when I un-muted the scenes, I found a renewed interest in what I was hearing. In my third viewing of Half Nelson, for example, I finally heard the lyrics of the song "It's Alright to Cry" that plays diegetically during the family dinner scene. As I argue in the chapter about transference in Half Nelson, the song sets the emotional tone to the scene and illuminates a reading of the unspoken family dynamics that the scene constructs between the anti-hero, Dan, and his overbearing father. Lastly, in the third round of viewing, I also took notes about the overall *mise-en-scene* of the scenes I selected to analyze. I moved from thinking about how the camera and lights moved in the second viewing to trying to see what was actually in the scene that camera was shooting. Here, I turned my attention to noticing any relevant costuming, props, body language and facial expressions that supported or contradicted my analysis. About any outstanding details, I asked: why is this here?

(Asking both: why did the filmmakers include this detail in the film? And why does it capture my interest? How does it help me understand what is happening in the scene?)

Chapter Summaries

Chapter One: Literature Review

In the following chapter, I review selections from three different fields of theory that inform my research project: psychoanalytic theories of learning to teach, feminist theories of pedagogical desire and relationality, and research on using films as sites of public pedagogy. By outlining the arguments made by selected theorists on these topics, I offer additional context to my research problem by showcasing the wider theoretical concerns with which my dissertation is in conversation.

Chapter Two: Half Nelson and the Teacher's Transference

My first analysis chapter is a study of the psychoanalytic concept of transference. The theoretical framework considers work first from Sigmund Freud to define the idea of transference, developed originally in the context of the analyst-analysand relationship. Then, I turn to psychoanalyst Anna Freud who helps me bring the concept from the site of the clinic to the classroom. Anna Freud says that pedagogy constitutes a site of "learning twice," and that teachers must conduct self-subversive investigation to think about how their emotional conflicts re-play in teaching. Then, I turn to educational theorists Deborah Britzman and Alice Pitt who help me think about the psychical conflict for the teacher of self-subversive investigation as a way to avoid interfering with the wellbeing and development of students. Finally, I look to Britzman's (2006) autobiographical account of learning to teach, "Monsters in Literature," in

order to think about what it means for the new teacher of learning to desire knowledge about the transference.

I read the film <u>Half Nelson</u>, a film about the pedagogical relationship that develops between a white male teacher, Daniel Dunne (Ryan Gosling), who is also a drug addict working at an inner city Brooklyn school and Drey (Shareeka Epps), a thirteen year old, female, African American student who becomes the site of Dan's transfer for his earliest emotional conflicts that arise from his family life, especially in relation to his father. I argue that the relationship between Dan and Drey becomes a site for the teacher to repeat the fantasy of the emotionally dead mother with the student. In its representation of the pedagogical relationship as a site of transference as much for the teacher as for the student, <u>Half Nelson</u> challenges the idea of self-study as an antidote to transference and suggests instead that transference is the very grounds of pedagogical relationality as well as an expression of resistance to the work of teaching and learning. I ask the questions: how might teachers learn to desire knowledge about their pedagogical transferences? And how does such a desire mediate one's conflicts in teaching?

Chapter Three: Fantasizing the Mother and the Orator in Mona Lisa Smile

The second chapter of my dissertation considers the concept of psychical identification and its role in shaping teaching desire. To frame the concept, I look to Sigmund Freud's discussion of identification, followed by work from cultural theorist Diana Fuss. Fuss (1995) argues that identification is a psychical process which begets identity and, at the same time, identification disrupts the subject's work of claiming an identity. Identification, according to Fuss, "is the detour through the other that defines the self" (p. 2). I find Fuss's articulation of this

constitutive conflict useful in considering how the process of psychical identification at once aids the work of learning to teach and disrupts such learning, too.

I then turn to feminist historian Joan Scott's idea of the fantasy echo, or an elaboration of how contemporary political movements hinge on psychical identification to think about how contemporary social actors imagine historical archetypes for inspiration. Scott suggests that the fantasies of the maternal and of the orator, the female public speaker, have been sites of psychical identification for feminist writers and speakers for centuries and that fantasizing these figures during challenging moments helps to create a sense of continuity from the dissonance inherent in political organizing. I use Scott's elaboration of these figures, the mother and the orator, to consider the grounds of psychical identification for the feminist teacher learning to teach. I read the film <u>Mona Lisa Smile</u> to argue that the feminist teacher uses these politicized historical fantasies to sustain her teaching desire in an otherwise inhospitable school culture and to make a relationship to students, whose desires the teacher expects to educate. A reading of the fantasy echo in the film, however, showcases why the teacher cannot form robust teaching desire from an identification with students that is based on sameness or doubling. When the students finally articulate desires that are different from the teacher's ideal fantasy of feminist subjectivity—differences that are implied in the idea of echoing—the teacher cannot sustain her desire for teaching and must leave the school.

Chapter Four: Monsieur Lazhar as an Allegory of Surviving the Cultural Myths of Teacher Education

The last analytic chapter of my dissertation is a study of the concept of melancholia in teaching as it is expressed as a response to cultural myths about teaching. The chapter opens with a discussion of cultural myths in the making of a teacher that suggest the process of learning to teach is mystified by popular ideas that the teacher's most important skill is social control, that the teacher is self-made, and that the teacher comes to teaching already an expert who is not engaged in a process of learning. I suggest that Britzman's early work in outlining these cultural myths and their deleterious effects on the emotional lives of prospective teachers opens onto a reading of what makes teachers feel depressed or psychically dead.

I engage Andre Green's concept of the dead mother, an image of the melancholic subject conjured in the child's mind of a maternal figure who is physical alive but psychically dead—which means in this case, bereaved or depressed. I use Green's concept of the dead mother complex to think about how the teacher's internal world is touched by loss and how the teacher's psychical survival (or failure to survive) affects pedagogy and teaching desire. I turn to Lisa Farley's concept of the dead teacher, one who enacts a fantasy of being dead in response to loss and who is therefore psychically unavailable to be used by students in their development and learning. I use the concept of the dead teacher to think about the human fantasy of non-survival, how it circulates unconsciously in school cultures, and its effects on the psychical lives of teachers—especially teaching desire. If, as Farley argues, melancholia is not a condition educationalists can cure but instead needs to be worked through in order for subjects to live creatively, how might the issue of melancholia complicate the work of finding and sustaining one's teaching desire? I examine this question through Monsieur Lazhar, a film about an

Algerian refugee who becomes a substitute teacher to a group of grade five students after their teacher, Martine, kills herself in the classroom. I suggest that instead of reading Martine as a literal example of a dead teacher, viewers might think of Martine's suicide as emerging from an unthinking (read: psychically dead) pedagogical environment and that highlights the fantasy of deadness through the adults' desire to ignore grief—both theirs and the students'. I argue that the film represents a school environment that is inhospitable to creative living and thinking by depicting a new teacher's conflicts with encountering the cultural myths of teaching. I also argue that the character Claire represents a mentor teacher to Bachir, who is a newcomer to teaching. Claire models psychical survival to Bachir by helping him to think creatively about his teaching practice and, at the same time, her teaching is also shaped by idealism, a symptom of melancholia.

Chapter Five: Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through in Film Pedagogy

Chapter five serves as the conclusion to my dissertation and, at the same time, I turn to thinking about film studies in education in a different vein: viewership as pedagogy. To begin, I use Deborah Britzman's study of psychoanalytic histories of learning, After-Education, to suggest that in the pedagogy of film viewership, like all pedagogies, learning is deferred. Deferred learning is significant to thinking about film as pedagogy because it helps to orient my suggestion that films are resources for teacher education beyond the context of using films in classrooms and coursework to the work of making an education from watching and thinking about films outside of schools. To further contextualize Britzman's discussion of deferred learning, I use Sigmund Freud's essay "Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through," in which he discusses the idea that all learning begins from resistance which is necessary to the

work of interpretation. Finally, I also use film theorist Lynne Joyrich's study about using the film The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie as a pedagogical primer. Joyrich narrates her experience watching, re-watching, and not watching the film to suggest that the teacher's identifications as a viewer are instructive to thinking about the teacher's relationship to teaching and her history of desiring.

Then, I use the work of these three theorists to turn back to my discussions of the three films in my analysis chapters, Half Nelson, Mona Lisa Smile, and Monsieur Lazhar to discuss viewer pedagogy through my experiences watching and re-watching these films, in the context of conducting dissertation research and beyond. Here, I think about the films as offering a screen for the projection of my emotional conflicts about teaching desire. And, through this discussion, I make meaning about the transformation of my identifications with characters on screen as I learned to teach and as I moved through the research process. To conclude, I return to a discussion of the questions I posed in the introduction about teaching desire and film: What desires must be lost in order for a new teacher to transform her identification with students into passionately and confidently claiming the role of teacher? how does an ambivalent teacher (expect to) use the passionate student's love of learning to re-find her professional purpose? And, to turn the question: what is to be made of the teacher's transference with the disillusioned student's loss of desire for learning?

Chapter Two

Literature Review: Psychoanalytic Theories of Learning to Teach, Feminist Theories of Pedagogical Desire and Relationality, and Educational Theories of Film as Public Pedagogy

Psychoanalytic Theories of Learning to Teach

Anna Freud's (1935) collection of lectures to teachers about the early science of analysis, Psychoanalysis for Parents and Teachers, is one of the first texts in the field to make an explicit connection between the work of psychoanalysis and pedagogy. Her work elaborates the ways that psychoanalytic insight is a resource for teachers' thinking about education. In the third chapter, "The Relation between Psychoanalysis and Pedagogy," Anna Freud proposes three contributions of psychoanalysis to education. First, she suggests that psychoanalysis organizes a narrative of child development according to three significant stages: infancy, latency, and puberty. She suggests that in each of these stages, the child occupies a distinct emotional situation in the way he reacts to others around him according to the differences in his instinctual development during these times. "A special attribute of the child, or his method of reaction," Anna Freud writes, "cannot therefore be judged without specific reference to the period of his life" (p. 93). She goes on to explain that one of the benefits of the psychoanalytic narrative of child development is that parents and teachers can think in more relative terms about the meaning of children's actions, dispensing with the anxiety that comes from judging specific acts as always perverse or morally wrong.

Anna Freud's insight also imbues the teacher with a greater responsibility for understanding and interpreting the role of students' inner lives as part of everyday classroom interaction. She suggests that children's actions are ruled by the ongoing negotiation between instinctual life, the ego, and the superego. Actions that seem surprising to the adult can usually

be explained by recognizing the child's behaviour as belonging to one of the three areas and seeing how, at any given time, one area predominates the child's internal life. Freud suggests that these three areas—the id, the ego, and the superego—are in contest with one another. For the child, learning to navigate the demands of each area of the mind is not a peaceful process and is one that, to adults, can seem like a bewildering clash between the child's intentions and his actions. Ultimately, she uses idea of the competition between parts of the mind to say that teachers and parents may use psychoanalysis to investigate their own conflicts so as not to bring those conflicts unthinkingly to pedagogy where they will ultimately harm students. Her suggestion that teachers' psychical lives inform the quality of students' learning informs my argument that emotional deadness in teaching ought to be taken seriously because the teacher's emotional life (and death) shapes the psychical environment of pedagogy.

Anna Freud is one of the first psychoanalytic theorists of education to show how understanding human interior processes provides an alternative to punishing children for seemingly perverse or undesirable behaviour. She discusses case histories of seemingly rebellious or wanton children to show how, without insight into the life of the mind and its complex processes, education has traditionally emphasized the role of punishment and harsh discipline to curb unwanted childish actions like running around naked or masturbating publically. She proposes that instead of coming down on the side of punishment or reward for children's actions that in adulthood would be considered as symptoms of pathology, parents and teachers instead adopt a more neutral strategy that takes confidence in the abatement of these activities over time. In my study, her point is instructive to my argument that conscious and unconscious expectations for teachers to punish refusals to learn are actually deleterious to teachers' and learners' psychical survival.

Returning to my introductory discussion of Jamie Owl, I find in Britzman's (2003) study of learning to teach a story that is useful for elaborating a definition of psychical survival that begins from the teacher's sense of purpose. In other words, Jamie not only loses her desire for teaching in the course of her training, but she came into the field without thinking about if she wanted to learn to teach: "She did not think about how becoming a teacher might change her and in fact she did not perceive herself as wanting to learn to teach. But she decided to go into teaching" (2003, p. 84). As Britzman explains, a sense of purpose is an essential resource for the beginning teacher to make meaning about and so to survive the trials she encounters learning to teach. The distinction between Jamie's fantasy that teaching would "help her achieve critical distance necessary to move beyond the sway of her personal world" and not perceiving herself as wanting to learn to teach is critical. "Ultimately," Britzman writes, "it was to thwart Jamie's ability to theorize about her own process of coming to know and to limit what she might draw upon during times of pedagogical decisions and distress" (2003, p. 84). Without the ability to make sense of one's experience that is motivated by pre-existing teaching desire, Jamie falls hard into feelings of anger, paranoia, and self-doubt when the events of her teacher training inevitably upset her assumptions about the secure life to which teaching would lead, prompting Britzman to ask on Jamie's behalf whether one can become a teacher *and* hate school.

Although Practice Makes Practice, the text that contains Jamie's story, is not a psychoanalytic study of education, I read the narrative from a psychoanalytic perspective to suggest that the prospective teacher's hatred of school is a defense against the emotional conditions of sadness, loss, and confusion that might otherwise allow a person to make significance of her experience and so to learn from difficult events. While Jamie Owl predates Britzman's turn to psychoanalytic theorizing, "The Jamie Owl Stories" highlight in my research

both the psychical stakes of entering teacher education without pre-existing teaching desire, or from a position of psychical deadness. Jamie Owl also showcases how learning to teach restages the emotional situation of infancy in teacher education, provoking in new teachers overwhelming feelings of helplessness that without a sense of purpose, the prospective teacher struggles to overcome. The idea of the (new) teacher's helplessness also renews the significance of Anna Freud's initial work in theorizing childhood psychological development for teachers' professional practice: teachers are learners and the process of learning to teach restages the learner's childhood conflicts between instinctual and psychical forces. A strong sense of purpose may help new teachers to survive the frustrations and contradictions of learning to teach, but as Robert Gardner reminds readers in "The Furor to Teach," too much teaching desire in the absence of an investigation into one's psychical conflicts and investments can also wreak havoc on one's attempts to teach.

In his contemplation of the "true" teacher's aggressive desire to teach with ultimate authority, Robert Gardner (1999) says "the furor to teach" is responsible for the teacher's failure to defend her students against her influence. Responding to Alcott's imperative that "the true teacher defends his pupil against his own influence," Gardner warns readers that the teacher can only stage such a defense amidst an affliction. Where Alcott is suggesting that the student needs protection from the student's own influence, Gardner turns the phrase to suggest that students most need protection from the teacher's influence. The drive "to teach immoderately" troubles all teachers: "teachers possessed by that furor are in trouble. Teachers devoid of that furor—if such can be called teachers—are in more trouble" (p. 3). In other words, the furor to teach propels teachers to continue working in the impossible profession—fuelled by the belief that they (and only they) have indispensable knowledge to offer ignorant students who are

particularly in need of teaching. The problem, according to Gardner, is that too much adherence to the furor to teach leads to "over-teaching" which transforms ordinary teachers into pedagogical monsters. Over-teaching is the unconscious tendency to teach in ways that oppose what the teacher plans "reasonably and resolutely" to teach. I think of over-teaching, and the concept of the furor to teach more generally, as anxious defenses against the questions that haunt the teacher who experiences a breakdown of meaning about teaching: Does anything I do matter? And if so, who will notice? The purpose of the furor, then, is to protect the teacher from the intrusion of these questions into consciousness by creating a pretense that what the teacher has to teach the students matters absolutely. At the same time, the teacher's fantasy of possessing indispensable knowledge also expresses the teacher's anxiety over the question of whether the teacher is needed at all in order for students to learn.

Stephen Appel (2008) also works with Gardner's idea of the furor to teach, turning the concept to consider how the teacher's hatred can be read as a response to students' resistance of the teacher's furor. Using lessons from his experiences as a psychotherapist and as a university professor teaching a graduate course on the psychodynamics of education, Appel suggests that the teacher's headache is one example of how repressed pedagogical hatred can return to the classroom through psychosomatism—the expression of unconscious conflicts through bodily symptoms. That is, by feeling as if his institutional responsibility makes it impossible for him to express his aggression toward students openly, Appel represses his feelings of hatred for students' (mis)interpretations of his beloved curriculum. A dream reveals to him that he feels in teaching his psychoanalysis and education class that he must not only defend but resuscitate Freud to learners who are often either suspicious of Freud's wild thinking or, in Appel's conscious perception, disengaged from the course material. Appel's narrative takes readers

through a series of analytic possibilities for reading the teacher's bodily conflict—at first

suggesting that the headaches are the teacher's reaction-formation to students' aggression toward

Freud, who Appel fantasizes is in need of defense in the graduate seminar. In other words, Appel

begins his interpretation believing that his migraines arise in the therapeutic context when he

happens to notice from the "weak spot" in his temple that a patient glances at him out of the

corner of his eye—connoting pre-conscious anger—following one of Appel's interpretations.

Unconsciously, the therapist hates the patient who rejects his interpretation.

But then Appel's narrative of the headache's pedagogical significance transforms when

he turns to consider the role of counter-transference in shaping the repressive tendency he once

thought originated in the teacher's inner life. In counter-transference, Appel writes, "the therapist

responds to the patient in a way that is dependent on his or her own characteristics ("stuff") . . .

the tendencies or propensities of the therapist necessarily include his or her own pathological

bits" (p. 140). That is, he turns to thinking about the symptom as the result of a mutual

interaction which produces an emotional situation that remains semi-repressed between patient

and analyst. The repressed material between patient and therapist depends on the pathologies of

both parties. Like Robertson's notion of the posted as constituting aggressive and sexual desires

in fantasy which cannot be spoken in the pedagogical interaction, Appel's headache is

symptomatic of a conflict between teacher and student or patient and therapist that is yet

unspeakable and so can only be pre-consciously perceived. The conflict makes itself felt before it

can be understood. By learning to 'read' his bodily signals—migraines, but also twinges in his

temple that sometimes point to an oncoming headache—Appel suggests that teachers and

therapists might begin to use our "pathological weak spots as sensitive

transference/countertransference receptors and decoders" (p. 134). Appel's argument about the

use of weak spots in thinking about the psychodynamics of pedagogy is instructive to my argument that educationalists use films as screens for thinking about teaching desire. Specifically, Appel's suggestion that the headache is a preconscious expression of a conflict that arises between patient and therapist underscores a tension in my argument that, on the one hand, the teacher's episodes of emotional deadness or losses of meaning are significant sites from which emotional insight can be made about education and, on the other hand, that depression, melancholia, and emotional deadness all further defer learning to a time when the subject can represent one's conflicts.

In "Pedagogy and Clinical Knowledge: Some Psychoanalytic Observations of Losing and Refinding Significance," (2004) Deborah Britzman and Alice Pitt open their discussion of a clinical view of the complexities of learning with a review of an encyclopedic entry on trauma. Britzman and Pitt were surprised, they say, to read how much a description of trauma has in common with the psychical vicissitudes of learning. They use the similarities between trauma and learning to suggest that one difficulty the unconscious poses to the process of learning is transference, or the psychical positioning of another in the authoritative place of one's parents. "Significant learning entails a dual action," Britzman and Pitt write, "new knowledge becomes entangled in the force of old phantasies of learning events, rendering both as a problem of transference and so of interpretation" (p. 354). One way that knowledge becomes emotionally significant, and so internally persuasive, is through the subject's unconscious association of that knowledge with the fantasized authority the infant accords to its parents. Transference, then, is both a means to the individual's learning and an obstacle to it.

In suggesting that learning is not the opposite of trauma but its ubiquitous character, Britzman and Pitt also return readers to their earlier research in which they suggest that difficult

knowledge should be included in the curriculum. Difficult knowledge, they elaborate, signifies the relations between the representation of social traumas in the curriculum and the subject's struggle to encounter and make sense of those representations in pedagogy (2004, p. 354). To explain why difficult knowledge finds its home in a curriculum that provokes significant learning, Britzman and Pitt turn to thinking about what the psychoanalytic clinic has to offer to the context of pedagogical relations. Here, they suggest that part of what makes psychoanalytic thinking about education instructive is the use of clinical knowledge, a form of knowledge that is itself an object and a means of understanding. Clinical knowledge, Britzman and Pitt write, "is not something to be applied to another but rather a mode of relationality, a third space that allows the self and other their respective depth, surprise, aliveness, and difference" (p. 357). Clinical knowledge, then, creates a psychical space for the individual to encounter and so to symbolize their experience with social traumas represented in the curriculum. Clinical knowledge thus utilizes the transference in inviting the subject's learning but also creates a psychical space for the teacher/analyst to occupy a thinking position in relation to the student/analysand.

Psychoanalytic theories of learning to teach are significant because they articulate a relationship between clinical psychoanalysis—and the theories of interiority first explored there—and the world of teaching and pedagogy. By suggesting that there is an emotional situation to teaching and learning relations, psychoanalytic theories of education complicate an understanding of education by introducing the concept of the unconscious to the scene of pedagogy. Here, the concept of teaching desire is marked not only by the conscious intentions which inform the teacher's wish to teach, but also by the learning subject's inability to ever fully know the self and its strivings. The complications for pedagogy that arise from the subject's unconscious knowledge also informs much of the work I discuss in the next section on feminist

theories of pedagogical desire and relationality, in which feminist theorists of education discuss pedagogical desire as both consciously and unconsciously informed. Here, the psychical nature of desire opens up conversations about desire in pedagogical theory to two problems: first, that aggression is a central part of psychical life that comes to bear on the subject's desiring (when the subject is not emotionally dead), and; second, teachers might not fully know, articulate, or discipline their desires.

Feminist Theories of Pedagogical Desire and Relationality

In "Mother Love's Education," Alice Pitt (2006) turns to recent debates in feminist discussions of the maternal in literary studies, psychoanalysis, mythology, and cultural studies to ask: "Why must the mother be destroyed and what remains after such a terrifying act" (p. 87) This question introduces Pitt's theorizing of matricide, a psychical act which she says belongs to unconscious fantasy but is felt as violently as if an actual murder was at stake, refers to the killing of one's mother. Pitt suggests that matricide is a painful event affecting both sexes and is an unbearable but necessary loss of one's earliest love object in the subject's creation of an internal psychical reality.

Pitt elaborates three orientations to thinking about matricide. The first, she says, concerns feminist discussions of women's exclusion from the historical record and cultural production: "here, matricide is represented as a trauma of history that inaugurates women's social status as inferior and subject to laws and knowledge made for and by men" (p. 89). In this vein, matricide names the history of women's exclusion from full and equal participation in public life as artists, intellectuals, and experts. This strand of Pitt's argument is particularly instructive to my analysis of identification in feminist teaching desire. If one of the tenets of feminist education is to

redress acts of matricide that erase women's contributions to social and cultural life, feminist

learners are directed to identify with historical fantasies in which women are dispossessed.

Identification with female dispossession makes more difficult the developmental achievement for

(feminist) learners of enacting psychical matricide, or the unconscious fantasy of killing one's

mother that is essential to creating an autonomous, surviving self.

Second, in the context of human development narratives, Pitt locates matricide in the time

between infancy and the child's inauguration into speaking and representation. Here, Pitt turns to

psychoanalyst Adam Phillips who suggests that entering the world of language as a speaking

subject who can articulate her needs and desires also requires a kind of loss that is difficult to

consider: the loss of the unspoken self who is autonomous without the group interaction that

speaking and writing entail. For Pitt, the infant sees the mother on both sides of the fateful

transition from infancy to speaking subjectivity. "One one side, the infant knows the mother who

babbles, coos, and cuddles," Pitt explains, "on the other side, the infant is suddenly faced with

the knowledge that the mother's play is more purposeful, instructive even, and, most of all, her

speech is carried on the wings of her desire for a world and objects beyond the baby" (p. 90).

Matricide, she explains, names the loss of the infant's discovery that the mother's desires do not

begin and end with her baby.

Third, Pitt articulates a form of matricide that is a combination of the first two

manifestations through a return to her autobiography of reading feminist phenomenologist

Madeleine's Grumet's study of women in teaching. Until she could understand her history of

difficulty encountering Grumet's ideas as an experience with learning and not learning, Pitt says

she struggled to theorize the connection between matricide as a deliberate erasure of women

from history and the developmental process of acquiring language through psychically

destroying one's mother. "My third orientation," Pitt writes, "presents the mother as paradox: our mothers create the grounds for our eventual understanding that we cannot represent them; they both hold the illusion of unmediated understanding and allow for its disillusion through a fantasy of matricide" (p. 90). In this orientation, then, mothers invite the infant into the world of representation and, when language inevitably fails, the child experiences her disillusionment through a fantasy of destroying her mother. Pitt's discussion of psychical matricide establishes aggression and fantasies of destruction as part of learning and human development. Matricide, then, is an essential concept for differentiating between emotional deadness and survival in education. The teacher's fantasy of deadness helps the teacher to defend against the possibility that she will not be able to survive the psychical attacks by learners that are necessary for their growth. I look to Jane Gallop's account of her sexual desire for a graduate student as one example of the teacher's attempt to stage a defense against matricide.

In "Knot A Love Story," Jane Gallop attempts to think through a symbolic collapse she experiences through an erotic transference with a graduate student: the qualities of a good teacher can also be what make us bad (1992, p. 4). More precisely, Gallop argues that the pedagogical performance that opens a teacher to potential accusations of lechery (if mostly in this case from her persecutory thoughts) can also be the grounds of feminist teaching. In her pedagogical encounter with a male grad student who completed a directed reading course with her, Gallop's erotic feelings towards the student did not arise alongside their work together as though it were a coincidence. Her feelings of attraction—expressed as a state of agitation in which the teacher thinks fixatedly about the student after a particularly heated and prolonged meeting—stem instead from the intense exchange between people in a pedagogical relationship, emerging directly from what pedagogy requires from teachers and students for learning to occur.

Desire, then, enters the scene of pedagogy at precisely the moment the scene becomes

pedagogical, when the teacher and student begin working together over a shared object, in this

case the student's failed paper. "After two and a half hours," Gallop writes, "we reached the end

of the paper, neither until then letting up concentration, the concerted effort to understand and

communicate. We were both exhausted but I for one felt a pleasure in that" (p. 102). This passage

begins a description of the tired satisfaction that accompanies the achievement of reaching a

mutual understanding about the status of the student's failed paper, and it makes reference to the

possibility that this shared understanding is similar to orgasm. The "exhausted" "pleasure" of

having "reached the end" is the very process by which teacher and student created a pedagogical

relationship. To me, this account suggests that the teacher's desire for the student at first stands

in for and eventually aids the teacher's desire for teaching. The teacher's fantasy of sexual

fulfillment with the student prompts the teacher to attend with renewed focus and enthusiasm to

work (grading) which might otherwise feel monotonous. In Gallop's account, the teacher

expresses a transference to a passionate student who not only feels worthy of the teacher's time

and attention but who also wants to improve his work. Notably, Gallop develops her sexual

fantasy about the student after feeling a strong sense of resistance to the student's expression of

need for her time and attention—resources she feels initially unable and unwilling to offer. The

sexual fantasy, then, offers the teacher recompense for her labour implied by the student's

challenge (which symbolizes here the student's psychical matricide of Gallop.)

According to Gallop's reading, "the primal scene" in which the student responds to

Gallop's feedback by coming to her office to demand a conversation is tantamount for Gallop to

the feeling of holding his balls in her mouth: "the backdrop of his initial anger and challenge

give particular piquancy to my sense of his placing himself, undefended and vulnerable, in my

hands, trusting it would do him good" (p. 108). This offers the sexualized image of pedagogy as an erotic power-play in which the person who contains the other, and who is traditionally read as the bottom in the sexual formation, has a great deal of subversive power. This sexual metaphor intentionally draws a Lacanian analysis of the female teacher's ability to access masculine symbolic power (the phallus) by proxy to her male students.

Finding the extra time to dedicate to her students is one of the criteria that Gallop describes that allows her to feel good following the prolonged encounter with the grad student, "neither until then letting up concentration"(p. 103). She describes going home after their meeting and waking out of restless sleep that night to grade some undergraduate assignments, returning them to her students earlier than she originally anticipated: "I felt, excitedly, like a really good teacher, finding unsuspected pockets of time for my students" (p. 103). In Gallop's account, I find justification for my argument that a study of teaching desire cannot only champion the project for feminists of claiming and following desire without also asking after the fantasies our desires contain and express. In "Knot a Love Story," the teacher's expression of desire does not arise solely from feelings of excitement over a shared intellectual project, but also as a defense against the student's aggressive strivings in the pedagogical encounter. In this formation, the teacher's desire for the student expresses the teacher's fear that she will not survive the student's matricide.

The counter to Gallop's argument for the (feminist) teacher's claim to eroticized desire in pedagogy is perhaps best captured by the affective turn in feminist theories of emotional life. In her study of public feelings projects, Ann Cvetkovich (2012) suggests that depression is a collective public feeling that creates the conditions for making political insight. "Feeling bad," Cvetkovich writes, "might, in fact, be the ground for transformation" (p. 3). Cvetkovich,

following Sarah Ahmed (2010), argues that feminist subjects are prone to depression because they are routinely involved in the work of critiquing and resisting dominant social patterns that are oppressive to people who are already systemically oppressed. This work and the depression it invites, Cvetkovich suggests, might offer insight into how hegemonic systems such as capitalism profit from and thus reproduce public and collective feelings of anxiety, fear, and depression. In my reading, Cvetkovich argues for the creative potential of depression in order to destigmatize it and other negative emotions such as melancholy, shame, and failure.

Like Cvetkovich, I believe in the importance of destigmatizing depression and other negative affects so that people are freed to symbolize negative emotions without judgment. Here, I agree with Lisa Farley (2014) and Paula Salvio (2007) that melancholia and depression may be endemic to teaching. Farley, in particular, disagrees with Cvetkovich that depression might be a source of critical or creative insight. Instead, Farley suggests that depression, as a defense against negative emotions, forecloses the emotional situation necessary for people to make meaning. Therefore, depression needs to be worked through in order for teachers and students to create lively pedagogical environments which invite learning.

Yet, arguments that try to settle that debate as a means of inviting or eschewing depression from scenes of education is itself a melancholic project. In Cvetkovich's argument, then, depression holds a similar status as eroticized desire in Gallop's work: both are emotional agents for the subject's meaning-making and therefore should be reevaluated in public and intellectual contexts. Yet, Cvetkovich's argument prioritizes the potential meaning to be made from the pervasiveness of depression in contemporary culture over the psychological effects of depression on a person's capacity for learning and creativity. Following Farley, I argue against recent feminist affect theories which advocate to reclaim the creative and political potential of

depression. I suggest, instead, that depression is a defense against the emotional conditions of loss, vulnerability, and sadness. Further, I think teachers and other humans need desire—which is absent from the scene of depression—in order to co-create a maternal pedagogical environment that can survive.

In "First Readings," Aparna Mishra Tarc suggests that the maternal relation includes not only the mother's relationship to the infant but also the infant's earliest attempts at sense-making as the basis for all learning. She offers a critique of western, Cartesian models of the mind/body and of individual bodily autonomy in order to think about how the maternal defies the concept of individuation to the processes of teaching and learning. Tarc turns to a passage from feminist theorist and poet Adrienne Rich to say that the mother's desire for knowledge emerges from and reflects an ambivalent and exquisite form of suffering that includes a "murderous resentment" of and feelings of blissful tenderness toward the child's dependence on her (Rich, 1976, p. 21). Tarc suggests that the mother's murderous ambivalence toward the child also mirrors the infant's process of "first reading" or, the earliest experience of making sense of one's frightening internal and embodied reality as a newcomer to the world. The suffering that the infant animates in the mother leaves the mother with few options except to recede into a position of uncertainty about what the other wants, and whether she can provide it. Following Britzman, Tarc suggests that the mother's position of uncertainty constitutes the grounds for creating knowledge that both represents and defends against the body's feelings of unbearable dependence and attachment.

Tarc resists thinking of the mother and child as separate entities. "Motherhood, then, is not a person nor tied to women's bodies," Tarc explains "but a curricular process" (p. 335). The curricular process of motherhood "is felt in the transference circulating between the bodies of the infant and primary other(s) and constituted within the socializing processes that institute the

infant's becoming human through making uneasy relations between affect and emotion, self and other, language and the social" (p. 335). Tarc's critique of individualism returns me to Appel's discussion of the headache as a preconscious conflict that is felt, made, and articulated between two people in pedagogy or psychoanalysis. Tarc's analysis of motherhood as a curricular process also complicates Pitt's discussion of matricide as the psychical fantasy that initiates the infant's autonomous subjectivity. I use Tarc's elaboration of a maternal emotional situation which includes ambivalence and suffering to signify the difficulty entailed for the mother/teacher in the work of psychically surviving the infant's attacks. Where Pitt's analysis emphasizes the emotional difficulty for the child of entering the social world through language, Tarc's discussion indicates that suffering may be endemic to teaching and mothering. At the same time, her discussion keeps open the difference between suffering and deadness. Here, the mother's suffering does not need to be cured, it is the grounds for relationality, creative thinking, and care in education.

Using work by Pitt, Gallop, and Mishra Tarc, I am suggesting that feminist theory opens up new questions about pedagogical desire when education researchers think about teaching and learning not only as psychical processes but also as relationships that are mediated by social histories of sexism which deeply shape collective understandings of the maternal teacher's role in educating learners. As Mishra Tarc points out, living in a body that is constantly represented by others can be a burden for the newcomer—first as the infant, and then as a learner—and for teachers. In the next section, I move to discussing educational research on film as public pedagogy which takes the problem of representing and having to be represented in education to the context of visual and cultural studies which helps me to think about popular films as contrived representations through which viewers make meaning about education.

Educational Research on Film as Public Pedagogy

Educational theorist Judith Robertson's study of beginning female primary school teachers' responses to watching popular films about teaching is foundational to my study. Robertson's study is the first to bring psychoanalysis and film theory to feminist research in the field of education. Robertson analyzes the responses of female primary school teachers to a screening of the popular film about education Stand and Deliver. In recorded conversations and journal entries, the participants of her study—who are instructed to attend to the moments in the film that they feel strong desire—overwhelmingly return to a particular scene of the film in which the teacher character, Jaime Escalante, receives a thank-you letter from the students. The scene is appealing to the participants in the study because it offers a way to articulate that they, too, dream of receiving a letter from students expressing affection and thanks. The participants' fantasies contain a vision of love in which teachers are saintly—devoted and selfless—and the students are deeply grateful but are absent or, removed from the scene, by the letter. Therefore, the scene in which the teacher receives a letter by post from students also expresses the teachers' aggression towards students through the scene's removal of students' from the moment the teachers receive their long-awaited thanks.

Robertson suggests that these female primary school teachers' fantasies block from consciousness the underlying tensions of teaching. In addition to being dispossessed of their claim to full compensation and respect for their labour, Robertson argues that female teachers of young children are routinely expected to forfeit those desires which fall outside of the gender role available to primary teachers that takes for granted the teacher's role in caring for little children as an extension of the maternal function. So, the wish for a love letter substitutes for teachers' desires to be recognized for their efforts and it conceals the feelings that contradict the

image of the teacher as a saint: "the act of disclaiming power and aggressivity through a dream of love brings the projection back into the boundaries of the social, the ideological, and the institutional" (p. 84). In other words, teachers use the fantasy of the love letter as a resource for negotiating the institutional demands of their subjectivity. Negotiating demands of obedience and caring, though, also bears consequences for the teacher's psychical life. According to Robertson, the psychical effects of teaching within the boundaries of the social and ideological makes it essential to feminist pedagogy for educational researchers to think about the conflicts that fantasy blocks from consciousness. In Robertson's research, I find a strong example of how eroticized desire, or transference, can be taken as an object of curricular and pedagogical inquiry. Here, Robertson's analysis highlights how teachers' desires are instructive to pedagogy, but without championing the teachers' desires themselves as evidence of good or bad teaching. This approach is also what I think Sharon Todd has in mind when she argues that educationalists' goal to develop and instill the desire for learning requires *thinking* by educators about desiring and its affective connections to learning (1997, p. 1)

Following Robertson, Henry Giroux's (2001) study of film argues that, more than merely a site of entertainment or escapism, film engages viewers in an educational process that is widely available and transcends the limitations of schooling. In shaping viewer desire and offering up subject positions, films construct a cultural landscape that is accessible to and engaged by the public. "Deeply imbricated within material and symbolic relations of power," Giroux writes, "film produces and incorporates ideologies that represent the outcome of struggles marked by the historical realities of power and the deep anxieties of the times" (p. 585). Moreover, films deploy power by making pleasurable for the viewer the process of revising and absorbing the cultural meanings films construct. Giroux's study counters deep-seated cultural assumptions about the

primacy of print-based material for teaching and learning by reminding readers how film functions as a site of affective investment for viewers who, from the emotional situations that films shape, often return to thinking about a movie long after the lights come on in the theatre.

My research benefits from and reflects Giroux's thinking about film as a pedagogical apparatus and as a site of power relations; although, Giroux focuses primarily on the politics of film and avoids engaging the vast field of film theory that he suggests is too "specialized" for thinking about the significance of film to a broad public. Here, Giroux and I disagree, in part because I am more interested in thinking about the idea that popular films which have large audiences might also make pedagogical resources in the context of a teacher education that exceeds the time and place of schooling than I am in the commodification of film as a political problem. Specifically, popular and independent films about teacher-student relations play an important role in shaping teaching desire which I argue precedes the teacher's education and extends to the internal world questions about learning to teach. Therefore, the idea that film is a site of public pedagogy informs my study in three ways: as public texts, films that influence thinking about teaching desire are widely available and consumed; films construct meaning about pedagogy that in turn shape the cultural imaginary of education; and, research that considers the qualities of the teacher's interiority—including teaching desire—matters to the work of valuing teachers as public actors.

Film education theorist Karyn Sandlos's (2009) autobiographical study of using the film Elephant in a teacher education class about adolescence is also instructive to my research on teaching desire. Sandlos offers an account of introducing a group of teacher candidates in the course *The Adolescent and the Teacher* to a film about the Columbine High School murders in 1999. The teacher's hope in showing this film to teacher candidates is that the ethereal quality of

the film and its refusal to offer a didactic lesson would open up a conversation with the students about school violence beyond what proscriptive messages about the need for safety and prevention offer. "I also thought a great deal about the violent content of the film," Sandlos writes, "and what it would mean to ask students to watch it in class. I presumed that <u>Elephant</u> would be upsetting or even frightening for students who are trying to imagine their future careers in schools" (p. 56). She goes on to explain that her anticipation that some students would be upset or scared was a projection of a pedagogical conflict she was experiencing: on one hand she felt a sense of urgency that the film had something important to offer the teacher candidates' thinking about education and, on the other hand, she felt anxious about not knowing in advance exactly what the content of the lesson would be. Finally, she worried that without being able to address the students about the purpose of the lesson, she would drain students of their capacity to learn from the film.

Sandlos's study considers the emotional and pedagogical loss that arises when a teacher cannot tolerate her breakdowns of meaning in teaching. By insisting that ambivalent representations of schooling are an important resource for teacher education, Sandlos offers a framework for thinking about the psychical and emotional consequences of using film to initiate difficult conversations about education and to entertain the uncertainty that accompanies the pedagogical project of watching films with other people. By elaborating her internal response to introducing the students to <u>Elephant</u>, Sandlos offers a rich description of the relationship between the teacher's inner life, the work of interpreting the complex representations that films construct, and the students' uses of an ambivalent curriculum.

In <u>Unruly Girls, Unrepentant Mothers</u> (2011) Kathleen Karlyn studies contemporary films that appeal to teen girls, a rising demographic in the late Nineties and at the beginning of

the millennium. Karlyn looks to the unprecedented box office successes of melodramatic films like Titanic and Thirteen to inquire how these films represent feminism through girls' generational conflicts with their mothers. Introducing her research with a discussion of the mother-daughter characters Ruth and Rose from Titanic as an example, Karlyn describes how during the scene in which the ship is sinking, Rose refuses to board a lifeboat with her mother, turning her back on the oppressive conventions of the class system which structures the ship and her life. In so doing, Karlyn suggests, Rose also turns her back on life itself in favour of staying with Jack, the love interest who embodies the ideals of art, romance, and adventure, as the ship sinks. Karlyn uses this scene to think about a representational trend in contemporary mass cultural objects marketed to young women. She says that the character Rose embodies many of the characteristics Karlyn set out in her ground-breaking study of feminist cultural icons, The Unruly Woman, but with a noticeable difference. Young Rose is strong and fearless, traits that Karlyn says are inspired and made possible by the gains of the earlier waves of the women's liberation movement. But, in the film's construction of Rose as the story's romantic heroine, all traces of the character's feminist identity are lost. In casting off the oppressive conventions of class structure in favour of freedom and adventure with Jack, Rose also seems to disavow the feminist context that makes possible her choices.

Similarly, Karlyn also argues that these films—and across all Hollywood films—there are few relevant mother characters. When mothers do appear on screen, they are depicted as obsolete, nagging, and unattractive. In short, the mothers of the "postfeminist" girls in these films are not represented as fully human or as providing adequate emotional resources for their growing daughters. Karlyn wonders if Titanic and other films of its time suggest a larger

cultural shift to post-feminism, or if Rose might be redefining what it means to be feminist for a new age through an engagement of the generational conflict with mothers these films contrive.

Though she is not an educational researcher and so her study does not explicitly contribute to thinking about film as public pedagogy, I find Karlyn's research valuable for the ways her questions about feminist representation on screen imply a pedagogical process. She asks provocative questions about what viewers are to make of a powerful trend in the production of mass media that all but dismisses feminism as a useful or persuasive movement for adolescent girls and women. Yet, because a discussion of film as pedagogy is not elaborated, I also find some important limitations in her reading of films. Specifically, her critique that mainstream films for and about young women avoid situating their characters in an explicitly feminist context risks collapsing the encoding of film messages with the process of decoding and spectatorship. In other words, Karlyn provides a sharp and timely analysis of the erasure of feminist subjectivity from contemporary films about girls and their mothers; however, she extends this criticism to an assumption about how female viewers interpret the characters they see on screen. Therefore, I have included Karlyn's film analysis in my literature review for its contribution to thinking about films as sites of production in which cultural myths are encoded and reproduced across more than one text, leaving open the question of how or whether viewers find these myths to be internally persuasive.

Educational theories of film help me to think about viewer interpretation as a singular process that is culturally informed by using objects of mass culture that are also contrived representations. In this vein, the idea that films are encoded texts stands in tension with the psychoanalytic notion of using the film as a screen on to which the viewer projects one's psychical conflicts as a way to make meaning. Throughout the rest of the study, I hold a tension

between the idea that films are encoded texts produced for mass consumption and that they are

screens for the viewer—as a singular individual—to make meaning about one's inner conflicts.

Chapter Three

Scenes from an Investigation: Half Nelson and the Teacher's Transference

Introduction

In the inciting incident of the film <u>Half Nelson</u>, thirteen year-old student Drey finds her teacher, Daniel Dunne, crouched in the stall of the girls' locker room holding a crack vile. Moments before their excruciating encounter, viewers see Dan enter the locker room as though he is performing a professional duty as the basketball coach to make sure all the students are out of the school before he locks up after the game. The camera shows him in a wide shot from the far end of the locker room corridor as he calls out to make sure no one is left behind and, from this position, the camera tips off viewers to the fact that this is not a routine end-of-game check. He enters the girls' changing area and verifies that there is no one using the bathroom before closing himself into a stall to get high. As he lights up, the camera switches to extremely tight close-ups of Dan's strained face as he pulls smoke from the pipe. The camera angle shows Dan's desperation. In this moment, the camera is also hand-held, creating a shaky effect that gives the impression of Dan's shakiness—alluding to his nervousness following a surprise visit from his ex-girlfriend, Rachel, at the game.

When Drey enters the locker room, viewers experience the sound of her footsteps on the floor from Dan's perspective: heavy and intruding, instilling panic. Dan's face goes white as he pulls his feet up onto the toilet in hopes that he'll remain unnoticed in the stall. He hugs his legs to himself and closes his eyes tight against the sound of the girl peeing in the stall next to him. After a moment, it seems as though Dan might be in the clear, except Drey hesitates outside the stall door sensing that she is not alone. She pushes open the door to reveal her ghostly teacher

hiding in the stall, gripping the vile and looking terrified by the irony of being caught doing drugs by a student in the girls' locker room. Drey sees the vile in her teacher's hand and excuses herself, mumbling "Oh, sorry," as she turns to leave, when Dan asks her to stay. The drug has rendered him temporarily paralyzed and he needs her assistance. Drey helps Dan to the floor, where he lies down like a helpless patient, and she brings him water from a paper towel that she wrings into his mouth, nursing him back to health so he can drive her home. The inciting incident shows, then, that one effect of the teacher's addiction is that he re-finds in a student the attentiveness he misses from his mother, who is psychically dead.

The effects on the teacher of the mother's deadness appears from the beginning of the film. Viewers know by the time we get to the inciting incident—fourteen minutes into a film that is approximately one hundred minutes long—that Dan's drug use in the locker room is not a one-off bad decision by an occasional drug user. The opening shot of the film shows Dan's almost naked, emaciated body as he sits in front of a glass coffee table in his barren apartment. The teacher has been out partying all night and, when viewers first meet him, he is trying to muster the will to get to school in the morning. As the camera pulls back from the tight profile shot of Dan's face as he stares off, viewers begin to see the material effects of Dan's hard living: his emaciated body in his almost empty home showcases the teacher's emotional and material impoverishment. The sad look about his surroundings—like the dazed look on his face—signals that the teacher is not only poor but "burned out," a euphemism for depression that is common in teaching (Britzman, 1998, p. 123). As the film proceeds, viewers quickly learn that Dan is addicted to crack-cocaine. Paradoxically, drugs allow Dan to continue teaching despite his depression and his dependence on drugs deepen his depression so that he can no longer sustain

teaching. The inciting incident of <u>Half Nelson</u>, then, creates a complicity between teacher and student that is also the grounds for teacher's repetition with the student of his mother's deadness.

Dan transfers his feelings of helplessness and dependence to Drey, a perceptive and resourceful student who both cares for him and accepts his pretense of providing teacherly guidance to her when they spend time together outside of school. Dan begins to think that, as Drey's teacher, he is responsible for protecting Drey from the menacing influence of Frank, an African-American drug dealer who is also a family friend to Drey. While Frank encourages Drey to sell drugs to support herself and her mother while her brother is incarcerated (for a crime in which Frank conspired), the film also undermines the white saviour narrative which is common in mainstream films about pedagogy by showing how the white teacher's attempt to rescue the African-American student is limited by his dependence on drugs and his low-standing in their Brooklyn community.

Frank, who has social capital as a business man in the neighbourhood, seems to Dan like a threat to Drey's well-being. In his bid to re-direct her interest away from Frank, Dan's earlier emotional conflicts with his mother and father re-surface in his pedagogy with Drey. Later, Drey takes up Frank on his offer to help her make some money and she goes to a motel room party to run drugs for him. When she arrives, she finds Dan there and sells drugs to him, leaving the party in a teary silence after taking his money. Still unsettled by the encounter, Drey returns to the motel the next day to check on Dan, finally helping him leave the disheveled room. In this vein, <u>Half Nelson</u> showcases the teacher's scattered attempts to overcome his depression in teaching by casting a precocious student in the role of the psychically surviving mother he lacks.

Notably, <u>Half Nelson</u> was released in 2006, just five years after the No Child Left Behind Act was passed by the American Congress. No Child Left Behind is an attempt to instill

standards-based performance measurements for school-aged children in the United States in order to ensure that socially and economically disadvantaged students are not overlooked in the curriculum and teaching practices of public education. As a social commentary, <u>Half Nelson</u> turns on its head the assumption that without government intervention, "disadvantaged" students will be left behind. The film suggests that under the neoliberal framework of NCLB, teachers are also left behind or overlooked entirely by federal government's anxious attempts to recuperate a dysfunctional (read: dead) educational system that is depleted of adequate resources.

In this chapter, I analyze Ryan Boden and Anna Fleck's social issues drama <u>Half Nelson</u> using the psychoanalytic concept of transference, or the human tendency to unconsciously repeat old conflicts in new encounters. To begin, I turn to Sigmund Freud's original formulation to define the concept. Then, I work with education theorists Alice Pitt and Deborah Britzman's (1996) first study of transference in teacher education to help elaborate the specific qualities of transference in the context of pedagogy. Pitt and Britzman's discussion of the psychical dynamics of teaching and learning help me to think about teaching desire as an effect of transference, which is both necessary and unruly in teaching. Last, I look to Britzman's autobiographical study of learning to teach, aptly named "Monsters in Literature," as an example of what it means for teachers to desire knowledge about the transference as an alternative to acting out its effects in teaching. I ask: how does <u>Half Nelson</u> represent the teacher's family life? And, how can viewers read Dan's relationship to Drey as a repetition of his unresolved conflicts, namely the dead psychical environment he shares with his mother?

<u>Half Nelson</u> appeals to me as the best site to explore questions related to the transference in pedagogy because it follows the trend in contemporary films portraying monstrous pedagogical relationships (<u>Notes on a Scandal</u>, <u>the Class</u>, <u>De-tachment</u>, <u>An Education</u>, <u>Bad</u>

Teacher, and Whiplash all come to mind as recent examples) without undercutting the teacher's humanity. Although Dan struggles—and often fails—to do right by himself, his colleagues, and his students, the film invites viewer identification with both Dan and Drey and so makes it easy to see why they love each other. If, as Sigmund Freud suggests, transference is essential to human relationships, then a study of transference in teaching desire is best satisfied by rich portrayals of teachers as complex human beings who students and viewers have good reasons to love and hate.

To answer the questions of how the film represents the teacher's family life and how the teacher's old emotional conflicts shape teaching, I analyze three scenes from Half Nelson. First, I turn to one half of a sequence later in the film in which Dan attends a family dinner at his parents' suburban home. To elaborate Dan's transference to Drey and his repetition of maternal deadness, I look at another sequence and a scene. The sequence shows the teacher hosting the student in his apartment after she pretends to be locked out of her house after school. This sequence shows Dan's rehearsal of the kind of teacher he might be with a psychically surviving mother. The last scene I analyze in the chapter is set outside of school at lunchtime when Dan refuses his role as teacher to the student, repeating his mother's deadness in relation to Drey.

Theoretical Framework: **Transference as Repetition, Resistance, and the Means of Interpretation**

To elaborate the qualities of transference in the clinical setting, Sigmund Freud (1915) offers readers a scenario in which a female patient falls in love with her analyst, a male doctor. His article "Love in Transference," is written as a piece of advice addressed both to a layperson

trying to understand what psychoanalysis is, and to practicing analysts about what to do in a common if troubling situation. Reading Freud's advice about how analysts should treat their patients' love in transference, then, offers a definition of transference as a dilemma that can also contribute to the work of self-understanding. The idea that underpins Freud's discussion of transference is that the patient reenacts her first feelings of love for her parents and directs this love toward the analyst, who is in a position of authority and on whom the patient depends for her well-being. If all goes well, the patient's display of love will also unearth the emotional qualities associated with her earliest infantile conflicts and the analyst can offer in return to the patient an interpretation of these psychical conflicts for the patient's working through. "You hold onto the love transference," Freud writes, "but you treat it as something unreal, as a situation that has to be worked through in the therapy, taken back to its unconscious origins and made to help bring the most deeply buried aspects of her erotic life up into the patient's consciousness, and therefore under her control" (p. 347). The success of the patient's therapy relies on the analyst's self-restraint in avoiding counter-transference, or the analyst's desire to take the patient's love personally and to reciprocate it.

In Freud's view, counter-transference is dangerous because it supports the patient's unconscious resistance to analysis and therefore threatens to derail the patient's treatment: "the role of resistance in love-transference is beyond dispute and very considerable. But the resistance did not create this love; it finds it ready-made, makes use of it and exaggerates its self-expression" (p. 349). In fact, Freud warns readers of counter-transference—a response to the patient's resistance—so insistently throughout the short text that readers might begin to think of the patient's love in transference as a source of anxiety for the analyst who worries that he cannot give the patient what she wants. "What I want to do is to establish the principle that you

tolerate the existence of needs and longings on the patient's part as dynamic factors in treatment and change," Freud explains, "and you should be careful not to appease these feelings by means of surrogates. And you could not offer anything but surrogates, since the patient's condition makes her incapable of genuine satisfaction, until her repressions have been removed" (p. 346). In other words, the analyst cannot satisfy the patient by reciprocating her affection because such reciprocity colludes with the psychical drama the patient enacts in the analytic relationship.

By prompting the patient to examine infantile conflicts, the analyst stages a painful encounter for the patient of having to return to the experiences of helplessness and dependency essential to infancy. Though such returns are necessary in psychoanalytic treatment, the patient resists the work of self-understanding as a way to avoid pain. Love, it seems, is a lovely distraction from the demands of analysis. Yet, the similarity between so-called ordinary love and love in transference is the logic by which Freud suggests that the analyst respect the patient's love without reciprocating it, a principle that reverberates through Pitt and Britzman's discussion of the transference in teaching.

In their first study of transference, Britzman and Pitt (1996) discuss psychoanalyst Anna Freud's idea that teaching is "learning twice," which refers to a double movement that requires teachers to learn from the material they prepare and then to create the conditions for learners to implicate themselves in the lesson (p. 117). The question that grounds the study reflects the double movement they describe: what does the teacher learn in "learning twice," and how does the teacher's learning in the double moment shape teaching? Following Anna Freud's discussion in Psychoanalysis for Teachers and Parents about how psychoanalysis informs education, Britzman and Pitt suggest that teachers engage thinking about the double moment of learning twice by conducting an investigation which is something quite different than reflective practice.

Britzman and Pitt adapt Anna Freud's lecture to teachers about how psychoanalysis shapes adult interaction with young people to the context of learning to teach. They explain that the teacher's investigation relies on transference, or the idea that one's history repeats itself when one inevitably projects old and unresolved conflicts onto new interactions. "The classroom invites transferential relations," Britzman and Pitt write, "because, for teachers, it is such a familiar place, one that seems to welcome re-enactments of childhood memories" (1996, p. 117). The classroom is always already a familiar space to teachers who were once students. The transference, then, not only prompts the re-enactment of earlier scenes in the classroom but also organizes pedagogical interaction, shaping how teachers and students respond and listen to one another. The problem with the transference, according to Anna Freud, is not that teachers' and students' psychical histories attend the scenes of our learning, but arises when the effects of transference are not analyzed, or when teachers otherwise resist seeking insight into their transferential relations.

Within this same lecture to teachers, Anna Freud tells the story of a governess who sought analysis with Anna Freud in order to help make meaning about a difficult time the governess experienced with a student many years earlier. In the time of analysis, the governess is able to conduct the kind of self-subverting investigation Anna Freud proposes is useful in exploring the transference. In her reconstruction of the scene, the governess discovers that she shared a startling identification with a struggling child she taught. The governess realizes that she left abruptly from the family home when the student started to make progress was because she could not tolerate an emotional attachment to the child who no longer seemed overlooked, as the governess remembers herself as a child. If at first the identification takes the form of a rescue fantasy, in which the teacher hopes to save the student from his struggles, the governess's

identification turns envious when the child begins to succeed. "The teacher could only bear to work with this child," Britzman and Pitt explain, "when the child was dependent upon her and when the child served as a representation of a condensed version of her own childhood" (p. 118). The governess could only bear to work with the child when his struggles recalled her memories of being ignored and misunderstood as a child.

Anna Freud worries that in the absence of investigation teachers are doomed to repeat their earlier unresolved difficulties with new students and that the teacher's unconscious repetitions belabor pedagogy by rendering invisible the children who do not remind the teacher of herself. In other words, Anna Freud wants teachers to consider how they understand students through their subjective conflicts. The transference, then, is necessary for the teacher to make meaning of pedagogical relations, but it also potentially obstructs education when teachers do not explore the psychical stakes of their histories of learning. But, Pitt and Britzman point out a significant tension in Anna Freud's wish for teachers' self-exploration: no one can know in advance how teachers and students will affect one another. One can only encounter the self-as-teacher in the pedagogical moment, and so there is no way for the teacher to finally prepare for the psychical stakes of teaching. Britzman offers a clear example of a new teacher's resistance to investigating her emotional conflicts in learning to teach through her autobiographical account of life as a beginning teacher in a high school English class.

In "Monsters in Literature," Britzman (2006) returns to a scene from her first teaching job working in a public alternative high school where she created a curriculum about literary monsters for a Grade nine English course she was teaching. The "monsters" do not only refer to the characters on the page but also to the unruly emotional and relational dynamics for a person who is learning to teach and for the adolescent students in her charge. Britzman explains how she

agonized over the curriculum and its potential effects on the students before the course even started, and this state of exaggerated worry continued even after she began working with the students. The impetus for designing such a course on the theme of monsters was to use the literature as a proxy in order to teach students about difficult political realities. "In sequence, the curriculum began with the fantastic" Britzman writes, "but in my head these actual monsters would only set the stage for encountering something terribly real and literally terrible: the inhumanity of the state apparatus, class inequality and genocide" (p. 258). Yet, when as an experienced teacher and education scholar, Brtizman returns to think about the implications of her early assumptions, she begins to understand that her initial emphasis on the use of the English course to teach students about the terrible reality of class oppression is actually a screen or a defense.

By thinking only about how much she had to teach the students about the state apparatus and social control, the new teacher protects herself from the terrible uncertainty of learning to teach. "The curriculum, too, was used as a terrific defense against not knowing what it will be to learn to teach as one is teaching," Britzman writes, "Idealization was a defense against my fear of losing control of everything" (1998, p. 258). The teacher's defense of making everything political, which is a manifestation of the furor to teach, also defends the teacher from having to encounter the students. Here, the furor to teach is tantamount to the teacher's psychical deadness. By imagining that the title of the course would easily telegraph to the students a message about her curricular and pedagogical ideals, the new teacher projects her fantasy of teaching onto the students, creating a psychical image of what students need in advance of meeting them.

As a new teacher, Brtizman worries that the readings she has selected are too advanced for the students or that they will not like the layout of the course, again foregoing an engagement

with actual students' needs and concerns in favour of her unconsciously projecting her worries onto them. This defense expresses the teacher's unconscious fantasy that she will not be able to survive any aggression from students that is necessary for learning. When Britzman finally meets the students and begins working with them, she sees that they are able to tolerate her furor to teach—expressed through her insistence that all monsters are political. Eventually, she can see that the students engage with the texts she has selected for the course and that, through their engagement, the students make emotional significance of the theme of monsters. In class discussions, the students are engrossed by discussions about how being a teenager and having to go to school can feel monstrous.

In her account, Britzman suggests that part of the psychical work of learning to teach involves giving up one's omnipotent and narcissistic fantasies of rescuing students in teaching in order to encounter students in reality. But, the difficulty of this psychical and pedagogical process is complicated by the fact that the new teacher is also in need of her defenses and this means that losing one's defensive fantasies does not necessarily happen in the time of schooling but is deferred. By bringing attention to the new teacher's learning as deferred action, Britzman thus helps me understand the paradox of Anna Freud's suggestion that teachers must investigate their emotional conflicts which may otherwise obstruct pedagogical relations. Investigation, Britzman suggests, may be possible and useful to the teacher who learns to desire knowledge about the transference instead of continuously rehearsing one's conflicts in pedagogy, even as it may be impossible to conduct such self-subverting research in the time of learning to teach.

Is It Alright to Cry? The Depiction of the Teacher's Family Life in a Reading of Transference

In the second half of the film, Dan attends a dinner at his parents' house where he is welcomed by his mother into a warmly lit home. But what unfolds at the dinner party in the following shots complicate the initial impression that the house—or the family—exudes a simple warmth. The scene cuts to the family—Dan, his mother and father, his brother and sister-in-law—around the dining room table. The camera orients the shot on a bottle of wine that Dan's father is opening. Alcohol is a central feature of the family dinner scene and there's a heavy suggestion that the family not only enjoys drinking wine but that getting drunk is what allows each of them, especially Dan and his father, to tolerate spending time together even as it derails interaction. Like Dan's drug use and the vicissitudes it creates in his relationship with Drey, alcohol symbolizes the paradoxical dynamics of the transference.

The dinner scene is part of a cross-cut sequence and the camera always anchors the sequential return to Dan's family dinner on Dan's father opening another bottle or pouring a drink. The setting and camera effects also create an atmosphere of being drunk. Throughout the scene, the camera is hand-held, creating shaky movements which make the viewer feel unsteady. Around the table, the camera shoots extreme and medium close-ups putting the background out of focus and creating an ambiance from the blur of the house's yellow lamp light that resembles the glow of early drunkenness.

Dan's brother asks him about his "novel," mistakenly referring to the children's book he plans to write about dialectics. His father mocks Dan when, as a follow-up question to Dan's explanation about dialectics as the study of change, he asks: "how *does* change work, Dan?" Defeated, Dan keeps his eyes down and replies: "let's save it for dessert, Dad." The opening of

the conversation points to several key dynamics in the family. His brother means to draw out

Dan but instead reveals the family's ignorance about the details of Dan's ideas and the project

about which he cares. Dan is a version of the overlooked and misunderstood child that Anna

Freud's governess remembers in analysis. Viewers know from several earlier scenes in the film

that Dan is passionate about dialectics because he talks at length about it—often while high—in

the classroom and to anyone who will listen at the bar. But at the family dinner, Dan is quiet, a

shell of his extroverted teaching self. He uses silence to protect him from the emotional assault

of his father's antagonism, which also represents the father's failure to protect the child from the

mother's deadness.

The early dinner table talk also reveals conflict between Dan and his father that arises

through the showcasing of their differences. Dan's father is a foil for Dan, emphasizing Dan's

character by sharp contrast. For example, Dan's father has a big presence. He sits at the head of

the table and, with his large stature and loud talking, he overshadows Dan who is emaciated and

otherwise too worn out to respond to his father's taunts or make eye contact. In this vein, Dan's

father is also a foil for the dead quality of the mother-child relationship. Dan's intense interaction

with his father in this moment expresses his father's anxiety about the differences between the

men's expressions of masculinity. His father's taunt "how does change work, Dan?" points out

that Dan derives his authority from his intellectualism—specifically by means of questioning the

status quo—rather than by brute insistence on the law of the father, symbolized by the

positioning of Dan's father at the head of the table and farthest away from Dan at the foot.

Similar to Britzman's description of herself as a new teacher, Dan's preoccupation with

using the theory of dialectics to teach students about terrible political realities is an expression of

the furor to teach. In this case, Dan's furor to teach is also an expression of the teacher's

transference with the dead mother. Like the young teacher in Britzman's account, Dan's emphasis of teaching the political implications of dialectics defends against thinking about emotional life and its fluctuations. Dan's interest in the theory of dialectics as a form of political rhetoric thus defends him from literary knowledge about the relationship between his interest in a theory of "the way change works" and the emotional situation (compelled by his drug addiction) of feeling stagnant in teaching. In this case, the literary or unconscious knowledge Dan is avoiding is the way in which an articulation of dialectics might also represent what it feels like to constantly fluctuate between two extremes—intoxication and sobriety, or depression and liveliness in the transference—but to never move beyond the existing dyad.

In an attempt to re-direct a conversation which is turning into an argument about Dan's interest in dialectics, Dan's mother produces an artifact from Dan's childhood history: the Marlo Thomas record Free to Be You and Me. As she shows everyone at the table the record from Dan's childhood, a song from the album, "It's Alright to Cry" by Rosey Grier, plays diegetically and frames the emotional stakes of the dinner table scene. "It's Alright to Cry" is a song for children extolling the virtues of expressing one's sad feelings: "it's alright to cry, little boy, I know some big boys that cry, too." The use of the song in the scene implies that Dan's mother cannot attend to the emotional injuries inflicted on Dan by his father; instead, she uses a relic in an ironic attempt to redirect focus from the growing tension between Dan and his father. Replaying the song expresses subliminally in the scene and directly to the viewer the message that, at least during childhood if not in adulthood, people can welcome their feelings of sadness and anger rather than having to repress them.

The record also creates a deep irony in the family dinner scene: the song distracts the family from Dan's silent display of negative emotion and so suggests that it's not all right for a

grown man to cry in front of his parents. Following the logic of the song that "crying gets the sad out of you," Dan's inability to express his infantile rage about being overlooked and ignored means that Dan keeps his negativity inside and so cannot experience genuine relief. The family dinner scene in Half Nelson thus suggests that Dan struggles with the emotional situation not only of being misunderstood by his family but also of what it means to separate from the people who helped make him and who now impede his living. In other words, the family dinner exposes Dan's conflict over the ways his mother's political history (in protesting the Vietnam war) has shaped his worldview—represented by his interest in radical teaching—at the same time that he feels disappointed by the hypocrisy of his parents' racism and waning social consciousness. Here, his parents' waning social consciousness—combined with his mother's willful ignorance of his addiction problem—also represents the imago of the dead mother. Viewers get a fuller glimpse of the seeds of Dan's rage and disappointment in the second half of the sequence.

The family retreats to the living room where Dan's mother and sister-in-law are dancing drunkenly. Viewers see Dan, reclined on the couch, from a wide angle that represents the most social moment of the family dinner. Though he is not dancing, Dan's body language is open and relaxed and he appears to be engaged with his family—except, most notably, for his father who is absent. The camera cuts from Dan to the kitchen where his father is pouring a drink. In a visual move that best captures the ambivalent identification between father and son, the camera offers reverse-angle shots first of Dan's father in the kitchen as he is seen from Dan's position. His father looks out into the living room, in Dan's direction, with a disapproving expression on his face. The framing of the shot, true to Dan's unsympathetic view of his father, is awkward. Though the shot is medium-wide, distanced enough to contain Dan's father in the frame, he appears off to one side and his body is fragmented by the kitchen door frame. From Dan's

position, viewers cannot see his father clearly. Then, the camera cuts to another medium-wide shot of Dan, from his father's perspective, still reclined on the couch but looking wearily in his father's direction. The slowness of the reverse angle shots also creates an interpretive space—viewer transference—to think about Dan's transference with his father: In what ways is Dan like his father? And how does Dan's desire to be a different kind of man shape his desire to teach?

"Teach me something, Danny," his father slurs as he takes a seat beside Dan on the couch. "Teach me some Ebonics," his father continues, chuckling to himself, as he leans forward to set down his glass. Dan's father sits in the middle of the couch, between Dan and the camera, and eclipses Dan in the frame. "Is that what they got you teaching in that zoo?" he jeers. Dan looks over at him wordlessly and cradles his head in his hand. "Tell me something. How do you say "asshole" in Ebonics?" his father persists. Dan turns his face away from the question and the camera cuts to a shot, from Dan's perspective, of his mother in the kitchen smiling at him but unable to attend to him. His father's racist jokes are another example that Dan finds in his father's bigotry his parents' hatred of his difference even as the family relies on his difference to make change. His father's racist remarks signify not only a refusal to see Dan's ideas and his work as valuable and worth trying to understand but also a paternal refusal to interrupt the deadness between mother and child.

The family dinner scene illustrates transference in two different directions. The set-up of the scene suggests that transference alters one's perception of the other who is either too close or too far for one to see clearly. The scene encourages identification with Dan who presents to viewers an image of his father as being larger than life. The interactions between them in the scene suggest that Dan struggles to live up to his father's example of masculinity. So, the transference creates a conflict from Dan's infantile identification (the desire to emulate his

father) and the difficult knowledge (knowledge that is made from the ruin of erotic ties) that Dan's father is not a good model for Dan to follow. Moreover, Dan's father is not only a poor role model but one who is impossible for Dan to emulate as long as the psychical imago of the dead mother persists in his unconscious. The scene shows the pain for the child of having to lose one's parents as ideal love objects. In doing this, the scene also contextualizes the psychical stakes of Dan's relationship with Drey—highlighting both Dan's attempt to defend against his sadness about his relationship to his father by being a good role model to Drey, making sure she gets home safely, and confronting Frank about what Dan perceives to be Frank's interference in Drey's life.

Yet, Dan's transference is also shaped by the history of his identification with the fantasy of the forgotten child, and the image he has of himself as overlooked by his mother is also something he transfers to Drey—especially in moments when his addiction makes him dependent on her care. In these moments, Dan's drug use and its effects on his body—the temporary paralysis in the locker room, for example—create the conditions for Dan to demand attention from Drey, the person he has placed psychically in the role of his (now psychically surviving) mother. But Drey is not Dan's mother, precocious and attentive as she may be, and her status as a child and a student means that she cannot always act as a maternal figure to Dan.

Dan's demand for care creates a dual fantasy of pedagogy in which Dan is psychically protected from having to encounter Drey's needs and desires as a learner in reality: on one hand, Dan's identification with the fantasy of the forgotten child—like the governess—compels Dan's concern for Drey when he thinks that she needs someone to look out for her. Viewers see an example of this outside Drey's apartment when she pretends to be locked out—presumably forgotten—by her mother who is at work. On the other hand, Dan welcomes Drey's attention as

the forgotten child himself, allowing her to occupy a place as his favourite student because of their complicity in his drug use and his dependence on her care.

While this scenario may seem to present a win-win scenario, in which both teacher and student give and receive care, their pedagogy is shaped by Dan's defenses against his emotional conflicts in teaching. Therefore, the relationship actually protects the teacher from thinking about the student as a learner who is more complex than either an overlooked latch-key kid or a precocious caregiver. In other words, Drey's pretense of being locked out matters because in her family, her mother is emotionally present and her father is the one who is absent. While their relationship seems to feed Dan's desire to go to school, this is something quite different than an expression of teaching desire. Teaching desire, Britzman reminds us, is located in the teacher's capacity not only to want the daily work of teaching but to desire knowledge about how the teacher's inner life affects pedagogy. Thus, Dan's strong desire to go to school where he continues to feel dissatisfied by teaching is an expression of his transference with the (dead) mother.

Locked Out: A Sequence of the Teacher's Love in Transference

The next sequence I discuss happens earlier in the film, in one of the days following Drey's discovery of Dan in the girls' locker room. Dan dismisses class for lunch and as the other students file out of the room, Drey tentatively approaches Dan's desk where he is eating a dry peanut butter sandwich. She asks why Dan isn't eating with the other teachers, a question that highlights the conflation of their pedagogical roles by its similarity to a more familiar question that a teacher is likely to ask a child: "why aren't you eating with the other students?" Dan,

lowering himself into his chair heavily and rubbing his hands over his face, explains that he

prefers to be alone and Drey nods, indicating she understands his desire for solitude. As she

leaves the room, she turns to ask Dan for a ride home. Dan agrees and when he is alone in the

classroom, viewers are privy to the effect of Drey's request for help: Dan's demeanor changes

suddenly. His eyes light up and he repeats to himself, "okay!" with a great sense of occasion and

relief. Dan's sudden change of expression mimics a common indicator of successful

psychoanalytic interpretation in which a patient's behavior or emotional state changes abruptly in

response to an analyst's suggestion. Dan's newfound burst of energy, "okay!" implies that by

asking for a ride home, Drey is summoned into the unconscious fantasy of deadness by being the

child who is called to care for the adult.

When she arrives at her front door Drey takes out her house keys as she changes her mind

about going inside. She tucks away the keychain, returning to Dan's car, and lies that she is

locked out. When Drey gets back into the car after "discovering" she's lost her house key, Frank

pulls up in an SUV beside Dan's old station wagon. Here, Dan repeats with Drey the fantasy of

the forgotten child in the dead mother complex. Frank offers Drey some candy—holding it out in

front of Dan as a taunt, playing on the double-entendre of 'candy' as another name for crack.

Frank asks Drey why she is with Dan. Dan feels addressed by Frank's question and responds

"She lost my key—her key." Dan's pronoun confusion reveals through a slip of the tongue his

unconscious identification with Drey. The shot looks onto the encounter from outside the

vehicles. The image of Dan and Drey inside the car makes visible their newfound intimacy while

Frank, on the outside, looks down at them from his SUV. The shot illustrates that Frank is other

to the duo, but it also puts Dan and Drey in a childlike position, both in need of containment

which is represented here as the physical boundaries of the car. They look up at Frank while they

answer his questions. Frank asks, with concern, "So, what? You need a place to stay until your mom gets home?" Dan responds again for Drey: "Nah, we're cool." But Frank distrusts Dan and asks Drey, who clearly wants to stay with Dan, "*Are* you cool, Drey?" and she nods.

Viewers see from Dan's perspective in the rear-view mirror as Frank pulls away, leaving teacher and student to their conspiracy. Dan's view of the back of Frank's vehicle as he drives down the street emphasizes that Dan considers Frank, his drug dealer, to be untrustworthy and a threat to Drey's wellbeing. When Dan and Drey are alone again, Dan questions Drey about her relationship to Frank: "I thought you said you didn't know him." Dan turns in his seat to face Drey, expressing his concern, as she explains that Frank is "just a guy from the neighborhood." Dan asks: "Do you know what he does?" The camera pans to Drey who says nothing and then the camera focuses again on Dan in the driver's seat. The sun shines through the open window and creates a natural spotlight for his soliloquy, the moment he will speak a significant truth.

 Looking straight ahead at the camera now, Dan continues, "Look, I know I'm the last person who should be saying this…" He trails off and his face moves into shadow. Drey, intuiting the message of the hypocritical lecture he cannot bear to give, replies, "You don't have to worry about me." Dan's suspicion that Frank is unworthy of Drey's trust in this scene is a projection of Dan's fear, which he cannot consciously bear to encounter, that his drug use makes him a bad influence. And so Dan's transference—as a resistance to investigating his conflicts—pushes Dan to defend against the thought of his negative influence on Drey and to defend against the sadness of his own childhood by trying to act as a good role model to Drey.

Dan enters his shabby apartment first, ahead of Drey, to tidy up and to make sure that any incriminating evidence—of drug use or of the teacher's personal life—is hidden since he wasn't expecting company. The opening shot gives viewers a split screen made from the interior wall of

Dan's apartment. On the left side, Drey is a shadow waiting in an empty hallway and on the right side, Dan surveys and tidies the living space. "Wait!" Dan instructs to Drey, who creeps down the hallway, as Dan covers the couch with a blanket. "Okay." He gives the green light after stashing a pair of stray underwear in a closet. Dan suggests that Drey can watch television and make herself at home. She ignores the first suggestion in favour of conducting research about Dan. Drey notices as she sits down in the apartment Dan's record collection, asking "You got them old things?" The records, like the Marlo Thomas album at the family dinner, symbolize the teacher's personal history about which Drey expresses equal curiosity and cautiousness in investigating.

Drey wanders over to the book case where she notices that Dan has "a lot of books about black people," as well as an old family photograph and a picture of his ex-girlfriend. Drey holds one of the books in her hand, flexing its spine, and asks if she can borrow one. Her question is a test to see if the teacher will trust her with his cherished possessions, if he will share knowledge with her. Her eyes steady on him in the kitchen where he is preparing to cook supper while she waits for his answer. "Yeah," he says. Drey asks about the picture of Dan's ex-girlfriend and Dan, enforcing a boundary, tells her it's none of her business. The shot cuts to a close-up of Dan slicing vegetables at the kitchen table where he and Drey continue their conversation. Drey asks Dan if he has "a lady comin' over tonight" and whether this woman likes Dan. Dan replies "I don't know. I'm hard to like sometimes." And Drey says, revealing a truth in the form of a joke, "yeah, that's true." The two laugh together nervously. Drey offers Dan some jokes for his date, advising him about what women like. There's a pause in the conversation in which the camera focuses on Drey who looks down and turns serious for a moment. She asks Dan, "Hey coach, what's it like when you smoke that stuff?"

During this part of the scene, the camera offers reverse angle shots of the characters as they talk. Notably, the camera in this scene is not hand-held, contributing to an atmosphere of stability which also connotes the strong rapport that teacher and student have created. As viewers look from one character to another, from the other's perspective, the camera offers clear, direct shots of both characters centered in the frame from the chest up—not so close to exaggerate their reactions but not so far to prevent seeing how they respond to one another. There is no background music or sound. The silence encourages viewers to focus more closely on the conversation and suggests an intimacy between them that is also visually supported by their close proximity to each other at the small table. Drey and Dan are each engaged in a separate task—chopping carrots and crushing tomatoes—related to Dan's supper preparation for his date. This activity shows mutual cooperation between teacher and student. Here, Dan is relaxed, open, and engaged in reproductive work, as one might with a friend or a spouse, lending a feeling of familiarity to the encounter. Dan and Drey's conversation across the kitchen table reminds the viewer how their complicity began: Dan needed to be taken care of by Drey after an impromptu visit from his ex-girlfriend, Rachel, someone who viewers are encouraged to think of as a significant other to Dan based on the positioning of her photograph in the bookcase that Drey investigates when she comes into Dan's apartment. When Drey asks about Rachel's picture, Dan avoids answering the question, reminding her in a joking tone that it's "none of your business."

The scene in Dan's apartment illustrates well one dimension of transference in pedagogy: difficult knowledge is made from the ruins of erotic ties (Pitt and Britzman, 2003, p. 757). In the comfort of his home, Dan is able play the "good teacher" (read: a psychically surviving mother) by staging an interaction with Drey that makes her feel comfortable enough to ask an important question. But Drey's desire to know what it's like to "smoke that stuff" also arises from her

relationship to the teacher who cannot be mindful of the student's best interest without encountering a serious conflict about his addiction and the history of his own childhood. The scene's contrast to Dan's later encounter with the female teacher also suggests that Drey and Dan's relationship contains erotic desire, a feature of love in transference, which cannot be fully expressed between them and so requires a surrogate. The trace of eroticism in their relationship is part of what drives Drey to stash the key, to conduct research about Dan, and to ask after his experience with drugs. Drey's question, "what's it like when you smoke that stuff?" might also ask: why do you get high? Or, can we get high together? Drey, not knowing Freud's advice to the lay analyst to respect the patient's transference but to avoid succumbing to it, hints at the idea that she might further implicate herself in Dan's drug use in order to get closer to the teacher. The pedagogical problem for the student of the teacher's transference is that to take seriously the teacher's love is a collusion with the unconscious drama the teacher is re-enacting. Yet, the student cannot be expected to know that a better solution to the problem of the teacher's runaway transference is a good analysis, not an invitation for repetition.

Drey's question expresses the potential consequence for the student of the teacher's unruly transference, a dynamic that simultaneously creates an opportunity for mutual cooperation and affection between teacher and student as it animates the teacher's depression and unthinking demand for care. In other words, Dan's transference does not only call him to be an attentive host to the "forgotten" student, it also stirs an emotional reaction to the memory of being a forgotten child within his family, this time in teaching. The child who feels he has been overlooked defends against the rage and pain of being left behind by asserting a desire to be left alone. In one of the following scenes, Dan re-enacts the emotional situation of the dead mother

with Drey who has to suffer the teacher's rejection when he retreats to his car to entomb himself from a living encounter with others.

Locked Out Again or, the Teacher Re-enacts the Dead Mother

The teacher quickly returns to the emotional situation of deadness in a scene that follows Drey's visit to Dan's apartment. Dan sits in his car at lunch time. He is gingerly eating potato chips despite suffering a split lip from the female teacher he sexually assaulted the night before. His hair is disheveled and he has loosened his tie. Drey wanders up to the car and knocks tentatively on the window. Dan leans over and rolls down the window, but does not invite Drey into the car this time. Foregoing pleasantries, he asks, "what?" The camera cuts between shots of Drey, from straight on, looking through the car window at her teacher, and Dan from profile as he sits facing forward in the driver's seat. When Drey asks "how's things?" Dan replies, "How does it look?" squinting and holding his forehead as though he is experiencing his bereavement physically. He turns back to Drey, asking with a tone of incredulity, "What do you want?" Drey, framed through the car window, says with disappointment in her voice, "nothing." She stares into the car, waiting for something more. Dan says, "Look, you know, you don't really see other kids coming up to my car, Drey, to talk to me. You know, I'm your teacher," he looks at her with emphasis and pauses, "Not your friend." Drey looks back at Dan and then turns her head to the side, showing that she is hurt by what Dan has just said. "Why don't you go play with other kids your own age?" Dan asks, shoveling chips into his mouth past the cut on his lip. "I'm just trying to be alone," he says through a mouthful of food. He stares straight ahead, not looking at Drey. Drey ends the conversation. "Then be alone… asshole," she accuses as she turns to walk away from the car.

The scene at the curb outside the school contrasts the expression of love between Dan and Drey evidenced in Dan's apartment in the previous scene. Dan and Drey's argument through the car window also showcases the pitfalls for pedagogy of the teacher's unexamined transference. After their previous interactions give Drey more than enough reason to believe that she and Dan are friends, she wanders up to the car to ask after Dan who is obviously in pain. Dan's cold refusal to attend to Drey shows the unruliness of the transference which causes Dan to vacillate between idealization and depression, and between the positions of the forgotten child and the dead mother. Here, Dan's unresolved familial conflicts replay.

Conclusion

The scenes in <u>Half Nelson</u> I read in this chapter offer a strong example of the competing and complementary forces of the teacher's transference with the psychical fantasy of the dead mother. By starting with an analysis of the family dinner scene, I tried to show how the film constructs an association between the relational dynamics of Dan and Drey's pedagogy and Dan's relationship with his mother. The family dinner scene, to my mind, offers a context for Dan's desire to teach and the uninvestigated conflicts—represented by his drug addiction—that belabor his teaching. By offering an ambivalent representation of the teacher's love and depression in transference, <u>Half Nelson</u> offers an important resource for thinking about teaching desire.

The end of <u>Half Nelson</u> leaves open questions about the long-term effects of the teacher's addiction and Dan and Drey's singular pedagogical relationship. After a night of hard partying following his dysfunctional family dinner, Dan misses school the next day and, concerned, Drey

returns to the motel room where she sold him drugs the night before to check on the teacher who is left alone at the motel room after the party has ended. Drey finds Dan, disheveled and wrapped in a bedsheet. She offers him candy—a lollipop instead of crack this time. Drey helps get Dan home, where she sits on his couch while he cleans himself up and prepares for a new day. The film ends with the two characters sitting on opposite ends of the couch telling knock-knock jokes to each other.

The ambiguity of the film's ending follows up on Britzman's suggestion about monsters that new teachers are at once served by learning to desire knowledge about the transference at the same time that it is impossible to conduct self-subversive research in the time of learning to teach. On the couch, Dan and Drey are positioned side-by-side from a wide angle. Physically, they are on the same level and are facing the same direction, positioned equally in the frame. In this final shot, Dan finally has enough "elbow room" from the dead mother imago that he might begin to encounter his sadness about his childhood. This scene construction is notably different than most of the other shots in the film that are often out of focus and that use odd camera angles and objects to constrict characters in the frame—such as the scene between Drey and Dan outside of the school at lunch time when they argue through his car window.

While the final shot of the film does not resolve the uneasy questions of whether Dan will recover from his addiction or whether Drey will stop running for Frank, it suggests to me that, in a more sober light, the teacher is entering a position from which to think about himself as a teacher. If by the film's ending, Dan is not yet in a position to fully investigate the emotional conflicts which shape his teaching, the steady camera shot, the day lit apartment, and Dan's cleaned-up appearance all suggest that he is beginning to shed some of the self-protective fantasies which cast Drey either as a caretaker or in need of care. In other words, their

positioning as equals on the couch symbolizes that Dan sees Drey next to him instead of above or below. This suggestion is subtly conveyed through the *mise en scene* and so the film responds ambiguously to the question of what, if any, lasting effect the transference holds for Dan and Drey's pedagogy, even as the transference foregrounds the possibility that Dan will recover his teaching desire. Half Nelson thus provokes the question of whether by repeating old conflicts in new scenes with Drey Dan develops a desire for knowledge about his pedagogical transference that can help him survive, adapting his father's question to the context of teaching: how does change work over time? Or, what does the teacher desire from a theory of change?

Chapter Four

Feminist Educational Echoes: Identification with the Maternal and the Orator in Mona Lisa Smile

Introduction

In one of the foreshadowing scenes of <u>Mona Lisa Smile</u>, Katherine Watson provokes a new curriculum for her *Introduction to Art History* course by asking the students to consider a series of unfamiliar slides, among them a wartime photograph of her mother in uniform. The students, who loudly refused Katherine's first attempt to teach them, are eerily silent. The class sits in the dark, their faces illuminated only by the glow of the projector screen reflecting the black-and-white picture. During the discussion of the previous images—including the grizzly "Carcass" by the Modern artist Soutine—the camera cuts quickly between indirect shots of the students' and the teacher's faces as they respond to one another in conversation. Notably, when the image of Katherine's mother is presented, the viewer looks at it straight from Katherine's point of view at the back of the lecture hall. The shot is totally silent and lasts for eight seconds, about twice as long as the direct shots of the other images in the scene.

The length of time the viewer looks at the photograph suggests that the image of Katherine's mother is more important than the others. Then, Katherine is shown straight on, as if the viewer is looking at her from the position of the projector screen. This is the only time during this scene that the viewer sees a character directly, which encourages viewer identification with Katherine. We see from Katherine's point of view, as she looks to the image of her mother. And, we look from her mother's would-be perspective at Katherine as she sits in the dark, having finally found something she wants to teach that the students cannot memorize from a textbook:

how to *think* about art. The work of thinking, then, begins from an unconscious identification with the image of the mother who is presented as a muse, a model agent of public life, and as a witness to the struggles of teaching and learning. I suggest that Katherine identifies with historical fantasies of the maternal and the orator in order to sustain herself in a pedagogical encounter with psychically dead students. At the same time, the film also offers an important cultural commentary on the nature of teaching desire that I explore through the use of historian Joan Scott's concept of the fantasy echo. In Mona Lisa Smile, the fantasy echo describes how the students, in learning to think and so to psychically survive, re-present to the teacher a different fantasy of feminist subjectivity than what the teacher desires. In my reading, the fantasy echo presents the new teacher with a conflict over how to sustain her teaching desire if the students will not reproduce the teacher's political ideals.

The central conflict of the film is for Katherine to learn how to teach in a way that is meaningful for her and for the students—to teach them how to think about significant and provocative works of art—while at the same time learning that the students have minds of their own. In particular, Katherine experiences a deep conflict in her pedagogical relationship to two students: Betty Warren and Joan Brandwyn. On the one hand, Betty is arrogant and stubborn— refusing to take seriously Katherine's teaching when it interferes with planning her lavish wedding, and wielding her political leverage as the daughter of an important alumna to challenge Katherine's authority. Betty represents a psychically dead student—one whose vicious refusals to learn are depicted in the film as the consequence of her mother's incapacity to survive her daughter's education. On the other hand, Joan seems like an ideal protégé for Katherine and one who provides the teacher with a maternal education: she's hard-working and ambitious, but she also has her own mind. When Joan decides to forego Yale law school in favour of eloping and

homemaking, despite Katherine's encouragement to pursue her education, Joan's decision forces Katherine to confront an important conflict in her teaching philosophy: teaching students to think is not the same as teaching one's politics. At film's close, Katherine decides to leave Wellesley in favour of a solo trip across Europe to see in person for the first time the paintings she has dedicated her career to studying, leaving in her wake a group of students (even Betty!) who have grown to love and admire (and to identify with) their uncompromising teacher.

This chapter considers the significance of psychical identification, through fantasies of the orator (the public speaker) and the maternal, to the problem for the new teacher of sustaining teaching desire with psychically dead students. How does one create a teaching self from her identifications? And what do our sites of identification—our fantasy figures—offer a reading of the conflicts entailed in desiring teaching when one's students are unable or unwilling to think?

In the process of developing this project, Mona Lisa Smile helped me to think in particular about what is required of the feminist teacher, not only in learning to occupy a position of institutional authority, but also to represent a patriarchal educational system and to reproduce its values in pedagogy. Feminist pedagogy theorist Madeleine Grumet (1988) describes the contradiction for feminist teachers of reproducing the public education system as the feminization of teaching, or the ironic employment of "many women, even many mothers, as the very agents who deliver children to the patriarchy" (p. 32). Following Grumet, I suggest that psychical identification with historical and fantasy figures is one way that people learning to teach begin to encounter and symbolize the conflicts of professional life. Specifically in the context of feminist education, I want to ask after the effects on the teacher's psychical life of having to reproduce an education system that has historically excluded and marginalized female learners. Mona Lisa Smile provides an evocative site for conducting this thinking in part because

it positions sexism in education as a condition of the past. The film derives the thrust of its central conflict from the depiction of the 1950s as a time when women were being educated into domesticity and childbearing. The effect of this representation is to make women's marginalization in education seem like part of a distant past, instead of an historical precedent that continues today. The film was released in 2004, on the heels of the 2003 American invasion of Iraq and, as a result, it reflects a nostalgia for the stability and growth of the white American middle class of the post-war era of the 1950s. This nostalgic depiction of feminist education in the mid-twentieth century allows me to ask after the role of historical fantasies in the teacher's psychical identification.

After framing the concepts of psychical identification and the fantasy echo in the next section, I return to <u>Mona Lisa Smile</u> to read four scenes. First, I read the initial scene the film sets in the classroom, which showcases a nightmare for the teacher: the students are restless and disrespectful, the teacher loses her voice and her control of the class. How does this pedagogical catastrophe, which is ordinary to the work of learning to teach, recall the fantasy of the female orator? And, how does looking at the scene through the fantasy of the orator help to redefine psychical deadness as something other than a nightmare for the teacher?

Second, I return to the scene of the lecture in which Katherine uses her mother's image to provoke a new curriculum, this time to offer a fuller reading of the scene as a site in which the teacher expresses a combination of identifications that help her to regain authority in the classroom and to articulate a teaching philosophy. Here, I suggest that the teacher makes a teaching philosophy—and a thinking teaching self—from the history of her identifications as a learner. The scene is important, I argue, not only because it contains one of the emotional turning

points of the film, but because through it Katherine conjures figures of the maternal and the orator simultaneously in the negotiation of a developmental conflict as a new teacher.

Third, the film's central conflict stages a fight between Katherine Watson and student Betty Warren about whether the goal of women's education is to prepare students for reproductive work (to assume the role of the mother) or whether it should provide a springboard for students to claim their independence (and become the orator.) At the same time, the film's central conflict summons a question about the dual meaning of history as "a time before the self" for female teachers and students: a time before I existed, and a time before women were allowed to go to school and pursue careers. How does an identification with her excluded female ancestors—represented by the historical fantasies of the mother and the orator—excite the feminist teacher's desire to teach amid a group of unthinking students? To discuss these questions, I analyze two scenes. The first depicts an in-class fight between Katherine and Betty that thinly disguises their competing bids for authority in the classroom over the question of what women's education is for and what female students should learn in postsecondary education. Finally, I read one of the concluding scenes of the film in which Joan returns Katherine to the dilemma of how her identifications, which are necessary in learning to teach, impede the teacher's capacity to teach students whose desires do not conform to the feminist ideals of her teaching philosophy.

Theoretical Framework: Defining Identification as the Tender Wish for Someone's Removal

Identification, according to Sigmund Freud (1922), is the "earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person". Freud explains that identification emerges first from the Oedipus complex, in which a little boy will develop an identification with his father alongside an object-love of his mother. For a time, these two relationships exist simultaneously without affecting each other, but once the child realizes that his father stands in the way of his desire for his mother, the identification the boy has with his father becomes complicated. What is at first the internalizing of the father as an ego ideal grows competitive or "hostile," as Freud (1922) suggests, and the boy's identification soon includes a wish to replace his father in relation to his mother, removing his father entirely from the familial scene in unconscious fantasy. According to Freud's explanation, then, identification pre-empts the aggressive strivings necessary for children to develop into adults. The desire to replace or remove one's parents that is central to psychoanalytic theories of human development begins from the earliest expression of an emotional tie to another human being: identification.

Past infancy, however, Freud considers identification to be regressive because it stands in for libidinal attachment. To illustrate his thinking, Freud uses the example of a school girl who is first among her friends to get a boyfriend. If the girl is suddenly disappointed by her boyfriend, the other girls may adopt symptoms of heartbreak as an expression of guilt for secretly harbouring crushes on their friend's love interest. In this formation, Freud suggests that the other girls' crushes on the boyfriend reveal their identification with their female friend. "The other girls," Freud (1922) writes "would like to have a love affair too, and guilt is the acceptance of the pain involved in it." By identifying strongly with their heartbroken friend, the schoolgirls

prioritize an attachment that does not seem to be libidinal and is at first less threatening to the ego. But, Freud (1922) also suggests that identification is complex: "it can turn into an expression of tenderness as easily as into a wish for someone's removal."

The relationship between identification and psychical development is useful in contextualizing a study of identification in teacher education, or representations of learning to teach. Psychoanalytic studies of teacher education (Pitt, 2006, 2003; Britzman, 1998; Robertson, 1997) suggest that teacher education stages a psychical and emotional repetition of infancy in new teachers. To take seriously the claim that learning to teach restages infancy makes psychical identification paramount to a study of teaching desire through the question of how the new teacher makes a relationship to an emotionally dead or depressed student. The unconscious repetition of the emotional dynamics of infancy in learning to teach positions psychical identification as a necessary process to becoming a teacher. The beginning teacher's identifications—with teachers, administrators, parents, and students—are part of a developmental process that inaugurates both the desire to teach and the fashioning of a teaching self by introjecting a model who the infant teacher may also wish to remove from the scene of education.

Diana Fuss (1996) extends thinking about identification as a difficult and meaningful psychological process in her study that maps the emergence of the term in psychoanalytic writing, beginning with Sigmund Freud. Fuss's work on identification not only defines the significance of identification for contemporary readers of psychoanalysis, but also conducts a close reading of Freud's correspondence to think about how the concept of identification carries the traces of Freud's unconscious introjection of other doctors, analysts, and even some of his patients. Fuss argues that although Freud's theorization of identification begins from the

assumption that identification belongs to femininity, Freud eventually develops a masculine

identification that underwrites a conceptual shift. At first, Freud not only sees identification most

often in female patients but also puts himself in the position of women, frequently using

examples of wives and schoolgirls to elaborate his thinking. Later, Freud is preoccupied by a

paternal identification through which he suggests that the desired object of all identifications is

the phallus.[1] In order to substantiate her argument, Fuss turns from an investigation of Freud's

earlier work with a female patient, "the butcher's wife," and her famous dream of the abandoned

supper party to his writing about identification as a problem between fathers and sons in Totem

and Taboo (1913). This turn is significant because Freud's later writing performs a kind of

matricide in which maternal or feminine influence is erased from the study of identification.

In the story of the primal horde, Freud establishes that subjects are made from the history

of their identifications and that identification is an act of repetition and remembrance. "With

Totem and Taboo," Fuss writes, "the entire psychoanalytic narrative on identification decisively

shifts from an investigation of feminine influence to a demonstration of masculine authority"

(1995, p. 33). Following Totem and Taboo, almost every subsequent metaphorization of

identification by Freud attempts to position the origin of self-other relations in the model of the

son's emotional attachment to the father: "from this point on, Freud's theoretical aim is to

establish, beyond any possible doubt, the paternity of identification" (1995, p. 33). Freud's turn

from associating identification with femininity to masculinity, according to Fuss, begins after he

develops Oedipal theory, the primary psychoanalytic explanation for castration anxiety. In her

survey of Freud's writing, Fuss finds that the earliest mention of identification from Freud

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[1] This conflict is easily seen in Freud's 1922 writing on identification in which he suggests, using the example of a boy, that identification is essential to infantile development and then turns to using an example of the schoolgirl crush in his elaboration of how identification is regressive past infancy

appears in a letter to the ear, nose, and throat doctor William Fliess about a middle-class female patient's identification with servant girls, or people of low morals who the woman associates unconsciously with women sexually connected to her father or brother. Identification, in this case, focuses on women's sexual fears and revolves around the questions of terminating and preventing pregnancy.

Fuss explains that early in his writing on identification, Freud becomes fixated on the image of the servant girl, routinely comparing his practice as an analyst to the low social status of working women and this prompts Fuss, identifying with Freud, to ask: "In the demand for pecuniary reimbursement from the patient for a treatment that never promises a cure, how, Freud wonders, is the psychoanalyst any different from the dishonest Catholic nurse who demands recompense for her bad care of her charge?" (Fuss, 1996, p. 26-7). In other words, Freud's sexual and professional insecurities underwrite his early preoccupation with identification as a uniquely feminine experience. While his early writing on the subject continuously references identification as a matter of female desire—through servant girls' concerns about the prevention and termination of pregnancy and then through Freud's reading of the dream of the abandoned supper party as an expression of "aborted" desire—Freud's insecurity about the potency of psychoanalysis and his contribution to the field eventually leads him to cover the traces of his feminine identifications with a newfound interest in father-son relations.

Fuss's elaboration that the theorizing of identification itself contains the analyst's complex and contradictory identifications is instructive to pedagogy if educational researchers consider the similarities between the work of the analyst and that of the teacher. Like the analyst who is worried about what, if any, effect an interpretation of the unconscious might have for the patient, the teacher, too, must struggle within a complex matrix of her identifications over what,

if any, influence she will have on her students. Education and psychoanalysis are fields that are both deeply shaped by the practitioner's anxiety about what they do and who they are to others—and, as a study of identification points out—who others are to the practitioner. In the context of educational research, Fuss's study shows how the teacher's anxiety about the potency of his/her teaching is doubled, if readers think about how identification is at once deeply implied in teaching and learning relations and is the very product of theorists' myriad identifications.

The gendered reading that Fuss offers is also useful for how it makes explicit the role of female influence as the premise for a theory of identification. In a study of teaching desire and psychical deadness in education, Freud's forgotten ties to the servant girl and the butcher's wife, she among Freud's "cleverest patients," (Fuss, p. 27) is especially salient since education is a profession overwhelmingly populated by female teachers. Fuss's study shows how, once it was freed from the prohibitive sexist assumptions about women in Victorian culture, the concept of identification could be rendered more complex and more common. At once, identification could include a non-pathological form of hatred and, in masculine subjects, a reading of identification did not hinge on a diagnosis of hysteria. Yet, neither Freud nor Fuss offer answers about the role of identification for women entering the public domain as social and political actors. While each theorist considers identification through the lens of feminine influence (although Freud later abandons this approach), there remains a question about how or whether female public actors, such as teachers, can claim authority[2] as knowledgeable subjects.

Identification, according to historian Joan Scott, is a fantasy echo "replaying in time and over generations the process that forms individuals as social and political actors" (p. 54).

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[2] Here, the concept of authority extends to one's sense of belonging and entitlement to occupy public space as someone who may influence others—especially as a public speaker.

Although the idea of the fantasy echo might mean simply that identification orients the study of history toward finding resemblances between the historical actors of past and present (p. 52), Scott also suggests in her pairing of the words fantasy and echo that the concept of history itself relies on unconscious formations. As sites of identification for contemporary figures, historical fantasies do not simply repeat what came before. "Echoes are delayed returns of sound; they are incomplete reproductions," Scott writes, "usually giving back only the final fragments of a phrase" (p. 52). The concept of the fantasy echo thus suggests that while public actors depend on historical fantasies as sites of psychical identification that promote unity in social and political movements, humans' use of these fantasies to build coherent identities can never exactly reproduce what came before. Here, Scott echoes Fuss when she says that psychical identification is a relational process through which people not only create but revise their identities.

Feminist identification with the fantasy of the maternal, then, implies that the image and definition of the mother is altered in every appeal to motherhood as the ground for organizing. I use the concept of the fantasy echo in my reading of Mona Lisa Smile to think about how the teacher's desire for teaching relies on the (unconscious) expectation that students reproduce the feminine identification the teacher idealizes. Yet, the students' reproduction of a fantasy echo—an incomplete reproduction of the teacher's identification—is actually evidence of a surviving pedagogical environment populated by thinking students. The fantasies of the maternal and the orator are instructive to my reading of identification between the teacher and students in Mona Lisa Smile.

The Orator

The fantasy of the orator consists of an iconic (and often parodied) image of a woman standing alone at a podium talking to a restless crowd: "things might be out of control," Scott writes, "the tumult acknowledges the transgressive nature of the scene, since in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries women were excluded, by social convention, if not by law from speaking in public forums" (p. 55). In other words, the figure of the orator is a fantasy image for feminists who are nervous about speaking publically. The orator counters a fearful mental image that the female public speaker may have of being jeered, heckled, or becoming the target of violence by audience members who are enraged either by what she has to say or that she is occupying premium public space to say it. The image that identification with the orator seeks to counter might also extend to "softer" expressions of misogyny and sexism against the female public speaker. For example, even political figures who have a long history of speaking publically on matters of import are likely to receive as much attention from interlocutors about their physical appearance as the content of what they say. In this case, the figure of the orator provides a site of identification for staying the course of one's speech and asserting oneself as having valuable and interesting ideas. In other words, the orator "projects women into masculine public space where they experience the pleasures and dangers of transgressing social and sexual boundaries" which tacitly and explicitly forbid their equal participation.

The fantasy of the orator includes several archetypes who feel excited by transgressing social and cultural laws against women occupying masculine public space: in speaking or in writing, for example. Punishment—including public execution by beheading, in the case of Olympe de Gouges—is part of what is exciting and desirable in the fantasies, which Scott argues

are resources that feminists invoke when their egos need bolstering during a difficult or intimidating moment. Turning to an archetypal feminist orator, Olympe de Gouges, who was ultimately beheaded in the late eighteenth century for her public insistence on women's right to speak publically, Scott traces the echo of the orator fantasy as it reverberates through the transgressions of female historical figures with something to say. For example, in the mid nineteenth century Jeanne Deroin campaigned for a seat in the British legislature despite that women were not allowed to vote or run for office. Deroin's place at the lectern during a speech was almost overtaken by an unsympathetic crowd when, summoning the image of Gouges, she managed to stand her ground and even wrote later that she derived great satisfaction from the stir she caused (p. 56).

Scott's examples show how the fantasy of the orator help sustain and propel female speakers within hostile public contexts that are as feared as they are satisfying to encounter. The risk involved in occupying public space, implied by the possibility of being silenced by an unsupportive crowd or of being overcome by one's emotions, stir the speaker's passions and bring to life her mind. Overcoming through an identification with the orator fantasy the fear of being destroyed offers the subject a deep sense of accomplishment and this feeling of achievement supports the idea that risk-taking is essential to (feminist) subjectivity.

The Maternal

Female public speakers—from Gouges to Deroin—reproduce the fantasy of the maternal, like the fantasy of the orator, to solidify the identity category "women" and to conceal discord across discontinuous feminist movements. When used to invoke a positive identification,

fantasies of the maternal draw on notions of collectivity, love, and peace. Scott suggests that the fantasy of motherhood and childbirth has been used throughout history—especially since the eighteenth century—to unite women according to commonality and shared experience, especially through the idea that all mothers experience the same pain in childbirth and feelings of heartbreak when their children get hurt. "In these strategic interventions," Scott writes, "the incentive for collective mobilization has often rested on the physical sameness of women's (reproductive) bodies" (p. 59). For example, Scott notes that Gouges speaks in the name of women's courage during childbirth when she delivers her <u>Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen</u>, the document for which she was beheaded. Similarly, Deroin associates womanhood with an idealized mother, claiming that the most important of all work is the production of the human being (p. 59).

While the fantasy of the orator emphasizes the speaker's individuality—or at least her separation from the crowd when she stands at the lectern—the fantasy of the maternal implies a relational bond between women in which all female subjects are expected to love as mothers and be loved like daughters. "In the scene," Scott writes, "the reciprocity of love and desire is assumed. The dissolving of the boundaries between mothers and daughters constitutes the reclaiming of a certain "lost territory," the pre-Oedipal love of the mother. . ." (p. 61). By calling on pre-Oedipal relations between mothers and children, that time before the world interrupts symbiosis, the feminist figure of the maternal is distinct from the figure of the orator in its reconciliation of disparity and contradiction. And, as Scott suggests, the idealized image of the mother eschews the punitive conditions of fantasy elaborated in Freud's essay "A Child is Being Beaten" (p. 61). As a psychical resource for building social movements, the feminist fantasy of the maternal is one in which female subjects delight in being together: "the world of women

conjured by feminists in this fantasy is one in which women find pleasure among themselves" (p. 65).

The idea that identification creates a psychical space for female relationality makes the fantasy of the maternal especially significant to a discussion of teaching desire and the issue of psychical deadness in education. In the context of pedagogy, the fantasy figure of the maternal as an idealized teaching subject presents a conundrum: on one hand, the comparison between mothering and teaching as sites of underpaid and undervalued reproductive work may provide a useful description of the sexism implied in public education, a field overwhelmingly populated by female teachers. On the other hand, as feminist educational researchers (Pitt, 2006; Gallop, 2001; Robertson, 1997; Grumet, 1988) rightly point out, the comparison of teaching to mothering also reinforces the widely held unconscious expectations that dispossess female teachers of their claim to full and equal compensation[3] for their professional labour and expertise. I am suggesting that by bringing the conflicts associated with the conflation of the mother and the female teacher to the realm of psychical fantasy, the figure of the maternal not only provides a strategic image for unifying social movements, as Scott suggests, but that, as a site of potential identification, the maternal figure also provides a space for feminist teachers to express and grapple with what it means to enter a profession so contingent on reproductive labour. Similarly, Scott notes that feminist subjects are likely to conjure the fantasies of the maternal and the orator simultaneously since they represent two competing desires that express a

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[3] Including payment but not limited to it. For example, Pitt argues that one way to read acts of matricide, or the psychical killing of one's mother, in education is as the silent erasure from historical record of women's intellectual contributions to academic culture. Gallop has also written extensively on the idea that among the other rights and privileges from which female teachers are dispossessed, university anti-harassment policies also bar female professors from participating in the sexual and erotic life of teaching that she says is the very foundation of thinking and learning.

conflict that is foundational to psychical development: to leave the mother (to be independent) and to return to her (to be safe).

Presuming Doctor Watson: Summoning the Orator in Mona Lisa Smile

On her first day of teaching at Wellesley, Katherine's trouble in the classroom is foreshadowed by the school nurse as the two women gaze through the window to the lecture hall: "they can smell fear." Katherine proceeds to enter the classroom and introduce the course to the students who continue to chat among themselves. Viewers see this introduction first from the back of the lecture hall in a wide shot that emphasizes the size of the room and in turn connotes the grandness of the school and the task of teaching to the teacher's mind. Katherine appears very small as she crosses the room to the podium. She pulls at her jacket furtively and says in a quiet voice "Good morning. This is History of Art 100." From this point, the students ask questions and finish the teacher's sentences as though they were heckling her with the details of the course. When Katherine asks if the students have any questions, a student calls from the back "your name!" and when Katherine introduces herself, another student makes a joke contesting the teacher's credentials: "Dr. Watson, I presume?" which sets up one of the tropes of the teacher's nightmare when Katherine is forced to point out to the students that she does not have the institutional authority they imagine. "Not yet," says Katherine in a whisper. The scene of the teacher's nightmare reflects what Scott argues is integral to the fantasy of the orator in history: by challenging the stricture against women speaking publically, the female speaker is in turn challenged by the audience—a challenge which so fills her with nervous passionate energy that she almost loses her voice.

The lights go off in the classroom as Katherine begins to present slides of the pieces they will be studying. Katherine is lit from behind by the ominous white projector screen, as though

she were the subject of a dramatic interrogation. When Katherine begins discussing the images that appear behind her, the students one-by-one begin to finish her sentences—aggressively demonstrating they have read the entire textbook in advance of the first class. The teacher's nightmare deepens: it would appear that she has nothing to teach the students. As she moves to the next slide and suggests to the students that they might be less familiar with the next one—a wish more than it is an accurate prediction—the camera offers a tight shot of student Connie Baker at eye-level, which suggests both viewer intimacy and parity with the character, who rolls her eyes with great exaggeration at Katherine's lagging pedagogical standards.

The pace of the scene quickens. The slides begin to change more rapidly as the students begin to sit up in their seats, each taking a turn showcasing what they know about the images that appear on the oversized screen. At first quiet, the scene is now accompanied by dissonant piano notes that emphasize the emotional tension between the teacher and students. Viewers see a close-up of Katherine's face which then cuts to a shot of the front light of the projector. The glass slides changing in the projector make a scraping noise which liken it to a machine used for cutting: a meat grinder or a table saw, tools that by equal turns might injure the person who uses them to do her work. Katherine, now pictured in extreme close-up, looks scared. Then, the screen goes blank, the music quiets, and viewers see Katherine from a wider angle. The camera cuts to students: some are wearing wry smiles, others look smug or have turned their faces away in discomfort. One student rests her face in her hand—suggesting she has grown tired of this game which the students appear to have won easily. The lights come on and Katherine asks, "by a show of hands only, how many of you have read the entire text?" Every student raises a hand, prompting student Giselle Levy to ask "long way from Oakland state?" followed by snickering in the background. Katherine concedes, "Well, you girls do prepare, ah…" but she is interrupted—

cut off—by student Betty Warren who dismisses the class on the teacher's behalf. Katherine is silenced by the sound of books closing and students leaving the lecture hall. Stunned, Katherine waits behind the podium for everyone to leave. She smiles dejectedly as the students pass her and she pauses for a moment to swallow her tears. Once the room is empty, Katherine packs up her things and braces herself to shoulder a heavy dossier, the material symbol of the teacher's emotional burden.

In this scene, the film showcases what is terrifying about teaching: the school and its culture can be hostile to newcomers, the students are already well-read and have nothing to learn from the teacher, the teacher's credentials for which she has worked hard fail to impress the students and do not secure her authority in the classroom, the teacher's beautiful objects—the glass slides—that she regards with aesthetic significance are used to publically humiliate and injure her, other faculty members observe the teacher's struggle but will not come to her aid. The scene of Katherine's teaching nightmare also revolves around public speaking—the female teacher's occupation of public space—and so offers insight into how feminist teaching appeals to the fantasy of the orator for meaning about how the teacher might sustain her desire for teaching among a group of dead students.

In the fantasy of teaching that the film constructs, Katherine's initial difficulty in the classroom gives way to her creation of a new curriculum, one that satisfies the teacher because it draws more closely on her field of research and one that transforms art history from a lesson about a static, ironically art-less past to a richer engagement with objects which invite the students' thinking and that channel their aggressivity. The orator fantasy reveals that in dramatizing the teacher's fear of being overtaken by the students, the scene of the nightmare is a useful invention because it elaborates the emotional stakes of learning to teach. As a new

teacher, Katherine experiences infantile helplessness as her imagined sense of autonomy in the classroom shifts to a feeling of isolation, of being left alone with the students. The scene of the teacher's nightmare thus contains the film's inciting incident or the protagonist's call to action. Katherine knows she will be dismissed if she cannot bring her teaching up to the standard of Wellesley College, because President Carr tells her this immediately after the end of the first class. So, the teacher must learn to claim her authority in the classroom and to do this she must craft a teaching philosophy and a curriculum that better speaks to the educational context in which she finds herself.

To justify taking a new course of action, Katherine summons a fantasy that the privileged women she teaches at Wellesley have never learned to think for themselves because they are being educated into domesticity following a post-war backlash against feminism. To Katherine's mind, the students need her to be a more provocative teacher who introduces them to the mysterious impressionism of Modern art because learning to think—rather than learning to recite—is key to the students' ability to take up their rightful places in public, professional life, just as she does in the academy. But Katherine also takes an unconscious cue from the students to refashion her teaching self after her first failed lecture. While the students' aggressivity prompts Katherine to invoke the fantasy of the orator to survive and find meaning in their attack of her, she also introjects their aggression. Viewers can see her offer back to the students their aggressivity in the following lecture. Once Katherine ingests their aggression, it becomes a source of confidence for her and a source of anxiety for the students about what they do not already know.

"I wouldn't even call it art." Or, The Teacher's Multiple Identifications

The scene of Katherine's return to the classroom with a revised curriculum opens by referencing the scene of the teacher's nightmare: viewers see a tight, direct shot of the projector as the projectionist changes slides. The sound of the glass squares falling in front of the bright light sets a dramatic tone for the scene, one that recalls the students' "cutting" remarks in the first scene. The momentary shot of the projector at the opening of the second scene both reveals the setting in the lecture hall and suggests a plot twist that is the basis of my reading.

The camera cuts to a wide shot of Soutine's impressionist painting of a bloody cow corpse entitled *Carcasse* projected at the front of the darkened lecture hall. The camera focuses directly on the art, depicting the dead animal splayed on a dark blue background, its head hanging at the bottom of the frame. The scene is silent for a full six seconds during a direct shot from forced perspective of the painting. Katherine stands in front of the projected image, aligned with the image of the animal's remains. When Betty asks "what is that?" Katherine responds "you tell me," returning the students' certainty to them as an occasion for their anxiety. The camera turns from its shot of Betty in the audience to a direct shot of Katherine at the front of the room again, standing in front of the screen. Only this time the lighting is different and suggests that despite her location in the same place she stood during the first lecture, her stance has changed. In a close-up, the top half of Katherine's face is in darkness and the bottom half is in the light, making it appear as though Katherine is a menacing stranger standing in the shadows. The opening shots of the scene prepare the viewer for another of the students' pedagogical attacks on the new teacher. But the expression on Katherine's face as she stares out from the shadows of the projector suggests a subtle role reversal. Katherine, still standing in front of *Carcasse*, has survived the students' feast and is prepared to defend herself against another

attack. Once it becomes clear that the students cannot answer Katherine's question, she re-enacts the students' recitation of facts from the previous lecture: "*Carcasse*, by Soutine, 1925." Finally, Katherine steps out of the shadow and begins teaching, asking about the painting: "Is it any good?"

At first the students are dumbfounded. The students flip through their textbooks trying to find information about *Carcasse* in their course material. Finally, one student notes that the painting is not listed on the syllabus. Katherine, climbing the stairs to the back of the hall, offers some context to the students' scrambling: "Come on, ladies. There's no wrong answer. There's also no textbook telling you what to think." As she turns to look at the screen, now facing the same direction as the students, she says in a more empathic tone "It's not that easy, is it?" The students are reluctant to say what they think, preferring instead to offer facts that can be confirmed by the text book.

Finally, Betty Warren offers her perspective: "No, it's not good. In fact, I wouldn't even call it art. It's grotesque," she says, turning her head to face Katherine. Katherine takes a seat on the top stair of the centre aisle at the back of the room. Now, she is directly in front of the projector, but she is also on the same level as the students and is sharing space with them. At once, she is "close" to the subject matter she is presenting, finding a new way to occupy a position of authority in relation to her audience—channeling the orator—by demonstrating her complex thinking to them. And, she is physically close to the students, recalling one of the implied conditions of the symbiotic love that the fantasy of the maternal represents. Katherine's positioning at the back of the room forces the students to turn towards her, angling themselves to see and be heard by her, suggesting that she has gained control of the class from the first lecture in which she struggled to be taken seriously by the students.

Katherine's position in the lecture is also noteworthy because of her proximity to the slides and her placement between the projector and the screen. More than being "close" to the subject matter, looking at the screen from the back of the room with the students also subliminally associates the content of the slides with images that the teacher has introjected and is now projecting to share with students as curriculum. No longer feeling like a carcass herself, Katherine can symbolize through the painting the aggressive strivings present in the room—the students' and hers. She presents the painting to throttle the students. In other words, the slides express sites of the teacher's identification that are meaningful to her experience of learning to teach.

The image of Katherine's mother that viewers see in <u>Mona Lisa Smile</u> provides a strong example of how the two figures of the mother and the orator can be called upon simultaneously. In the photograph projected on a large scale above all of the students and the teacher, Katherine's mother wears a uniform which signifies that she is part of a generation of women who entered occupations during the war that were previously the domain of men. But the photograph is a professional portrait in which Katherine's mother looks clean and soft. She wears lipstick and her hair falls in soft curls around her shoulders. Set in a curtained studio, the photograph shows her mother removed from the paid, physical and, sometimes dangerous work associated with wearing the uniform that signifies one's belonging in masculine public space. In this lecture, Katherine's tone, pacing, and even the way she positions herself in the lecture hall is notably different from the scene of the nightmare in the first class and, like the photograph, signifies a dual identification with the orator and the maternal. In particular, Katherine's stance and body language in this scene reflect the ways that learning to teach also requires her to negotiate her newfound authority as an Instructor. When at first viewers see her standing at the front of the

room again, we are primed for another attack by the students. By the time Katherine steps out of the shadow of the projection, however, she is standing up straight and speaking with confidence, showing the students that she does have something to teach them. In this initial moment, Katherine is identified with the figure of the orator by insisting that what she has to say is important and she will neither lose her voice for an overflowing of emotion nor be overtaken by the audience.

But Katherine also performs a balancing act. Katherine balances her assertiveness when she positions herself at the back of the room, looking at the screen from the same position as the students and at the same level. Here, the rows of seating better frame the teacher so that she does not look like she struggles to occupy the large empty space at the front. Katherine seems more in control of her surroundings, including the content and pacing of the slides. She follows up her provocation to the students with a calmness that allows the students to respond to one another, rather than anxiously jumping to defend herself against the students' questions. In other words, her introjection of the students' aggression from the first lecture has helped her negotiate a human developmental conflict that extends to teaching. Katherine has lost her sense of helplessness that viewers witness in the first lecture. By accepting the challenge of revising her curriculum to be more in conversation with the students, Katherine also sheds the infantile fantasy of omnipotence, or the idea that she can control the students or their responses to the objects she brings them. Said differently, Katherine negotiates the conflict implied by the feminist use of the orator and maternal fantasies simultaneously: she is at once independent when she stands alone at the front of the room and she is safe among the company of the students when she sits in the lecture hall, neither succumbing to their attacks nor acceding to their rank. As with

ordinary human development, however, the teacher does not negotiate the conflict between the wish for independence and the wish for safety once and for all.

No Man's Land: The Teacher's Identification with the Maternal

The idea that identification creates a psychical space for female bonding makes the fantasy of the maternal especially significant to a reading of teaching desire in <u>Mona Lisa Smile</u>. In the climax of the film, Katherine is leading a class in a remote campus building, referred to in an earlier scene as "no man's land," when Betty Warren—returning from her honeymoon— arrives late to class. When the scene begins, the other students are gathered around a large wooden table that is surrounded by windows that make the lighting of the scene seem natural. In contrast to the formality of the large lecture hall with its dark wooden accents, the make-shift classroom in "no-man's land" gives the impression that the students are seated at a kitchen table. The space is smaller, so the students and the teacher are much closer together and without the stratified seating of the lecture hall, everyone is on the same level. The table does not accommodate all of the students which forces the students in the background to lean closer in order to hear the lecture—a marked change in body language from the nightmare scene and one that symbolizes the students' growing investment in considering what the teacher has to say.

The topic of the lecture, too, offers the viewer clues to the psychical implications of the fantasy of the maternal being constructed in the scene. Katherine is talking to the students about the irony that Van Gogh's work became popular through mass reproduction after his death. During his lifetime, his paintings were considered to be child-like and were not well received by his contemporaries. Katherine offers an example of a paint-by-number kit to say that now, by

comparison, anyone can (and many do) own a Van Gogh. The paint-by-number kits are also a

proxy for the fantasy echo: the students have the opportunity to reproduce Van Gogh's famous

paintings; yet, their copies are never identical to the originals. The class discussion of the

merging of high and low art forms implies a leveling of hierarchies and the reconciliation of

difference that Scott articulates as a salient part of feminist historical fantasies of the maternal.

Katherine's turn to considering popular mass reproductions of high art forms mimics a kind of

equality that is achieved when the students begin to take the teacher seriously: the upper-class

students gather around the table with their working-class teacher as though they are equals. "No

man's land" is a symbiosis between teacher and students.

Symbiosis is interrupted when Betty arrives. On the heels of Katherine's suggestion that

the moral of Van Gogh's story is to not conform, Betty enters the room mocking Katherine: "I

know! Be ourselves!" Betty's attempt to continue the students' intimidation tactic of interrupting

the teacher shows that her extended absence has set her apart from the other students: not only is

she the first to be married, Betty has also missed the group transformation from resisting the

teacher to being one with her. Or, in the logic of psychical fantasy, Betty's marriage confirms her

complicity with the law of the father and she is thus already outside the pre-oedipal bond created

between her classmates. Katherine and Betty then act out Betty's betrayal of the group fantasy.

After Betty takes her seat, another student explains to Katherine that there is an unwritten

rule for married students to be excused for a few classes following the wedding. Betty whispers

under her breath, turning her face away from Katherine, "What does she expect?" Katherine

stands on the opposite side of the table from where Betty is seated: "Attendance." As teacher and

student begin to argue, all the students are seated around the table. Because Katherine is

standing, the impression of equality between teacher and students is erased and their pedagogical

positions are re-emphasized. Betty accuses Katherine of disregarding the school's traditions and being subversive. Katherine, rounding the table to stand over Betty, retorts that Betty should not disrespect the class just because Betty is married. Katherine tells Betty that if she does not come to class Katherine will fail her, to which Betty responds that if Katherine fails Betty, "there will be consequences." The camera is just behind Katherine's shoulder as she hovers over Betty in the chair, positioning the viewer to identify with Katherine or "to have her back" in the conflict. At first, the positioning implies that the camera might be setting up a shot-reverse-shot sequence except that the camera stays behind Katherine, looking down at Betty's profile. In this complex positioning, Betty is the one who has to turn to look at Katherine and the uneasiness of this movement implies her involuntary submission to the teacher. "Are you threatening me?" Katherine asks incredulously and Betty replies "I'm educating you." Katherine presses the end of a pencil under Betty's chin to direct Betty to look up at her, like a mother to a naughty child. "That's my job," Katherine reminds her.

The argument between Betty and Katherine hinges on an intense identification between teacher and student while, on the surface, the scene reveals that the major plot conflict of the film is the teacher's struggle to convince the students to take their academic lives seriously. On one hand, Katherine's approach to the conscious conflict of marriage-versus-career that structures the narrative is to try through teaching to convince the students to be like her: to cast off the oppressive conventions of traditional femininity and to pursue the development of their minds. On the other hand, Katherine's prioritizing of professional life is lonelier than she anticipated— both because she has to move across the country to teach at Wellesley, leaving behind a well-built life, and because the culture of the school is unwelcoming of her. To try to live well in the cold climate of Massachusetts, Katherine must find ways to sustain herself, which means getting

the students to accept and listen to her. And, returning to Fuss's suggestion that identification is one of the most familiar and defamiliarizing psychological experiences through which humans attempt to re-find lost love, Katherine's experience of loneliness as a new teacher drives her identification with Betty, adversarial though it may seem. If consciously, Betty seems to want more recognition of her autonomy and authority, to be allowed to make her own decisions regarding her education. Katherine's introjection of Betty thus helps Katherine to survive the difficult conditions of learning to teach, even as their expressions of identification seem to contradict the loving, symbiotic atmosphere depicted in "no man's land" before Betty's return.

By imagining that the students' best outcome is to become public actors, Katherine finds justification for her radical transformation of the Art History curriculum, which is what sustains her meaningful connection to teaching and so allows her to continue working within the psychically deadening conditions of the school. To acknowledge that the students may still desire to be homemakers implies an emotional conflict for Katherine since, according to her conscious logic, the assumption that the students will pursue careers outside the home is what makes urgent her makeover of *History of Art 100*. But, the fantasy of the maternal operates according to a psychical logic which promotes love based on sameness and shared experience. Katherine's transformation of the classroom and the curriculum toward the common—signified by the environment established in "no man's land" and the lecture based on revisiting popular art—is still imbued with the maternal fantasy, even though the conscious reasoning for the transformation—for women to stake a claim to professional roles outside the home—appeals to the orator's need of individuation. Once Katherine has survived the excitement of the students' attack, the psychical working of identification changes to address the teacher's need to feel close

to the students. In a move reminiscent of the butcher's wife in the dream of the abandoned supper party, Katherine adopts the desires of others as her own.

Conclusion: The Question of Dispossession as the Grounds of Feminist Teacher Identification

In Mona Lisa Smile, the fantasy of the maternal at work in 'no man's land' not only fulfills the teacher's desire to be close to and to feel understood by the students, it also reveals how the teacher's desire for the students arises in response to the institutional conditions that make teaching difficult: of working at a school in which untenured faculty are beholden to the will of students who have powerful family ties to the administration, for example. Betty's statement "there will be consequences" during their argument in "no man's land" reminds Katherine that Betty's mother chairs the alumni association and can therefore have Katherine fired if Betty fails *History of Art 100*. Katherine's dream of symbiotic love in "no man's land" offers her reprieve from what is demanded of her subjectivity by a school that negates her authority to assess students based on the merit of their work rather than according to their class privilege.

The confrontation between Betty and Katherine in "no man's land" might also suggest something about the challenge for teachers to try to think about what their fantasies block from consciousness. If Betty's entry into the makeshift classroom signifies an interruption to the teacher's dream—the answer to the nightmare—and expresses the aggressive strivings of identification, the argument that ensues between teacher and student is evidence that the teacher's attempt to think about the conflicts which compel the fantasy cannot be forced or

hurried. Betty's intervention in the comfortable symbiosis between Katherine and the other students highlights Katherine's conflicts—the conscious concern about educating women to have big lives expresses how the school makes her feel small—and pushes her into a ruthless confrontation through which she gives expression to Betty's repressed desire to take seriously her education. Betty's flagrant attempt to exercise her privilege in not coming to class forces everyone in the room to face the differences between teacher and students that also signifies the story's climax. Read through the lens of identification, Betty's exaggerated sense of entitlement is actually an expression of the teacher's claim to autonomy, independence, and respect for her expertise as a teacher. While the intensity of their exchange in "no man's land" urges Katherine to think about teaching, Katherine's consideration of the deeper stakes of her fight with Betty is deferred.

Katherine finally encounters Joan, a more sympathetic student, who returns Katherine to the conflict by offering a description of it rather than acting it out: "You stand in class and tell us to look beyond the image, but you don't. To you a housewife is someone who sold her soul for a center hall colonial. She has no depth, no intellect, no interests. You're the one who said I could do anything I wanted. [Raising a family] is what I want." Joan, in other words, presents Katherine with a fantasy echo—or, an altered reproduction—of the teacher's ideal fantasy of femininity. Joan resists the teacher's demand for doubling or simple repetition. In this scene, Joan and Katherine stand on Joan's front porch after Katherine has arrived unannounced to press Joan to go to law school. Their conversation is captured from shot-reverse-shot angles, in which the camera looks from behind the shoulder of one character who is looking at the other and then reverses to the perspective of the other character. This camera angle, in contrast to the argument

between Betty and Katherine which is shot only from Katherine's point of view, suggests parity. The viewer is encouraged to think from both characters' perspectives.

Katherine, too, is now able to think about what her identificatory fantasies have left out: the possibility that encouraging students to think for themselves will not go as she expected. Joan takes Katherine's lesson to look beyond the image and does something unexpected with it. Katherine's difficulty accepting Joan's decision shows how the teacher had been relying on students' conscious identification—at least, the idealized version in which students would model themselves after the teacher, but not aim to remove her—as a sign of her success in teaching. Joan reminds Katherine, and so shows viewers who are encouraged to identify with Katherine, that Katherine's revised curriculum was intended to teach students to think independently, not necessarily to model themselves after the teacher.

In showing Katherine what it might look like for students to embrace the task of thinking, Joan's decision to raise a family instead of going to law school also reveals that Katherine's urgency in encouraging female students to occupy public space in the pursuit of professional life is about more than correcting the problem of women's dispossession. By asserting the idea that women's postsecondary education should educate women into professional life and thereby subvert traditional expectations for middle-class women to forfeit the desires that fall outside the boundaries of the ideological, the social, and the institutional (this time, of the family), Katherine draws on the problem of women's historical exclusion from postsecondary education to correct the problem of her exclusion as a teacher from the rest of the faculty and school community. In other words, Katherine's appeal to the history of women's social inequality—the exclusion of women from attending school and from the professoriate—as the impetus for educating female students as social and political actors works to conceal differences in class, desire, and

institutional standing that might complicate the notion that feminist pedagogy is by itself an antidote to female dispossession.

Katherine's desire to correct the inequalities of the female students' education also highlights the similarities between the school's refusal to take seriously the students' learning and its refusal to credit Katherine's authority, passion, and expertise. So, Katherine invokes the history of female exclusion from education in order to give expression to the psychical effects— lost desire, or psychical deadness—of the institutional conditions of being distrusted and unsupported in teaching. Katherine's identification with Betty, expressed through an adamant insistence that the students need to come to class and put their education first, also creates the psychical space for Katherine to think about what it means for the new teacher to inherit an educational system she did not create. In this sense, Katherine's ultimatum to Betty expresses a series of possible desires that embody the contradictions of what it means for the beginning teacher to represent and reproduce the rules of patriarchal, institutionalized education. "Come to class or I'll fail you" could mean "I don't want to fail you (and I might have to)" or "I want to fail you (and the school forbids it)" or, following Diana Fuss's logic of identification as a veil for same-sex desire, "I desire you (and my desire is taboo)." If as Fuss suggests identification is a form of repetition and remembrance of the lost love objects we have introjected, the possibility of repressed same-sex desire between teacher and student is also a totem of maternal influence in education. The teacher's desire for the student is also a desire for the mother who, in fantasy, the teacher must destroy on the way to the lectern.

Chapter Five

Reading Monsieur Lazhar as an Allegory of Surviving the Cultural Myths of Teacher Education

Introduction

In one of the opening scenes of <u>Monsieur Lazhar</u> the principal of the school, Madame Vallaincourt, addresses a class of students and their concerned parents about the remediation plan following a teacher's suicide in the classroom. This scene is shot at first from behind Madame Vallaincourt as she addresses the group from the front of the room. The group appears out of focus, forcing the viewer to notice Vallaincourt's speech and upright stance. With an air of authority and judiciousness, she assures parents that the school psychologist will be available to speak with students as needed and, addressing the students, she insists that students speak to an adult if they feel sad or anxious during this time. The camera switches to a tighter profile shot of Vallaincourt as she responds to a parents' complaint that there is only one psychologist on staff for the whole class of students. The close-up reveals a momentary look of surprise on the principal's face before she moves more fully into a managerial position, assuring the parent that administrators and teachers will take the day to evaluate student need and may bring in more help if necessary.

This scene establishes an important conflict between, on one hand, the lip service the school administration offers to appease parents and students following the suicide of a teacher and, on the other hand, the failure of the adults at school to help the children make meaning of a traumatic event. The failure to offer the support Vallaincourt suggests will be available to the school community arises from her and the other adults' incapacity to think about how the loss of

the teacher matters. The need to make significance of the loss stands in tension with cultural myths about good teaching that make a psychically dead education environment. In the scene of her address to parents and students, Vallaincourt represents this unthinking enviAronment through her attempt to placate parental concerns but without attending to the emotional content of parents' and students' questions.

In this chapter, I read the film Monsieur Lazhar as a representation of a new teacher who learns to negotiate teaching in a psychically dead school environment. Bachir Lazhar arrives to a Montreal elementary school as a refugee from Alergia where his entire family—including his wife who was a school teacher—was murdered. At the time that Bachir responds to the job posting in the newspaper, he needs a job but is not a trained or experienced teacher although he presents himself as one to Madame Vallaincourt, saying that he taught in Algerian schools for over nineteen years. Vallaincourt, pressed to find a replacement as quickly as possible and receiving minimal interest in response to the emergency job posting, hires Bachir on the spot.

Monsieur Lazhar is a film about Bachir's experience learning to teach as an imposter in a school culture that is deeply affected by the actual death of a teacher. In light of his own history of loss and his inexperience working within the institutional constraints of the school, Bachir becomes an advocate in the school for open discussions about the students' grief and sense of loss over Martine's suicide. At the same time as he is learning to teach, Bachir also testifies at an immigration board hearing in support of his application for political asylum as a refugee in Canada. After Bachir disobeys Vallaincourt's instruction not to discuss Martine with the students, he facilitates a discussion among the children in his class following an outburst in class. Later, Bachir is fired for his insubordination and must find a way to say goodbye to the students

without deepening their trauma and so he writes an allegory which symbolizes the loss of his family as well as the students' loss of their teachers.

I suggest that although Bachir is initially dead—unable to mourn the loss of his family—when he comes to the school, his relationship to Claire—an experienced teacher—supports him both in learning to negotiate the cultural myths of teaching and in learning to survive his students' attempts to make him a (dead) substitute for Martine. Here, I am defining psychical survival in two ways: first, the capacity to think meaningfully about loss and, second, the teacher's capacity to sustain a sense of purpose about teaching amid students' expressions of aggression and melancholia. As Bachir struggles between the demands of the prescribed curriculum and his desire to make a space for students to symbolize their loss, Bachir's experience learning to teach reflects the psychical process of moving from melancholia to mourning. From a discussion of Britzman's argument about the cultural myths that insidiously and prominently affect the education of new teachers as they begin to work in schools, I turn to elaborating the psychoanalytic concept of the dead mother in order to think about the culture of the school as a psychical environment for the new teacher

Turning to the film, I analyze three scenes. First, I look to a scene in which Bachir brings a student's class presentation on the topic of school violence to the attention of Principal Vallaincourt to suggest that the student's work be distributed as a resource for students, parents, and teachers to talk about their feelings of loss in response to Martine's death. Second, I look at the scene of a staff meeting in which the faculty and Madame Vallaincourt deliberate over what to do about Simon, a student whose schoolyard aggression seems to be mounting. Finally, I look at two short scenes between Bachir and Claire in which Bachir observes Claire's teaching and the two teachers discuss their pedagogical practice through Claire's gift of an African violet to

Bachir. . In my reading, Bachir represents a depressed teacher who advocates for students' need to symbolize their grief but without any thinking about how his loss matters to teaching. Claire, acting as a surviving object, eventually supervises Bachir out of his depression in time for Bachir's departure from the school.

Theoretical Framework: Cultural Myths in the Making of a [Dead] Teacher

In her critical study of cultural myths in and about teacher education, Britzman (1986) explains that school cultures emphasize the need for social control in the classroom and, for the student teacher, cultural myths substantially contribute to the student teacher's assumptions about the individual capacity to exercise power and assert expertise while mystifying school structure. "Evoked to somehow illustrate and explain their teaching intentions," Britzman writes, "these views, or what I have come to call cultural myths, tended to rationalize and legitimize the existing school structure as well as to provide a semblance of order, control, and certainty in the face of the uncertainty of the teacher's world" (p. 448). In particular, Britzman elaborates three common and related cultural myths that pervade the context of teacher education and deeply shape student teachers' perceptions of their learning and the profession they plan to enter. The first cultural myth is that everything depends on the teacher. The second myth is that the teacher is always an expert. Third, and perhaps most important for my purposes, is the myth that teachers are self-made. Each of these myths position the teacher in individualistic terms and as, Britzman points out, "these myths valorize the individual and make inconsequential the institutional constraints which frame the teacher's work" (p. 448).

The first myth (everything depends on the teacher) equates learning with social control. In this understanding of pedagogy, students are unable to learn unless the teacher controls the class. Implicit in this notion is the idea that a request for external help in managing one's classroom affairs is a sign of weakness or incompetence. Thus, maintaining an orderly classroom is seen as a paramount indication of one's success or failure as a teacher. And, because this myth rests on the condition of the teacher's isolation in the classroom, there is also a strong pressure to supplant learning with social control. The cultural myth that everything depends on the teacher thus creates an especially difficult dilemma for student teachers who, at once, have little experience in controlling a class full of students and are also engaged in their own process of learning when they occupy the classroom as a new teacher. Britzman finds one recurring consequence of this particular cultural myth in her interviews with student teachers about their experiences of learning to teach. Again and again, research participants understand their inability to control the class as a problem—a sign of failure—rather than as an opportunity to learn. Student teachers' misrecognition of a learning opportunity as a sign of defeat also spurs the notion that student teachers must anticipate in advance the unexpected of classroom life, effectively shutting down their capacity to explore and think creatively while teaching. In other words, these myths create the condition of psychical deadness in teaching.

The second myth (the teacher as expert) expresses a widely held fear by many prospective teachers that they will never know enough to be able to teach. This myth, Britzman explains, reveals a broader cultural expectation that good teachers always need to be certain of what they know. And, the expectations of certainty and expertise create a problem for student teachers who are in the process of learning and teaching simultaneously. The myth that the teacher must be an expert also hinders prospective teachers from developing a complex

understanding of knowledge, making it into a discreet and obtainable set of information rather than prompting an investigation into both what it means to know and the deeper values that knowledge systems promote. Likewise, the myth of expertise also constructs the teacher as one who knows everything already and has nothing to learn from the students. One other consequence of this myth is that, according to Britzman's interviews, student teachers view their learning not so much as an intellectual process but as a matter of accumulating classroom experience. Acquiring classroom experience and therefore becoming an "expert," Britzman writes, "becomes the key to controlling knowledge and imposing it on students as a means of classroom control" (p. 450). In other words, the myth of the teacher as expert serves the myth that social control is the primary indication of good teaching (or, "everything depends on the teacher.")

The third myth, that teachers are self-made, is a common-sense response to the complex question of how teachers are made, simultaneously reinforcing the idea of the "natural teacher." The natural teacher is brimming with talent, intuition, and common sense which are all qualities that, in serving the power of the subjective self, diminish the roles of the institution and social context to the teacher's development. "More than any other cultural myth," Britzman explains, "the dominant belief that teachers "make" themselves functions to devalue teacher education, educational theory, and the social processes of making value systems explicit" (p. 451). In this myth more than any other, the teacher is constructed as a rugged individualist whose learning never touches on feelings of helplessness, dependence, or the need of support from mentors. This cultural myth works against teachers' opportunities to express feelings of vulnerability, an emotional situation against which the fantasy of psychical deadness defends. "Indeed, the emotional world of the teacher is a new encounter," Britzman explains, "This is the difficult

process of making sense of, and acting within, self-doubt, uncertainty, and the unexpected, while assuming a role which requires confidence, certainty, and stability" (p. 452). Finally, Britzman emphasizes "it is a painful experience, often carried out in a state of disequilibrium" (p. 452).

In his discussion of the dead mother, Andre Green (1999) begins by clarifying that his concept does not refer to an actual death but to a psychical one. The dead mother, then, can be defined as "an imago which has been constituted in the child's mind, following maternal depression, brutally transforming the living object, a source of vitality for the child, into a distant figure, toneless and practically inanimate" (p.170). The dead mother is one who is alive but psychically dead in the eyes of her child. Therefore, the dead mother is a relational condition that depends both on the mother's depression as it does on the child's perception of the mother's emotional unavailability.

Green grounds his discussion of the dead mother by analyzing some of the differences between the figures of the dead mother and the dead father in psychoanalytic theory. Here, Green points out that while the image of the dead father usually belongs to Oedipal relations and is therefore a death that names the structural relationship of the child's position in the family and his place in the social world, the mother's death is something altogether different. In other words, the dead mother is rarely discussed from a structural point of view. Here, Green is careful to draw a distinction between the concepts of matricide and the dead mother in psychoanalytic theory, explaining that matricide names a painful developmental achievement for the child whose mother survives the act of psychical destruction. And, since the dead mother is pre-occupied by her depression, the death she suffers in the child's unconscious fantasy is protective and idealized rather than aggressive.

In analysis, Green explains, the dead mother complex reveals itself through transference. The dead mother complex can be difficult for the analyst to detect in a patient, though, since symptoms are more likely to be expressed through acute conflicts with the people close to the patient rather than through the patient's depressive symptoms, which may be undetectable. "This depression, which has sometimes appeared sporadically in the clinical history," Green writes, "only breaks into the open in the transference" (p.176). The patient often expresses narcissistic conflicts in which the ego ideal is either in extreme collusion with or opposition to the super-ego. The analyst may also infer the patient's feeling of impotence or helplessness as a result of the patient's preoccupation with narcissistic worries. Green notes that other symptoms of a patient's dead mother imago, and the narcissism it evokes, may include "an inability to withdraw from a conflictual situation, inability to love, to make the most of one's talents, to multiply one's assets, or, when this does take place, a profound dissatisfaction with the results" (p. 176). The people close to the patient may suffer the depressive object-relationship that the patient establishes with them; yet, these people cannot often detect the patient's depression which may only be expressed in the transference with the analyst. "What this transference depression indicates," Green explains, "is the repetition of an infantile depression, the characteristics of which may usefully be specified" (p. 177). The essential quality of the depression implied by the dead mother complex is that the patient only expresses it in the presence of the object, which is itself absorbed by bereavement.

Among a list of possible losses which trigger maternal depression, Green suggests that the mother may be preoccupied by the death or absence of a person dear to the mother such as a friend, parent, or child. But the list does not end there. The mother's depression may also be provoked by a deception or conflict that inflicts a narcissistic injury: "a change of fortune in the

nuclear family or the family or origin, a liaison of the father who neglects the mother, humiliation, and so on" (p. 177). Sometimes the analyst struggles to interpret the patient's dead mother imago because the child has witnessed a maternal depression triggered by an event for which he cannot account as an adult. In that case, Green suggests, the mother may have suffered a miscarriage which the analyst would have to reconstruct from the patient's minor and mostly unconscious indications.[4] Whatever the cause, the mother's despair and, as an effect, her weakened interest in the child are at the foreground. Yet, Green also explains that the dead mother is not necessarily a neglectful one. She may still take care of the child and feel love for him. The difference is that she is emotionally absent from caring for the child—or, her heart is not in it.

Although the child eventually overcomes the initial trauma of losing the mother prematurely, the child experiences the sudden transformation in psychical life at the time of the mother's bereavement as a catastrophe. The child feels the mother's love to be lost all at once and, as such, the maternal depression forces the child to encounter disillusionment before the child has the emotional and psychological capacity to make sense of the mother's withdrawal. Further, the child easily mistakes his loss of the mother's love as a consequence of his aggressive life drive toward her because, during infancy and early childhood, the child imagines that he is the centre of the mother's world.

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[4] Notably, Green dedicates an entire paragraph to describing the hypothetical situation of a mother's miscarriage and the subsequent difficulty ("labour") it creates for the analyst in trying to interpret it. When I first read this passage, I assumed for a moment that Green was using the miscarriage as a metaphor. When I return to it now, I'm struck by the thought of how much the child may not know—or fails to perceive—about the mother and the private experiences that shape her inner life. In this way, I continue to read Green's language of the miscarriage as a metaphor for all of the possible losses the mother encounters of which the child/patient remains (consciously) ignorant.

Then the child responds to the loss. The child's first move involves an attempt in vain to repair the mother. And since the child cannot rescue the mother from her depression, the child experiences a profound sense of helplessness. During this first phase, the child will also struggle against anxiety through feelings of agitation, insomnia, and nightmares. Next, the child begins to decathect—or, to emotionally withdraw from—the maternal object and inhabits an unconscious identification with the dead mother. During decathexis, the child performs a psychical murder but—unlike matricide—the child does not feel hatred toward the depressed mother because her affliction forecloses it. Once the child has de-cathected the mother, the child creates a cannibalistic identification that aims to preserve the dead mother by becoming her. The aim of the child's identification is to continue to possess the mother—to have her in a way that her depression prevented or interrupted prematurely.

Later on, the adult subject of the dead mother complex will experience repetition-compulsion during which he will decathect anyone from whom he anticipates disappointment, enacting an old method of defense. This repetition will also serve as the means by which the child re-unites with the dead mother. The child may also look for a scapegoat, someone to blame for the mother's depression and to whom he can direct his hatred. For my purposes here, the child's identification is significant since the lost ability to think and live creatively define the symptoms of the maternal depression—first for the mother and then for the child who identifies with her.

Lisa Farley (2014) writes in her study of depression and curriculum affected by histories of loss about the psychoanalytic fantasy of the dead mother. Farley adapts Andre Green's idea to the context of pedagogy where it is also possible for teachers to enact a fantasy of deadness in response to psychical loss that the teacher cannot bear. She argues that the dead teacher is a

particular form of melancholia that is a sign of the deadening structures of education. In this fantasy formation, the usual fantasy of matricide is reversed and burdens the child with an endless bond of having to care for the mother, where there would be the use of ordinary aggression to make a life of one's own. Deadness might arrive as melancholia, or a form of narcissistic identification in which the ego mistakes the loss for itself and therefore cannot think about or symbolize how the loss matters.

In a reading of the teacher's deadness as melancholia, the confusion of ego and object is significant because the desire to symbolize one's losses inaugurates learning. Thus, the ego's misrecognition of the self as the lost object prevents thinking and interferes with education. In pedagogical terms, the process of idealization embedded in melancholia forecloses creative potential when the subject internalizes the lost object as an ideal. The dead teacher, therefore, is one who is not prepared to think creatively about how curriculum is tinged by loss and the teacher's incapacity to think in this way creates a psychical pedagogical space in which the student is called upon to think on the teacher's behalf. Yet, the student may not have developed the psychological resources to care for the curriculum or the teacher, especially in light of the dead teacher's incapacity to model and support the kind of creative thinking that is necessary in the context of education.

Farley suggests that educational researchers and pedagogues might learn to think of depression not as an individual affliction or biochemical imbalance but as trace and effect of what it means for subjects to encounter the many and profound losses of culture, symbolization, and living that constitute an historical relation. To make this argument, Farley turns to Britzman who reminds readers that psychoanalytically informed educational research takes as its primary assumption that reason and cognitive functioning do not solely organize the work of learning.

Instead, teaching and learning are both structured by emotional life and are shaped by unconscious fantasies which are not informed by conscious knowledge projects. Importantly, psychical fantasy resists adaptation to reality, but fantasy is at the same time a structuring agent through which subjects make meaning of reality in the first place (p. 118). Therefore, Farley suggests that the significance and effects of depression are an integral part of education. Depression cannot be easily dismissed as an interference to pedagogy or reified as a source of inspiration for critical thinking. The dead mother complex shows, then, that schools can only be places where students learn if thinking and desiring are valued as a part of teaching. Returning to Britzman's discussion of cultural myths in teacher education, the pervasive understanding of teachers as self-made and as in control of everything contributes to schooling cultures in which teachers are dissuaded from exercising their creativity.

Running Laps as Crowd Control: Bachir Learns a Lesson about School Violence

The scene in which Bachir discusses the project on school violence with Vallaincourt begins with a clandestine shot from the doorway of the principal's office. The door is partially shut, giving the impression that the viewer is overhearing a private conversation. The view is partially obstructed by the door. The lighting of the scene appears to be natural, coming from the row of windows behind Vallaincourt and Bachir in the principal's office. The backlighting creates an atmosphere of frank dialogue between the two characters. Viewers have a direct view of Vallaincourt who sits behind her desk listening as Bachir, sitting opposite from her, reads the student paper aloud. In this positioning, the camera shoots from behind Bachir's shoulder which means that viewers cannot see his face. Therefore, viewer attention is directed toward Vallaincourt's reaction to Bachir's proposal of distributing the student paper as a resource for

everyone in the school to talk about loss. The paper details a contradiction in the way that schools deal with violence. On the one hand, students are punished with detention when they are aggressive and, on the other hand, no one can give Martine a detention for her suicide. The student paper, then, suggests that Martine's suicide is an act of violence toward students and teachers at the school.

Vallaincourt listens, periodically closing her eyes against the pain of hearing an articulation of student grief and anger—an expression that Vallaincourt explicitly but insincerely invited in her address to students and parents directly following Martine's death. As she listens, Vallaincourt looks consternated. Her brows and her mouth are pulled into tight lines across her face. When he finishes reading, Bachir suggests to Vallaincourt that the students' interpretation is very mature. Vallaincourt nods and asks how the students reacted. At this point, the camera cuts to a direct shot of Bachir from Vallaincourt's point of view. He responds that the students were troubled but insists, by leaning in, that to hear the student's presentation did them good. Bachir then asks for permission to distribute the text to the whole school. Vallaincourt asks, "Why?" to which Bachir responds that the student assignment shows a desire to communicate, to talk about death. At this point, the camera cuts back abruptly to a shot of Vallaincourt from an indirect angle behind Bachir so that viewers can see her face as she offers an emphatic no to Bachir's request. Vallaincourt moves from a reclined position in her chair to sitting upright, directly facing Bachir, shoulder leaning in to the conversation and arms crossed. Vallaincourt's body language is defensive and closed off suddenly.

When Bachir probes for an explanation about why she is denying his request, Vallaincourt responds that she finds the text itself violent. Vallaincourt's thinking here is melancholic; she confuses the expression of pain with the act of inflicting an injury. The camera

cuts back to a reverse angle shot of Bachir from behind Vallaincourt's shoulder as Bachir reminds her that the theme of the assignment was school violence. "It's life that's violent, not the text," Bachir insists. The pace of the conversation, punctuated by the reverse angle shots of Bachir and Vaillancourt, quickens. Cutting back to a shot of Vallaincourt, she explains further that the text is disrespectful to Martine. Then, Bachir asks pointedly whether Martine was respecting her students when she committed suicide in the classroom. To this comment, viewers see Vallaincourt straighten her head from a slightly tilted position which expresses inquisitiveness or openness to the dialogue. She is going to end the conversation. "Let the psychologist do her job," Vallaincourt says, "I want no insubordination. The class is doing well. Grades are good. . . I don't want any waves, okay?" Finally, the scene ends with a shot of Bachir surrendering to the principal's instruction, lowering his head as he folds his eyeglasses into his shirt pocket. The principal prefers to control the crowd rather than to prompt thinking by teachers or students about the significance of their loss. In my reading of their exchange, Bachir is positioned as the dead teacher. Although his proposal suggests he is interested in creating a space for students to discuss their loss of Martine, he makes this proposal in the absence of any thinking about how he intends to signify his losses. Bachir's emphasis of the students' need to grieve Martine defends against his own feelings of vulnerability about being in an unfamiliar place after having lost his family. And, his care for the students while defending against thinking about his biography reflects Green's suggestion that the dead mother may still care for her child but that she is dead because her heart is not in the caring.

The conversation between Vallaincourt and Bachir has the same misleading atmosphere as the opening scene in which Vallaincourt invited students to tell an adult if they were feeling sad. In both scenes, part of Vallaincourt's method of social control as a school administrator is to

disingenuously invite members of the school community to self-report their difficult feelings as a way to pre-empt any unruly expressions of emotion that may disrupt the daily routines of the school. Likewise, their conversation reveals a contradiction to the setting which supports an atmosphere of openness to the new teacher's ideas. Vallaincourt finds in Alice's report on school violence an expression of violence and, as such, sees the discussion of the child's interpretation of Martine's suicide as not only disrespectful to the deceased teacher but as a threat to school safety itself. Vallaincourt's conflation of a discussion about school violence with an expression of violence represents an administrative investment in the idea that social control is necessary for student learning, or the first cultural myth outlined by Britzman that everything is up to the teacher.

Here, Vallaincourt's rejection of Bachir's proposal to create a space for students to talk openly about their trauma represents the first cultural myth about teaching: everything is up to the teacher. If Bachir opens a dialogue with the students about grief and death, he may lose control of the classroom and to do so threatens the possibility that students will learn anything. In her adherence to the cultural myth that everything depends on the teacher's ability to control the class, Vallaincourt also expresses the psychical deadness which characterizes the institutional culture of the school. Being primarily concerned with social control expresses a depression over teachers' and administrators' lost sense of possibility in teaching upon learning how much teachers are expected to enforce school rules as their primary responsibility. And, because Vallaincourt is preoccupied with maintaining social order at school, she is also unable to think about how students' emotional situation deeply impacts their capacity to learn—rendering their trauma over the teacher's suicide a significant barrier to their creativity.

Notably, the scene is preceded by a brief shot of the students in Bachir's class running laps in the gymnasium. The students, all clothed in the same uniform of oversized white t-shirts and dark sweatpants, run in circles to the direction of the Physical Education teacher's whistle. Against the backdrop of the industrial looking gymnasium, the uniforms gives the impression that the students could just as easily be in prison as at school. There is no dialogue in this shot. The scene is entirely scored by the sound of the whistle and the heavy breathing of the running students. Upon my first viewing of the film, I was intrigued by the inclusion of this five second scene. Why does it appear in the film and what does it communicate to the viewer? Then, when I started thinking about the role of social control in the cultural myth of teacher education, I began to see a connection between the students running laps and the conversation between Bachir and Vallaincourt that immediately follows it. The scene suggests that while the adults are in the principal's office discussing the definition of school violence, the students participate in a routine activity of public schooling that also epitomizes the role of social control in teaching. Running laps to the cue of a whistle is not only a mindless activity, it is completely devoid of creativity or independent thinking and, it is a way to tire the students so that they are more likely to be docile when they return to their desks. The juxtaposition of these scenes therefore contrasts the psychically dead teaching style of the Physical Education teacher, Gaston, with the new and untrained teacher's fantasy of creating an emotionally responsive pedagogy and curriculum.

Doing Nothing Wrong: Psychical Deadness in the School's Teaching Environment

"Expel Him," the film chapter that contains a faculty meeting, showcases teachers' responses to the question of what to do about Simon's episode at the recent school dance in which, reacting to another student's theft of a beloved photograph of Martine, Simon physically

attacks him. Viewers see in the faculty meeting that Lazhar tries to act as an advocate for Simon among the other adults who openly regard Simon as a nuisance at best and a threat to school safety at worst. The scene of the meeting opens onto a medium-wide direct shot of Lazhar from across the table, so that we can see he is seated facing other adults in the teachers' lounge. His gaze is down, looking at some paper he is doodling on while other people in the room talk about the budget. The principal asks Lazhar for his copy of the end-of-year field trip budget, but he is lost in thought and at first does not notice someone is talking to him. The principal asks Lazhar what kind of outing he has planned to which he responds that he's taking the children to see Moliere's Imaginary Invalid, a French comedy ballet.

The camera looks from behind Lazhar's shoulder toward the Phys-Ed teacher, Gaston, who remarks sarcastically about how thrilled the children must be about Lazhar's choice of a year-end activity. Gaston receives some muffled laughs from the other teachers but Lazhar ignores him. This exchange establishes a context for reading the scene as a depiction of psychical deadness—or an unconscious refusal to think creatively as an effect of depression—in the teaching culture at the school. The teachers snicker at Gaston's sarcastic joke not only because Bachir's proposed field trip again ignores dominant understandings of age-appropriate curriculum, but also because Gaston's comment represents a form of anti-intellectualism, or a refusal to believe that children—let alone anyone else—could be interested in ballet. Here, the teachers who laugh at Bachir's plan demonstrate part of the cultural myth that teachers are self-made through the dismissal that learning requires an engagement of theory or the use of cultural objects to make emotional significance.

The conversation then turns toward Simon and the camera cuts to a medium-wide shot of the principal at the head of the table saying that some parents have complained and want Simon

to be suspended for hitting Victor. The camera turns to Claire, sitting beside Bachir, from the principals' point of view. Claire suggests that suspending Simon is unnecessary because the two students are back playing together already. The conflict is resolved, in her opinion. At the edge of the frame, viewers see Bachir looking toward Claire and nodding in agreement with her assessment. A teacher sitting across the table from Claire disagrees, saying that Simon is getting more violent and suggests that Simon should be expelled. Here, viewers can see the teachers' collective emphasis on social control as a priority of what makes responsive teaching rather than attending to Simon's outburst as an effect of grief or unmourned loss. To some, expulsion seems like the right solution because if Simon is absent from the school, his aggression will not infect the rest of the student body and teachers' authority will not be challenged. The camera cuts back to Bachir who says that parents are deeply worried and that punishment is beside the point: Simon's photograph of Martine points to a deeper problem that suspension or expulsion will not remedy. Martine's suicide has cost the students—in this case, Simon—the developmental opportunity to psychically destroy the mother/teacher. As a consequence, Simon is left to carry around an idealized picture of the teacher as a latent expression of the guilt he feels about his fantasy of having caused the teacher's death. Part of the reason, then, that some of the teachers are outraged by Simon's possession of the photograph of Martine is because, in the absence of creative thinking, they invest in the fantasy that Simon killed Martine. The teacher who wants Simon expelled asks what Bachir is insinuating. He clarifies that he's trying to talk about grief— both the students' and the school's.

The room falls silent and the camera cuts to a wide corner shot overlooking the entire table and all of the people sitting at it, as if viewers are looking in or overhearing the conversation. Lazhar is sitting at the middle of the table and is centered in the frame, suggesting

that he is important and perhaps also that his comments are the most balanced between all of the competing perspectives the teachers represent. Bachir continues, asking: "apart from the photograph, what has Simon done?" Gaston answers that Simon is very aggressive to which Bachir retorts: "when you whistle in his ear?" The camera shows the principal laughing, surprised, at Bachir's come-back.

One of the teachers says that Simon was horrible to Martine and the principal warns not to bring up an old topic. Bachir who, like viewers, is uninformed about what the teachers are referring to, asks for clarification. Hesitating, and sighing heavily, the principal quickly offers the synopsis that Martine gave Simon extra tutoring when he was having problems at home, she hugged him, he pushed her away violently and later complained that Martine "kissed" him. The other teachers jump in to explain that the kiss was actually a hug and that Martine was affectionate with everyone. In a turn of phrase that marks a significant conflict for how teachers think about Martine's interaction with Simon, the principal says "Martine did nothing wrong, except make an error in judgement."

The camera turns back to Gaston who goes on a rant about how difficult it is to be a Physical Education teacher in a school culture with a "no touch" policy between teachers and students. He offers the anecdote that he sent his child to summer camp and the child returned with a severe sunburn because the camp counsellor was not allowed to put sunscreen on him, elaborating his point that students can just as easily be hurt by the cultural anxiety and paranoid responses to child abuse as they can be when teachers are allowed to touch them. In an ironic turn from his own refusal to consider more deeply the emotional implications of Simon's aggression, Gaston is launching a complaint about how the emphasis on enforcing school or camp rules stands in for critical and creative thinking about what caring for students actually

requires. The deadness represented by the summer camp anecdote expresses frustration about the limitations of school culture at the same time that it allows Gaston to reproduce the ideal of order and social control which are implicit features of the cultural myth that everything depends on the teacher.

The camera pans out to show Bachir and Claire, who insists that Gaston is exaggerating. The principal re-orients the discussion to the question of what to do about Simon, saying that the teachers can either help him or send him away to be someone else's problem. She says optimistically that they can still get through to him, ending finally with the ironic recommendation that they give Simon detention and have a specialist see him. As she finishes her commentary, the camera moves back to its original position in the scene so that viewers are again looking at Bachir from across the table, framed by the bodies of the two female teachers who sit opposite him and hold fast to their position that Simon needs to be expelled. In silent response to the principal's solution to Simon's problem, Bachir looks from side-to-side, doubtful, and takes a long sip of water. His interpretation that Simon needs to express his grief is lost on the other adults in the room.

The scene of the staff meeting highlights that Bachir is able to bring new insight that hinges on his lack of teaching experience. Bachir is able to offer a reading of the students' emotional situation precisely because he lacks previous experience with the institutional constraints of teaching, represented by Gaston's cynicism about the no-touch policy. By suggesting that Simon's acting out might be an expression of his grief, Bachir attempts to open the adults' conversation to considering how teaching and learning are affected by histories of loss. The implications of his suggestion to the group are also complex. The possibility that Simon's behaviour is an effect of unresolved grief highlights an unspoken similarity between

teachers and students. Like Simon, the teachers still suffer the pain and confusion of Martine's inexplicable death which arises from and exacerbates the psychically dead institutional culture of the school. The teachers' unexpressed loss of Martine contains the logic of the dead mother complex through an adherence to the cultural myths of teaching Britzman outlines: everything is up to the teacher, the teacher is an expert, and the teacher is self-made. In this context, teachers cannot express their loss because to do so might interfere with the impression that the teachers are in control of students' learning. But, without symbolizing or thinking about how their loss of Martine matters, many teachers are the school can only consider Simon's aggression as a form of defiance or bad behaviour to be punished.

Bachir's comments expose how the teachers' conversation about what happened between Martine and Simon splits the interests of students and teachers and so defends against the possibility that a student might be legitimately hurt and confused by the actions of a naturally affectionate and well-meaning teacher. In this way, the scene creates a contrast between Bachir's innovative idea that education might create space for teachers and students to symbolize their losses and the experienced teachers' inability to think about the emotional situation of teaching and learning. By suggesting this division, the scene also illustrates the dead teacher complex Farley articulates. The insistence by some of the teachers that Simon is becoming more violent expresses a fantasy that teachers will suffer the student's violence without being able to make emotional significance of it. In this vein, the teachers' worry is that they cannot psychically survive student aggression. In other words, they cannot sustain a sense of purpose about teaching if students' act aggressively in the service of making their own lives. Although in psychoanalytic theory aggression is central to the process of human emotional development, the teachers' conflation of aggression with violence characterizes Simon's actions as threatening not only to

the other students—like Victor who Simon hit—but also to the teachers. Ironically, then, some of Bachir's colleagues adopt the paranoid understanding that no-touch policies give students the power to exploit the adults who have considerable institutional authority in deciding whether to punish Simon by excluding him. The teachers who can only treat Simon's aggression as an effect of increasingly violent tendencies use the question of how to punish Simon as a way to consume their loss of Martine whose death the teachers identify with but fail to understand.

The question of whether to expel Simon thus stands in for the teachers' unresolved grief at the loss of their colleague. The psychically dead teachers conflate the loss of Martine with the loss of their egos. In their identification with Martine, the dead teachers are unprepared to interpret Simon's actions as anything other than violence which in fantasy the dead teachers suffer as the victims of Simon's false accusation of inappropriate touch. As an effect of their depression or incapacity to think, the teachers fall back on the cultural myths of teaching to defend themselves. The scene in the teachers' lounge emphasizes Bachir's difference in relation to most of his colleagues. Through this scene, Bachir is positioned as someone who has the emotional resources—a psychical environment oriented toward survival—to support the students in making sense of their loss, even though he is not prepared to share with the students how his own history of loss affects his desire to teach.

The Allegory of the African Violets: Reading Claire as Surviving Mentor Teacher

When Bachir first arrives at the school to replace Martine, the psychologist and the students criticize him for the way he organizes the classroom: he moves the desk from a semi-circle formation to traditional rows and the barren walls are painted a drab colour. His lack of

consideration regarding the layout of the classroom reflects how the teacher struggles to gain control of the classroom using authoritarian and outdated teaching practices, based more on a fantasy of what teaching is rather than on theories of education. Early in the film, Bachir slaps a student on the back of his head for misbehaving in class, for example. As an extension of his pedagogical struggle, the staging of his classroom is contrasted when he begins casually looking in on Claire's classroom next door. At first, he steals glimpses of her teaching from behind the partially closed classroom door as Claire stands at the front of the room. Bachir watches as, seamlessly, Claire counts backwards to prepare the students to be silent and settle down. At first, Claire is presented to viewers according to the myth of the self-made or "natural" teacher who is abundant in talent, patience, and skill at classroom management.

Directly following his conversation with the school psychologist in which she says that his classroom "looks like a hospital," Bachir wanders into Claire's deserted classroom to take a closer look. In the hallway behind him, the camera cuts from a wide shot of Bachir looking into the room to one of the student work that decorates the walls of Claire's classroom. Viewers see a solar system mobile made from Styrofoam balls hanging from the ceiling. There's a model ship with pictures of all the students faces on board. In another corner, handmade dolls are pinned to the bulletin board next to student reports made from construction paper about Indigenous history. In other words, Claire's classroom is represented as the opposite of Bachir's. Not only is her classroom full of colour and evidence of student's learning, it's also a space that she controls and in which she feels comfortable. In this sequence, the camera moves smoothly behind Lazhar, zooming in on the wall displays as Bachir leans in to look closer. The scene is scored by slow, quiet xylophone music that gives Bachir's exploration an introspective and dream-like quality. Finally, the camera stays behind Bachir in a medium-wide shot as he turns from the bulletin

board to the window, capturing him from profile as he notices a collection of potted African violets in the window. Everywhere in Claire's classroom, there are signs of life.

Later, viewer are reminded about the African violets when Claire gifts Bachir a pot of them to keep in his classroom. As he carries them down the steps away from her apartment, the camera closes in on a direct shot of Bachir in the darkened stairwell with tears running down his cheeks. This scene returns the question from my discussion of Half Nelson about whether the teacher is allowed to cry. The shot of Bachir crying in the stairwell follows a scene in which Claire hosts a supper for Bachir at her apartment in which the two teachers have an awkward disagreement about the status of Claire's fantasy of world travel in the curriculum. Claire suggests that she, too, is an immigrant, having left Quebec for a tour of Africa before arriving in Montreal. Bachir asks politely whether Claire shares that information with the students, to which she responds with an emphatic yes. Claire presumes that Bachir shares parts of his biography with the students, as well. "What about your culture?" she asks Bachir, but he disagrees saying that it's not part of the curriculum. "But exile is a kind of journey," Claire ventures. "No," Bachir corrects her, "for most immigrants, it's a trip without papers, uprooted to a country whose culture is foreign." Throughout this exchange, the camera is positioned on the supper table between the two characters and cuts back and forth between tight shots of their faces as they speak to each other. The lighting is warm and dim, reflecting the heightened intimacy of their collegial encounter outside of school.

When Bachir disagrees with Claire about the status of the immigrant's biography in the curriculum, the camera stays for several seconds with a silent, medium-wide shot of Claire who looks stunned to hear Bachir's point of view. Her face is turned to the side, looking in Bachir's direction. Half of her face is lighted by the chandelier and the other half which is turned away

from the camera is less visible, in the shadow. This positioning shows Claire as if she were "struck," both in the sense of having been hit and in the vein of encountering new information about a long-held perspective. This scene is important because it not only highlights previously established differences in the pedagogical stylings of the two teachers but also showcases a significant personal disagreement—one that unsettles both of them and foregrounds an uneasy exchange they have later at school. Here, I read Bachir's rejection of Claire's supposition that good teaching rests on the teacher's inclusion of his biography in the curriculum as the new teacher's insistence on the cultural myth of the teacher as self-made, or one whose teaching remains untouched by histories of loss.

Bachir not only objects to Claire's romanticizing of immigrant experience, he also voices a refusal of the suggestion Britzman makes in her discussion of cultural myths in teaching that prospective teachers need to consider how the details of their biography shape their expectations and assumptions about teaching when their histories come into contact with the social structure of the school. In Bachir's case, to engage this type of thinking risks the discovery that learning to teach provokes its own series of losses through the demand that teachers learn to enforce the rules and not "create waves" by encouraging the students to talk about their grief. And, to associate the rehearsal of the cultural myths of teaching with a fantasy of a psychically dead education, then Brtizman's suggestion about the significance of the teacher's biography—reflected in Claire's assumption that talking to the students about traveling is educational—expresses its opposite: the fantasy of the teacher's survival. In this scenario, the teacher's talk to students about their travels—either as a tourist or a refugee—is fine because the surviving teacher will not lose her sense of purpose if the students are uninterested in or disbelieve her story.

Claire's suggestion that exile is a journey, while naïve, also suggests that Bachir's painful history is pedagogical—that he learned something from his travels—and that he can offer those lessons to students to help them learn. In this way, Claire's suggestion that Bachir talk to the students about his background responds to an important question that Farley asks in her discussion of depression and the dead mother complex in teaching about what it means to read curriculum and pedagogy as emotional traces of historical loss. The conflict between Bachir and Claire in this scene depicts the paradox that Farley describes: on the one hand, depression might be one inevitable effect of encountering loss in education and, on the other hand, depression thwarts rather than aids the process of internally persuasive learning and creative thinking. Viewers may interpret Bachir's refusal to talk about his past as a manifestation of such a depression, rendering him unable to think about how his desire to teach is motivated by a fantasy that he shares a special relationship with the students over their shared grief or that, through the loss of his family and homeland, he is uniquely positioned to teach and understand the students following Martine's suicide.

Bachir's disagreement with Claire over the place of the teacher's history in the curriculum thus suggests that the losses he suffers in learning to teach—of being refused the opportunity to initiate a dialogue with the students about Martine's suicide as a form of violence, for example—animates his earlier losses. But, Bachir seems unable to express his grief over either form of loss until he encounters Claire, whose suggestion that he talk to the class about his past for the sake of their learning is simultaneously an encouragement to symbolize—and so to make meaning of—his suffering. Viewers witness the beginning of Bachir's attempt to recover his creative mind from depression in the stairwell when, privately, he cries over Claire's gift of the flowers.

While they are waiting for the children to come in from recess a few weeks later, Bachir comments to Claire that the violets are dying. As they stand side-by-side, the camera looks from behind Bachir's shoulder to Claire's face as she suggests "too close to the window, maybe. You have to talk to them." Surprised, Bachir asks what he might say to the flowers. "About you. Tell it about yourself, Bachir," Claire instructs. Bachir laughs mockingly, "it will shrivel with boredom," Finally, Claire says, turning to leave with her students, "Too bad you feel that way." As she walks away, the camera stays at Bachir's side, offering a wordless profile shot of Bachir responding to Claire's comment. Claire's departure from the frame and Bachir's glance in her direction as she leaves suggests Bachir is beginning to understand that his refusal to offer an account of himself carries with it the consequence of isolation. A refusal to narrate himself is, in a larger sense, to refuse conversation which means that his connections to others—including Claire—will wither like the violets which sit too close to the window. Again, Claire is prompting Bachir to express his losses and so to begin the work of thinking about how the world matters differently without his lost objects. To create a surviving teaching self from an episode of depression, the effect of his personal history and his experience as a newcomer to teaching and the school itself, rests on the Bachir's ability to think about how the world matters differently after losing his family and his idealistic fantasies about teaching. According to the logic of psychical matricide, the mother/teacher who refuses to talk (to the plants, the students, or the infant) refuses the maternal responsibility of inviting the infant into the speaking, social world. In the closing scene of the film, Bachir finally begins to learn from Claire the importance of talking to the violets (read: students) when he stages a goodbye in the form of a lesson. He presents his class with an opportunity to correct the grammar of a fable Bachir wrote. By asking the students

to correct his mistakes, he creates opportunities for the students to psychically destroy him (i.e. to commit matricide) by pointing out the (intentional) errors of his writing.

Claire's hinting that the plants need to be cared for is an allegory about learning to teach: Bachir needs reach out to people around him—like Claire—as an important part of overcoming the isolation that is part of the social structure of the school and one that contributes to the myth of the teacher as self-made and in control of everything. The flower will survive even though Bachir did not know how to care for it properly in the beginning. His learning how to care for the violets represents Bachir's friendship with Claire who is initially hurt by his criticism that her play about the colonial encounter is romantic and her fantasies of world travel trivialize the suffering of immigrants and refugees. Instead of turning their argument into a site of a narcissistic wound, Claire pauses for a moment to consider the emotional thrust of what Bachir is saying and this allows her to psychically survive the loss that their disagreement implies. At the same time, Claire can hear in his criticism traces of his painful biography and develops an interest in genuinely getting to know Bachir, even though he worries about being discovered by the rest of the school as an imposter. In this way, Claire both reinforces the myth of the self-made teacher that teaching style is an extension of one's personality *and* she helps Bachir to create a surviving maternal environment at school for his learning to teach and for his pedagogical relations with students.

Conclusion

Through Bachir's relationship with Claire, the film both reproduces and critiques the myth of the self-made or "natural teacher" by exposing through Bachir's attempt to create a representational space at the school for students and teachers to mourn that learning to teach is a process and requires emotional labour. In Bachir's learning process, Claire represents the position of a mentor teacher, or one who encourages Bachir to symbolize his own losses in the curriculum as a means of psychical survival.

Before returning to a more fulsome discussion about the pedagogy of viewer identification in the final chapter of the dissertation, I want to suggest upon conclusion of this chapter that viewer identification with Bachir and Claire in Monsieur Lazhar is significant in making meaning of Britzman's suggestion that new teachers need to be supported in developing a critical awareness of cultural myths so that they can gain some control over their experience learning to teach rather than being controlled by the myths themselves. Here, I am suggesting that the viewers' alternating identifications with Bachir and Claire are instructive of Farley's suggestion that, rather than trying to master one's emotional situation as a means of preventing melancholia, teachers and educational researchers might instead think of melancholia as inevitable to pedagogical relations. Attempts to cure melancholia or to rid it from the scene of education express melancholia, and so educationalists might instead attend to the conditions that foster creative thinking rather than trying to create a fantasy of "happily ever after" in education.

On one hand, viewer identification with Bachir helps the viewer to understand the emotional conflicts associated with learning to teach within the institutional constraints of the school—including the demand that new teachers learn the techniques of social control instead of how to create an emotionally responsive pedagogy with students. Identification with Bachir's

experience helps the viewer to understand on a deeper level how depression emerges from the process of learning to teach as an effect of the new teacher's sense of lost possibility about working in schools. At the same time, viewer identification with Claire showcases the ways that, like depression or melancholia, engagement of the cultural myths of teaching might also be inevitable. If Claire represents a "natural" teacher whose teaching style extends from her talent, compassion, and tendency towards romanticizing the curriculum, she also represents a teacher who models creative thinking and whose mentoring encourages Bachir to permit his history of loss a place in teaching.

Chapter Six

Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through in Film Pedagogy

Introduction

In this dissertation, I have read three fictional films about pedagogical relationships in order to think through some persistent questions I have about teaching desire and the status of depression in education. First among these questions is how teachers—especially but not exclusively prospective teachers—develop and sustain an appetite for teaching. Through the exploration of three psychoanalytic concepts applied to the context of education—transference, identification, and melancholia—I have suggested that the films Half Nelson, Mona Lisa Smile, and Monsieur Lazhar offer rich sites for investigating how the teacher's educational history and its expression in her inner life significantly affect teaching and learning relations. In discussing these concepts through the films I study in the dissertation, I offer both a description of the psychical and emotional conflicts that drive and unhitch teaching desire—which is both necessary in and disruptive to pedagogy—and, a discussion for how the depiction of these unruly dynamics on screen provide a useful site for (prospective) teachers to mine the emotional situation of teacher education. In the preceding chapters, however, I have focused primarily on interpreting the films rather than discussing the pedagogy of viewership in fictional films about teacher-student relationships.

Here, I turn back to my discussions of Half Nelson, Mona Lisa Smile, and Monsieur Lazhar to think about these films as sites of pedagogy. To frame my concluding commentary on the films, I work with three texts that help me to think about the pedagogy of film and—most appropriate to the conclusion—the concept of deferred learning. I work with Deborah Britzman's

(2003a) <u>After-Education</u>, which gives me a language for discussing the problem in film viewership and other forms of education that knowledge arrives belatedly. To provide some conceptual and historical context to Britzman's discussion of deferred learning, I use Sigmund Freud's (2006, 1914) essay "Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through." Freud's work puts in conversation the psychical activities of deferred learning (remembering, repeating, and working through) with the concept of the screen memory. I first discussed the concept of the screen memory in the introduction to the dissertation and I find returning to it here useful in making a connection between viewership and psychoanalytic pedagogy. Finally, I also work with Lynne Joyrich's (1994) article about using the film <u>The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie</u> as a pedagogical primer for the teacher to think about teaching.

Theoretical Framework: Film Pedagogy as Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through

First, after-education is a concept that contains the notion of deferred learning, an idea in psychoanalytic theories of education that represents the time of learning as extended, non-linear, and shaped by the emotional situation of loneliness. "All at once," Britzman writes in the introduction to her study, "the time and reach of education can move backward and forward when we recall our history of learning through our childhood, through friendship and love, through the force of ideas, through encounters with cinema, books, and ordinary accidents"(p. 1). Britzman continues by explaining that this definition of education constructs learning as a process which is shaped by unconscious fantasies and reality, and is a play between presence and absence, past and present.

Deferred learning also includes remembering, repeating, and working through. And, this statement also contains its opposite. If learning includes remembering, for example, learning also involves forgetting. Where there is repetition, there is also variation and surprise. Learning as a process of working through also implies that to learn involves a process of overcoming one's resistance to knowledge. Deferred learning, in other words, is part of the psychical drama of having to learn and helping others to learn because, through education, learners encounter the limitations of conscious knowledge. If ample planning is one of the hallmarks of popular conceptions of what makes good teaching, psychoanalytic thinking about education— specifically, the concept of deferred learning—exposes a significant conflict for teachers and learners by suggesting that learning is not something for which we can ever be fully prepared. "If we make education from anything," Britzman explains, "we can make education from experiences that were never meant to be education, and this unnerves our educational enterprise" (p. 1). Britzman's discussion of deferred learning, or after-education, helps me to think about what it means to make an education from films that are not didactic and were never meant to be used as curricular and pedagogical resources. I am suggesting here that the after-education of film viewership—the process which names how the viewer makes emotional and psychical significance of a film only after the film is over—shapes teaching desire. Using films as a screen for the psychical dramas teachers and students encounter in pedagogy engages teachers in a process of reconstructing knowledge about education from their histories as learners. The teachers' reconstruction of this knowledge through their engagement of film is a creative practice which feeds teaching desire.

Through my discussion of After-Education, I am suggesting that the pedagogy of viewership depends on deferred learning, or the idea in education that the process of learning

exceeds the time of schooling. In the context of film viewership, deferred learning describes not only how a viewer might learn something from a film she never previously considered to be educational, but also how the viewer must return to thinking about the film after it ends in order to make meaning of the film's significance

In his essay on remembering, repeating, and working through, Freud begins by explaining how the method of psychoanalytic interpretation has evolved from the analyst's fraught attempt to stage the patient's repetition of earlier, repressed scenes through hypnosis, to offering interpretations of psychical conflicts based of the patient's reconstruction (while awake) of past events through narrative. Freud further explains that in the latter approach to psychoanalytic treatment, the concept of forgetting is no longer conceived of as a simple accident but as a symptom of unconscious repression. "The forgetting of impressions, scenes, experiences," Freud writes, "comes down in most cases to a process of 'shutting out' such things . . . the term 'forgetting' becomes even less relevant once there is due appreciation of the extremely widespread phenomenon of screen-memories" (p. 392). Freud reminds readers here that screen memories contain not just some essential elements of the patient's childhood but all of the elements that are relevant in understanding the partially repressed event. Screen memories, then, are a means for the patient to express and at the same time to attempt to repress unconscious material. The patient's narration of screen memories in analysis, then, becomes a place for the patient to mine the partially repressed unconscious material in order to make meaning of one's psychical conflicts. In analysis, the screen memory functions as a shared curricular object that the patient and analyst use to create a meaningful interpretation of psychical events.

Next, Freud deconstructs the distinction between forgetting and remembering in the context of analysis. Apart from screen memories, he suggests that other internal activity such as fantasies, emotional impulses, and unconscious associations call into question the difference between forgetting and remembering. "Something that occurs particularly frequently here is that something is 'remembered' that can never have been 'forgotten,'" Freud writes, "since it was never at any point noticed, never conscious" (p. 393). What's more, Freud suggests, is that it seems to make no difference in the context of analysis whether the memory that arises through a psychical event was at one point conscious and then forgotten or whether it was ever conscious to the patient at all. The meaning the patient arrives at in analysis is independent of whether the patient's memories are fully conscious. Further, Freud explains, remembering is not only similar to forgetting but it is also closely connected to the process of repetition.

In "Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through," Freud explains that repetition can change the course of treatment in analysis if, instead of remembering through narration, patients repeat psychical events in the clinic. "Then we may say that the patient does not *remember* anything at all of what he has forgotten and repressed," Freud writes, "but rather *acts it out*" (p. 394, emphasis in original). To elaborate, Freud uses the example of a patient who comes to analysis unable to remember a history of defiance toward one's parents, only to behave defiantly toward the analyst. In this case, the patient's defiance of the analyst is a form of repeating in place of remembering one's psychical history. Moreover, repetition is important to the work of analysis because, as Freud suggests, all psychoanalytic treatment begins with one particular form of repeating: the transference. Here, Freud explains that one form of repeating-as-remembering begins with the new patient's inability to remember any events from childhood. This inability to remember is a form of unconscious resistance which both obstructs psychoanalytic interpretation

and is the key to it, too. Resistance in the form of the patient's inability to recall earlier events inaugurates the transference between patient and analyst and the transference, Freud reminds us, is an example of repetition, *par excellence*. In transference, the patient unconsciously positions the analyst in the role of one's parents and this psychical relation is the basis for mining the patient's repressed unconscious material in the clinic. "The greater the resistance," Freud explains, "the more thoroughly remembering will be replaced by acting out (repetition)" (p. 395). The nature of how the patient acts in staging a repetition expresses the conflict at the centre of the patient's repressed material and this is significant to Freud because, he argues, that the repressed conflict that prompts the patient's acting out grounds the patient's personality and singular way of being in the world. This means that, in analysis, the repressed conflict is not treated as a matter of the past but as something that informs the patient's present emotional situation in analysis, in relation to the analyst and in one's everyday interactions.

Finally, Freud explains the significance of working through. Here, he clarifies that analysis does not begin and end with the anlalyst's successful interpretation of the patient's resistance. The patient does not simply overcome a pattern of resistance because the analyst points it out. Rather, the patient needs time and therapeutic space in which to consider the analyst's suggestion and to think about the pattern of resistance or the nature of the psychical conflict that has arisen in narration. "One has to give the patient time to familiarize himself with the resistance now that he is aware of it," Freud writes, "to *work his way through it*, to overcome it by defying it and carrying on with the therapy in accordance with the basic rule of analysis" (p. 399).

Freud's writing on remembering, repeating, and working through in the context of analysis suggest to me that if film theory treats films as screens for repressed psychical material that the

processes of remembering, repeating, and working through are also implied in film viewership. Specifically, Britzman's writing on the controversies between Melanie Klein and Anna Freud points out how the patient's process of remembering, repeating, and working through in analysis is not necessarily unidirectional, as Freud suggests in his discussion of working through. Brought to the context of pedagogy, the patient—now the learner—may work through various new iterations of the same old conflicts more than once. And, as Freud points out, working through suggests that learning through the examination of one's inner life is not instantaneous with an interpretation. Instead, the working through of learning depends on the patient-learner's resistance and repetition through acting out. To take the concept of working through as an example of the deferred time of learning, learners will need more than one opportunity or one representational space—originally in the clinic and now the classroom and the movie theatre—to remember, repeat, and work through old conflicts. As screens, films provide such a chance for the repetition necessary to deferred learning from old conflicts.

Film theorist Lynne Joyrich (1995) writes about what films bring to the viewer's awareness. Specifically, she offers an autobiographical account of her history as a viewer watching the film adaptation of Muriel Spark's novel <u>The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie</u>. Joyrich suggests through her account that films are a pedagogical primer, not only in contexts where teachers intend to use them as curriculum in their classrooms, but also as a resource for the teacher's thinking about the relationship between her self—as a female viewer and learner—and her professional practice as a teacher.

To begin, Joyrich returns to a particularly memorable line from the film in which the teacher character Jean Brodie tells a classroom full of ten year old girls during an introductory lecture "Give me a girl at an impressionable age and she is mine for life." Here, Brodie is

inviting the students into her influence by bragging about her artistic and intellectual prowess, explaining that her strength as a teacher is molding the minds of young women. Joyrich notes that there are two utterances of this line—the first is diegetic when we hear Jean Brodie talking to the students and the second comes to the viewer as a voice-over at the end of the film when matriculated student, Sandy, who is now a young woman, repeats the phrase as an ironic sum to her experience learning from Brodie, an experience that ends with Sandy getting the teacher fired.

Joyrich recounts how her identifications as a viewer shift as her pedagogical positions changed. When she first saw the film in college, she identified strongly with Sandy and developed a passionate hatred of Jean. She longed to see the film again, checking cable listings every week in the hope that the film would air again. Eventually Joyrich acquires her own copy and watches it repeatedly for a month, fueling her obsession. But by this time, she is learning to teach and she notices a shift in her loyalties when she gets a second chance as a viewer. Here, she notices that her viewer identifications are both more complex and more ambivalent and they do not rest on one character. Joyrich sympathizes with Sandy and then with Jean, and back again. "For in addition to the drama of renunciation and repetition that defines the relations between Sandy and Jean," Joyrich writes, "when I watch the film I also encounter my own double—my past incarnations as a viewer, previous identifications I both repeat and disavow" (p. 47). These identifications are significant to Joyrich because, as she continues by explaining, "One might say that I reenact the drama of the film in my own (pedagogically informed) spectatorial development" (p. 47). In other words, Joyrich's varied experiences watching the films re-enact the emotional qualities of the pedagogical relationship between Jean and Sandy. Joyrich narrates

her entry into interpretation through resistance, expressed through the viewer as a repetition of dynamics depicted between characters in the film.

But, from this self-observation, Joyrich develops an important question about the relationship between viewership and teacher education, asking: what does it mean to develop an obsessive relationship with an educational horror story at exactly the time one decides to be a teacher and begins learning to teach? In response to this question, Joyrich argues that The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie is not simply a film about education, it is also pedagogical—like all cultural objects—and therefore it has something to teach viewers. For Joyrich, mass culture's production of meanings, affective investments, and ways of life make it a primary meeting place for public and private, especially through its mixing of politics and pleasure, pedagogy and the personal (p. 49). In its occupation of interlocking systems of exchange—textual, discursive, commodity, affective—mass culture, Joyrich argues, is the point at which "desire itself is disciplined and educated" (p. 49). In this vein, Joyrich concludes her discussion of Jean and Sandy's ambivalent relationship by proposing that film theorists, critics, and viewers not turn away from the fragmented and contradictory readings films provoke but instead learn to see these tensions as productive rather than defeating.

Joyrich's account of shifting identifications over a long engagement of learning from the same film complicates thinking about what it means for a viewer to maintain an interest in a film—to stay with the images it presents—in order to work through the psychical conflicts that arise within the viewer and are projected onto the screen. Viewer identification, in other words, offers education and film researchers a vocabulary for the emotional drama of the film which replays in the viewer—and that the viewer may re-enact—that can make the process of thinking about a film feel like the film is staying with the viewer—that the viewer cannot shed the film's

influence—rather than an act of conscious contemplation. If the emotional situation of dependence, helplessness, or loneliness implied by viewer identification at first seems like a problem or a setback to the experience of watching films, psychoanalytic theories of education help to pinpoint these emotional situations as forms of resistance and repetition in film pedagogy. In fact, the subject's repetition of the ungainly conditions of learning through viewer identification with film is an essential part of what makes film a site of pedagogy. In other words, my exploration of the psychical conditions of transference, identification, and melancholia in learning to teach might just as easily extend to thinking about the complexities of what it means to go to the movies as to what it means to become a teacher. To identify strongly with a film's characters, to put the film in the unconscious role of one's parents (transference), and to be consumed with the loss of the film's representation of a world after it ends are all routine conditions of viewership that make films entertaining but that also destabilize the viewer's process of making knowledge about what she has seen and heard on screen. The emotional situation of viewership makes the study of films (an expression of deferred learning itself) central to understanding film as a pedagogical resource.

To extend the idea that films provoke emotional and psychical responses from viewers that are essential to learning, I am also suggesting here that films offer an important resource to all learners—but especially to those learning to teach. By offering audiences rich depictions of pedagogical relations that are not beholden to reality, fictional films create a pedagogical space in which viewers are free to respond however they will. For example, viewers can fall in love, passionately hate, or forget (read: repress their conflicts with) characters they meet on screen. For teachers especially, the freedom of having one's unruly psychical and emotional responses to the characters and worlds films depict is a necessary departure from the culture of schools where

the profession demands that teachers are caring and attentive to the people around them, often at the expense of the teacher's capacity to prioritize her needs and desires. Here, my concern for what teachers are required to sacrifice of themselves in order to be considered "good" teachers returns to feminist theories of pedagogy, especially Judith Robertson and Jane Gallop's studies of female teaching desire. Yet, my worry that schools dispossess teachers of their claim to the complexity that comes with having an unconscious, inner world—complete with runaway transferences, identification, and melancholia in teaching—also positions the representational space that films create as a consolation. Films, in other words, provide a screen or, in psychoanalytic terms, a place to project one's emotional and psychical conflicts outside the self so that those conflicts may be contained and then, hopefully, examined. But the stage of working through is never guaranteed. While I am suggesting that popular films about education provide good resources to make meaning about the emotional conflicts implied by the prospective teachers need to find and sustain teaching desire in the process of learning to teach, I am neither suggesting that engagement with films is a substitute for psychoanalytic treatment nor that engaging films as screens promises an antidote for the teacher of bringing one's psychical conflicts into teaching. Here, I am suggesting that a viewer's responses to films about teaching may not only reflect one's conscious feelings about what is actually being depicted in the film, but they may also bear the traces of one's unconscious histories as a learner, a viewer, and a desiring subject and the psychical traces of one's earlier conflicts is hard to shed. For example, when as a viewer of <u>Half Nelson</u> I feel bothered by Dan's cold dismissal of Drey through the window of his car, I am responding both to the conscious material of the events being depicted on the screen and to the unconscious emotional conflicts which arise out of my history as a

student who, like the infant, feels rage and disappointment at the thought of being left behind by a caregiver.

The Pedagogy of Half Nelson

As one of the films that survived my summer of film viewership away from graduate school, <u>Half Nelson</u> is a text I have used to think about pedagogy for several years. This long history matters to concluding the dissertation research with a discussion of viewer pedagogy because, in many ways, my earlier responses to the film shape my interest in studying film in education. That is, my pedagogy with <u>Half Nelson</u> pre-dates but also organizes the concerns I bring to interpreting films and making a case for their inclusion in teacher education as resources for learning to teach.

As with Joyrich's account of watching and not watching <u>The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie</u>, my relationship to <u>Half Nelson</u>—specifically, the nature of my identifications as a viewer—has changed significantly over the course of my graduate education and throughout the process of researching and writing the dissertation. Before I developed either a framework for thinking about films as visual texts or a literature review of film as public pedagogy, my writing about <u>Half Nelson</u> focused much more on dialogue and narrative structure. In short, I had trouble seeing the film as a visual object. And, my difficulty in writing about the visual details of the film made my writing flat and uninteresting. Likewise, my early attempts to write about the relational dynamics between characters Dan and Drey suffered in the absence of a psychoanalytic framework to offer me a language for interpreting the emotional and psychical conditions of pedagogy on screen. I narrowed in on providing a sharp, critical analysis through which I often unknowingly expressed

my deep identification with Drey. This identification belabored the process of writing at the beginning of the study since, in my identification with the student, I conflated the emotional situation of reading Dan as a bad teacher with a misreading of the film as one that reproduces uncritically the narrative of the teacher as white savior. My earliest identification as a viewer of this film provides an example of how viewers can enter into viewership through the phase of resistance Freud discusses as central to the process of beginning psychoanalysis. My resistance to interpreting Dan as a complex character—or one worth consciously thinking about—is a partial repression of my transference with the depressed teacher and of my teaching desire that resulted in acting out, or repetition.

As a viewer, I unconsciously rehearsed many of the relational tendencies which Dan enacts in the film that depict him as an ambivalent, conflicted, and inattentive teacher. In the film, Dan's focus on teaching the students about dialectics—the study of change—allows him to be very critical with the students of the school's institutional structure. Yet, Dan's focus on dialectics also obscures his transferences to the students—especially Drey—as the dynamic that drives his teaching desire and keeps him from changing. Like Dan, my early readings of the film were very focused on theories that might help me explain conscious behaviour, but that obscured a reading of the film as a contrived text and as providing commentary on the emotional and psychical situation of teaching as much as on the social inequalities which organize teaching in a public school. As a researcher, my transference and especially my resistance to the film—expressed through my identification with Drey and my hatred of Dan—kept me from developing a more thorough and nuanced framework for analyzing not only what the film was purposefully depicting about pedagogy but also how as a spectator I am engaged in the film's pedagogy. My response as a viewer is also a repetition of my resistance to the emotional hardships of learning to teach by

trying to stay with the student character, by staying in an exclusive identification with Drey. My resistance as a viewer, of course, is not unlike the emotional conflicts that underpin Dan's difficulty in teaching in the film. Half Nelson suggests that Dan's addictive patterns with drugs are connected to his repetition of maternal psychical deadness while occupying the position of the teacher, full with its responsibilities and privileges that set him apart from the students.

It's no surprise, then, that at the earliest stage of developing this research, I also identified most strongly with the student character. As I developed the research and began working in classrooms as an instructor rather than as an assistant, my relationship to watching Half Nelson changed. More and more, I found that my experience as a viewer included thinking about Dan and not only judging his bad teaching but trying to imagine the emotional situation which underpins the teacher's erratic behaviour and addiction. My turn to thinking about Dan as a more human character is a form of learning as working through. But working through my resistance to thinking about Dan as an interesting character also involved some substantial changes in my teacher education outside of film viewership that are difficult to account for in this study, except that they highlight the ways in which viewership as pedagogy depends on external and social experiences that the viewer brings to the screen. Here, for example, I transitioned from working primarily as a Teaching Assistant in someone else's classroom to getting my first jobs as an Instructor and then as a Course Director where I was responsible for making decisions about how to curate and run courses of my own. In these contexts, I experienced for the first time the ways teaching can feel like an interference on the teacher's inner life, for example, when teacher candidates brought me their anxious questions expecting answers. In these moments, I began to think differently about the Half Nelson scene at the car when Dan tells Drey to leave him alone. As an example of a teacher in the throes of narcissism, Dan presents viewers with an opportunity to think about the

value for teachers of having solitary time which fuels creativity and teaching desire, even when the teacher's defense of needing solitary time seems to express the teacher's depression.

I have learned through the process of developing the theoretical framework to support my research to think of identification itself as changeable. That is, I want to avoid positioning my identification with the characters in the film as a linear or unidirectional process. If education researchers accept the premise in psychoanalytic theory that humans have an unconscious mind which is involved in and interferers with development, regression, resistance, and repetition are also inevitable in teaching. The teacher's capacity for transference and repetition means, then, that as a viewer the teacher is also likely to maintain or return to an identification with students on screen. Rather than taking the viewer's shifting identifications as a stage to be overcome, I return to thinking about Farley's (2006) suggestion in her study of identification in history education that students need sites where expression can be given to psychical fantasy as a way for learners to entertain complex questions about how loss is part of learning. Similarly, my viewer pedagogy with <u>Half Nelson</u> suggests that one way films are an emotional resource in teacher education is that they offer a site where expression can be given to fantasy. This does not necessarily mean that through viewership, people learning to teach will never repeat their conflicts in teaching, but it does mean that viewership creates an opportunity for teachers to think about themselves as learning, fantasizing, and desiring subjects.

The Pedagogy of Mona Lisa Smile

I first watched <u>Mona Lisa Smile</u> when I was eighteen and had just started university, well before learning to teach. As with my engagement of <u>Half Nelson</u>, my identifications with the characters in <u>Mona Lisa Smile</u> have shifted substantially across my long engagement with the film. As a younger student, I was attracted to the film's depiction of schooling as the site of passionate disagreement between articulate women. Then, as I started to read theories of film and television in preparing my dissertation proposal, I returned often to <u>Mona Lisa Smile</u> as a way to think about how television and films made for female audiences often use an ensemble cast in which each character represents a different part of the human psyche. Learning to analyze the film in this way was helpful to me, again, because it allowed me to stop fixating on whether the character Katherine Watson was being a good or bad teacher. Instead, I found an opportunity to think about the conflicts depicted between Katherine and the students—especially Betty—as representative of the internal conflicts the prospective teacher faces in learning to teach from one's history as a student and as a newcomer to the world.

Again in my engagement with <u>Mona Lisa Smile</u>, my shifting identifications and the meaning I made from my changing responses to the film are shaped by my experiences outside of film viewership. For example, I started to re-write the chapter on <u>Mona Lisa Smile</u> and psychical identification after I experienced a nightmarish scene in my own classroom in which I was reprimanded by an administrator in front on my students who were writing an exam. This experience allowed me to see anew the importance of the scene in which Katherine has a nightmarish encounter with the students in her first lecture at Wellesley College. As a viewer, watching the teacher surrender to the aggressive, cannibalistic students in the film was at once a

painful reminder of my own experience and a salve for how dramatically the film depicts the new teacher's emotional distress about learning to teach.

Katherine not only survives her first hostile interaction with the privileged students but she uses the episode in the lecture hall to grow her confidence. First, viewers see that Katherine is sad about her perceived failure in teaching, then she gets furious and viewers see this fury unfold into creative thinking as she redesigns her course to better serve herself and the students as learners. While working through my classroom nightmare was less smooth than the film depicts for Katherine, I felt a strong identification with the teacher character that opened my thinking about the emotional hardships of learning to teach—expressed best perhaps through the teacher's process of learning to think and respond in teaching through her oscillating identifications with authority figures and with students.

A central part of my pedagogy with this film is expressed through my learning to see the importance and inevitability of nightmarish scenes for teachers not only as expressions of psychical identification but as moments that help clarify one's resolve and purpose in teaching. From my engagement with this film, I learned to think about how the sting of being reprimanded in front of my students expresses part of my teaching philosophy, which until then informed my teaching only unconsciously, that classrooms need to be hospitable spaces where teachers and learners are free from punishment. This moment of working through also allowed me to transform my response to the film yet again from merely entertaining a strong identification with Katherine out of a narcissistic injury to thinking about Katherine herself as a learner who is engaged in a therapeutic pedagogy with student Joan Brandwyn. At the end of the film especially, Joan returns Katherine to thinking about how her unchecked assumptions about the students' desires for education actually express her desires for research and for teaching through psychical

identification. Although the encounter between Joan and Katherine at the end of the film prompts Katherine to leave the profession of teaching altogether, the film's encouragement of the viewer's mutual identification with both characters in this scene opens up an opportunity for thinking between two positions that constitutes what it means to work through a conflict. In this way, Mona Lisa Smile promotes a viewer pedagogy that helps viewers sustain teaching desire by entertaining the possibility of leaving teaching as an antidote to the emotional conflicts and institutional constraints of teacher education.

The Pedagogy of Monsieur Lazhar

Consistent with the theme of survival in learning to teach, my early identifications in watching Monsieur Lazhar rested with Martine, the dead teacher. Before I found (or was directed to) Andre Green's discussion of the dead mother less as an actual figure and more as a the child's psychical image of maternal depression, my early writing on Monsieur Lazhar focused on trying to analyze how the film depicts teaching as something that is difficult—if not impossible—for the teacher to survive. Here again, my fixation on Martine opens an interpretation through an initial resistance to learning to think about teacher education as a question of psychical survival. In other words, my early interest in Martine expresses my disbelief that I could learn to survive as a teacher who is also learning to think and research education. My turn to using Monsieur Lazhar as a representation of how the cultural myths of teacher education meet with a depressed school culture arrived belatedly; although in deferred time I can see now how my earlier identification with Martine served as a screen for my concern about the psychical effect of cultural myths about teaching on teachers.

As with the pedagogy of the other films, my identification also changed substantially over the course of my research. Throughout writing about <u>Monsieur Lazhar</u>, from my identification with Martine to my eventual thinking about Bachir, I experienced difficulty in committing to writing about the teacher characters and often strayed into analyzing the perspectives of Alice and Simon, the student characters who struggle to make sense of their loss of Martine following her suicide. In transitioning from occupying only the position of a student to also inhabiting the role of the teacher, I found I could think about Bachir as someone who comes to teaching as an imposter but one who offers the culture of the school fresh insight into the emotional situation of learning through loss. In other words, my pedagogy with <u>Monsieur Lazhar</u> began through resistance in the form of repeating the teacher's depression represented on screen. This depression, as a resistance to thinking creatively about loss, eventually opened up my thinking about how the film depicts Bachir's process of learning to teach as one that is simultaneously fed by his pedagogical relationships (to Martine and Alice, for example) and thwarted by psychical deadness he encounters in the culture of the school, represented especially by the psychically dead administrator Madame Vallaincourt. Changing my identifications as a viewer, then, both depends on learning experiences which are external to the film and is key to finding and sustaining teaching desire through film. In other words, if I had maintained an identification with Martine, the suicidal teacher, I might never have re-found my appetite for teaching; although this transformation implies that film is a cultural and visual text which depends on what else viewers bring to the screen to make meaning of what the film depicts.

Conclusion

Throughout the dissertation I have suggested that popular films about teachers and students offer a resource to teacher education for thinking about the emotional and psychical conflicts of learning to teach. In this concluding chapter, I have turned the discussion to think about how viewers themselves are engaged in a pedagogical process which involves using the film as a psychical screen to mine unconscious material. Film as pedagogy thus engages the viewer in a process of remembering repressed material, staging a resistance to thinking about one's conflicts through acting out a strand of their psychical history that the film depicts, and learning as working through a newfound awareness of one's existing conflicts. In my discussions of <u>Half Nelson</u>, <u>Mona Lisa Smile</u>, and <u>Monsieur Lazhar</u>, I also suggest that the viewer's capacity to re-find teaching desire through watching ambivalent depictions of teaching depends on and is fueled by the viewer's changeable identifications over an extended period of thinking about a film. In other words, film pedagogy depends on the viewer's capacity to make meaning about why one moves from having strong feelings for one character to an equally strong feeling of understanding another character over time. Learning, as a form of working through, depends on the viewing subject's capacity to think between both the positions these characters seem to represent and the moments the viewer is most strongly identified with particular characters. While thinking *in between* may be something a viewer learns to do by oneself, I think viewership as a form of pedagogy functions best when viewers are supported in thinking *in between* not only as a practice that applies to making meaning about films but as one that extends to teaching itself. In film viewership, such support would require that teacher educators take seriously films as sites of pedagogy that open teachers and learners to loss, surprise, and re-finding new versions of old conflicts on screen.

In the introduction to this dissertation, I posed some questions about how finding one's teaching desire implies the teacher's repetition of psychical conflicts in pedagogy. For example, I asked: how or why might a student ever resemble an authority figure to the teacher? And, what desires must be lost in order for a new teacher to transform her identification with students into confidently claiming the role of teacher? Now from the position of working through this study, I can see an important assumption on which my earlier questions rest: like Anna Freud, I believe that teachers ought to engage the work of resolving their psychical conflicts so not to repeat them in the classroom. By working with the concept of viewer pedagogy, however, I now think it might be impossible for the teacher to completely lose her identification with students, since these identifications are so often the very premise for developing and articulating one's wish to teach.

Following Britzman's suggestion in <u>After-Education</u>, learning to use films as a screen for the teacher's emotional conflicts may not provide an antidote to the reach of education backward and forward across the learner's history. In fact, the idea of viewer pedagogy suggests that the reason films might be considered a resource to teacher education at all is that they prompt the return of the teacher's conflicts in the form of resistance and repetition, perhaps also recalling the teacher's strongest identifications with students. And, just as the particular lessons of viewer pedagogy depend to some degree on what external events or objects the viewer brings to the screen, learning from our identifications with film may not limit the repetition of one's emotional conflicts to the time of watching the film or to the space of the movie theatre. This means that while films create a space for creative thinking, and therefore have the potential to engage the viewer in a therapeutic pedagogy, to take seriously film as a resource for teacher education also risks the idea that there can ever be a cure for the reappearance of the teacher's conflicts at school. The best teacher educators can hope for then, as I am suggesting here, is that films are sites that, by

entertaining our fantasies and conflicts, can help teachers to think about the psychical dynamics that inflect their teaching. In doing so, learning to think about the teacher's psychical life in pedagogy might help teachers to bear the conflicts they will inevitably bring to teaching, in claiming their teaching desire. In this vein, I am suggesting that part of what it means for the teacher to find and sustain teaching desire is to permit space for, to represent, one's conflicts as significant to the scene of pedagogy.

Here, I return to the original definition I offered of teaching desire: the teacher's wish to teach which is constructed through narration, the teacher's belief that one has unique insight to offer that will benefit other learners, and an emerging confidence the teacher develops as one learns to teach that one will psychically survive the rigours of pedagogical interaction and classroom life. In offering this definition, I stated in the introduction that teaching desire carries a dual meaning which suggests that while desire cannot be taught, the quality of the teacher's desire for teaching shapes pedagogy through which students learn to think. From a psychoanalytic perspective, this means that the teacher's teaching desire profoundly influences the psychical environment between teacher and students and in turn affects the emotional situation of teaching and learning. To carry forward this definition of teaching desire, I suggest finally that for the teacher to develop the capacity to tolerate thinking about one's conflicts in teaching (through film viewership) shapes a surviving psychical environment between teacher and students which is essential to the work of learning, especially learning to teach.

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