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Becoming Teachers' Little Epics: What digital storytelling might reveal
Petites aventures d'enseignants en devenir : ce que les récits numériques peuvent révéler

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Article abstract

This paper discusses pre-service teachers' use of multi-modal tools to produce three-minute films in light of critical moments in their teaching practice. Two cases are considered; each centers on a film, a "little epic" that was produced by a future teacher who attempts to work within an anti-racist framework for social justice. Findings point to how multimodal tools are effective for engaging meaningfully with unresolved conflicts. However, in the face of trauma experienced, the future teachers' efforts to work within a social justice framework may be pushed to the margins. This pedagogy / research sheds light on the workings of the inner landscape of becoming teachers, and highlights the dynamic of education as a psychic crisis compounded by the demands of the social.

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BECOMING TEACHERS' LITTLE EPICS: WHAT DIGITAL STORYTELLING MIGHT REVEAL

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ABSTRACT. This paper discusses pre-service teachers' use of multi-modal tools to produce three-minute films in light of critical moments in their teaching practice. Two cases are considered; each centers on a film, a "little epic" that was produced by a future teacher who attempts to work within an anti-racist framework for social justice. Findings point to how multimodal tools are effective for engaging meaningfully with unresolved conflicts. However, in the face of trauma experienced, the future teachers' efforts to work within a social justice framework may be pushed to the margins. This pedagogy / research sheds light on the workings of the inner landscape of becoming teachers, and highlights the dynamic of education as a psychic crisis compounded by the demands of the social.

PETITES AVENTURES D'ENSEIGNANTS EN DEVENIR: CE QUE LES RÉCITS NUMÉRIQUES PEUVENT RÉVÉLER

RÉSUMÉ. Cet article s'intéresse à l'utilisation, par des enseignants en formation, d'une combinaison d'outils pour produire des films d'une durée de trois minutes, films mettant en lumière des moments charnières dans leur pratique enseignante. Deux cas sont examinés et chacun portent sur un film, un court récit réalisé par un futur enseignant tentant de travailler dans un contexte antiraciste et de justice sociale. Les résultats indiquent que des outils de type multimodal sont efficaces pour s'engager de manière signifiante dans une situation de conflits non résolus. Cependant, considérant les traumatismes vécus, les efforts des futurs enseignants pour œuvrer au sein d'un cadre de justice sociale ont peut-être atteints leurs limites. Cette pédagogie / recherche apporte un éclairage sur les mécanismes en action dans les pensées de l'enseignant en devenir et souligne le rôle de la dynamique éducationnelle comme crise psychique aggravée par les demandes sociales.

> I'm sure of one thing: and one thing only.
> Whatever I see, whomever I meet,
> In the end, I'll make sure that I'll still be me.

Inspired by Dr. Seuss's *Oh, the Places You'll Go,* the above passage is voiced in a digital story of a student who just completed a thirteen-week practicum in the certifying year of a concurrent teacher education program. By layering image and sound, this storyteller takes "new risks" and thinks through the work of teaching, illustrating the kind of fantasy or daydream that Britzman (1998) called a "little epic" (p. 32). While Britzman lamented that such unsanctioned play with ideas, which possesses immense "psychical value," is shut out of the business of learning to teach, we have found that digital storytelling invites such play, particularly when the films are prompted by critical moments experienced in the practicum.

VIDEO CLIP 1. "*I'll make sure that I'll still be me*" (click to activate).

In Video Clip 1, the becoming teacher turns the lens on herself, as she considers "Who will I be?" following what she describes as a student's "preposterous racist" response to a graphic novel about the Holocaust she sought to use in class. The clip is taken from her digital story entitled Shapes of Me. The ethicality of institutional and organizational uses of digital storytelling has been the focus of recent debate (Dush, 2013; Poletti, 2011; Vivenne & Burgess, 2013). However, our purpose with this text is to make explicit the ways that multimodal forms of representation allow us, as teacher educators, to address a particular ethical question: What should our response be to becoming teachers' moments of pain that linger following their practicum? Notably, the literature on digital storytelling raises ethical questions related to asking participants to return to experiences of vulnerability (Dush, 2013). Further, as Salvio (2007) has noted, "the ordinary fears and anxieties that face teachers and students recede further and further into the background discussion in

education" (p. 7). With our work in digital storytelling, we seek to foreground these apprehensions, believing it would be unethical to not address them. Such autobiographical work, as Grumet noted, addresses the "complexity of teaching, the way it is rooted in personal and social history, the way it gathers up our hopes and relentlessly requires us to play out the compelling issues of our lives" (Grumet in Salvio, 2010, p. x). We have found that digital storytelling of critical moments is particularly effective for such engagements (Aitken & Radford, 2012; in press); working with multimedia tools and multiple layers over a period of time, the filmmakers may excavate the remains of what they have experienced and have chosen to symbolize.

In the literature on digital storytelling with teachers, we have noted that there is increased enthusiasm in taking up forms of filmmaking as a new guise for the familiar practice of self-driven reflection (Long, 2011; Tendero, 2006) or as a new means of representing performances linked to regulatory frameworks (Barrett, 2008; Kearney, 2009; Kerin, 2009). We seek to interrupt these practices by using digital storytelling to attend to unconscious knowledge, which Taubman (2012) described as disavowed in education.

While unconscious processes have been explored in digital storytelling in community-based settings (see Brushwood-Rose, 2009; Brushwood-Rose & Granger, 2012), there is no documentation in the literature on film use in teacher education of the ambivalences, contradictions, and unconscious processes. In our work we invite beginning teachers — who are faced with the struggle of negotiating the psychic and social demands of the practicum — to use narration and layers of image and sound to work through what they have experienced and identify as uncomfortable or critical (Aitken & Radford, 2012) (see Figure 1).

For the becoming teachers with whom we work, critical moments have included facing sudden and unexpected displays of racist behavior or hatred for others, experiencing the fear of being unable to respond to the needs of vulnerable children or being repelled by students, or their families or their home lives. Some becoming teachers have written about accusations of racism or concerns that surround students not caring about what they thought or said. Or they venture into anxieties over the subject content of lessons and approaches to teaching and learning to which they are expected to subscribe in their practicum schools. While these all point to how they begin to acquire an understanding of themselves as teachers, most of these experiences are not considered in any depth within official training practices or discourses, nor is the relationship of the psychic to the social generally taken into account around such events of emotional significance. The latter is central to our interpretive lens.

FIGURE 1. *Video-still from the case introduced above, which was layered with the spoken text, "But am I one individual with only one identity?"*

With this contribution to the special issue of the MJE on multimedia in / as scholarship, we present findings of an inquiry that has looked at what digital filmmaking of complex and often contradictory experiences offers pre-service teachers. The research was carried out in a School of Education with three cohorts over three years. We illustrate how our use of digital storytelling with our students has helped us to address what Britzman (2003) underlined in her seminal text, *Practice Makes Practice*: education is a form of crisis shaped by conflicted histories, one's own schooling, fantasies of the self and others, and pervasive cultural myths of teaching, which problematically propose that, "everything depends upon the teacher, teachers are self-made, and teachers are experts" (p. 7). More importantly, this work with multi-modal representations and associated artifacts — what we call the aesthetic archive — has led us to consider the workings of the inner landscapes of becoming teachers who are facing the symbolization of what seems unspeakable. That is, in creating spaces for becoming teachers to use multimedia tools, their "little epics" emerge as they come face to face with what remains largely unaddressed in education: "the isolation of teachers, the dependency and vulnerability teaching accrues, and the problems of knowledge teachers are supposed to possess" (Britzman, 2003, p. 6).

More than a decade has passed since Britzman's original 1991 edition of *Practice Makes Practice* was revised; yet, the notion of education as psychic crisis remains largely unacknowledged (Brown, Atkinson & England, 2006; Taub-

man, 2012). In lieu of this recognition, there has been increasing regulation in the world of education in the last decade: an expansion of politically and economically-driven reforms and expectations of adherence to rigorous professional standards (Britzman, 2006; Brown et al, 2006; Pinar, 2011; Taubman, 2012; Young & Boyd, 2010). In this context, our digital storytelling assignment intersects with what is largely shut out of the popular discourse of teaching: challenges to the cultural myths of teaching and explicit attention to feelings of loss and failure (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2: *Video-still layered with the spoken text, "Later that night I asked myself questions about my own teaching"*

In our practice, we have been deeply attentive to what Poletti (2011) called "the issues of power attendant in institutional environments" (p. 81). A number of researchers point to how many digital storytelling projects attempt to coax a specific type of story from the participants for specific post-production purposes (McWilliams, 2009; Poletti, 2011; Dush, 2013). In contrast, we are interested in what emerges for the becoming teachers in the process of narrativizing and visually representing an uncomfortable or critical moment.

CONSIDERING THE CRITICAL IN PEDAGOGY AND RESEARCH

This article focuses on the aesthetic archives of two becoming teachers who wanted to work pedagogically within a social justice framework. The two examples allow us to consider the dynamic of aggression that takes place around

learning experiences through which social and cultural beliefs are challenged and critiqued. As Britzman (1998) contended,

> while antiracist pedagogies have been astute in analyzing the structures of inequality, the reliance upon cognitive content as a corrective to affective dynamics can neither imagine the affective force of narcissism of minor differences nor consider why tolerance of inequality is so pervasive. (p. 11)

We seek to work with becoming teachers around a range of affective dynamics provoked by anger, powerlessness, and guilt. Pedagogically, and through our research, we seek to uncover what symbolizing these affective dynamics can mean to education.

The movie-making project is located in a seventy-two hour interdisciplinary course taken by all pre-service teachers who are in the final year of a concurrent education program. Over the course of the project, students select and discuss critical incidents in their teaching, respond to viewing experiences, work with different aesthetic elements in filmmaking, and engage in public viewing and responding. In the evolution of this pedagogy, we have taken into account research on critical incidents in teaching (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005), a *currere* approach (Pinar, 2004), and curriculum theorizing (Yates & Grumet, 2011). We introduce our students to the significance of the unconscious through readings and discussion of the nature of subjectivity and theories of identity.

We also make use of Robertson's (2004) "Screenplay Pedagogy," as it calls on viewers to take note of and work with deeply felt emotional or somatic moments experienced during the screening of a film; these moments signal the unconscious at work. Robertson, who has worked with transferential provocations in the teacher education classroom, wrote, "having viewers represent, discuss and revisit screen experiences can function as a form of digestion, as they learn to become attentive to meaning making, participants learn to think more analytically about those processes" (p. 5). As both a research methodology and pedagogy, Screenplay supports viewers as they think about their identifications, resistances, and exhilarations. Equally, it creates a context for discussing one's meaning making processes with others. In this paper, we are interested in meaning making around affective dynamics that arise with attempts at using anti-racist pedagogies. We argue that through these different elements of the digital storytelling project, the students are immersed in the backward and forward movement, "the working through of one's own unresolved conflicts" (Britzman & Pitt, 1996, p. 117), leading to the possibility that something of significance — both personal and social, with implications for self, other, and for teaching and learning — may take shape.

Practice as research

The digital stories are composed of a script (of approximately 300 words), still images, video, and a sound track. These elements provide data for our inquiry

into the psychic and social uses of digital filmmaking of critical incidents. Additional sources include transcriptions of post-production focus groups, participants' post-screening written reflections, storyboards, and journals. The data were treated as follows: rhetorical analysis of all texts was carried out using interpretive lenses informed by the work of Britzman (2003), Brooks (1992, 1995), Sharp (1937/1988), Simon (2011), and Williams (1998). The multimodal layers of the films were analyzed individually and in relation to each other, given that differing / competing perspectives may be revealed through the non-compositionally linked layers (Brushwood Rose, 2009; Brushwood Rose & Low, 2014).

A framework for probing more deeply

At this point in our study, nearing the end of the third year of our project, we are working with the notion that the digital stories of critical moments perform the affective response to what Simon (2011) called "shocks to thought," which result in "a loss of previously secured meanings and concomitantly a deeply felt set of uncertainties as to how to respond" (p. 434). Through observing spectators' responses at exhibits of difficult knowledge, Simon found the desire for "relatively straightforward" (p. 434) and conclusive thinking, overwhelming negative emotions, or heightened anxiety, such that the trauma of the shock to thought may be repeated. We have come to realize that in the face of critical moments, our students perform resistances that are similar to what Simon described, mentioned above. In such situations, "one's conceptual frameworks, emotional attachments, and conscious and unconscious desires delimit the ability to settle the meaning of past events" (p. 434). Following Simon, we propose that at such points the becoming teachers' "sense of mastery is undone" (p. 434); they are moved to extreme emotionality, which lends itself to a melodramatic narrative.

In popular parlance, melodrama is defined as "a sensational, dramatic piece with exaggerated characters and exciting events intended to appeal to emotions" ("Melodrama," nd) and is usually conceived in negative terms. Film theorist Williams (1998) described it as the presentation of a hero (or heroine) "who is also a victim and whose moral worth is revealed, to the audience and usually to the other characters in the film, in the course of the narrative" (p. 475). While such stories of moral legibility have been maligned as having low cultural value and are overused in mass entertainment, melodrama has undergone a revival of sorts by scholars "who analyzed the imaginative modes in which cultural forms express dominant social and psychological concerns [and who] sensed that the category of the melodramatic needed revival" (Brooks, 1995, p. vii) because of what it might reveal. In the twenty-first-century, melodrama prevails throughout the public sphere, is mobilized as a mode of address in and through multiple spaces and cultural forms (Philbrick, 2003). It is increasingly pervasive in the digital world in reality television, graphic novels, film

adaptations of superheroes, and social media sites that allow for the sharing of such narratives (see eg., http://waltdisneyconfessions.tumblr.com). Williams contended that what is accomplished ideologically with the melodramatic text is the assignation of guilt and innocence.

Like the structure of melodrama, which "works to recognize and regain a lost innocence" (Williams, 1998, p. 61), we have found that the becoming teachers' critical incidents and films appear to be organized along lines of right and wrong. The films make possible a visualization of the hero as victim, and their narrative structure follows a trajectory of the quest for lost innocence, which often emerges from feelings of anger, powerlessness (see Figure 3), and guilt through other's painful histories. As we explore in this article, the digital stories become places where the working through of such thought can take place. Further, captured in digital form, a story of the self can be screened publically, returned to privately, and read and reread, possibly in ways that allow for considering one's inner landscape and the demands of educational discourses. As the filmmaking leads the students to consider this dynamic, the facilitation of this project leads us to consider our own inner landscape in the spaces of teacher education.

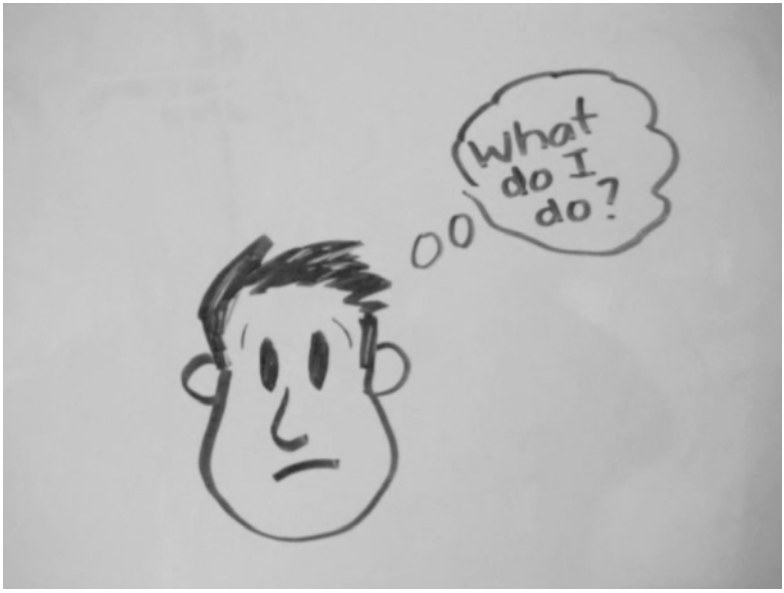

FIGURE 3. *Video-still not accompanied by voice-over*

Our own dreamwork

As the project has unfolded, we have found ourselves considering the risks of such work. We find that the process calls for a type of pedagogical response that seems to exceed the space and time of the course. We attempt to attend

to this in ways that are not, as Britzman (1998) wrote, "curative." That is, we resist "correcting practices and... propping up the practitioners' control and mastery" (p. 32), and we refuse to "valorize the quest for a rationality that can settle the trouble that inaugurates thought" (p. 32). Through these means we seek to work in ways that are emancipatory for ourselves and our students.

While such work moves against the regulatory frameworks of teacher education, we still feel their pull; that is, we find ourselves resisting the desire for control and mastery, shaped by the cultural myths of teaching. Through our ongoing conceptualization, we have held fast to the two following questions: How does the digital film making open a window on the inner landscape? What does it mean for a becoming teacher to contemplate this in a teacher education classroom?

TWO STORIES OF THE UNEXPECTED DYNAMIC OF AFFECT

In what follows, we read how the heroic fantasy of working within an anti-racist framework for social justice becomes difficult to maintain in the face of histories, tensions and conflicts and when the unexpected dynamics of affect emerge. The cases also reveal the possible pedagogical benefit of the digital storytelling. In the recounting of the critical moments, we see that the cultural myths of being a teacher are *writ* large in the students' inner landscapes; reading their own experiences through those myths appears to magnify feelings of failure. However, we argue that the use of the melodramatic structures in the production of the film allows the becoming teachers to tell their stories in a way that supports the reconsolidation of identity, fragmented in the face of the social demands of the practicum. Such demands include working within hierarchical relationships, negotiating a space of potentially competing views of education, building relationships with students, demonstrating recently acquired knowledge around teaching, facing pressure to adopt "best practices" (or those sanctioned by the institution), facing evaluation, and so on.

In the cases shared below, we look at the work of two becoming teachers, both of whom chose not to explicitly represent their critical incidents in film. In the first example, with which we opened this paper, the becoming teacher used the filmmaking to respond to an unexpected display of racism. In the second example, we explore the case of a becoming teacher who is called to account for her own beliefs by an Indigenous student she seeks to help.

Shapes of Me

The future teacher in our first case was assigned a language arts course, despite being a performing arts major. She explained that to overcome feeling "rather uncomfortable at [her] lack of knowledge" of Language Arts teaching, she decided to use a book about the Holocaust that she knows well, *Maus*, a graphic novel by Art Spiegelman (1991). In her post-practicum reflection, she

provides an overview of what happened. In an excerpt from that reflection, the student describes the emotionally charged experience. The thrust of the story is the loss of mastery and an attempt at its restoration, which harkens to Simon's (2011) notion of the type of spectator response that involves a relatively straightforward and conclusive solution:

> I went over the Holocaust and the importance of the event with the class in a series of activities they seemed to like and participated well in, but as we moved on, I realized how most of the class were not engaging with the story because they did not understand the modern connections we would make and had already made before hand. We were working with the Guiding Question,[1] How does war affect and shape relationships? As a class we had a discussion about these modern connections during which a student said: "I don't really care for Jews anyway, so what's the point?" I was very appalled by the blatant racism and the other students either agreed or blatantly rejected this comment. I became very emotional and had to re-think how to react and deal with the situation, adapting my plans for further lessons.

In a follow-up response, we see how the future teacher grapples with overwhelming negative emotions of a similar nature to those Simon (2011) described in relation to difficult knowledge. The anger of the becoming teacher is expressed through her comments. She writes, it is "preposterous that it's getting worse as we're moving toward multicultural education." She mentions that the event has pointed to several issues for her, which she named as: "lack of tolerance from students; lack of awareness; lack of global awareness, and lack of empathy."

These events are not represented in the becoming teacher's movie, *Shapes of Me*; yet, in reading her text using Sharp's (1937/1988) concept of dreamwork, we see the traces of the encounter with anti-Semitism lingering beneath her filmic exploration of questions of nationalism, belonging, and the experience of being an outsider. As Sharp (1937/1988) wrote, "dreams are a means of exploring present day stimuli and current conflicts through the elaboration of preconscious thoughts" (p. 95). In dreaming, Sharp wrote, "a film of moving pictures is projected on the screen of our private inner cinema. This dramatization is done predominantly by visual images" (1937/1988, p. 58). While digital stories are largely elaborated in the conscious realm, some of the same forces that apply in dream formation, such as dramatization, condensation, displacement, symbolization, and secondary elaboration, are evident for the storytellers in the filmmaking process. In this becoming teacher's film we see dreamwork-like condensation, where several themes are combined into one symbol (Sharp, 1937/1988). For example, the film is composed of a series of still shots, the first and last of which are taken along a railroad track, which is significant to her own journey.

As the film begins, the storyteller recalls being asked what she wanted to be when she grew up. While she is speaking, she has shifted seamlessly from French to English and picking up the rhythm of the Dr. Seuss story, she says,

"I found the answer to be just as simple as can be, I just want to be me." Against a childhood photo of the filmmaker, we hear her say, "but being me is not as simple as can be; it's much more complicated." The image fades out and we see the words, "The unexpected." The voice over continues, "wait a minute. It's not what I signed up for. It's not for me." Like the moment of rupture in the classroom, the "unexpected" is not what this future teacher had "signed up for."

The storyline shifts at this point to reveal the difficult work of "making sense of both personal and historical crisis" (Britzman, 2003, p. 9). The backdrop of photos shows friends, family, or classmates from over the years, smiling widely. However, the voice-over conveys the painfulness of having to question where you "fit" as well as the fears associated with the idea that people may be against you simply because of your ethnicity or culture. The filmmaker explains, "you are one, or the other." She describes hiding a part of the self to fit in as an adolescent, and the subsequent and recent revelation that the lines are still drawn between perceived different groups, even at university, where she is once more "the other."

As we near the end of the film, there is a shift in the storyline as the filmmaker picks up the rhythm of Dr. Seuss once more. In her return to the book, *Oh, the Places You'll Go*, which has become famous for being the ideal send-off of a child into the world, we see a means to begin again. She says, "now as a teacher, who will I be? I know I'll be shaped by many things; the things that I do, the places I see. But most of all, I will be shaped by the people I meet. The real impact in education is the human experience and it can only be achieved through integrity" (See Video Clip 2).

NOTE. Background music: "I slept with Bonhomme at the CBC" (Broken Social Scene, 2001, track 1).

VIDEO CLIP 2. *The becoming teacher's words, final section, layered with still photos and soundtrack* (click to activate).

The last line, which is somewhat discordant as it has lost the Seuss-like rhythm, hearkens unmistakably to the cultural myths of teaching. As Britzman (2003) explained, these myths "situate the teacher's individuality as the problem and proffer a static solution of authority, control, mastery, and certainty as the proper position. They seem to explain competency as the absence of conflict" (p. 7).

In fact, the final images of the film capture this absence. It closes with an image of a sun-filled sky, a close-up of a flower in bloom, and finally, a brightly smiling filmmaker standing on the railroad tracks facing the camera. In this closing sequence, the voice over takes us back to the initial question posed to her as a small child. The final lines of her written script submission, with which we began this article with, read:

> One person, one identity?
> Oh, I'm sure of one thing: and one thing only.
> Whatever I see, whomever I meet,
> In the end, I'll make sure that I'll still be me.

This affirmation of the self is a sharp contrast to the becoming teachers' earlier expression of overwhelming negative emotions in the face of her anger over the racist incident (Simon, 2011), which she chose not to represent. We argue that through the dreamwork of the digital story — using the structures of melodrama — the becoming teacher has made an enormous achievement of symbolization. With the critical moment, innocence is first registered. The pathos and action of the narrative suggest the filmmaker's return to the space of innocence. Through this symbolization and the use of the Dr. Seuss text, she takes on the experience of being "othered," bringing the cultural myth of integrity into relief. She tells us through her autobiography, and even shows us in images, that she is on a journey and it is ongoing; she has affirmed her moral worth (Williams, 1998) and, heroically, is ready to set out again (see Figure 4). This is what Brooks (1992) would call a "fully achieved plot" (p. 114).

FIGURE 4. *Video-still of railway tracks from* Shapes of Me

In *Reading for the Plot*, Brooks (1992) provided a thorough examination of the psychic uses of narrative; he writes, "Autobiographical narration must necessarily... show margins outside the narratable, leftover spaces which allow the narrating *I* to objectify and look back at the narrated *I* and to see the plotted middle as shaped by and as shaping its margins" (p. 114). While the becoming teacher's shaping of the narrative reveals a reading of the self against the popular Dr. Seuss story, what exists in the "margins outside the narratable" is the struggle to work with antiracist pedagogies. In producing the digital story, she has found a plot that is *thinkable* and coherent, in contrast to her "preposterous" experience, which was *unthinkable*.

All About My Mother

The second example brings us to a remote First Nation community school. With this case, we take up Britzman's (1998) question: "What then, might come of an antiracist pedagogy unafraid of examining the question of love and the meaning of social bonding, when aggression is admitted as part of its dynamic?" (p. 111). Through the exploration of this dynamic in this story, we consider how the creation of the aesthetic archive may evoke heightened anxiety and the potential of secondary trauma, which, as Simon (2011) wrote, "accompanies feelings of identification with either the victims of violence, the perpetrators of such violence, or those identified as bystanders, passively acquiescent to scenes of brutalization" (p. 433). Faced with a difficult encounter, the becoming teacher identifies with both victim and perpetrator. She attempts to mask her own feelings of being a victim, but appears unable to admit that aggression is part of the dynamic. Perhaps this response emerges given the context where the colonial past has an enduring presence. In a written response to the critical incident, the material and psychic costs of attempting to work transformatively become evident (Britzman, 1998). The becoming teacher explains what has taken place:

> During my first couple of weeks at [the school] my associate teacher had given the students a writing assignment where the students had drawn topics out of a hat and were expected to write a text. One student had drawn the topic of "culture and traditions in your family." She was a strong willed student but she was struggling to write the text. I attempted to prompt her by asking questions about customs and traditions in the community, asking whether there was traditional food or celebrations she could think of. I believe she was attempting to test my confidence and retorted the following, "I don't know where you come from, white devil [*kaamichiskwaaw* = evil woman], but we are not the kind of Indians who put feathers in our hair and dance around at PowWows." I was shocked and very much taken aback. I was not attempting to make her generalize statements about her culture but I understood in the moment that as an outsider I needed to be careful about asking or inquiring about the [student's] culture. I needed to be a listener and not instruct or push the students to share when they are not ready.

The becoming teacher had requested this particular remote placement, which the Practice Teaching Office granted her, given her academic standing and relative maturity.

While she offers a rational description of how she might have acted, her written response to the event underscores the disruption of her dream of teaching, as she recounted asking herself at the time, "Why am I doing this?"

At the start of the focus group discussion, she describes the event as an incident that cannot be shared with others, given the degree of trust that would be required. Through her lowered voice and comments, we see the heightened anxiety about which Simon (2011) wrote. She later goes on to suggest that it cannot be shared at all, as it would reveal problems with the community in which she was placed. This reveals her struggle to frame the story melodramatically, given the blurred lines between who might be the hero.

The becoming teacher chose not to use the film to narrativize the traumatizing event. However, we argue that she uses the different dimensions of the aesthetic archive to perform her affective response. In her film, entitled *All About My Mother*, she describes the foundation of her values as well as the source of what she draws on in education and hopes to embody. The teaching world she captures in her film exists in the indeterminate future rather than what had taken place in her practicum. Unlike the first becoming teacher, who seems to be able to move forward through the mobilization of the melodramatic modes of address, this becoming teacher is unable to name herself as the victim hero, despite drawing on melodramatic structures, such as the quest for lost innocence. Nonetheless, the building of the aesthetic archive — from attempting to recount the incident to the dreamwork of how her mother imbued her with creativity and compassion — brings the expression of lost innocence into sharp relief.

The film, which she describes as "more personal" than her peers' movies, begins with what appears to be an epigraph written on a black backdrop, while we hear the slow picking of a melodic tune on a single acoustic guitar. The epigraph reads, "From each of our pasts emerges a sense of belonging, a sense of truth, and an identity that we must claim as our own. To find our identity, we must reflect on the past." In the next sequences, a feeling of restoration and wholeness is rendered through the images of the filmmaker with one or several family members. The voice-over and images capture the melodramatic return to home; it is a means of finding and restoring innocence, in the face of the burden the critical moment produced (Radford, 2009). We hear, "My family are [*sic*] the pillars on which I stand, the happiness that fills my heart. Wise and knowledgeable, each member contributes something unique to my understanding of what it means to be a lifelong learner." The voice-over continues with references to past generations, oral histories and lessons learned for the future; we hear this as we see photos of family members from the distant past as well as the newest member of the family.

A third of the way into the film, we hear a list of what the storyteller has learned from her father, who is absent from the title, *All About My Mother*. The lessons include respect, love of the outdoors, caring for all dimensions of the self, and the importance of experimentation, creation and discovery. The teaching practices she mentions echo what she had planned, written about, and hoped to carry out in the remote placement.

At two minutes into the three-minute movie, we hear the first explicit mention of teaching, which is once more captured in a lesson from her father. She says, "I learned that to teach something requires patience and humility and might mean that you have to repeat yourself more than a couple of times." Seconds later, an image of her mother appears on the screen, as we hear a list of the lessons she provided: creativity, self-expression, caring, and empathy. Similar to the sequence of photos connected to the earlier voiceover, we see images of nature, art, and people, some of which include the filmmaker, alone or with children. As the film nears the end, we hear, "My mother taught me compassion and empathy, how to care for others, worlds apart from myself. She taught me to how follow my passions and reach for my goals and that my voice is important, even if it feels like no one is listening." The becoming teacher mobilizes the troubling cultural myths of teaching, among which is the notion that "everything depends upon the teacher" (Britzman, 2003, p. 7).

With the final two images of the filmmaker as a teenager and later as an adult, we hear her conclude, "My family has shaped who I am today and the teacher I will become tomorrow. I hope to inspire my students to learn through experimentation, self-expression, and the world around them. I hope they too will become lifelong learners." Like the filmmaker in the first case, who seeks to answer the question, "Who do you want to be?", the becoming teacher provides an almost literal response to the comment of the angry youth of the critical moment, who said, "I don't know where you come from."

In this case, the narrative shows how the filmmaker's youthful inspirations are connected to her future hopes as a teacher. However, in "plotting," the filmmaker makes no explicit mention of the critical moment of having provoked rather than inspired a student. Here we are interested in exploring the boundedness of the narrative of this digital story, or as Brooks (1992) said, the ways it "demarcates, encloses, establishes limits, [and] orders" (p. 4). Both cases of storytelling present a melodramatic return to home for the becoming teachers; this return signals a counterpoint to the teachers' initial recounting of the critical moments of fragmentation, pain and uncertainty suffered at the hands of the students who affronted them in the face of their efforts to work in an anti-racist framework for social justice.

CONSIDERING THE AESTHETIC ARCHIVES

While spaces of aesthetics and affective turns are "typically relegated to irrelevancy, to losing the point, to being off the subject, to wasting time" (Britzman, 1998, p. 33), this work reveals the potential that exists with digital practices and the possibilities for future teachers to better understand the challenges of teaching for change. Even while we see future teachers working within this melodramatic framework that has been criticized for its profound conservatism because it is a "quest, not for the new but for the old space of innocence" (Williams, 1998, p. 65), we maintain that as teacher educators it is our ethical responsibility to attend to the moments of pain experienced in the practicum. We propose that digital storytelling of critical moments validates the future teachers' experiences that are painful and difficult to articulate and provides the possibility of access into their own unconscious struggles. Brooks (1992) reminded us that narrative is "an urgent attempt to cope with the human facts of our existence in body and time" (p. xv). While Brooks argued that literature can illuminate the workings of the mind, we believe that this is also the case for digital storytelling of critical moments. That is, the multimodal tools of digital storytelling may allow the filmmaker access into how one's unconscious is playing out within the arena of the educational context. This is, above all, the dimension that requires further exploration through research and practice.

Within the aesthetic archives, through the use of the imaginative mode of melodrama, the becoming teachers are able to symbolize their psychic experience (Radford, 2008; 2009; 2010). We propose that the melodramatic mode repurposed in their digital stories contributes to processing the fears and anxieties that the critical moments produce. In a culturally prescriptive context where the existential crises of learning are shut out, it is not surprising that the becoming teachers take a melodramatic path. Their stories "expose the insufficiency of viewing teaching from normative standpoints" (Salvio, 2007, p. 6). "In melodrama," wrote Williams (1998), "there is a moral, wish-fulfilling impulse towards the achievement of justice" (p. 48). Moreover, she notes, "melodrama is structured upon the 'dual recognition' of how things are and how they should be" (p. 48). We see the becoming teachers' painful struggles to negotiate the gap between the challenges they encounter and the illusive mastery that the cultural myths of teaching prescribe.

We maintain that the digital traces reveal the value of creating spaces for the little epics. The use of the melodramatic structures allows the becoming teachers to tell their stories in a way that supports the restorative reconsolidation of fragmented identity, assaulted by the social demands of the practicum. Yet, this melodramatic reading of their own story smooths over the messy spaces where psychic, social, and historical forces collide. For the becoming teachers who attempt to work in an anti-racist framework for social justice, it appears that in the face of the depth of their emotionality, and with the failure of "cognitive content as a corrective to affective dynamics" (Britzman,

1998, p. 11), their wishes to attempt these pedagogies are compromised. This troubling observation has propelled us to find ways that will allow our students to attend more explicitly to their inner landscapes. The possibilities of doing so with multimodal storytelling are immense, given its affordances, such as the selection and juxtaposition of non-compositionally linked layers and the opportunity to "read for the plot" (Brooks, 1992). Through the attention to reading practices and production process, the implicit can become more explicit for the becoming teacher. That is, the digital restaging of the traumatic moment becomes a means of remembering, creating the possibility of insight for the becoming teacher into the mutual imbrication of the psychic and the social, and the significance of this to their teaching.

NOTES

1. Traver (1998) described a guiding question as "the fundamental query that directs the search for understanding" (p. 70). The use of such questions aligns with provisions of the Quebec Education Program (Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, 2007), which states, "Educating students must include practices that draw on processes of analysis, synthesis and evaluation" (p. 16)

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