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 AN EPOCH OF DIFFERENCE: HEARING VOICES IN THE NINETIES

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## TRAGEDY AND POSTMODERN PASTICHE

This is a tale about the “postmodern” subject who has, tragically, come of age in a climate of crisis. To grow up in the 1990s is, for many, to learn to live and breathe disasters of both global and local proportion. Like the tragic figure in the 1999 film *The Fight Club*, young men made millionaires in Silicon Valley may come to abhor IKEA furniture and return to bloody brawling to reestablish the lost sense of identity in the face of modern demise, loss of meaning, and certain heritage.<sup>1</sup> Abandoned by God and, most likely, by one’s own father, devoid of human contact and intimacy, one communicates to others largely through computer-mediated interaction. Tragedy, measured by material or emotional loss, cannot help but be a potent sign of the millennial times.

The pastiche subject is described by Fredric Jameson as a “a statue with blind eyeballs,” devoid of any conviction that “normalcy” exists beyond contradictory and random measures.<sup>2</sup> Whether this pastiche subject is the franchised, yet tragically disaffected white male of Silicon Valley, or whether this tragic subject is the *disenfranchised* “youth” targeted by the “Juvenile Crime and Delinquency Act” (passed by voter landslide in California in 2000) who, as minors, have no voice whatsoever in the so-called democracy, the millennium marks the epoch of suspicion and pastiched representations of tragedy.<sup>3</sup>

Tragic for certain are the signs and traces of “democratic, public education” just a few miles from the opulent wealth of Silicon Valley. Recently, Oakland High School celebrated its year 2000 graduation, marked by proud parents holding balloons and flowers to honor hundreds of Oakland’s Black and Asian young citizens — young people for many of whom simply living to twenty-one is a miracle. Days later, I witness the piles of folded rusty chairs left abandoned in the dry sun — a scene devoid of laughter, cornered by a freeway and littered with wind-blown trash and glass. An added ironic twist to the whole tragedy is that no doubt some of these Oakland High School youth were among the thousands mobilized against the Juvenile Crime and Delinquency Act. California is forty-first in the nation in

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 1. *The Fight Club*, Twentieth Century Fox, directed by David Fincher, 1999, film.

 2. Fredric Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983).

3. Proposition 21 in California dictates that a juvenile may be arrested simply on the basis of a public dress code violation. Writing graffiti or a schoolyard fight are crimes tried as felonies and California’s disastrous “three-strikes” legislation applies to youth.

education spending, yet first in prison spending. What meaning have democracy and dialogue when even those organized in resistance are not allowed to vote? Meanwhile, Oakland's Mayor Jerry Brown is being seduced by the military to open a charter school at an abandoned naval base (apparently to solve the state's inexcusable lack of buildings and teachers) — a school complemented by the "solution" of militaristic discipline for the poor and disenfranchised.

In the 1990s one witnesses tragedy in postmodern paradoxes I will call "pastiche": the "imitation of a peculiar or unique idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language."<sup>4</sup> This pastiche subject is the modern variation of the tragic spectator who alternates between blind actions and helpless witnessing. Not surprisingly, listening and witnessing are themes that thread through the 1990s decade of educational theory. Just as "witnessing" has gained theoretical significance as a means of recognizing such modern tragedies as the Holocaust, so is "listening" manifested as a postmodern emphasis in response to difference. Consequently, debates about consensus and dissensus represent possibly the major intellectual debates of the 1990s.

Whether of pragmatist, existential, or French or American bent, the authors of *Educational Theory* may be said to agree that tragedy is a uniquely human condition of paradox: the too-late recognition, after the fact, of the error of our ways — "If only!" we lament, casting our gaze behind and ahead, attached to outcomes and regrets. Yet tragedy is also a drama beyond anyone's control. Tragedy is the inevitable conflict of ego with the impermanent world. Theorists may agree that suffering will always be with us. Yet once we have shared this suffering and created a momentary truce, we are bound to enact a tragedy in our differences. Theorists who agree that tragedy is an absolute will not agree in their interpretations of the causes of events, nor even in a vision of right outcomes. From the moment we begin telling tales, we encounter crises of representation in the face of differences. The tragedy, and crises, can thus be seen as a multilayered, multilevel narrative, occurring first at the level of experience ("brute" animal sensation), second at the level of awareness (I am aware of my suffering), and third at the level of discursive awareness: "I am aware that I am being aware." Paradoxically, at the point of recognizing the depth of tragedy and our implication in it, the protagonist-turned-spectator-turned-storyteller may also find an equilibrium in the disequilibrium: a mere mindfulness of suffering.

Within the field narrowed to educational theory, postmodernity is manifested as paradoxes revealed through the seaminess of discourses: discourses (academic, political, or popular) bloat and rupture, showing raggedy stuffing and the tricks of language. At least the shared tragic stories suggest a common experience of the

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4. Jameson quoted in Mario O. D'Souza, "Educational Pastiche versus the Education of Natural Intelligence," *Educational Theory* 46, no. 4 (Fall 1996): 501.

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world, a basis from which stories *about* may originate. But from here on out, any shared vision is likely lost, for in the face of infinite differences and tragedies resulting from conflicts we encounter fundamental philosophical and strategic differences: Is our goal to seek consensus, or to embrace the tragedies of dissensus from the outset?

In the body of this essay, I trace interlocking themes of *tragedy* and *pastiche* as they intersect with the role of listening in educational theory. I begin with an examination of the absolutism of tragedy; I will then focus for the most part of the essay on differences and similarities in the accounts of pragmatism and postmodernism in relation to how conflict is recognized in educational theory and practice. Whether one is of the view that "difference" directs us toward revolutionary and fertile theoretical terrain and practice, or that it simply functions as a new hegemony, the 1990s as represented in the journal *Educational Theory* struggle with the politics of difference.

In this essay I examine the tension between invocations of consensus versus an emphasis on dissensus, or paralogy. After examining tragedy, I look specifically at an essay that traces the promising *dangers of listening*. In the last section of this review, I examine essays that enact "metissage," a cross-disciplinary style well-suited to representing the tragic, pastiche subject. The growing genre of "metissage" in *Educational Theory* struggles openly with the crises of representation indicative of the millennial shifts in ethics and knowledge. Attempting to take account of the material reality and history of educational systems, these later authors (primarily I refer to essays following 1996, with some important earlier essays found in 1993) depict pastiche in part through stylistic and analytical directions of metissage. Metissage is a practiced, and not merely theorized, style which self-reflexively enacts the listening required to hear disembodied voices. A primary focus of the contemporary academic genre of metissage is thus a "meta-listening": a simultaneous listening to the "object of one's gaze" as well as listening to the discursive echoes of one's own ventriloquation echoing across the linguistic minefields.

Pastiche describes a

"stylistic and discursive heterogeneity *without a norm*." The *absence of a norm* is what gives pastiche its particular flavor and flair. The demise of the modern world and the subsequent disappearance of the individual subject have provided fertile ground for the flourishing of such heterogeneity.<sup>5</sup>

Yet Mario D'Souza laments what he sees as the "hegemony of difference," worrying that the "pastiche of individual differences becomes normative and anything that questions this norm is quickly labeled as hegemonic. Even reason is viewed suspiciously and must conform to the expressions of this heterogeneity."<sup>6</sup> For some educational theorists, then, "difference" has ironically come in and of itself to represent a hegemonic norm. Battles? Tensions? But of course.

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5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., 502.

The good news is that the pastiche subject (whether the author or the subject of theory's gaze) is skeptical that "some healthy linguistic normality exists." The bad news is that "postmodernism" gets accused of driving away Enlightenment hope and inviting nihilism instead. Oh well: humans are also suckers for stories, for nostalgic pasts remembered through unreliable and unruly words. I now tell some tales about educational theory, commencing in 1991 and ending its ventures in 1999 facing the void of the millennium.

#### AN ORIGIN MOMENT

In 1991, *Educational Theory* published an issue dedicated to "tracing the origins of the PES and the philosophy of education."<sup>7</sup>

Editor of *Educational Theory* during the decade I review here, Nicholas Burbules's "Introduction" to the 1991 Special Issue reiterates what might be called a lament of humanism, voiced at the very first 1942 Philosophy of Education Society meeting. According to Burbules, the 1942 program authors worried about "these times when so much of the world has apparently forsaken reason as its chief reliance for the effecting of a more humane social order."<sup>8</sup> In short, since 1942 educational philosophers (and no doubt some historians and sociologists as well) recognized the inevitability of tragedy in our well-intentioned work in educating the young citizenry.

Burbules concludes, "The Philosophy of Education Society has endeavored to maintain over the years, both in its processes and its intellectual substance, the vision of a more reasonable and just approach to education, and through this a more reasonable and just society."<sup>9</sup>

Having now read forty issues representing the 1990s, I feel it is fair to say that educational theorists (and most especially educational philosophers, generously represented in these forty issues of *Educational Theory*) share a hope for a more "just society." Yet beyond this hope, a reader of *Educational Theory* is hard pressed to find shared analyses of, representations of, or solutions to, a variety of perceived problems needing the cure of justice.

Given the relative homogeneity of perspectives represented in *Educational Theory* (nearly all contributions are from North America, though there are significant Western European contributions and a handful of contributions from Australia and New Zealand) one might hope to find some agreed path toward a "more reasonable and just society." In the wake of the last decade of representational crises, educational theorists cannot be assumed even to agree that our society needs to be more "reasonable." Rather, the tragedy we collectively face is, in part, that metanarrative "solutions," such as "reason," no longer ensure collective faith. Postmodernism has added new layers of uncertainty and ambiguity to already

7. *Educational Theory* 41, no. 3 (Summer 1991).

8. Nicholas C. Burbules, "Continuity and Diversity in Philosophy of Education: An Introduction," *Educational Theory* 41, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 263.

9. *Ibid.*

difficult philosophical differences, broaching a faith in crisis (pun intended).<sup>10</sup> The politics of difference emerges straightaway in the 1990s. Burbules's remark on the 1942 PES call for a "just society" sits alongside Maxine Greene's challenges, within the same journal issue, to the constraints placed on educational theory.

Wars of style fought in the name of epistemological battles are ancient, as we heard in tales of poets consigned to building "mere appearances," forbidden from naming Plato's forms. But "moral prophets of humanity have always been poets," and one may thus look to the 1990s "style wars" as they reflect postmodern challenges to positivism. Marking a longstanding style war, Greene's invited commentary at the end of the 1991 Special Issue identifies the crises represented by philosophy's stylistic stuffiness and the shunned power of the aesthetics' role. In "A Response to Beck, Giarelli/Chambliss, Leach, Tozer and Macmillan," Greene further challenges her contemporaries' descriptions of the field of philosophy of education and its troubled relation to history.<sup>11</sup> "What of education in its broadest sense? What of the schools?" she asks. "Do all the events in fifty years of educational change mean nothing?"<sup>12</sup>

In debates regarding the role of narrative in philosophy, discourses as seams become visible, marking off territories of virtual and discursive space and geography. Calling for educational theorists to "entice some real toads" into our "imaginary garden," Greene claims that these

toads are ugly because they make visible the seams of narrative in their own style and mark of aestheticism against the dreary landscape of drier scholarship....I am not asking for papers in social foundations: nor I am asking for cracker-barrel philosophizing. I am suggesting that these papers seem often to have been written in airless places, with closed windows.<sup>13</sup>

Ironically, of course, she writes as both spectator and actor in the tragedy that unfolds, as existentialism recognizes: constantly remaking the multiply layered pastiche in a Deweyan metissage. Greene's disciplinary transgressions — her attention to literature, aesthetics, and her own use of a narrative style — are attacked even in this 1991 issue for being "not philosophical enough."<sup>14</sup> (Philosopher Mary Leach remarks in an insurrectionary counter-history of PES that in 1961 there was

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10. I use in this essay the term "postmodernism" because it is frequently used in *Educational Theory*, though the term is rarely defined overall and quite loosely used. I would prefer to use a term such as "poststructuralist," or "post-positivist" to refer specifically to theories of knowledge. For ease I use "postmodernism" to refer to the influence of French philosophers Derrida and Lyotard as represented in *Educational Theory*.

11. Maxine Greene, "A Response to Beck, Giarelli/Chambliss, Leach, Tozer, and Macmillan," *Educational Theory* 41, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 323.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*, 324.

14. Greene's engagement of literature to illustrate the shifting attentions to existentialism and pragmatism represent a significant shift in the stylistic landscape of educational theory not only in the 1990s, but for the last three decades. In this 1991 issue, C.A. Bowers takes Greene to task. In his "Open Letter" to Maxine Greene, Bowers accuses Greene of one of the foremost fallacies of philosophy and Western either/or fallbacks: Greene is bound by her "own ideas and values." A proper philosopher, would "develop progressively an argument in a way that lays out all the dimensions, including the culturally specific nature of the root metaphor that underlies your language."

but one woman on the PES program — Maxine Greene.) Others who were present in those halls at the same time included Nel Noddings and Jane Roland Martin.

In her counter-history of PES, Leach notes the 1978 crisis of representation that spawned the Committee on the Status of Women for this philosophical organization. Leach further details that since the mid-1970s many members of PES were radically engaged in the recognition of difference:

working to construct not just a scaffolding but...a place in which...all "others" would be understood not in terms of oppositions and separations, but in terms of related differences...a home where everyone is present as a visible "I" who does not merely point, disembodied, to the world out there.<sup>15</sup>

These tensions can be dated even further in philosophical history. Greene notes the intertwined tensions of "style" and "philosophical attention to social and political problems" that surfaced during the early years of PES: "There is no question...about the fact that for many years the meeting halls rang with the sounds of 'Ayers,' 'Ryle,' 'Scheffler,' 'Peters'....Underneath, most of the time, there was the *basso ostinato* of 'Dewey, Dewey, Dewey.'" <sup>16</sup> Predominantly a venue for educational philosophy rather than history, sociology, or aesthetics, *Educational Theory* continues to be indebted to the philosophy of Dewey.

As I will discuss later, the issues of style were not merely aesthetic but deeply political and also philosophical. In the course of addressing the growing emphasis on discourses and postmodernism, Leach notes that "it wasn't until the mid-1980s that it wasn't remarkable to find a woman's name beneath the title of an article appearing in *Educational Theory*. Even now, entire issues which feature only male authors are easy enough to find."<sup>17</sup> I would say today, as an evaluative remark on the overall absences in *Educational Theory*, that what is missing are essays substantially addressing race, social class, popular culture, or cultural studies, with very little colonial or global studies, and relatively slight international representation in author or focus.

Variations of pragmatism, liberal democratic theory, and postmodernism govern the metaphysical, epistemological, moral, and aesthetic inquiries published in *Educational Theory*. Critical theory has largely mutated into poststructuralism, as reflected especially but by no means exclusively in feminist and metissage perspectives. The major challenge to the U.S.-based liberal pluralist and democratic tradition of *Educational Theory* is, in the 1990s, ushered in by such French philosophers as François Lyotard. Framed by decades of debates between existential and analytic philosophy, American and British and especially Deweyan philosophy dominates, far overshadowing any sustained discussions of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jürgen Habermas, or Hannah Arendt in relation to questions of the public and democracy.<sup>18</sup>

15. Mary Leach, "Mothers of In(ter)vention: Women's Writing in Philosophy of Education," *Educational Theory* 41, no 3 (Summer 1991): 291.

16. Greene "A Response," 322.

17. Leach, "Mothers of In(ter)vention," 288.

18. See Natasha Levinson's analysis of "Teaching in the Midst of Belatedness: The Paradox of Natality in Hannah Arendt's Educational Thought," *Educational Theory* 47, no. 4 (Fall 1997): 435-52.

I recall only one reference to the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, though Jacques Derrida gets a bit of air time. Though I do not focus on his work in this essay, there are numerous essays that draw on Michel Foucault in interesting and significant ways.<sup>19</sup> The journal reflects the influence of Richard Rorty drawn in as a bridge between pragmatism and liberal democratic theory, on the one hand, and postmodernism on the other.

Debates in *Educational Theory* surround such familiar topics as critical thinking, caring, and community. Apparently in contrast to the 1980s, there is relatively little attention to critical theory or pedagogy. Despite ongoing debates in *Educational Theory* regarding how philosophy and professionalism inform one another, "professional practice," "school reform," or "educational policy" are infrequently addressed. There is little analysis of issues of race, sexuality, or class, or of globalization or postcolonial theory, with significant exceptions.<sup>20</sup> There are several thematic or special issues that mark the changing face of the decade: the Winter 1993 issue devoted to essays addressing Jonathan Kozol's *Savage Inequalities*; one special issue on technology (Winter 1996); and a guest-edited issue on education and ecology (Spring 1994). Feminist theories, alongside of and drawing on postmodernism, represent a major influence in the 1990s.<sup>21</sup> The feminist writings are distinctly cross-disciplinary, within and across essays. One finds that while style, by the late 1990s,

19. See for example Bernadette Baker, "Child-centered Teaching, Redemption, and Educational Identities: A History of the Present," *Educational Theory* 48, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 155-74. Baker's essay is also noteworthy as one of the few Australian contributions, and for her historical and "student" focused scholarship. See also Greg Seals, "Objectively Yours, Michel Foucault," *Educational Theory* 47, no. 4 (Fall 1997): 59-66.

20. On race, see Alicia Rodriguez, "Latino Education, Latino Movement," *Educational Theory* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 381-400; Ana M. Martinez Aleman, "Que Culpa Tengo Yo? Performing Identity and College Teaching," *Educational Theory* 49, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 37-52; and C. Alejandra Elenes, "Reclaiming the Borderlands: Chicana/o Identity, Difference, and Critical Pedagogy," *Educational Theory* 47, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 359-76. On sexuality, see for example, Jonathan G. Silin, "What AIDS Teaches us About the Education of Children," *Educational Theory* 42, no. 3 (Summer 1992): 253-70. Silin's essay uses narrative as an early version of metissage, and is boldly open about his own homosexuality in what appears to transgress the stylistic norms of the journal. In 1995, see also Deborah Britzman, "Is There a Queer Pedagogy? Or Stop Reading Straight," *Educational Theory* 45, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 151-66. Theorist Frank Margonis deserves recognition for being a steadfast but lone contributor to the Marxist educational scholarship in *Educational Theory*, "Theories of Conviction: The Return of Marxist Theorizing," *Educational Theory* 47, no. 4 (Fall 1997); and Frank Margonis, "Marxism, Liberalism, and Educational Theory," *Educational Theory* 43, no. 4 (Fall 1993): 449-66. For an excellent analysis of how youth are framed within policy discourses, see Nancy Lesko, "Past, Present, and Future Conceptions of Adolescence," *Educational Theory* 46, no. 4 (Fall 1996): 453-72. Lesko is one of the few authors who intersects with postcolonial theory, combined with a discursive analysis, to look at Greene's burning question of schools and policy regarding youth. See also Audrey Thompson, "Surrogate Family Values: The Refeminization of Teaching," *Educational Theory* 47, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 315-40, which offers a refreshing analysis of discourses and educational history.

21. In the 1990s, *Educational Theory* featured many more worthy feminist essays than I can discuss in the space of this review essay. One might date the flurry of feminism to Susan Laird's feminist address, "Women and Gender in John Dewey's Philosophy of Education," *Educational Theory* 38, no. 1 (Winter 1988): 111-29; Nicholson's essay, "Postmodernism, Feminism, and Education: The Need for Solidarity," *Educational Theory* 39, no. 3 (Summer 1989): 197-205; and Leach's, "Mothers of In(ter)vention." Feminist poststructuralism is in grand form by 1991 with Patti Lather's essay "Deconstructing/Deconstructive Inquiry: The Politics of Knowing and Being Known," *Educational Theory* 41, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 153-73. By 1993, feminist analyses proliferate and continue to represent the cutting edge of poststructuralist philosophies as well as the self-reflexive genre of metissage.

is surely a shifting and contested terrain, the number of essays that reflect actual school experience — much less educational history or policy — remain few and far between.

Likely the major debate of the 1990s has to do with tensions between consensus views and dissensus views. The pragmatist and postmodern theories that shape educational theory hold different understandings of how communities and individuals — or organisms — participate and act in the social world. Pragmatism and postmodernism appear to take quite different views regarding the virtues of “consensus”: a pluralist and liberal democratic aspiration, often reflected in debates about dialogue, on the one hand; or instead a recognition of the “fundamental groundlessness” of mortal existence (which we might call the absolutism of tragedy). There is apparently significant overlap between pragmatism and postmodernism — particularly with respect to a rejection of a “metaphysics of presence”; a shared respect and indebtedness to semiotics, for “language as the tool of tools”; and a shared respect for how habits become institutionalized. Nonetheless I see significant tensions between the consensus and dissensus view; and between a pragmatist emphasis on the organism’s desire to restore equilibrium, and postmodernism’s embrace of contradiction and ambiguity. I will play with this tension, while recognizing that pragmatism and postmodernism are not enemies: both understand paradox and tragedy as elements of human consciousness.

#### TRAGIC OR NOT

In 1992, one educational philosopher asks whether or not a faith in the absolutism of tragedy is a necessary step in reaction to inevitable educational failures. In an essay titled “Tragic Absolutism in Education,” René Arcilla takes as a starting point Burbules’s worry that

As educators, our activities require us to hope for the best that may be possible.... Yet the further the process of education proceeds, the more aware we become of the ambivalent character of our successes and failures, the difficulty of attaining significant or lasting change, and the kinship of hope and disappointment. What should our attitude be as we continue in our educational endeavor?<sup>22</sup>

The recognition of the ironic paradox that we shall inevitably fail gives Arcilla pause. Given that education may well “change [our students’] lives tragically,” Arcilla asks “can [the educator/Burbules] possibly justify the hopes of educators to [students]? And if not to them, then to whom? Dare he still hope, knowing that he will be condemning some to hopelessness?” (*TAE*, 473).

In the Aristotelian account invoked in this debate, tragedy is defined as follows: As actors, we act in ignorance of the despair and failure that await us. Within the classic Greek model, the spectator is able to see that the actor is doomed. But the actor will discover this anguish only retrospectively. At this narrative turning point, the actor comes to embody not only the point of view of the [unconscious, unmindful] self who acts in ignorance, but as well the new awareness of his doomed

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22. Nicholas C. Burbules, quoted in René Vincente Arcilla, “Tragic Absolutism in Education,” *Educational Theory* 42, no. 4 (Fall 1992): 473. This article will be cited in the text as *TAE* for all subsequent references.

fate. This we can call an awareness of awareness: the uniquely human recognition of actions and consequences. The actor suddenly embodies a mirrored reflection as his own witness: within the tragedy the actor comes to share the spectator's gaze. The result is (at minimum) a dual perspective — a potent tension which, Arcilla will argue, produces history.

Arcilla does agree with Burbules that "we need to confront the dilemma without either succumbing to cynicism or despair, or denying it with yet another good cheer," and he further agrees that an attitude of humility is most certainly to be extolled. Yet Arcilla parts philosophical paths with Burbules when it comes to Burbules's "defense of pragmatism" as the

least destructive attitude to adopt toward educational tragedy...[Burbules] encourages pragmatists to "persevere without falling into...a faith in absolutes." He substitutes for such a faith not a quest for rationalistic certainty, but one directed towards "attaining, if possible, workable solutions...and decent human relations" (*TAE*, 473).

Drawing on a combination of existentialism and Rortyan philosophies, Arcilla argues instead that we might find some relief in cultivating a "faith" in the "absolutism" of tragedy. Arcilla commences his critique of the pragmatist stance by invoking Rorty's accusation that the protagonist holds an "unjustifiable hope." Arcilla writes,

What puzzles me...is that such pragmatists who sustain themselves on what the philosopher Richard Rorty calls an "unjustifiable hope" appear by Burbules's own account to be protagonists who have not yet realized the tragic sense of their endeavor, and who therefore are in no position to guide us through to the end of the tragedy. Although they are dedicatedly struggling against misfortune, their concern with winning a better fortune lacks an appreciation of why human suffering is not just a contingent fact, why it is in one of its dimensions a tragic fate (*TAE*, 474).

Arcilla's answer to this foundational dilemma is to advocate a hope — or, more accurately, a faith — in tragedy.<sup>23</sup> Thus we come to the central kernel of Arcilla's argument: that a faith in the absolutism of tragedy "should enable us to wager...less out of hope than out of an inability to live otherwise with oneself, that education can be a memorial to what was lost and still has to be redeemed" (*TAE*, 474).

Arcilla advocates a combination of existential and Rortyan frames to define three aspects of tragedy. The first feature of tragedy is manifest in the disappointing gap educators, or social activists, encounter between theory and practice. (This gap is closely related to Greene's call to invite "ugly toads" into our "imaginary gardens.") In other words, the hard work of education is to make sense of the disappointing gaps of social engagement — between self and other, between the view of the spectator and the view of the protagonist. For example, the gap between the spectator who sees tragedy coming, and the protagonist who does not, is a gap that is reconciled only "post-catastrophe." At that moment — closing the gap — the protagonist suddenly shares the perspective of the spectator, but ironically has merely come to occupy the position of a "helpless spectator" gazing at one's

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23. I call this a "faith in crisis," which means both that our previous traditions of faith have been shaken and that, as the postmodern pastiche subject we now must root our faith in the inevitability of crisis. Elsewhere, I develop what I call "critical hope," a hope rooted in a responsibility for our positions as spectators/actors/agents/subjects within the educational praxis of self-reflection and responsibility.

"irreversible deeds." Arcilla describes this as "the spectacle of human folly granted to those unable to intervene" (TAE, 474).

Second, the incongruity between the spectator and protagonist gives history meaning. History, Arcilla notes, is "produced by the "incongruity between the protagonist and spectator's points of view" (TAE, 475). Our engagement with the world alternates between "blind action alternating with helpless witnessing." Arcilla stresses that "history is a realization of hopelessness, mortal incapacity, of loss, of fate" (TAE, 475). Yet through the split-level tragic awareness of the subject, history is made, at the moment when one recognizes one's own tragic steps.

A third effect of tragedy is a longing for redemption. Both the spectator and the "protagonist-turned-spectator" engage in "blind action alternating with helpless witnessing." This is the absolutism of tragedy: we recognize horror, and feel that these "terms of living in the world...are unacceptable." We desire some alternative to this blind action and helpless witnessing — but must come to terms with our powerlessness: "[W]e realize that these powers build up our confidence only to set us up for tragedy." Arcilla concludes that we must, therefore, seek "redemption in humility."

To return to Arcilla's challenge to Burbules's pragmatism: Arcilla summarizes that to avoid a "gloomy fatalism" implied by the devastations of tragedy, the goal of pragmatists is to seek "outcomes," or at least "workable solutions...and decent human relations" (Burbules, quoted in Arcilla). Burbules must then, Arcilla argues, have a *faith not in success* but in a decent course of action *even if it is likely to fail*. This irony of holding hope in a decent course of action that is likely to fail is the breaking point at which Arcilla advocates an embrace of tragedy, a faith in its absolutism.

Although Arcilla draws more on Rorty and existentialism than on postmodernism, this embrace of tragedy resonates with Derrida's urging that we "embrace disappointment."<sup>24</sup> Although Arcilla does not invoke postmodernism, his account resonates with the pastiche subject. Further, the central place of the longing for redemption within tragedy resonates with readings of Lyotard in *Educational Theory*. A 1992 essay addressing "Lyotard on the Death of the Professor" outlines how the death of the subject, and of "God," implies as well a tragic fate for the professor.<sup>25</sup> The ill-fated professor not only cannot hope the best for his students, but must fear his own demise. Left then only with a longing for redemption, the professor can be seen as profoundly vulnerable. Suggesting a tie between Lyotard's and Derrida's ideas on tragedy, Zelia Gregouriou analyzes Derrida's notion of "circumfession" as an autobiographical metissage. Gregouriou describes what might be understood as the insertion of femininity into this equation when she describes responsibility as "vulnerable," invoking the inscription of text and body as

24. Jacques Derrida and François Ewald, "A Certain 'Madness' Must Watch Over Thinking," *Educational Theory* 45, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 273-91.

25. A.T. Nuyen, "Lyotard and the Death of the Professor," *Educational Theory* 42, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 26.

a missing element in Derrida's emphasis on textual practices.<sup>26</sup> Derrida does not advocate a necessary bridging of the "disappointing gap" by deconstruction, because deconstruction cannot offer a moral judgment.

In the 1996 *Educational Theory* interview with Derrida, the significance of the postpositivist emphasis on discourse surfaces and connects to the production of tragedy. The "shake-up" of an episteme beneath a critical gaze renders ethnological knowledge an ironic circulation of tragic production. According to Derrida, "neutral" measures do not pre-exist but are invented with "every sentence, with no guarantee, no absolute guard-rail. This is equivalent to saying that madness, a certain 'madness,' *must* watch each and every step, and eventually must watch over thinking, just like reason also does."<sup>27</sup> The interview concludes with Derrida advocating "disappointment," a disappointment that "promotes us to wonder why we were waiting." Why do we find ourselves waiting for theory to offer a kind of moral redemption or deliverance? Why are we awaiting Godot?

Derrida's urge to disappointment is an embrace of the absolutism of tragedy. Uncertainty and ambiguity are bound to plague efforts toward democratic education within a culture of massive contradictions of class and inequities. Derrida reiterates that deconstruction cannot "derive from and by itself a 'moral segment.'" But this does not mean that the deconstructive experience is not, does not practice, or deploy within itself, any responsibility, not even any ethico-political responsibility.<sup>28</sup>

From this moment on, the simplicity of tragedy fades: for although persons may all share the experience of some form of suffering, they differ drastically in visions of the right response to others' suffering, and in personal responses to one's own suffering. These differences assure that human encounters will engage conflict, dissensus, and disequilibrium as one comes tragically to doubt one's course of action.

The debate between paralogy and consensus may well cast the greatest shadow over this decade's history, reflecting how educational theorists understand difference in both praxis (that is, *how they write about education*) and in theory. According to one version of pragmatism, the organism seeks equilibrium. In contrast, the pastiche subject has become so accustomed to disjunctive contradictions that he has lost an ideal of balance. Perhaps the differences represented in the age of information are so multiple that difference indeed rules the roost as the new norm. In this next section I address J.M. Fritzman's essay, "Lyotard's Paralogy and Rorty's Pluralism: Their Differences and Pedagogical Implications," to illustrate some of these basic tensions between consensus and dissensus.<sup>29</sup> The essay also provides a contrast to Arcilla's emphasis on history and his embrace of Rorty.

26. Zelia Gregoriou, "Derrida's Responsibility: Autobiography, the Teaching of the Vulnerable, Diary Fragments," *Educational Theory* 45, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 311-36. This issue also contains two other essays on Derrida, Derrida and Ewald, "A Certain 'Madness'" and Denise Egéa-Kuehne, "Deconstruction Revisited and Derrida's Call for Academic Responsibility."

27. Derrida and Ewald, "A Certain 'Madness.'"

28. *Ibid.*, 291.

29. J.M. Fritzman, "Lyotard's Paralogy and Rorty's Pluralism: Their Differences and Pedagogical Implications," *Educational Theory* 40, no. 3 (Summer 1990).

## PARALOGY AND DIFFEREND: PRAGMATISM MEETS PASTICHE

Consensus is only a particular state of discussion, not its end. Its end, on the contrary, is paralogy.<sup>30</sup>

It is this paradoxical "doubled-movement" or "double-consciousness" regarding both the contestatory and reproductive dimensions of our efforts to make meaning that is the hallmark of postmodernism.<sup>31</sup>

Paralogy is by definition self-reflexive: the ground constantly shifts under one's feet, offering no foothold save a continuing series of negotiations, temporal stabilizations, and changes. Difference is the stuff of (post)modern life. Paralogy is defined as the "constant introduction of dissensus into consensus... postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our *ability to tolerate the incommensurable*."<sup>32</sup>

A postmodernist might be told, then, that the aim of education is constantly to introduce dissensus into consensus. Is this growth? Are there identifiable moments when dissensus crushes spirits, extinguishes hopes, or catalyzes tragedy? How might practices and theories of listening, self-reflexivity, and postmodern thought revise our recognition of differences?

Difference pushes educational philosophy to question how one defines democratic education; and who has the power to define a thing such as "democratic education." Further, if one's intellectual commitments lie in the critical tradition, one must choose whether to align oneself politically with the histories and practices that represent the sometimes totalizing and often homogenizing policies of democracy. Beneath the thumb of democracy, we may be unable to escape the hegemony of consensus. Consensus tends to push toward conciliation, treaties, and policies that are manipulated and distorted.<sup>33</sup> Instead, one recognizes the utter contingency of events.

It is crucial to recognize that the postmodern shift from positivism to paralogy has significant roots in very real historical struggles of bodies and discourses within educational theory. Leach's counter-history of PES, discussed earlier, addresses the gendered nature of philosophical work and the Western philosophical style that requires that one "not call attention, to not recognize one's own sexual embodiment of one's gender."<sup>34</sup> She returns us to 1978 when Kathryn Morgan took a "postmodern turn" at the PES conference in Indianapolis. At this meeting the women's caucus was established for political reasons in response to a 1978 Philosophy of Education keynote session on "career," in which Morgan "chose to address the philosophical issues of personal identity and the inherent pragmatic contradictions bound up in the very concept of a woman philosopher."<sup>35</sup> The event symbolizes the "turn" taken by

30. *Ibid.*, 372.

31. Lather, "Deconstructing/Deconstructive Inquiry."

32. Emphasis added, Lyotard quoted in Fritzman, "Lyotard's Paralogy and Rorty's Pluralism," 372.

33. In *Educational Theory*, there is considerable emphasis on British and American theorists and a great many interpretations of Dewey. One finds very little invocation of the traditions of critical theory.

34. Leach "Mothers of In[ter]vention," 290.

35. *Ibid.*

some and not by others as Morgan reportedly invited the audience members to consider the significance of their particular philosophical styles — which required a self-reflexivity that in turn required a recognition of one's gendered and otherwise marked identity and relation to legitimacy (an invitation apparently refused). Why Morgan could not be heard thrusts us directly into the politics of listening and debates over difference and dialogue.

A critique of Rorty's pragmatism highlights the shortcomings of ideals of dialogue, democracy, and consensus within educational theory — and apparently in professional practice. Fritzman accuses Rorty of neglecting Marx's point that the "tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living."<sup>36</sup> Although Rorty recognizes the "logical contingency" of criteria, Fritzman finds that he fails to emphasize

that historical practices could have been otherwise.... While Rorty allows that criteria emerge as the result of the congealment of human practices, he rejects the search for paralogies — *new ideas and concepts which upset previously existing solidarities*. Instead, *he hopes to discover "a way to balance competing claims"* in order to regulate conflicts, and he applauds John Rawls's ...[theory of] reflective equilibrium.<sup>37</sup>

This aptly summarizes the politics of difference that enact the tragedies of the 1990s: How do we adjudicate competing epistemological claims, and do these have any bearing on ethical directives?

In rejecting the search for paralogies, Rorty's impulse to defend equilibrium, or a "dynamic status quo," reveals in my estimation a weakness of this version of the pragmatist narratives. The theoretical attribution of a universal need or desire for equilibrium and harmony is compelling, yet pushes us into some naturalistic corners that in turn lead to demarcating highly contestable measures regarding what constitutes a "norm," what constitutes "healthy," "balanced," and "functioning" dynamics within or between organisms.

Offering an insightful sketch of how educational philosophies of difference potentially shape educational practice, Fritzman contrasts Rortyan and Lyotardian players:

While Rortyans will follow rules and obey norms, Lyotardians will choose strategies. Rortyans, recognizing only the logical contingency of the game and the rules which constitute that game, will play by the established rules of the game, will expect others also to observe these rules, and will cry "foul" when they are violated. *Lyotardians, regarding the game and its rules as both logically and existentially contingent, will be prepared to violate the rules of the game, thereby constituting and beginning a new game.*<sup>38</sup>

Paralogy names this willingness to recognize the perpetual contingency and change of agreements as the most knowable organic form. The basic structure of paralogy as a principle is more knowable than human action or the consequences of human action — human action is free largely to the extent that these are unknowable.

36. Marx quoted in Fritzman, "Lyotard's Paralogy and Rorty's Pluralism," 373.

37. *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

38. *Ibid.*, 375, emphasis added. Litigation is possible in response to damages; but "differends result from wrongs....difference would be a case of conflicts...that cannot be equitably resolved for the lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments...A wrong results from the fact that the rules of the genre of discourse by which one judges are not those of the judged genre," 376.

One must wonder how much correspondence there is between the postmodern version of shifting rules, and a pragmatist's attention to action defined as a mixture of habits and interruptions, without a certain *telos* (beyond a modified Darwinian desire for homeostasis as I will suggest below). How does this tension between paralogy — the possibility that there are no equitable criteria — and the ambiguity regarding norms, sit alongside the pragmatists' emphasis on language as the ultimate medium of social exchange? Language, for pragmatists, is seen as a tool that can be used for strategic ends or courses of action chosen from among many. Further, for the pragmatists disrupted habits in turn engender communication, growth, and transformation. Thus, the fact that the organism seeks equilibrium does not mean that the organism does not grow and change. One can thus ask, "Is equilibrium, however dynamic, adequate to the postmodern challenge of alterity and openness to the radically other?"<sup>39</sup>

The debates about dissensus versus consensus, paralogy versus conversation, and the ongoing 1980s and 1990s debates surrounding dialogue within education, push us to think about difference in practice. Yet the postmodern turn must not itself be reified; rather, one must keep turning the gaze over and over, relinquishing to new perspectival ground. Thus it is not as though postmodernism necessarily ensures a better form of freedom than the liberal Enlightenment emphasis on harmony and democracy. As Lather asks as early as 1991, "Is [postmodernism] more class-privileged, Eurocentric, white male discourse, 'the last ruse of the patriarchal university trying for power to fix the meaning, and contain the damage, of its own decline?'"<sup>40</sup> We are repelled back into tragedy through the doubled movement of a postmodernism that brings to bear the relentless gaze of self-reflexive paralogy; once again, the ground is torn from beneath one's feet.

Jim Garrison's analysis of the "dangers of listening" provides a finely wrought path amidst debates over consensus and dissensus, in an essay that represents a quite different reading of pragmatism.<sup>41</sup> Key to Dewey's notion of education is the communicative aspect involved in the social disruptions of habit toward which educational dialogue aims. Garrison addresses the "dangers of listening" as he outlines a neopragmatic approach to debates about educational dialogue. Is there such a thing as a pragmatic approach to paralogy? If so, one key may lie in listening — an emphasis not simply on voice, speech, or ideal dialogue, but on the radical implications of how we listen.

#### THE DANGERS OF LISTENING

In a "Deweyan Theory of Democratic Listening," Garrison notes that, despite the extensive tradition of attention to conversation and dialogue, there is an overall absence of attention to the fundamental role of "listening" within democratic theory. Essentially addressing the postpositivist ethical dilemma, which he encap-

39. Correspondence, Garrison to author, 1 July 2000.

40. Morris quoted in Lather, "Deconstructing/Deconstructive Inquiry," 155.

41. Jim Garrison, "Deweyan Theory of Democratic Listening," *Educational Theory* 46, no.4 (Fall 1996). This article will be cited as *DTD* in the text for all subsequent references.

ulates as "how we listen to difference," Garrison emphasizes the dangers inherent to listening. "Most theories of listening," he notes, "make the listener a passive participant" (*DTDL*, 432). Such theories are overdetermined by the "conduit" metaphor (which in turn is frequently compared to Freire's critique of the "banking model" of education). Central to Garrison's analysis is a critical stance regarding the limits of sympathy or empathy. Garrison quotes Dewey:

A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others; and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to breaking down barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity (*DTDL*, 430).

Garrison stresses that in the work of Mill and Habermas there is an assumption that "simply by assuring freedom of speech [we can secure] communication and democratic rationality." Yet, Garrison argues, freedom of speech does not ensure that people will listen. Though Mill speaks to the evil of the suppression of speech, Garrison asks further about the implications of being "forced to listen." Garrison draws then on Gadamer, with help from Dewey's "pragmatic insight that we embody beliefs in bodily habits of conduct that include emotion as an inseparable component" (*DTDL*, 432).

Garrison importantly notes that, along with the limits of sympathy, one must be conscious of the "dangers of being theorized or colonized while being 'assimilated' by some dominant cultural norm or standard, or being defined in someone else's terms" (*DTDL*, 433).

The dangers of listening aptly characterize the loss engendered in tragedy. It becomes necessary, as a listener, to "risk parts of our own interpretative forestructures....Remaining open is awkward" (*DTDL*, 433). Like the tragic actor before turning spectator, most often we cannot know ourselves. Through an ontological hermeneutics, or a slow and painstaking development of self-consciousness, we may come to (tragic) self-awareness. Yet the difficulty of developing self-awareness only underscores that if it is sometimes nearly impossible to know ourselves how can we possibly understand another?

In contrast to Gadamer's own position, Garrison argues that "difference, or rather the dialectic of difference and sameness," is a more valuable approach than simply to emphasize "cultural distance," as Gadamer does, as the basis of the "hermeneutic tension." Garrison contrasts "sentimental listening" to "hermeneutic listening," arguing that it is possible to "creatively *produce* understanding rather than merely *reproduce* it" (*DTDL*, 437).

The primary direction Garrison takes from Dewey at this point has to do with the potential of listening for the disruption of habits: "for Dewey [these are] historically effected unconscious and hidden habits" (*DTDL*, 440). He states further,

Intelligent inquiry begins in the openness of disrupted habitual functioning...For Dewey, "Reason [intelligent inquiry] pure of all influence from prior habit is a fiction." The background system of habits, of operative meanings...provide the interpretive forestructures necessary to inquiry. Indeed, consciousness occurs only when our habitual background of our habits is disrupted, or the environment to which our habits coordinate themselves changes" (*DTDL*, 444).

Here, however, we return to the tension between the pragmatists' emphasis on equilibrium and the emphasis on possibly irresolvable tension endemic to the notion of Lyotard's paralogy or differend. For Dewey, the "disruption of habitual functioning is a state of *need*" (*DTDL*, 445). This "disturbed equilibration...organic uneasiness and restlessness" forces the organism to seek "balance." Garrison extends this point to issues of "disruption of habitual function" that occur within dialogues across differences. How do participants resolve the tension, strangeness, in this case the tension between the need for equilibrium and doubt of one's interpretive forestructures? It seems to me that the pragmatist model (in some contrast to the Gadamarian model in the dangers of listening) requires a restoration of equilibrium.

While understanding that in response to a dialogue that creates conflict, one will desire resolution and equilibration, one must ask, Is the desire or search for equilibrium always possible or indeed always the best or most productive response? Isn't part of the inheritance of Western rationality precisely an emphasis on consensus that tends to erase dissensus? What Garrison is after in emphasizing the "dangers of listening" is fundamentally the willingness to be changed. I would argue that one form of this openness to change is the willingness to live in a kind of ambiguity which, precisely, is not characterized by a comforting equilibrium across or between differences. Here lies, perhaps, a key distinction between a Rortyan and more critical version of pragmatism.

Experience is constituted by flow and inhibitions. Leonard Waks argues that for Dewey's reflex arc, "inhibition-transformation parallels inquiry in Peirce."<sup>42</sup> Waks stresses the "equilibrium" required by the disrupted organism: "Living is maintaining a dynamic equilibrium with environing conditions. Dewey follows Peirce closely here: the state of disturbed equilibrium constitutes need." This appeal to equilibrium — which draws on a narrative tending toward biological determinism — reflects another dimension of the democratic and pluralist faith in consensus.

Waks details as well pragmatism's struggles with its relation to "science." He offers a close analysis of Dewey's philosophical stance on a certain ideal of science (as an alternative to a Cartesian notion of reason, for example). Waks's essay traces the roots of Deweyan experimentalism in Peirce's "doubt-belief theory of inquiry." On Peirce's account, it is the nature of humans to attempt to escape the "sensation of doubt" (*EFE*, 10). Doubt, according to Peirce, is an "uneasy state from which we struggle to free ourselves." We attempt to free ourselves through inquiry, defined as a form of action; inquiry turns out to be the primary avenue by which to escape doubt.

If inquiry is the path toward restoration of equilibrium, one is also challenged to discern which method of inquiry "best settles doubts and fixes habits that restore freedom in action" (*EFE*, 10). Peirce "rejects the methods of tenacity, authority, and reason." Instead, "only a method applicable to all topics, and imposing the same results on all people if sufficiently persisted in, can assure release from the irritation

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42. Leonard J. Waks, "Experimentalism and the Flow of Experience," *Educational Theory* 48, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 11. This essay will be cited as *EFE* in the text for all subsequent references.

of doubt. This is the method of *science*" (*EFE*, 10). Waks states that Dewey's experimentalism adopts Peirce's "pattern of inquiry." Thus the thesis of Waks's essay: how Dewey's pragmatism juggles an ideal of scientific inquiry. (Despite the ideal of science underlying Deweyan pragmatism, it is crucial to note that Dewey nonetheless recognized that in any historical moment, these scientific practices are institutionalized. In their particular human and social institutionalization — habits formed through cultural accretion, custom, tradition, and specific mannerisms and languages — we encounter the oppressive aspects of science in practice.)

One might challenge the naturalistic model of holism by asking such questions as: Who or what is responsible for the interruption or conflicts that intervene in the flow of experience? What tools and resources are provided to individuals to revive their flow of experience in the face of unsympathetic institutionalizations of scientific, cultural, or institutional "habits?"

Feminist poststructuralism picks up these kinds of questions, pushing the possible limits of pragmatism in search for analyses of the contradictions of systematic oppression materialized in our lived historical and social experience.

In stark contrast, by 1993 one finds within the covers of *Educational Theory* increasing numbers of essays that are skeptical about the promise of discourses of plurality and equity, and hence skeptical about the value of consensus as an ideal goal. Indicative of such a stance, in 1993 Mary Bryson and Suzanne de Castell criticize the discourses and institutionalized practices surrounding the injection of "gender" and "equity" into education.<sup>43</sup> They are critical of "institutionalized programs [as] a state of sameness...equality of opportunity which serves the purpose of equipping 'diverse student bodies' with the *habitus* universalized as normative." Absent from gender equity policies and practices, they argue, is any "poststructuralist deconstruction of traditional gendered subjectivity." Such institutionalized discourses cannot recognize that they are but a "sign," an "effect" of discursive regimes.<sup>44</sup> Bryson and de Castell are asking that educational theorists and practitioners be able to identify the "fundamental but unrecognized internal contradictions" that define our institutionalized practices and discourses.

This feminist poststructuralist critique reflects the push toward paralogy. And if committed to paralogy, we may have to learn to live in a constant state of unease, or disequilibrium — which describes the pastiche subject. Feminist poststructuralism, and an acute awareness of materialism, reconfigures the scientific determinism that creeps into some educational theories. The pragmatic faith in science — albeit an unrealized ideal — offers an appropriate segue to diverse feminist analyses of scientific method and epistemology, and the engaged practice I refer to here as "metissage."

43. Mary Bryson and Suzanne de Castell, "En/Gendering Equity: On Some Paradoxical Consequences of Institutionalized Programs of Emancipation," *Educational Theory* 43, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 341-55.

44. *Ibid.*, 345.

## METISSAGE

Especially after 1996 in *Educational Theory*, one finds essays that take up the challenge of self-reflexivity, problematizing their disciplinary positioning in relation to their selected object of "inquiry" and gaze. Ironically, tragedy is not merely a lived experience but a representational reflection of experience, resulting from the choices of the actor.<sup>45</sup> In this hall of mirrors, loss and grief multiply through contested images and simulacra. The engagement of poststructuralist work is largely due to pioneering essays in the early 1990s penned by such authors as Bryson and de Castell, Lather, and Leach.

Metissage, as described in Mark Zuss's 1997 essay, is a "postmodern life-writing experiment [which offers] reflexive, tentative, and deliberately unfinalized explorations....their pedagogical import is compatible with a critical and feminist pragmatism; they constitute sites for a refusal of foundational, essentialist, and representational concepts and practices."<sup>46</sup> A concept drawn from the work of Françoise Lionnet, metissage "depicts autobiographical production as 'metissage,' a complex weave of linguistic, racial, and gendered selves...metis is 'the site of undecidability and indeterminacy.'"<sup>47</sup>

Metissage pushes the writer and reader to encounter the troubled terrain of "cross-cultural dialogues," and the frequently missed aims of "progressive," "liberatory," or democratic education. Metissage necessarily highlights the inevitable tragedies that develop within academic research and social relations. Those essays in *Educational Theory* that engage metissage are not necessarily feminist, though many are.<sup>48</sup>

Numerous feminist and poststructuralist authors have radically opened up educational theory, allowing fresh air into the stuffy halls as noted by Greene in 1991. A few examples from the 1990s have been addressed throughout the present review essay. There are other examples: Linda Nicholson's 1989 essay continues to be referenced in *Educational Theory* and many other journals. In 1990 Mary Leach and Bronwyn Davies pioneered philosophical engagements of postmodernism and gender studies in their essay "Crossing the Boundaries: Educational Thought and Gender Equity."<sup>49</sup> Leach and Davies push the boundaries of educational theory by

45. Of course such debates date far earlier and epistemological and moral debates have myriad ancient and traditional formations. For Dewey, the influence of C.S. Peirce clearly demonstrates an emphasis on the social medium of language and communication, specifically sign and symbol systems. Thus the pragmatists' articulations also align in uncanny ways with "postmodern" thought.

46. Mark Zuss, "Strategies of Representation: Autobiographical Metissage and Critical Pragmatism," *Educational Theory* 47, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 165.

47. *Ibid.*, 165-66.

48. Other examples include: Dennis L. Carlson, "Conflict and Change in the Discourse on Sexuality Education (Fall 1991): 343-59; C. Alejandra Elenes, "Reclaiming the Borderlands: Chicana/o Identity, Difference, and Critical Pedagogy" *Educational Theory* 47, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 359-76; Silin, "What AIDS Teaches us About the Education of Children"; and Greene, "A Response to Beck, Giarelli/Chambliss, Leach, Tozer and Macmillan."

49. Mary Leach and Bronwyn Davies, "Crossing the Boundaries: Educational Thought and Gender Equity," *Educational Theory* 40, no 3 (Summer 1990): 321-32.

drawing on postmodern and feminist studies not frequently cited in *Educational Theory*. In this essay, they challenge modern and liberal conceptions of identity as autonomous and static. Also reflecting educational theory's radical turn toward postcolonial and postmodern theories, Lather's 1991 essay offers a rereading of scientific inquiry. What is significant here are the multiple levels of inquiry that occur within what I call metissage. Lather, for example, offers a close analysis of the "ethnographic moment." She offers examples of how educational ethnographies differently manifest a "deconstructive emphasis on writing, a focus on the textual staging of knowledge, a focus on the social relations of the research itself."<sup>50</sup>

Carrying on these directions, I want to highlight essays by Leslie Roman and Alison Jones because these two essays reflect metissage in its most incisive form, enacting precisely what Lather and many others were calling for throughout the decade.<sup>51</sup> The essays by Roman and by Jones demonstrate specifically the tripled gaze of metissage.

Common to such analyses is an acknowledgement of a "fundamental groundlessness," in the form of lingering doubts regarding whether one's theories or practices avoid "exploiting subordinated groups."<sup>52</sup> Lather's pioneering 1991 question, "What would a sociological project look like that was not a technology of regulation and surveillance?" provides the overarching query to the genre of metissage.<sup>53</sup>

These essays directly engage in a self-reflective analysis of their own practice as a teacher or researcher. Such self-reflexive scholarly work is not synonymous with the "personal" or "anecdotal." In the cases I consider metissage, the text of one's experience is used for a "tripling" — and not just a doubling — of gaze. The writing self has as its object not merely the "studied" object (namely, the researched person or taught student); in addition, one looks at two selves: the self that is writing, and who thereby exerts power over the subject as the "author"; and the representation of oneself engaged in self-reflection (for example, Roman writes self-reflexively about the self who engaged in research at the time the research was conducted, yet also about the self who is — at a later time — reflecting upon and writing about that research. Thus, one has multiple levels of experience or text that one examines: the researched subject, the engaged researcher, and the writing self. Effective metissage is forged with potent theoretical and interdisciplinary sophistication. These authors engage contemporary sociology, ethnography, and colonial studies, as well as critical theory and philosophy.

50. Lather, "Deconstructing/Deconstructive Inquiry," 155.

51. Leslie Roman, "Double Exposure: The Politics of Feminist Materialist Ethnography," *Educational Theory* 43, no. 3 (Summer 1993) and Alison Jones, "The Limits of Cross-Cultural Dialogue: Pedagogy, Desire, and Absolutism in the Classroom," *Educational Theory* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 299-316. This latter article will be cited as *LCCD* in the text for all subsequent references.

52. Roman, "Double Exposure," 281.

53. Lather, "Deconstructing/Deconstructive Inquiry," 156.

Essays that engage metissage are often marked by the use of “narrative,” a stylistic variation from the majority of essays in *Educational Theory*. We recall Greene’s remarks in 1991, reflecting her own stylistic struggles over the decades — that the use of narrative invites criticism of not doing “proper philosophy” — or, one may ask, perhaps not proper *theory*. Yet the self-reflexive gaze directed at the enigma of oneself in relation to the text, to any origin moment, and inevitable hopes for redemption in the face of disappointment — these directives outlined by Derrida and Lyotard within the pages of *Educational Theory* are enacted by the metissage essays. Within these essays, the purpose of the descriptive mode is to use a theoretical lens to critique the author’s relation to the object of inquiry.

Metissage, in sum, highlights the seams and breakdowns of discourses.

Roman’s essay offers an example of the contradictions that define gendered subjectivity and efforts to “research” real subjects in the field. Roman takes us through the truncated journeys of her torn relationship to the young adolescent punk scene of 1981 in the town of Jamison, Wisconsin. (As noted earlier, it is important that Roman writes at significant temporal distance from the 1981 experience.) Roman’s attempt at “double exposure,” a form of “feminist materialist ethnography,” allows the reader not only to see clearly the seams of academic social science research and ethnography. The essay also allows the reader to witness the author’s struggle with her own relation to these interactions with young punk women, the ethical and political dilemmas she faced in attempting to conduct her research while maintaining integrity with regard to these women, and her attempt to make sense of her “findings.” The reader is also able to witness the author’s self-reflexive relation to the text she is producing in 1993, more than a decade after the research was conducted. Thus, on several levels, the politics of representation are highlighted — how meaning and text are used to represent experience and knowledge in ways that raise real dilemmas.

This hall of mirrors approach to ethnography is indicative of metissage. The self-reflexivity includes the disturbing, underlying question: Is the researcher’s relation to these objects of inquiry exploitative? My purpose in referencing Roman’s essay is to highlight the shifting epistemological approach embraced by pioneering authors who are working within a poststructuralist tradition that is informed by paralogy. Rather than summarize the entire essay, I note several instances where we are intentionally shown the “seams” and ruptures that informed Roman’s work.

One such seam is revealed as she discusses her reaction to learning of her research subjects’ histories of family violence and sexual abuse. Roman writes, “although the information was told to me in the strictest of confidence, in these cases I suspected that I had ethical and possibly legal obligations to inform the appropriate authorities.” Having verified her legal obligation, Roman notified the women of her obligation. She concludes, “it was not easy, however, to break the initial confidence of the young women in order to act in accordance with what I believed to be my ethical and legal responsibilities to break the silence about potentially ongoing

abuse."<sup>54</sup> We are not told of how her decision affected her relationship to the young women.

Throughout Roman's analysis the dilemma threads — the difficulty of engaging feminist materialist ethnography with subjects who embody contradictory accounts and actions in regard to their gender oppression. There are numerous examples of how the researcher's work with these young women raised problems in the lives of the young women's relationships to their boyfriends. Yet there are also instances where the researcher reveals that, despite having assumed a sense of trust between herself and the women and a shared interpretation of data, on occasion the young women would express severe disagreement with the researcher's stance.

For example, early in her research Roman witnesses what she sees as a kind of gendered battering on a punk dance floor. Several of her female subjects agree with her analysis of this sexist treatment. Yet one day, when Roman is observing a classroom with mixed women and men, she offers up the example of the women's victimization on the dance floor, and the women in the classroom become publicly angry, disagreeing with Roman's analysis. In the heated exchange (which takes place in front of an audience of punk young men) paralogy is powerfully exemplified. What we see is that interpretations of events shift and vary depending on the audience. In this case, when the young women felt that Roman's analysis of their victimization misrepresented their own experience to the young men, the women shifted their earlier interpretation. Roman reflects that she had to recognize her own misassumptions about shared interpretations and perceptions. Significantly, she notes that there were important differences in their understandings of what gender equality means. This echoes Bryson and deCastell's critique, in the same issue, of how difficult it is to engage effectively a discourse regarding an issue such as gender equity. It also emphasizes paralogy at work: There was no easy consensus — in fact, even if the researcher had come to count on a consensus between herself and her subjects, that consensus might be powerfully disrupted within another context.

In this way, paralogy — the constant introduction of dissensus into theoretical and practical work aiming toward democratic ideals — reconfigures the very project of academic research and, in this case, reshapes the researcher's ethical relation to the subjects of her research. Roman's analysis of double exposure requires, in sum, metissage in order to convey the contradictions inherent to theoretical and academic research, and the troubled practice of representing research as if it is a coherent whole. In fact, there is not a happy ending. What we are able to witness in the metissage are the tragedies encountered within educational practice. Further, we are able to see the discursive effects of tragedy as the actor (in this case, the researcher) comes to recognize her own role as herself a *catalyst* of tragic narratives despite the fact that her "feminist" ethnography seeks, precisely, to fight against the exploitation of a subordinated group.

As I noted, by 1996 one finds an increasing number of essays in *Educational Theory* that engage metissage and push the boundaries of educational theories and

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54. Roman, "Double Exposure," 291.

practices within the postpositivist climate. In 1999, we find an essay that enacts all the features of tragedy, pastiche, metissage, and triple exposure thus far described.

"THE LIMITS OF CROSS-CULTURAL DIALOGUE": METISSAGE IN ACTION

Alison Jones's essay on the "Limits of Cross-Cultural Dialogue" demonstrates the poststructuralist skepticism regarding notions of consensus and dialogue. Provocatively extending the profound and biting questions that problematize "dialogue," Jones offers a telling example of how dialogue breaks down. As explored throughout this essay, tragedy cannot be escaped: we cause our students "a certain madness," as Derrida describes, the inevitably tragic effect of being a pastiche subject encountering contradictory institutionalized norms conflicting with multiple engagements with "others" and oneself in the educational terrain. Jones's essay explicitly references the theme of pastiche as well, when she urges that a "contemporary sensibility demands and encourages *pastiche*, mix, multiple engagements, and their serious, as well as joyful, play of difference" (*LCCD*, 305, emphasis added).

One radical educational ideal, traced across pragmatism, existentialism, and postmodernism throughout this present review essay, upholds a faith in the power of change: that the potential witnessing of the other might yield a shift or radical change in one's capacity to hear difference. Jones echoes Garrison's emphasis on the potential of radical openness in listening: "On models of pedagogy-as-dialogue (or vice-versa), all critical pedagogical subjects are 'open' to others" (*LCCD*, 305). One remains open and awkward, vulnerable to radical change. But Jones importantly emphasizes, "what is most significant to the other's movements across the rocky terrains... is not the *telling* but the *hearing* of stories. Most important in educational dialogue is not the *speaking voice*, but the *voice heard*" (*LCCD*, 307).

Jones essentially traces a tragedy as she documents the social and historical significance of this failure of listening. In the feminist education course in question, co-taught with her colleague Kuni Jenkins in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the educators organize the course into two "separatist" streams, Maori (Indigenous) and Pakeha (white).<sup>55</sup> While Maori students welcomed the change, the Pakeha women felt "shortchanged." Jones details a kind of "corruption" of potential growth when the white students fall into a myopic trap of self-pity rather than attending to the significance of separatist cultural space within the colonial context of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Pakeha students in particular grieve and rage against their loss of "access" to the Maori women and the "knowledge" or type of "object" the Maori women represent to the Pakeha. On the other hand, "For Maori and Pacific Islander students, it appeared that segregation from their Pakeha peers was an effective, even necessary, condition for a powerful and positive educational experience" (*LCCD*, 303).

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55. During the years they had taught the course previously, "Maori students [had] said that the words, assumptions, and interests of the Pakeha students and lecturer continued to dominate, despite genuine attempts to encourage an open and democratic classroom," 300. There is a breakdown of traditional power and dominance as agency shifts from White (Pakeha) women to Maori women when "in the interests of participatory and critical pedagogy, the ninety nearly all women students would be divided on the basis of ethnicity for three quarters of the classes. In this 1997 course, there would be two roughly equal sized groups one for Maori and Pacific Islands students, and one for the others, mostly Pakeha [white] students," 301.

Jones analyzes the failure of the structural power shift to shift the white students' sense of privileged access:

In an interesting act of reversal, many of the Pakeha students inverted the old dualism of Pakeha and Maori...seeing themselves as on the "outside." Pakeha students talked about being "excluded," a "left-over," and "other." They felt left out of something. One Maori student made the perceptive remark that there was a reversal as to what counts as knowledge and who was having it (*LCCD*, 311).

Jones shows how the potential for the privileged to *actually hear* is interrupted by the self-centered reproduction of dominant relations. In this case, the Pakeha "reproduces the exclusion of the subaltern" by actually claiming as synonymous (with colonization) their own (white) exclusion from the marginalized.

Insightfully naming the paradox of trying to know the other, particularly within a fraught colonial relation, Jones points out that

their cannibal desire to know the other through being taught or fed by her is simultaneously a refusal to know. It is not only a refusal to recognize one's own implication....it is also a resistance to the possibility that the other cannot or might not want to be "known" or consumed by them, or to teach them (*LCCD*, 311).

Jones powerfully summarizes the tensions and contradictions faced in dislodging the scar tissues of previous consumptions.

Pushed to recognize when listening fails, one sees, as Bryson and DeCastell cautioned, that even "successful" shifts in institutional legitimacy and access can promise no significant change at all. The particular stagnancy Jones highlights is when the privileged group reproduces the original hierarchy: in this case, the "real exclusion here is not that of the subordinate at all. It is the dominant group's exclusion from — their inability to hear — the voice of the marginalized. This silence in the ears of the powerful is misrecognized as the silence of the subaltern" (*LCCD*, 307).

But she does not merely point a finger. Indicative of metissage, the author reflects on her own experiences, undergoing a loss analogous to the students, namely, her own "confusion and disappointment...a profound sense of grief and loss" when she similarly encounters the disruption of her flow of experience and the displacement of colonial relations. Jones reflects on her sociohistorical identification with the students she has essentially "criticized" in this essay:

I am not personally unfamiliar with the sense of confusion and disappointment expressed by the Pakeha students about the divided course structure. When my Maori teaching colleagues recently decided to form their own university department separate from the one I (and other Pakeha) had shared with them, I experienced a profound sense of grief and loss. Their positive and historically significant institutional move, which I supported politically, threw me into emotional turmoil (*LCCD*, 303).

Enacting metissage and reflecting on her own *written* representation of the events, she writes,

Several romances weave their way through this tale. One is obviously the cozy togetherness invoked in this rather saccharine and uncritical gloss on Maori and Pacific Islands students' classroom dialogue. The romance that interests me most here...is the colonizer's infatuation with access to and unity with the other, expressed in the annoyed words of the Pakeha students who felt cheated of such "coming together" (*LCCD*, 310).

Yet tragedy, more than romance, seems to prevail — the next section of the essay is titled "Learning Absolution." Here Jones looks critically at "confessions of

ignorance," which are "meant to signal an openness, a lack of prejudice, a pure 'desire to know' on the part of the colonizer or dominant subject" (*LCCD*, 312). Of course, this is the perennial dilemma of the ethnographer too. Yet the confession of ignorance turns out to be yet another way to "reproduce power." She writes, "The aspect of desire for redemption that concerns me most... is not so much in empathetic *knowing*, based in *confessing ignorance*, and the desire to be saved from having to suffer that sorry state" (*LCCD*, 312).

#### TOWARD (IN)CONCLUSION

As both pragmatists and postmodernists attest, the disruptions of comfortable habits allow us to experience and to witness the dynamic of change, the injection of disharmonies whose effects we cannot know. The moral lesson to be gained — if any — from this review essay is that one must live in the sense of disequilibrium. This may leave us in the tragic place where I began this review: like the educator who simply hopes for a course of decent action, one promises to reason a course of action, yet may be forced in the end to offer unjustifiable hopes for himself and to his students. The caring or politically conscious educator is faced with "alternating blind witnessing with helpless action" (*TAE*, 475).

To write self-reflexively is a complex endeavor, if done well. It is — all at once — to write about the other (the other being simply a reflection of the mirrors of one's own consciousness); yet to write with awareness of what the other reveals about one's own shortcomings, as well revealing what one cannot know about the other. Instead of claiming knowledge, one is then forced (in the inevitable tragic break) into a self-reflexive stance in relation to oneself as multiple reflections of the other consciousness. In effect, we cannot touch our finger to reality any more than we claim to have empirical evidence of faith. We may well be self-deceiving or acting in bad faith if we attribute "truth" to any version of this telling. So, for instance, Jones cannot rest comfortably with the veracity of any of the tales she is aware of telling. As she herself states, "In a deliberately disingenuous style, here I let the students 'speak for themselves' about the situation" (*LCCD*, 301).

As I said early in this essay, the good news is that the pastiche subject (whether the author or the subject of theory's gaze) is skeptical that "some healthy linguistic normality exists." This is good news because what educators offer is a constant rereading of norms, critical skills passed on to others who care to disrupt the narratives and representations that uphold the unjust world. The bad news is that "postmodernism" gets accused of driving away any hope. Yet if a "fundamental groundlessness" must be accepted, perhaps giving up hope is a fruitful directive.

Appropriate to conclude this essay is A.T. Nuyen's summary of educational theorists' different interpretations of Lyotard in his essay "Lyotard on the Death of the Professor."<sup>56</sup> Fritzman, you recall, embraces Lyotard's educational model as one that overcomes the "deficiencies of Rortyan pluralism." As Nuyen reads Fritzman, "Rorty (and indirectly Habermas) is unduly optimistic about the prospect of

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56. A.T. Nuyen, "Lyotard on the Death of the Professor."

consensus...[Rorty's] pursuit of consensus can be 'terroristic.'" This being the case, instead of constructing a curriculum based on the ideal of social consensus, we should teach "students to be sensitive to the inevitable presence of differends."<sup>57</sup> Another reading of Lyotard is John Murphy's 1988 *Educational Theory* essay: "postmodernists have never stated that establishing norms is impossible, but only that they originate in language use....Postmodernist education does not encourage normlessness, but...requires that persons assume responsibility for truth."<sup>58</sup> Finally, Nuyen quotes Carol Nicholson's 1989 *ET* essay, in which Nicholson writes, "the death of metanarratives will not prevent [educators] from trying to develop students' abilities to read and interpret texts, think critically, and communicate effectively in natural as well as computer languages."<sup>59</sup>

Whether one takes the perspective of the "driftless" pastiche subject or the classic protagonist of tragedy, the experience of uprooted and toppled identities creates a crisis of de-familiarization. Institutionalized habits and norms become random social terms: "it could be otherwise." Ideally, this disequilibrium is productive of growth. But when one faces tragedies of loss, legitimacy and reasonableness are in crisis. Either the professor is dead, or is a failed savior, or there is some other dangling modifier to describe the inevitable disasters that accompany productive change. And whether we find our balance or not, at least we have finally invited some kinds of toads into these imaginary gardens.

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57. *Ibid.*, 27.

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*, 28.