

POPULAR FILM AND ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE:
TOWARD A CRITICAL FEMINIST PEDAGOGY OF IDENTITY AND DESIRE

by

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ABSTRACT

My identity as a white woman ESL teacher has been structured partly through movies I saw in my youth. More recently in the late 1990s, a film with ESL, *The King and I* (1956), was on Japanese television two years in a row while I was teaching there. I found that very interesting and began asking questions regarding the influences that popular film may have on real ESL teachers and students. The study questions how films contribute to ESL in terms of teacher and student identities and desires.

To explore this question, I collected three forms of data: 24 films with ESL; post-secondary ESL teacher and student responses to watching two films with ESL; and memories of films from my youth. A framework of critical and feminist pedagogy, including work in identity and ESL, and postcolonial, cultural, and feminist studies informed the analysis. I analyzed the data in relation to discourses of desire and the body as a socially constructed site of racial and gender identification.

From the film data, I made the case that particular tropes, initiations, and signs construct reel ESL, such as white female teachers as upholders of particular colonial identities. From the teacher and student data, I found that readers engage with cinematic meanings in a space of liminality, that is, not quite *in* the movie but not quite in themselves. Readers by-pass their race, gender, age, and occupation to access the cinematic body as politically engaged and disrupting the status quo. From the memory data, I argued that through the seemingly innocent practice of watching movies, a world of racialized and gendered desire was settling in and making itself comfortable.

The study is positioned in a critical feminist pedagogy of multiliteracies. Here, diverse sites of meaning-making strengthen and disrupt the desires and identities of ESL.

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DEDICATION

For my son John, who came along unexpectedly in the second year of doctoral work and who has given me an understanding of language learning, loving, and becoming that I would otherwise have never known.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION:

What were the games of truth by which human beings came to see themselves as desiring individuals?

(Foucault, 1978, p. 7)

It is in the social world that we learn what is desirable, which desires are appropriate for which kinds of people, and which desires are forbidden.

(Cameron & Kulick, 2003, p. 131)

Whatever else we do, we should be attractive and desirable to men, and, ideally, our sexuality should be given to one man and our emotional energy directed at him and the children of the marriage. This message comes to us from a wide range of sources, for instance, children's books, women's magazines, religions, the advertising industry, romance, television, the cinema . . .

(Weedon, 1987, p. 3)

I love going to the movies and have since I was a child. My identity as a white women ESL teacher has been structured in part through cinematic discourses of race, gender and pedagogical relationships, particularly those in Hollywood and independent films I saw as I was growing up. More recently in the late 1990s, I watched *The King and I* (1956) with Deborah Kerr and Yul Brynner on Japanese public television two years in a row while I was teaching there. My desire to know why a story about a white ESL teacher and an Asian king in 1870s Siam would interest a Japanese audience compelled me to pursue research with popular films with ESL.

In this chapter, I first outline identity work that foregrounds the present study. Following that, I summarize the meanings of desire in education as they relate to this inquiry. The third section introduces two terms from cultural studies that are used throughout the document. In the final section, I map out the study, suggesting its significance and assumptions, and outline the research questions and organization.

1.1 Identity and ESL

Social categories of identification such as sexuality, race, and gender were introduced to ESL over a decade ago with Nelson's (1993) article that raised questions concerning gay professional identity. Since then, there has been much work on ESL and identity, summarized by Norton (in press), who first argued for a social understanding of identity and investment and their links to language learning (Norton Peirce, 1995). Just two years after Nelson's article, a special issue of the *TESOL Quarterly* on identity and language learning edited by Norton (1997) was published. Included here was a groundbreaking article concerning race and non/native teacher identity by Amin (1997). On the heels of this volume was another *TESOL Quarterly* special issue on critical pedagogies

edited by Pennycook (1999). It also took up questions of identity, including Nelson's (1999) work with sexuality in the ESL classroom.

The question of race, non/nativeness, and identity in ESL continued to be debated by Amin (2001) and Butler (2001). Meanwhile Kubota (1999a, 1999b, 2001, 2002) was making the case for the discursive constructions of race and racism in TESOL, while I argued for the importance of reflexivity in white teachers' racial experiences in order to locate third spaces between self/other positions (Mackie, 2003). More recently, Norton and Toohey's (2004) edited volume on critical language learning pedagogies features a number of studies on identity. Kubota (2004) argues against the politics of colour-blindness stemming from liberal multiculturalism in TESOL and for more advocacy by white/center teachers for periphery students. Another argument regarding center/periphery locations is suggested by Canagarajah (2004). He advocates the notion of classroom "safe houses that help students keep alive suppressed identities and discourses" (p. 132) in order to support multivocal literacies. Similarly, Stein's (2004) study of South African school children argues for multimodal resources such as photography, doll-making, and oral story telling to engage and foster the multiplicity of languages, literacies, and identities in a complex setting.

Regarding popular culture and identity, Norton's (2000) work with immigrant women in Canada points out the importance of popular cultural knowledge in gaining access to workplace communication. "Eva", a participant in the study, does not know Bart Simpson (a popular character in an animated American sit-com), and is thus "positioned as someone strange" (p. 130). Eva is silenced through lack of cultural knowledge which positions Eva's interlocutor, her co-worker Gail, as the knower and

therefore more powerful than Eva (p. 130). In other work, Norton's (2001) study of teen magazines questions whether poststructural feminism's notion of multiple subjectivities for women has really taken hold outside academia where teenage girls struggle with contradictory notions of identity. In their work with ESL school children and Archie comics, Norton and Vanderheyden (2004) found that comics are both a resource for multimodal reading practices as well as for popular cultural knowledge. This knowledge in turn leads to increased conversation with English first language students and other ESL students. Norton and Vanderheyden (2004) and Duff (2001) urge educators to adopt popular cultural texts as legitimate school material.

Concerning popular culture and racial identity, Dolby (2001) and Ibrahim's (1999) studies illustrate how black African students in South Africa and Canada respectively construct black identity through popular cultural texts such as hip-hop, sports and associated superstars. In work with popular films, I have drawn on cinematic representations of ESL teachers to question racial discourses of whiteness (1998, 2003). An implicit comment of the studies in popular culture is that neglecting it as a legitimate resource for identity, desire, and language learning and teaching severely limits theories and practices, and undermines participants' knowledge of the popular.

1.2 Desire and Education

I have used the word desire in the above section on identity. But what is desire and where does it come into play in education? The introductory quotes to the chapter underscore the social structuring of desire, "the games of truth" Foucault (1978) questions. The locations of the desirable and desire's boundaries are found in the social world as Cameron and Kulick (2003) note, and more specifically, for heterosexual

women, in cultural texts such as children's books, advertisements, cinema and others that Weedon (1987) points to. We learn about desire through popular culture, and it is intimately connected to questions of identity. Indeed, as Dolby (2001), hooks (1996), Ibrahim (1999), Kelly, (1997), Norton (1997, 2000), Norton and Vanderheyden (2004), and Pennycook (1998, 2001, 2004) point out, popular culture may impact more on desire, identity and language learning and teaching than resources and theories in formal schooling.

Desire is often associated with lust and while this meaning is helpful to the present study, a broader framework will support the data. In Harper's (1997a) study of multi-racial adolescent girls responding to feminist avant-garde writing, desire is defined as "who one wishes to have" (p. 142) while identification is "who one wishes to be" (p. 142). The alternative texts she offered the six girls threatened their heterosexuality, leading to a desire to construct themselves as young heterosexual women (1998, p. 224) and as seemingly unaffected by gender, race, and class (p. 223, p. 225). However, in Rockhill's study (1987) of adult women learning literacy, desire and identification are not this easily separated. Women in Rockhill's study desired, through education, a better job and a better life. They wanted to move from the working class to the middle class (pp. 344-347). Their desire "to be" middle class women was strongly linked to their desire "to have" a better job. In another study of women returning to school in adult basic education courses, Luttrell (1996) found that what the women desired through their education was to be better mothers, believing that they, as individuals, were the key to their children's successful education (pp. 354-355). Here a literate gendered identity and its effect on children were at the heart of their desire. In

Robertson's (1997) study of white female preservice teachers responding to popular films about teachers, she distinguishes between "desire" and "wish." Desire is larger, more insistent than wish; desire is "excitement", "ardor", and "fire" while "wishes are desires gone calm" (p. 76). Robertson's erotic desire compares with Christian-Smith's (1993) study of adolescent and young teenaged females reading romance fiction. Here desire is represented as the romance in the novels that the girls enjoy.

Another term for desire, eros, is taken up by hooks (1994) and Simon (1995). hooks argues that eros is a neglected and denied component in teaching and educational studies and that it must be understood beyond its sexual meaning to include the unique passion professors have to unite theory and practice (p. 115) and the love and care hooks herself extends to students (p. 117). Simon agrees that the eros structuring professor/student relationships is under-theorized (p. 91) and unique (pp. 94-95) although his concern is specifically with doctoral students. Simon structures the desires professors have for doctoral students into four categories. These are an act of love in exciting the desire to learn in others, the desire to have an object of love (a mirror of himself), the desire for an intellectual partner, and fourth, the desire for a partner in solidarity with him in political or cultural communities (pp. 96-97). Student eros for teachers is structured as a source of various pleasures professors may excite. Desired professors include those that: confer students with academic credibility; teach the conditions that make learning possible; make students feel at home intellectually and emotionally; and represent in intellectual work the joy and possibility of learning (pp. 99-100).

Dyson's (1994) work takes yet another turn in desire with his focus on the body of Michael Jordan, a famous black American basketball player. Dyson suggests that Jordan's body is the object of black desires for athletic excellence and economic wealth yet also for countering the commodification of the black body (p. 123). Kelly's text (1997) builds on Christian-Smith's (1993) three arenas of desire -- psychological, discursive, and material (pp. 3-4) -- by adding *schooled* as another dimension (Kelly, 1997, p. 21). However, "schooled" does not necessarily mean *at* school but rather the disciplining of desire through social institutions and texts. Desire here comes to mean pleasure.

In these educational studies, desire has layered meanings that include wish, ardor, romance, eros, and pleasure articulated through education, student and teacher relationships, and the physical body as symbolic. In applied linguistics, Cameron and Kulick (2003) agree that desire does concern the erotic (p. 106), the "ardor" and "fire" that Robertson suggests and that hooks (1994) and Simon (1995) do not reject. However, in their study of language and desire, Cameron and Kulick (2003) also include fantasy, fear, repression, and the unconscious (p. 106), terms that appear to contradict each other. Importantly, desire as constructed and disciplined must be understood as both what is articulated and what is silenced.

In the present study, desire is meant as both revealed and silenced fantasy, hope, resistance, and eros. In a general sense, however, the study takes the position, as Cameron and Kulick do, that the most productive way to study desire is to view it in the same way as Foucault's notion of power. Central to Foucault's work (1972, 1978, 1986, 1999) and to the present study is the notion that power is not:

divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies. (Foucault, 1978, p.100)

In relation to desire, Cameron and Kulick (2003) argue that a study in desire will also necessarily study the relationships of power that subvert, restrain, or express that desire (p. 113). In other words, any relationship, for instance the relationship between teacher and student, between a theorist's critical eye and her pleasure, or between a teacher and a film, is a relationship of power. Focusing on various forms of desire as they intersect and interrupt reel and real identities will enable the study to undermine the essentialized viewer as *an* ESL teacher or *an* ESL immigrant to Canada.

1.3 Useful Terms from Cultural Studies

In this section I would like to discuss two terms borrowed from cultural studies that I have found useful in exploring popular film and alternative identities to self/other binaries. (See Pennycook, 1998 for a discussion of the postcolonial discourses of self/other.) The terms are *panopticon* and *liminality*. The term panopticon was introduced by Foucault (1972, 1999) when he noted that the architectural plans by Jeremy Bentham for 19th Century hospitals and prisons were panopticons (1972, pp. 146-147). A panoptical building had "a central observation-point which served as the focus of the exercise of power and, simultaneously, for the registration of knowledge" (p. 148). In such designs, the individual patient or prisoner had no visual access to other patients or prisoners because each one was in a room (defined by walls or curtains) or cell. However, each patient or prisoner could be seen by a central observation room or tower. Surveillance was a one-way activity, and also an exercise in power/knowledge.

But interestingly, “power [was] no longer substantially identified with an individual who possesses or exercises it by right of birth; it [became] a machinery that no one owns” (p. 156). ESL studies have taken up the panopticon to problematize ESL discourses. Pennycook (1994) suggests that both English and its disciplines of linguistics and applied linguistics were central powerhouses of colonialism (pp. 97-98) while Morgan (2004) identifies the spatial arrangement of classrooms as a panopticon that disciplines learning (p. 162, p. 174).

The panopticon as a mechanism for structuring social power has also been taken up by McClintock (1995) in her study of colonial artifacts. She suggests that cultural texts such as photography and advertisements made available *panoptical time* to British citizens during 19th century colonialism (pp. 32-39, pp. 122-123). Like the central observation room, photographs became texts for the surveillance and spectacle making of colonized people through exhibits, museums, and travelling shows. The white British viewer was permitted a one-way gaze of the unmoving (unchanging) silenced (voiceless) viewed. Other scholars have also extended the meaning of the panopticon. For example, Chow (1996) furthers the panopticon metaphor in applying it to liberal notions of “ethnicity” and the “ethnic” film, *The Joy Luck Club* (1993). She suggests that invitations to “ethnic minorities” to recite their ethnicities and lineages are a panoptical interrogation process, disciplining gazing relations (pp. 208-213).

Adding another notion of the panopticon, I want to suggest that popular film as a global text is in a panoptical power relationship with viewers. But what do I mean by *panoptical power relationship*? Power does not abide solely in the film-as-text. There is rather a libration between the film and its viewers who are *multiply located*. Thus,

even the film itself does not and cannot offer a single unified and stable meaning despite its realization. The global availability of cinematic spectacles of western culture, primarily white English speaking America, provides a return gaze for ESL student viewers located globally. The ESL viewer watches a spectacle of the west, and is fascinated, repelled, desirous, or resistant (among other responses) to the images. The spectacle, like the spectacle of colonized people, is powerful. "They" are watching "us."

Cinematic gazing here works in radically different ways from anti-orientalist writing concerning white colonialists and their one-way gaze at colonized people. Importantly, in a study of responses from both viewers of multiple races and ethnicities in the globalized early 21st century, the power in gazing takes on more forms than colonizing subject/colonized object. If non-western ESL students are not the uncritical passive students they are sometimes interpellated as (see Kubota, 1999a, 1999b, 2001, 2002; Susser, 1998; Chapter 9, this study for deconstructions of this ESL identity), then what are they making of white people through the *spectacle* of cinematic images? Chow's (1995) question is relevant here: "How do we deal with the fact that non-westerners also gaze, are voyeurs and spectators?" (p. 13). The question turns the postcolonial gaze of white westerners at racial others around. But this is not a straight reversal of the gaze. Rather, ESL spectators take from the cinematic spectacle that which is already theirs (their difference), and in the process redefine who they are. Here is where the second term is useful.

The second and related term is *liminality*, introduced by the cultural anthropologist, Victor Turner (1974). A *limen* is a threshold and liminality refers to a transition period experienced by people in change, for example, children moving

through puberty toward adulthood, or people living in another culture. Liminality is “betwixt and between all fixed points of classification” (p. 232), and thus marginalized people can experience liminality. Artists and cultural theorists have borrowed from Turner’s liminality. In particular, Bhabha (1994) draws on the black American artist Renee Green’s use of the museum architecture in which one of her exhibitions was held. She used spaces such as the attic and boiler room to make statements regarding black and white people and the stairwell as the liminal space between them (Bhabha, pp. 3-4).

Bhabha takes up liminality to argue for a new cultural subject articulated “at the liminal edge of identity” (p. 179). This liminal space or threshold, what Bhabha (1990) calls the “third space”, displaces the postcolonial self/other relationship and sets up new relationships of authority, meaning, and representation (pp. 209-211). Liminality offers language and literacy education a “vital third mode of understanding” (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998, p. 6) in the dichotomous couplings of teacher/student, white/other, man/women, and viewer/viewed. Bhabha’s (1994) notion of liminal identities (and also hybrid identities discussed in Chapter 9) and a transglobal notion of the panopticon for ESL critical literacies refuse the self/other positions of postcolonial discourses where identities are fixed and gazing relations are one-way. Throughout the document, I refer to panoptical relationships and liminal identities.

1.4 Mapping the Study

1.4.1 Significance

That a social text like popular film is read globally is of immense importance to a theory and practice of poststructural literacy both because of its placement in ESL curriculum and because of its *worlding* (Spivak, 1985), a term I discuss in Chapter 5.

With increased access to television, videos, and DVDs, watching films has become a powerful and popular way of experiencing the world. Said (1993) suggests that for European readers of Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*, the novel was "as close as they came to Africa, and in that limited sense it was part of the European effort to hold on to, think about, plan for Africa" (p. 68). I argue that popular film has an even greater geopolitical impact on viewers than Said's estimation of Conrad's novel. Film images become part of a visual experience of the world while at the same time we may be critical of the film's language, that is, its characterization, script, mood, editing, and meaning, as well as its politics. The separation between, on one hand, the events of life, and on the other hand, film images and stories is more an exchange than a well-defined border. Certainly, as Chow (1995) argues, being a reader means reading the visual as well as the written world.

A case in point is the often-heard response to watching on TV the unforgettable picture of two planes crashing into the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001: "It looked like a movie," or "I thought it was a movie." Here the TV image of 9-11 may have sparked previous movie images and stories held in memory. Examples of these include the burning and collapsing sky scraper in *The Towering Inferno* (1974), the terrorist takeover and destruction of a 40-story building in *Die Hard* (1988), or the takeover of the U.S. President's plane by terrorists in *Air Force One* (1997). Whatever the viewer's response to the movies, the reel image is drawn upon and interacts with the real (televised) image of planes bursting into flames and the towers collapsing. If the viewer's response to the movie was, "It was just a movie. That couldn't happen in reality," or "That was cool!", then seeing the TV images of 9-11 creates incredulity,

confusion as to what is real and what is not, among other responses. Another space where viewer meets the movie image is created, so that the discursive space of the comments, "It's just a movie", or "Cool!", shift in response to the factual event of 9-11. In this liminal space between real/reel, it is more difficult to shrug off the image of films, the bank of visual memories and stories that we may draw on in reference to our day-to-day life. Real and reel negotiate. More everyday examples of this liminality is another often-heard explanation, "It's like in that movie when" Also remarkable is that students are usually able to complete the previous sentence when my own memory fails to remember an actor's name or a movie title. What is it about films that they are referred to so frequently, that students know American and British actors' names and films?

The important issue of access to popular culture has been raised by Duff (2001, 2002), Norton (2000), and Norton and Vanderheyden (2004). They argue, as noted earlier, that without knowledge of popular culture, ESL learners are positioned outside of necessary language learning sites and relationships to the local community. They advocate for the inclusion of popular culture as part of formal schooling. In the present study, however, access is not the issue. Young adult international students and Canadian immigrants attending a post-secondary ESL program in Canada reported watching movies in English in Canada from four times per year to every day with a mean of 86 movies per year, a mode of 52, and a median of 52 films per year. Clearly, these students had access and knowledge of popular films, and indeed were fans of popular cinematic stars. In addition, available studies on ESL practices with film suggest that films constitute considerable curricular practice in support of progressive literacy,

functional literacy, or cultural literacy (Fluitt-Dupuy & Heppner, 2001; Nakamura, 2001; O'Brien, 2002, Tatsuki, 2002; Williamson & Vincent, 1996) with adult ESL students studying in the United States and in Japan. (See Kelly, 1997, pp. 7-20 for more details on types of literacies.) Films have already acquired a definite quantitative presence in adult and international ESL where financial resources and governments permit access.

What is missing from these views of ESL multiliteracy practices is not the image or film itself but understandings of how popular films constitute social and cultural relations of power. What I propose in no way denies other literacy practices. Rather, I extend these practices to the recent conception of literacy as multiple in its resources and modes, so-called critical multiliteracies or multimodal literacies (The New London Group, 2000; Norton & Vanderheyden, 2004; Pennycook, 2001; Stein, 1999, 2000, 2004), and to poststructural literacy (Kelly, 1997).

What is currently available in the literature on film in ESL education (discussed in Chapter 2) is not commensurate with the geopolitical power that films have and with the knowledge that the students already have of popular films, stars, and directors. The potential of films should extend to the social and cultural constructions of literacy teaching and learning, and of teachers and students as desiring subjects. Film is a rich text that co-creates language teachers and students as social subjects, with particular discourses of desire relevant to education.

These at least are my public reasons for the study. No less important, however, are my personal interests in reading film and audience reactions to film. I love the narcissistic pleasure of watching movies, the scopophilia that Mulvey's (1975)

groundbreaking work suggests. I will address in Chapter 4 the strength of this pleasure interacting with the formation of desire as a white girl. I suggest that the singular pleasure of narcissistic identification can be both added to and apprehended by viewing film as a socially constructed text with signs and multiple symbolic meanings. Locating the cinematic ESL opens the task of reading film to the reinvention or redesigning of postcolonial discourses in ESL. However, in light of the profound lack of human rights and freedoms for many people such as the slave trade in young women and children or the grossly unethical labour practices in third world countries, it may seem frivolous to focus attention on the luxurious pleasure and promise of viewing films. It is undoubtedly a privileged position. Yet, I would argue that precisely because popular film, especially from the United States, is read globally in cinemas, on-line, and on television, an effort to understand how film co-constructs English, ESL, and ESL subjects is much overdue.

1.4.2 Assumptions

Underlying the study are certain assumptions regarding popular film and literacy. I assume, first, that the division between so-called high culture (for example, art house films) and low culture (for example, Hollywood films) is a social construction reinforcing an uneasy hierarchy of taste and class distinctions (Steinberg, 1997). The present work dismantles this assumption by calling attention to the ways in which any sort of film (or other text) is a co-constructor in social subjectivity.

A second assumption concerns reading cultural texts or the act of movie viewing itself. Reading and viewing are not simply individual acts. Rather, films intersect with, undergird, or disrupt existing discourses of identity such as race and gender. A case of

undergirding discourses is the white supremacist popular film, *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) which fuelled the growing popularity of the Klu Klux Klan, a white supremacist movement in the southern United States (Russell, 1997). A person comes to the viewing event and the text as a social being, someone who has been socialized or disciplined into ways of seeing and responding. (Indeed, as I argued above, some may seldom or never come to view popular movies because they have been socialized only into “high” or other cultural practices.) While the amount of pleasure varies from person to person, discernible patterns of structuring and disciplining the text, the viewing, and the ways in which we are disciplined through cultural texts are available.

This point is well illustrated by Ellsworth (1988) who examines film reviews of the film, *Personal Best* (1982). Using pleasure as a parameter for her examination, she makes clear the interpretive strategies that liberal, socialist, and lesbian feminist reviewers use, and finds that different feminists find pleasure in different interpretive strategies. In her exemplar study of women romance readers, Radway (1984) is also helpful in understanding the relationship between readers and their everyday worlds and romance novels. For the white women readers in Radway’s study, reading romance was in part a way to resist the constant demands on their time in their social roles as women. In other words, the escape that romance reading offered was structured through the women’s gendered and socialized identities.

Another interesting study that underscores viewing as a gendered and racialized practice is of white male and female French colonial painters of the harem (Lewis, 1996). Women painters tended to paint the women working in the harem, clothed, with children reading, and dancing for their own entertainment, for each other’s gaze. By

contrast, male painters of the harem represented women nude or semi-clothed, dancing for men's entertainment, or lounging about. The point is not that one is "true" and the other "false" but rather there are gendered and racialized structures at work which influence the subject matter and how it is represented or how it is "read." What these studies point to is the importance of looking beyond the individual reader's pleasure of viewing to the connectedness between reading/viewing positions and literacy practices. The second assumption, therefore, is that movie viewing is as much or more a social practice of reading as it is an individual pleasure.

1.4.3 Purpose and Research Questions

Literacy pedagogy, therefore, needs to account for the multiplicity of ways that people learn to interpret their world (Kelly, 1997; The New London Group, 2000), and the multiple sites of power in which people learn who they are (Brady & Hernandez, 1993; Rockhill, 1993). Critical multiliteracy is an alternative to (Kelly, 1997) or an addition to (The New London Group, 2000) progressivist, student centered literacy. Like The New London Group, critical feminist literacies do not reject student-centered literacies. Instead, they posit them as an important element in voicing personal/political issues such as violence against women (Rockhill, 1993; Stein, 1999), and women's ways of learning (C. Luke, 1998). Norton and Vanderheyden (2004) suggest that educators and parents should re-think meanings of literacy given changes to technology and society (p. 218). The main purpose of the present study is to propose film as a text for such re-thinking. Through an analysis of different forms of discourse, the study offers a contribution to poststructuralist and critical pedagogy where reading film is a site of significant knowledge production and a practice that decenters ethnocentric reading.

The underlying premise here is, again, that popular cultural forms such as film inform and are informed by language learning and teaching. Based on this premise, the study addresses the following sets of questions:

- (1) Where do theorists of critical pedagogy locate film, film viewers, and themselves? What structures underlie the analysis of film in studies of film and critical pedagogy? Where and how does desire come into play in such studies? How do questions of race and gender figure in readers' analysis? (Chapter 2, 4)
- (2) What discursive threads construct cinematic representations of English, ESL and ESL identities in relation to gender and race? How can the practice of close reading relocate such representations? (Chapters 5, 6, 7)
- (3) What position does film hold as a cultural and pedagogical text? How do ESL teachers and students make use of film? (Chapter 8, 9)
- (4) How do real ESL subjects negotiate reel subjects? What role do desire, race, and gender play in the interaction of reel and real ESL subjects? (Chapter 8, 9)
- (5) How do films figure into poststructural literacy? What challenges present themselves in undertaking a radical revisioning of ESL literacy? (Chapter 10)

1.4.4 Thesis Organization

The 10 remaining chapters in the study examine, first in Chapter 2, relevant literature on film and education. Chapter 3 presents the methodologies employed in analyzing the types of data, and describes the subjects and settings. In Chapter 4, I examine the structuring of desire through cinematic memories from my youth. Chapter 5 examines constructions of various cinematic tropes pertaining to ESL and the cinematic ESL curriculum and its settings in 24 films with ESL. In Chapter 6, I

continue the analysis of the films by focussing on the cinematic constructions of teachers and students. Chapter 7 offers close readings of two films with ESL, *Out of Africa* (1985) and *The Jungle Book* (1994). My reading of the films in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 is informed mainly by postcolonial, cultural and feminist studies. In Chapter 8, I examine the data collected from ESL teachers who watched and responded to two films with ESL, and in Chapter 9 I analyze ESL student data in response to the same two films. Chapter 10 discusses the challenges of using popular films as a resource for critical multimodal literacy. Chapter 11 summarizes findings and arguments of the study and offers directions for future work.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW:

THREE STRANDS OF CRITICAL WORK WITH FILM AND EDUCATION

1. Strand One

The major question in the study is, How has Hollywood portrayed masculinity in secondary male teachers? What cues, signs, symbols, images reflect this masculine portrayal? A secondary question might be, Are there any developing *patterns* in Hollywood's portrayal of masculinity in teachers? What does this say about our collective image of the male teacher? And, perhaps more important, What does this say about us? (*italics original*)

(Bodnar, 1996, p. 11)

2. Strand Two

The larger purpose of this work is to uncover several layers of meaning embedded in popular texts and reveal to teacher and student alike that even commercial Hollywood films are at once polysemic and complex.

Time and time again as we watch individual [cinematic American] teachers do battle with the hierarchy, we have the satisfaction (as an audience) of an implied win on some small front while the collective organizations remain largely intact.

(Dalton, 1999, p. 3, p. 17)

3. Strand Three

Unlike many readings presented within cultural studies, my reading of [the film] *Exotica* is not constructed primarily from a position of explicitly pleasurable engagement; rather, and more personally problematic, it is prompted by a *fascinated disturbance*, which my engagement with the film effected. This contradictory blend of fascination – the eye of the voyeur – and disturbance – the eye of the critic – is important for it re/minds or re/inscribes the voyeuristic gaze as always both without and within, a deeply internalized practice of looking, not easily disrupted by the critical intellectualization of the problematics of pleasure. (*italics original*)

(Kelly, 1997, p. 92)

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review the literature on film and education. The introductory quotes to the chapter outline the organization of the literature review of film and education into three sections. The sections build on Pennycook's (2001) delineation of critical pedagogy into three strands: *critical thinking*, *emancipatory modernism*, and *problematizing practices* (pp. 4-9, and throughout the book). The first quote from Bodnar (1996) underscores certain assumptions of *critical thinking* as they relate to films in education. These include, first, the objective and distanced stance of the reader (Bodnar) to his object of study (four Hollywood films), and second, the extension of Bodnar's (white male American) reading of "cues, signs, symbols, and images" to "reflect" "our" and "us". Bodnar assumes therefore that his reading reflects/mirrors American society (as white and male) and that his singular reading is *the* legitimate one.

The second quote from Dalton (1999) exemplifies *emancipatory modernism* in her assumption, like Bodnar, that she can "reveal" meaning "embedded" in popular films about American teachers. Yet, she touches on a more poststructural position by stating that cinematic texts are "polysemic and complex". However, she hastens to argue that "we" read different movies about teachers the same way, as local heroes who fail to change collective institutions. While Bodnar and Dalton's quotes are quite similar (detached objective readers in search of a single truth to offer to their essentialized group of readers), they differ in their identification to power/politics. Bodnar's politics are (seemingly)

apolitical while Dalton's interest is in locating whether cinematic teachers effect grand social change.

Kelly's quote comes from her reading of the film *Exotica* (1994). Her stance is self-reflexive. In other words, she explicitly states the position from which she reads the film as not like most cultural studies readings of the film and not solely from her own pleasure. Rather, she contends her reading comes from her "selves" as fascinated voyeur and intellectual critic. This type of cinematic reading suits the third strand of critical work, *problematizing practice*. It differs from the above-mentioned two strands in both the hyper-reflexivity of the film reader, the bivocality of her two selves, and the problematizing of something traditionally silenced -- pleasure.

The chapter is divided into three main sections following the above three strands of critical work. Each section includes:

- (1) the general tenets and underlying assumptions of each strand I have just briefly introduced;
- (2) reviews of the film *Stand and Deliver* (1988) (I chose this film as it was examined most often and from different strands of critical work. A synopsis of the film is provided further on);
- (3) reviews of other relevant studies on film and education.

The studies in this chapter can all be considered critical in that they question to one extent or another and in one way or another cinematic representations. Film is a recent subject of pedagogical research. The bulk of the studies are from the 1990s onward. Studies of film in applied linguistics are largely absent, although a number of TESOL Conference

presentations mentioned in Chapter 1 and one from the 2004 AAAL (American Association of Applied Linguistics) Conference are reviewed below. The present study addresses this gap in the literature.

The review focuses on studies in which films that represent teachers, students, and education are examined. Questions and possible answers guiding the review are:

- (1) How do films figure in the writer's pedagogical vision?
As a resource for analysis of certain groups of society?
As a site for emancipation? For resistance? For remembering?
For questioning social processes?
- (2) What position does the writer take up in relation to the film?
Film critic? Distanced observer?
Emancipator from dominant cinematic images?
Desiring and reflecting participant?
- (3) What alternatives to the writer's interpretation of the film are offered?
None? Multiple in theory, but only writer's provided?
Writer's and other's? Multiple others'?
- (4) How are the traditionally silenced topics of race, gender, and desire related to the analysis of film?
Silenced? Implicitly related?
Explicitly discussed as they relate to the film alone? To the viewers of film?
To the researcher/teacher?

A hesitation in using this approach to reading the literature is that such borders dividing work is a form of disciplining that detracts from the otherwise potential richness of the

academic text-as-discourse, a limitation that Pennycook (2001) himself agrees with (pp. 44-45). In addition, some studies are not clearly one or the other strand of critical pedagogy. The challenge was to read them for their main thrusts while locating certain texts within a space of liminality between two strands.

2.2 Critical Thinking

A pillar for liberal and humanist education, critical thinking aims to bring about equality, equal access, and an attitude of similarity toward minorities. The pedagogy is somewhat static in terms of time and agency, that is who or what makes what changes and how. In critical thinking studies of film and education, films *hold* meaning, that is, the meaning mainly stays within the text of the film. Connections the film may have to wider social practices are generally not made. However, the film may connect to the viewer on an individual or linguistic level. Changes are made available through the teacher and what curriculum is made available. Changes to the learner are expected in terms of learners' (negative) attitude toward minorities or in terms of the language learned from watching a film, for example, vocabulary or idiomatic expressions, on which the teacher has focused.

The assumption is that skills for critical thinking can be taught to students through critiquing of various texts such as film. Students should learn to identify the film as a text organized in a particular way. In such critiques, the teacher may ask students to identify the genre of the film, the good guy and the bad guy, the weaknesses such as the acting, dialogue, or ending of the movie, the students' favourite or least favourite scene. The students may be asked to discuss if they have ever been in a similar situation as represented in the movie and their opinions of the issue being raised in the

movie. At its most socially conscious, this kind of skill-building may also ask students to pick out the stereotypes of minorities and how the movie accomplishes these. The assumption here is that once cinematic stereotypes have been identified, students will question their own stereotypes. Here students may be asked to counter the cinematic stereotype by finding similarities between themselves and images of stereotyped minorities.

In this approach to critical work, the study of film and education is limited in how the film is positioned in relation to the theorist/viewer. The theorist is separated from the film, and the assumption is that the theorist has enough distance from the film to analyze it objectively. For example, a theorist/viewer reads a teaching film in which s/he finds that teachers are imaged in one way or another, say as heroes or incompetent or both. The theorist/viewer situates this single reading as a crucial aspect of teaching students to read films. Students may have different opinions and they are encouraged to voice their opinions, but this is often for skill building practice alone. It is not expected that either the theorist/viewer/teacher's readings or the students' readings of the films will cause any disruption to the class, curriculum, institution or other social venue. The reader is "objectively" reading a text for the purposes of a progressive literacy, a literacy in which students develop language and an awareness of genres, and less frequently, cultural minorities or a particular social group.

What is silent in this approach to critical pedagogy is the film's and the viewer's relation to society, or the positioning of film and viewers as social texts/beings. Critical thinking aligns with liberal multiculturalism in which non-white races and ethnicities are celebrated on particular days, weeks, or months of the year (for instance, "Multicultural

Week”) but where white structures are left in tact. Attention may be given to racial representation in terms of “minorities” discussions. As Sleeter (1993) suggests, the false assumption is that changing white thinking about racial minorities will result in large social changes (p. 158).

2.2.1 Bodnar’s (1996) *Stand and Deliver* (1988)

Before beginning the review of Bodnar’s work, some basic knowledge of the plot line will be helpful in reading the review of the six studies of the film. The movie is based on the real teacher, Jaime Escalante (played by Edward James Olmos, nominated for an Oscar), a mathematics teacher in Garfield High in a Hispanic neighbourhood in Los Angeles. Born in Bolivia, and raised in the United States, Escalante is convinced that his unmotivated failing-in-school students have potential. He adopts unconventional teaching methods, including teaching in Spanish, to help the students pass the Advanced Placement (AP) calculus test that will give them university credit. One particular student, Angel (played by Lou Diamond Phillips), is central to the plot line as through Escalante’s attention he changes from hood to studious. They not only pass but also receive some of the highest grades in the nation. The testing administration is convinced the students have cheated. Escalante challenges their assumption and demands the students be given a chance to take the test again. On taking the exam a second time, the students receive the same results.

The social group that Bodnar (1996) brings awareness to is cinematic male teachers. His examination of the masculinity of four cinematic teachers mingles psychology with particular cinematic cues, signs, symbols and images. It therefore

mixes psychoanalytical with sociological visual methodologies (see Rose, 2001, for detailed descriptions of visual methodologies). Bodnar (19996) states that his study

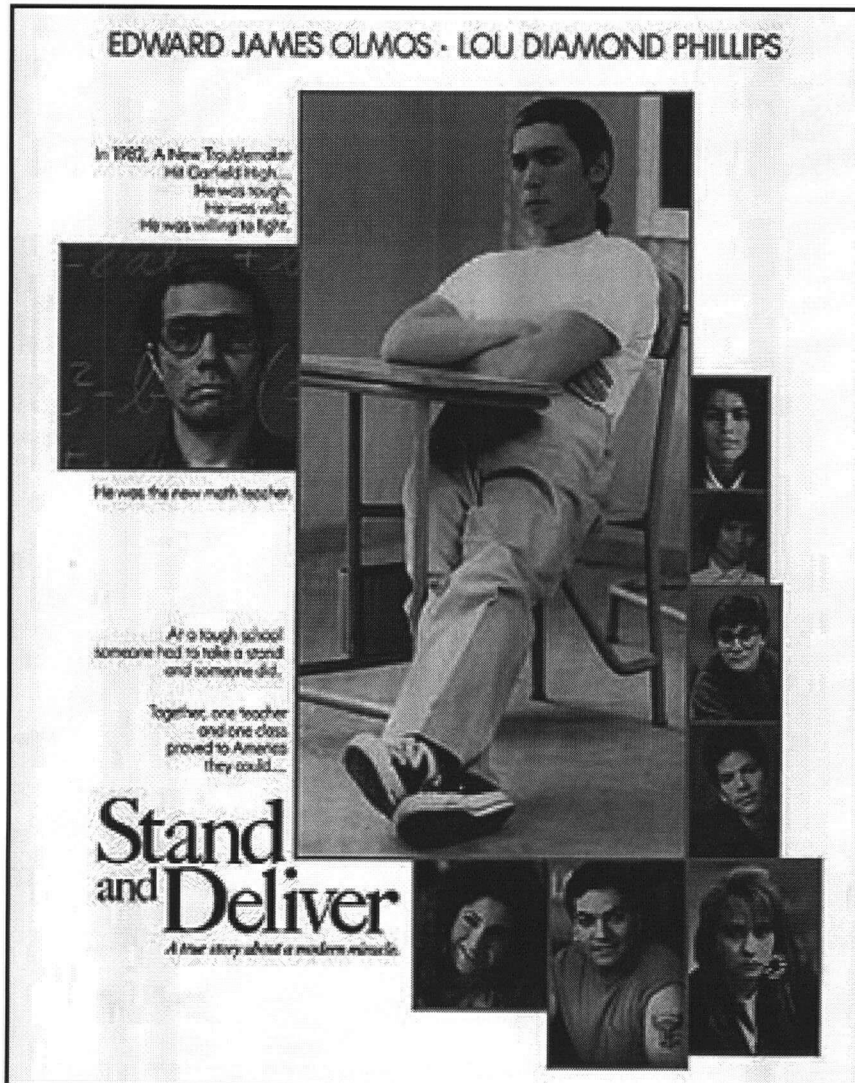


Image 2.1 Edward Olmos as “Jaime Escalante” and Lou Diamond Philips as “Angel Guzman” in *Stand and Deliver*, 1988

“determines and reports the way things are” (p. 11) through non-participant observation, specifically content analysis which he defines as “the systematic, quantitative description of the composition of the object of the study” (p. 11). He positions himself at a distance from the films and his analysis of them. Positioning his study in this way

“denies both its own politics and the politics of language” (Pennycook, 2001, p. 30).

The emphasis on “*logical analysis*” (Bodnar, 1996, p. 11, italics original) and various silences such as alternative viewings, self-reflexivity, and relationships of power locate this study in liberalist critical thinking.

Bodnar’s detailed interpretation of Jaime Escalante as a masculine symbol offers, however, insights into reading film-as-textual symbol. Bodnar sees Escalante as the archetype magician/shaman and offers several instances of his magic and magical representation. The magician is “the ritual elder who *guides* others” (p. 51, italics original) and Escalante guides his students through the sequencing of his instruction. The magician has special vision and perspective that the students do not but which Escalante can provide for them. A magician is a showman (p. 52). Escalante comes to his second class in the costume of a cook; he role-plays; he uses his fingers to do complicated mathematical problems. He uses chalk, a symbol of the magician’s wand. Using humour, he can change the mood of each student from discouraged or depressed to encouraged and light (p. 53). A shaman is like a magician who is often an outsider and can become an animal with animal powers. Escalante is also an outsider to the school administration and unsupported by them, and makes references to black cats and dolphins in his teaching (pp. 54-55).

A second identifier of Escalante’s masculinity is desire, or the Spanish word *ganas* that Escalante uses throughout the film. How does Bodnar relate desire to masculinity? The new masculine hero is not necessarily white, and “displays sensitivity, emotional commitment, and sacrifice” (p. 56). He is a man that gives “tough love” when needed, and is tested. Escalante is Latino, gives his students fatherly advice,

works the students hard in preparing for the AP calculus test, teaches 60 hours a week, and after suffering a heart attack, returns to teaching after just two days (p. 57-61).

Bodnar examines the relationships between Escalante and other male characters in the film to continue constructing Escalante's masculinity. His brother-in-law thinks Escalante has taken up teaching because he lost his better paying job. His brother could give him a better paying job than teaching, but Escalante insists that he *chose* to teach. In the new cinematic masculinity, money means less than following desire (p. 62). Bodnar similarly extantiates Escalante's new masculinity by drawing from specific scenes, signs, and dialogues. Male characters' use of silence, confiding their weaknesses in other men, their treatment of women, their use or not of physical fighting, and their perspiration (pp. 62-67) signify the new masculinity in contrast to earlier Rambo-like heroes. In concluding his study, Bodnar hints at poststructuralism when he suggests that educational gender studies like his may no longer be necessary as such notions as masculinity are tenuous (p. 119).

Bodnar's reading of Escalante offers a detailed analysis of his masculinity in terms of the magician archetype, and various signs and symbols such as chalk and perspiration. As such, his visual methodology is semiology. Semiology is concerned with social difference and how subjectivities such as masculinity come to be differentiated. His role, like semiologists, is an "objective" researcher and is self-defined as such. Why he chose films and masculinity is not apparent although he is certain that masculinity is socially produced and films are a text in which masculinity is produced. Earlier I stated that his methodology was mixed with psychoanalysis. Yet, Freud and Freudian studies are noticeably absent. I cannot claim this study as making a

strong use of psychoanalytical methodology at least not in terms of Rose's (2001) analyses of visual methodologies or in terms of feminist film scholarship (de Laurentis, 1984; Mulvey, 1975; Silverman, 1996).

2.2.2 Review of Critical Thinking Studies

Recent TESOL conventions in Canada and the United States have included several standing-room-only presentations on film in ESL indicating the acceptance of film as a resource for teaching. These presentations can be considered pedagogy in critical thinking. Students are asked to perform one of three tasks:

- (1) to analyze movies in terms of how minorities or cultures are constructed cinematically with the goal of greater awareness of cultures (Nakamura, 2001; O'Brien, 2002);
- (2) to analyze differences between two versions of the same movie with the goal of developing in students the skills needed to describe, interpret, and evaluate what they see cinematically (Tatsuki, 2002);
- (3) to relate a movie to a gendered theme with the goal of building listening and speaking skills (Aparicio, 2000; Fluitt-Depuy & Heppner, 2001).

In the first task, the assumptions are that the viewer is disconnected to the film's statements about minorities such as gays in the film *In and Out* (1997) (O'Brien) and cowboys and samurai in *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) and *The Seven Samurai* (1956) (Nakamura). Second, the student viewers are assumed to be unaware of their attitudes toward culture and minorities or to have a negative attitude toward them. A third assumption is that through awareness of minorities or social groups, students will think about them affirmatively.

In the second task, the viewer is positioned even further away from the politics of the two versions of the film *Cape Fear* (1962, 1991), the assumption being that the film carries no meanings beyond itself as a text. The students are set up as critics who are learning to see films as resources to be compared and evaluated. The films do not connect to them beyond their development as critics, nor are the films connected to any social structure or institution. The teacher is (unconsciously) constructing students as (seemingly) apolitical film critics.

The third task positions the viewer as a body who needs, in this case, to talk or listen in order to develop linguistically. Clips from the film *When Harry Met Sally* (1989) (Aparacio) act as a tool or resource for such development. Clips, poems and other reading texts are used to develop the gendered (white American) construction of "friendship." The curriculum plans are staged in such a way that little by little, from "warm up" to "final output" in the form of a debate on whether men and women can or cannot be friends, students will be exposed to the theme and express themselves on the topic. Student viewers are interpellated as passive participants until the end when they are asked to perform a debate. The assumption here is that the film is a resource in the development of language, not a resource in questioning the film's premise on gender and friendship. What is represented in the film, that is, the white American male opinion (men cannot be friends with women) and the female position (yes, they can) is less important than the performance of the debate. Similarly, Fluitt-Dupuy and Heppner's (2001) use of *Clueless* (1995) leaves unquestioned the cinematic representation of girls in the American high school. Rather, it is the recognition of slang used by the characters

in the movie (by way of listening for it in the film) and the discussion of what was funny, shocking or strange about certain scenes that are dealt with in this curriculum.

A final and exemplar quantitative study in applied linguistics research somewhat borders critical thinking and the next strand of work, emancipatory modernism. It concerns the fit between the language of American cinematic apologies and “naturally occurring” apologies. Kite and Tatsuki (2004) compared how American reel and real men and women apologize. They found that while there was a goodness of fit in the words spoken, there was not a goodness of fit in which gender apologized. Cinematic men apologized more often than real men. Kite and Tatsuki were skeptical about the naturally occurring data from American men collected by females in that the men, fearing lose of face, may not have wished to apologize in the female researchers’ presence. The study is critical in that it does not assume that watching movies will result in “natural” language acquisition in terms of gendered language. Indeed, the study tests this very premise, a premise made by the above TESOL presenters (and likely many teachers who use popular film as a prescriptive resource for gendered and other language learning). In addition, the study draws attention to the construction of gendered language, both filmic and ethnographic.

The study’s limitations are, first, its definitive examples of what constitutes an apology such as “forgive me”, “I am afraid . . .”, “excuse me”, etc. To be identified as apologizing, the speaker needs to speak particular words when there are obviously many ways to apologize silently, including silence, gaze, gesture, etc. as well as intimate apologies couples work out between themselves. Second, except for the categories of fe/male, the speakers were not identified. In discussing this presentation with gay

attendees of the conference, Gess (personal communication, April, 2004) made the point that he and his husband rarely if ever apologize in the language quoted above. This suggests that while gender may be a fruitful and powerful method of analyzing certain data for certain reasons, with regard to the language of apology, gender appears to be insufficient, and that a definitive list of apologies needs revisiting.

From this discussion of recent presentations, I turn now to two texts about teaching and film that also use critical thinking as an approach to pedagogy. Related to the first task above of analyzing popular films for representations of minorities is Summerfield's (1993) practical book concerned with the use of film "to unlearn stereotypes, to recognize different patterns of communication, and to develop empathy"(p. 4). These goals in turn will encourage commitment and further interest in learning about other cultures and even:

a deep sense of a *shared* fate with peoples of the world – a sense of the *interconnectedness* of life and of the need for cooperation *across all boundaries* of cultural difference to achieve *common* goals. (pp. 4-5)
(italics added)

Important to this liberalist approach is learning and questioning cultural differences in order to see the *similarities* between, for example, races and religion. The locus of power in changing stereotypes is therefore located in commonalities among people, not their differences. Seeing commonalities instead of differences will lead to a humanist sense of empathy and understanding.

Summerfield exemplifies her goals by offering her readings of films and suggestions on how they can be used by teachers in areas concerned with cross-cultural study, including ESL. One film she suggests is *El Norte* (1984), the story of a

Guatemalan sister and brother who cross the border illegally to Mexico and then to the United States in order to escape the brutality of the Guatemalan government and send money back to their family in Guatemala. Summerfield suggests particular scenes from the movie that help identify cross-cultural miscommunication. One scene “questions the assumption that cultures with advanced technology are in possession of the better way” (p. 72). In this scene, instead of using the washer and dryer to do Mrs. Rogers’s laundry, Rosa, the sister, washes them by hand and lays them out on the lawn to dry. Mrs.

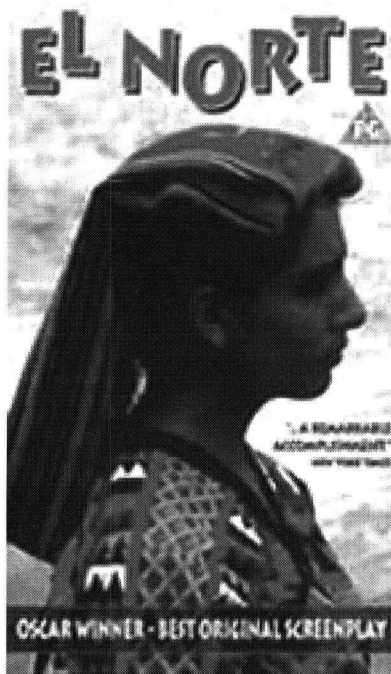


Image 2.2 Zaide Guitierrez as “Rosa” in *El Norte*, 1984

Rogers is baffled and asks Rosa why she did the clothes this way. The suggested question for this scene is, “How does the filmmaker use cinematic elements, such as music, colors, facial expressions, and close-ups, to lend support to Rosa’s way?” (p. 73). The students may then write a letter to Rosa or Mrs. Rogers suggesting how to avoid this cultural misunderstanding in the future, and they may also, the next time they see an

immigrant, record their thoughts about that person. The question and possible assignments position this work in critical thinking. A liberal line of questioning about cultural minorities makes use of cinematic language in order to reveal, not question, the construction of the minority. The tasks relate to amelioration of a misunderstanding and of the distance (white) American students are assumed to maintain toward (non-white) cultural minorities. The first task does not question the misunderstanding in terms of, for example, Rosa's limited literacy (she cannot read the washing machine) or Mrs. Rogers assumptions about Rosa's literacy. Instead, Summerfield reads this scene as supporting Rosa's hand washing, and through the wording of the question, sets up the students to read the scene in the same way. In the second task, the assumption is that writing one's thoughts about a cultural other will produce less distance from that person. Both these assumptions are tenuous, upholding Summerfield's reading of the scene as the legitimate reading while silencing the essentialized students.

While Summerfield's book offers practical suggestions on how to use particular films in class, the final study offers a textual analysis of films with education. Edelman (1983) looks historically at films from 1936 to 1983 classifying the cinematic teachers as good or bad. Good teachers are the protagonists in films such as *To Sir, with Love* (1967) and *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* (1939). Good teachers are caring, wise, stern yet fair, unorthodox, respected by students, and persistent even in the face of frustration and heartbreak (pp. 28-29). Edelman juxtaposes good male teachers such as Mr. Chips with their female equivalents such as Miss Bishop in *Cheers for Miss Bishop* (1941) who are often distinguished from the male cinematic teacher by their single marital status. Bad teachers are villains and are exemplified by Miss Brodie in *The Prime of Miss Jean*

Brodie (1969), an elitist whose passions are art, music, and Mussolini (p. 31). Edelman concludes his article by suggesting that the best teachers are those who are loved and who love (p. 31).

Edelman reads the films to trace the representation of good and bad teachers. The study's strength is that it looks back on earlier films to draw textual comparisons. The weakness is that he leaves unstated any causality or connection these descriptions may have to contexts such as Edelman as a viewer, national origins of the films, or the various political periods in which the films were released. The result is a discourse analysis whose meanings are free from social practices (Rose, 2001, p.162). Again, as with the other writers reviewed in this section, Edelman positions himself as an objective viewer, analyst and critic whose own politics are (seemingly) invisible, in turn making the article on cinematic teachers (seemingly) apolitical.

To sum up this section, critical thinkers are untouched by the films. Instead, they focus attention on a minority or social group. Viewers therefore become aware of this group. Most of the work reviewed here also leaves readers as a social group intact. When an effort is made to connect the student/viewer with the cinematic minority, it is through posing questions which position the student/viewer as an *individual* and not as part of a larger group or social practice. Reading critical thinking work means reading the work of a single writer whose identity remains hidden and whose interpretation of films stands out as singular. Work on film and education in the next section similarly sets up the writer's view of films as the most legitimate one. However, as we shall see, the politics of the work is explicit.

2.3 Emancipatory Modernism

One of the complex grand narratives of modernism is the Marxist story of liberation (Rust, 1996, p. 31). In my simplified version, the oppressed working class become conscious about their position under the oppressor and working together, the oppressed struggle and eventually triumph over the oppressor. In such stories, the temporal and social spaces of liberation fix subjectivity in two separate times, the present and future. Change is located between the present and future and in fact the future only exists through the space of opposition. Without it, there is a never ending (and sad and angry) story of oppression. Opposition creates an improved future. Implicit in this future, however, is the end of the story. Once liberated, subjectivity inhabits a happily-ever-after space. It/change is a temporary stepping stone. It is also only through liberation/the future that a past exists: "Once we were oppressed, but things have changed. Now we are liberated and self-determined." Subjects move from present to future and then from past to present. Movement is unidirectional and temporarily forward. Subjectivity is therefore *caught* in one forward motion that need not continue. Herein lies the wonderful contradiction that liberated/free subjects are not free to move discursively either backward or continually forward.

The position of the teacher in relation to students is similar in critical thinking and emancipatory modernism. In both, teachers are the primary vessels of knowledge about the film and what it produces. However, teachers employing emancipatory pedagogy will undertake the role of providing knowledge about the oppressive structures in the film or the liberatory nature of the film. Students will come to

consciousness about these structures through the teacher's knowledge. How the film structures social groups will be made apparent to students. It is important that in this pedagogy, like critical thinking, there is a singular reading of the film although, again, opinions from students may be encouraged. Students come to see the film as an important text that should (usually) be resisted in terms of its oppressive characterization and narrative or (less often) applauded in terms of its perspective on resisting structures of social oppression or representing ideal societies. The assumption is that once students can see the film in this way, they will be less under the control of the film as a dominant form of culture. Here also the "reality" of the film and the extent to which film reflects reality are questioned. For example, how similar is the film to the real experience of teaching or learning? The emancipatory modernist viewer looks for similarities between the reel version and the real experience. The real experience is often normalized as white, male, and heterosexual.

This potential of liberatory education's grand narrative is continually overstated and therefore the studies in this section seem reductive. In the past, I found the simplicity of emancipatory modernism seductive (Mackie, 2003). It seemed an attractive position to assume as a teacher: the liberator/hero of oppressed students. This strand of critical work with film is highly suspicious of the pleasure viewers may find in the act of viewing. Indeed, pleasure comes to mean a form of ideological manipulation, a point made by Joyrich (1995). The emancipatory modernist studies here accept this view and position film as dominating the viewer. It is not a matter of the viewer uncritically accepting the images (although this can also be an assumption), but rather

that the viewer is unaware of the film's meanings and messages. Viewers are *the viewer*, a group that is assumed to respond in the same way to popular films.

2.3.1 Dalton's (1999) *Stand and Deliver*

Dalton's *The Hollywood Curriculum: Teachers and Teaching in the Movies* (1999) analyzes teacher movies from the past 60 years. Like Edelman (1983) discussed earlier, Dalton classifies cinematic teachers into good and bad. Although she references 58 movies, *Stand and Deliver* (1988) is one of several films examined in some depth. Dalton positions Escalante as a "good teacher." She sees particular themes that construct him as good: personal involvement with students, teachers learning from students, personalized curriculum, and tension between the teacher and administrators. If her interpretation of Escalante stopped here, this study would be more appropriately placed in the previous approach, critical thinking. However, Dalton goes on to point out that:

[a]s [*Stand and Deliver*] confirms, most political projects in the movies are only marginally political. Escalante wants his students to succeed in the dominant culture rather than to challenge or dismantle that culture. The dedicated teacher helps students learn to take the AP calculus test; he does not question the validity of that test or the validity of the practice of administering standardized tests to students. (p. 44)

This position of the film is also Giroux's (2002, p. 91). While "good teachers" often do make curriculums that are better suited to the needs of students, they do not challenge or invite the students to challenge institutional hierarchies. Power, in emancipatory modernist understandings such as Dalton's, comes from the top. Yet, as noted in Chapter 1, power at least in Foucault's work is not hierarchical.

Dalton's examination, then, suggests that Hollywood's "good teachers" like Escalante maintain the status quo of unequal power distributions, motivating the students to give up everything else in their life in order to make the bar. Dalton builds a relationship between the film and its politics, and this is an important aspect of emancipatory modernism. She sees the movie as a product of Hollywood ideology, "a tool of social conformity" (p. 30). Good Hollywood teachers like Escalante "are, with few exceptions, non-political and are less concerned about social justice than about trying to help their particular students get their own slice of the capitalist pie" (p. 43). Hollywood "good teachers" help the transition from school to the outside world, but they do not participate in "transformations that could radically recreate schools and other societal institutions as agencies invested creating [sic] in justice" (p. 130).

A second aspect of her modernist approach is the offering of a single and strong interpretation through her expert univocal lens. She is a professor of communication, a filmmaker and screenwriter. These facts add legitimacy to her interpretation, and suggest that other interpretations are unnecessary. However, and this is a third aspect of emancipatory modernism, the univocality of her work suggests a finite quality to films-as-social production and a finality to her scrutiny. Although she briefly engages with Ayers's (1993) article "A teacher ain't nothing but a hero" (pp. 20-21), and even more briefly with Edelman's (1990) "Teachers in the movies" (pp. 19-20), space for other (critical) lenses is not provided. The final aspect of this study as modernist is the stance Dalton assumes in relation to the film. Like Bodnar (1996), a distance between Dalton and the film is established. The dialogue is one way -- Dalton talking about the film. It is also one way in that she does not locate herself in her looking at *Stand and Deliver*.

Although she is also an educator (a modernist emancipator?), references to how Escalante's story and hers intersect are absent. Such silences in her work indicate a modernist approach.

The visual methodology Dalton employs is semiology, the study of signs which can be structured into larger codes or ideologies (Rose, 2001, pp. 70-72). With *Stand and Deliver*, she finds themes, as stated above, of Escalante as a "good teacher" and couples these with signifiers such as explicit dialogue from the film and utopian moments between the teacher and students. Such moments satisfy "the audience's need to maintain hope for a better world" (Dalton, 1999, p. 49) and are foregrounded:

against an unchanging background of oppressive institutional hierarchy. While the foregrounded relationship may appear to contradict the backgrounded ideology, the dominant ideology of social conformity is never threatened. (p. 49)

Her main analytical interest is in exploring the relationships among Escalante, his students, the school administration, and the testing institution. Dalton's semiology does not employ the reading of specific scenes, costumes, or editing as Bodnar (1996) does. Rather she relies on various signifiers (themes, dialogue, and utopian moments) to underscore the interpretation.

2.3.2 Ayers's (1993) *Stand and Deliver*

In a similar but weaker analysis of *Stand and Deliver* than Bodnar's (1996) or Dalton's (1999), Ayers (1993) draws our attention to the stereotypical cinematic male teacher-as-hero through his univocal analysis of five films. Ayers focuses his attention on the narrative and characterization to see Escalante as decidedly less attractive than Bodnar's (1996) Escalante. Ayers is cynical of this portrait of heroism where learning

occurs only after discipline has been restored, and reel teachers do not represent real ones. With no life outside of his teaching, Escalante is the hero-saint who nearly kills himself in order to teach the students calculus (Ayers, 1993, p. 208). Throughout his analysis, Ayers is concerned with finding what is “actually” (p. 201) in this and other movies. The problem with Escalante’s classroom management “is that it is not true” (p. 208), and Ayers fears that viewers, including beginning teachers, will mimic Escalante’s classroom practice.

What is needed, Ayers insists, is a liberation from school control, obedience, and hierarchy, and *Stand and Deliver* offers no such liberation (p. 209). As an alternative to popular heroic images, he suggests that outstanding teachers must reach all students, unlike Escalante. He also suggests they must find common ground with students and their communities and question common sense by breaking rules and becoming political activists. On these last two suggestions, however, he fails to explain how Escalante does not measure up. Ayers believes that films have the power to “feed our collective powerlessness and manage our mindless acquiescence” (p. 209). Here, the oppressor is film and its message, and “we” are powerless and mindless! Except for *his* critical resistance to cinematic hero teachers, Ayers assumes the audience is a passive recipient of the film’s dominant message. The message is both unreal and politically incorrect.

2.3.3 Farber and Holm’s (1994) *Stand and Deliver*

Farber and Holm’s (1994) interest is in examining, like Bodnar (1996), Dalton (1999), and Ayers (1993), the heroic qualities of good cinematic teachers with respect to public discourse about education. They also look for commonalities among the representations of heroism. They find *Stand and Deliver* “an exemplary teacher’s tale

on film . . . that seems both to address hard problems facing teachers and to offer an edifying view of what good teaching can accomplish” (Farber & Holm, 1994, p. 156). Like other cinematic heroic teachers, Escalante faces challenges that he overcomes while the troubled students fulfill their teacher’s dream of their success.

Farber and Holm’s critical comments of cinematic hero-teacher films are that, first, they omit the reality of working in an institution. Again, as with Ayers (1993), the reel is not real enough. Second, cinematic language such as music and the presentation of characters makes available only one response to the story. Nothing is left to think about. “All the viewer is left to do is smile at the end” (Farber & Holm, 1994, p. 169). Here again, is the location of film as dominant and the viewer as passive recipient of its happy message. Their final critical comment is that the films serve as wish fulfillment. The wish is the transformation of unsuccessful students to winners and caring teachers into charismatic leaders (p. 170). Viewers know, however, that the wish can never happen but they hope it will. Farber and Holm conclude that because of the simplification of the complexities of education and the lack of the ordinary as relevant in schooling, the film offers little food for thought (p. 171). So even while the film temporarily fills the audience with a predictable feeling, it does not connect schooling to institutional practices. Here again, the audience is assumed to be a unitary figure having a similar response to *Stand and Deliver*.

2.3.4 Review of Emancipatory Modernist Studies

Several other studies of film and education similarly unwrap the ideology of films. *Dead Poets Society* (1989) with Robin Williams as the teacher Keating in an American all boys private school (Welton), is examined by Cohen (1996). Keating

teaches subversively, or so it seems, and counters Welton's curriculum and culture of keeping the boys on track by making them obey orders and repressing their individuality and sexuality. Cohen disagrees with both the popular and academic critiques that praised the film (p. 404). Ostensibly offering a Romantic liberationist pedagogy where the boys should learn to think for themselves, express their individuality, and seize the day, Keating's pedagogy is never realized (p. 409). What the boys learn is to give Keating what he wants, to aspire to live as he suggests (p. 415).

Cohen, like other writers in this approach, is critical of the valorization of a teacher's individual (heroic) efforts. A collective effort to resist and reorganize the school would receive a more favourable reading. The boys do resist Welton's attempt to repress their creativity by re-forming the Dead Poets Society and gathering in the cave to read poetry, dance, play music, and dress up. But, like Dalton's (1999) reading of Escalante, this resistance has no political meaning to Cohen, and Welton is left intact (Cohen, 1996, p. 414). In fact, certain scenes from the movie seem to uphold the Welton boys as more civilized than the American public high school boys whose party the Welton boys attend (pp. 417-418). The film then presents two incommensurate approaches to education, traditional and Keating's romantic liberationist. Cohen suggests educators choose neither one or the other but both (p. 420). Cohen reads the film in terms of the domination the school has over the boys and the lack of change Keating's (uncritical) pedagogy produces. Yet Cohen makes little over the suicide of one of the cinematic students, Neil, whose parental expectations Neil cannot abide. Keating is held responsible for Neil's death, and is fired. Cohen fails to attend to the

dangerous power that cinematic liberators/teachers are seen to have and yet are also victims of.

A study which somewhat borders emancipatory modernism with problematizing practices is Bauer's (1998) article, "Indecent proposals: Teachers in the movies." Bauer examines filmic images of professional desire according to American presidential eras, namely the Bush era (1980s) and the Clinton era (1990s), to draw out characteristics of English literature teachers. No matter what characterization of teaching is represented, teaching is a sexual proposition (p. 302). In the 1980s Bush era, eros in teaching is about disciplinary intimacy, in for example, *Dead Poets Society* (1989). Only single men may teach at the private boys' school and no girls are allowed there. Robin Williams's Keating leads the boys toward individualism yet, like Cohen (1996) above, Bauer (1998) finds that individualism is another form of authoritarianism (p. 306). Eros in teaching shifts in the 1990s Clinton era to erotic intimacy. Eroticism is no longer repressed but evident. For instance, in *Dangerous Minds* (1995) and *Mr. Holland's Opus* (1995), erotic energy from students toward their teachers is explicit (pp. 307-308). Yet the images of teachers finally and ironically are asexual, unambitious, and even lonely (p. 311).

In Bauer's article, the element tending toward emancipatory modernism is the univocality and therefore insistence on the reading of teaching films in this way. He is of the opinion that Hollywood images of teachers become the popular public teaching images (p. 314), so that the audience is again a lone (white male American) reader. While he brings up a topic mainly subverted or tabooed in other modernist studies of film, that is, eros and images of teachers' sexual attractiveness to students, it is another

representation of teaching that dominates viewers. However, and here is where he tends toward a problematizing practice, while Hollywood images provide students with ideas about pedagogy (that it is eroticized, that students are erotically attracted to teachers), teachers have the power to create another image for themselves, a non-glamorous image of someone who is committed to the community of the classroom, the value of communal work, discipline, and change (pp. 314-316). So although he is similarly convinced of the Hollywood image dominating the popular public teaching image (p. 314) as other modernists are, he does offer a more plausible alternative to its dismantling than the implicit alternative of reversing hierarchical power or Cohen's solution of adopting both traditional and romantic liberation pedagogies.

In contrast to Bauer's reading of *Dangerous Minds*, Lowe (2001) compares *Dangerous Minds* with a documentary called *High School II* (1994). Lowe's awareness of the politics of the films is explicitly stated: they either offer an image of racial equality or support white supremacy (p. 212). He takes up the latter statement, suggesting, like Giroux (2002, p. 157) that *Dangerous Minds* (based on the autobiography of LouAnne Johnson) is blatantly racist. The white female teacher in the body of Michelle Pfeiffer is the caring individual and the black people she interacts with (the principal, the mother of two of her students) are portrayed as the greatest obstacles to her successful teaching (p. 213). The blacks serve as a foil for the white Johnson whose heroism saves the class of African-American and Latino students.

Lowe suggests these representations of race will produce contempt in white viewers for the black principal and mother. Again, film dominates viewers. Viewers, except Lowe who positions himself as the sole insightful reader, are passive recipients of

film images. Interestingly, Lowe's concept of film and viewer is similar to Freire's (1970) critique of the "banking" notion of education, where students are empty and need to be filled with knowledge from their teachers. Freire, considered to be the forerunner in emancipatory pedagogy, offered instead a participant role to students and in turn

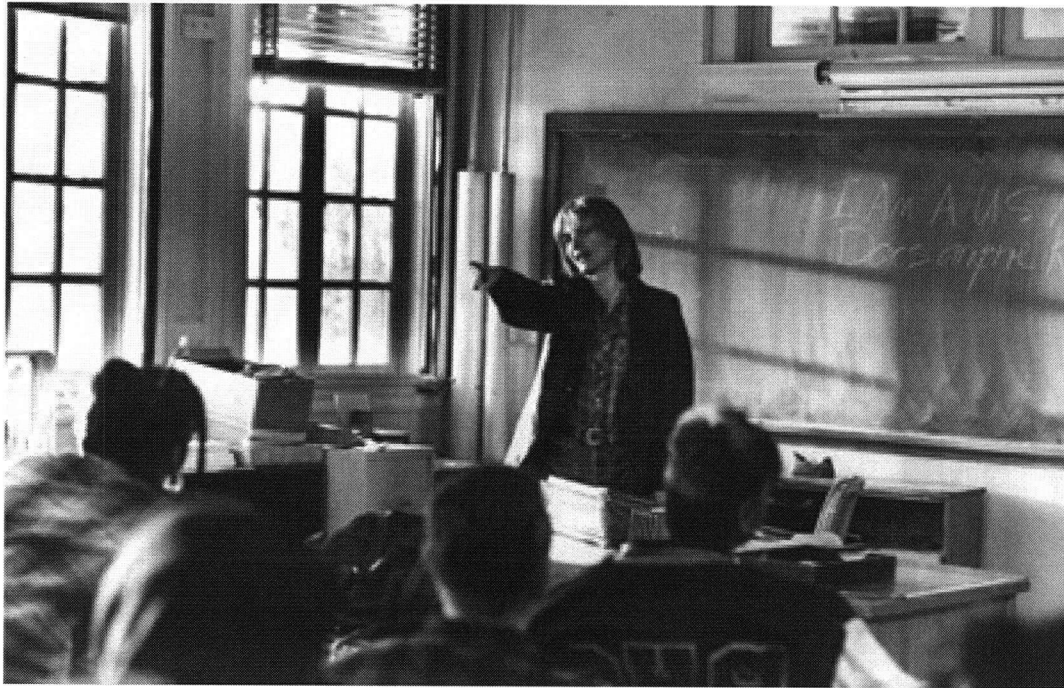


Image 2.3 Michelle Pfeiffer as "LouAnne Johnson" in *Dangerous Minds*, 1995

teachers needed to be listeners. From the studies in this section, the reflexivity that listening to student concerns may enable is again an absent notion.

In a similar but more detailed and powerful reading of *Dangerous Minds*, Giroux (2002) finds that LouAnne Johnson is the archetype of whiteness offering compassion and consumerism as the solution to educating students who have given up on school (p. 148). The movie is "offensive" (p. 147), "debased" (p. 147), "a pedagogy of diversion" (p. 154). It:

reinforces the highly racialized, though reassuring, mainstream assumption that chaos reigns in inner-city public schools, and that white

teachers alone are capable of bringing order, decency, and hope to those on the margins of society. (p. 156)

LouAnne Johnson has little interest in the students' lives and intrudes into their personal spaces by unscheduled visits to their homes. She plays old Dylan songs instead of the hip-hop they are interested in. Giroux sees her ignorance of their culture and her insistence on hers as a "form of symbolic violence" (p. 153) in which white teachers can teach without theory, with ignorance toward students' lives, and yet be miracle workers (p. 153).

Unlike the previous scholars in this chapter, Giroux suggests the uses the film has for critical pedagogy. It should be read for how whiteness is structured as racial dominance (p. 157), as a way to "interrogate and rupture" (p. 158) the film's ideology, and as a contrast to other filmic representations of whiteness (p. 158). He predicts that white students will resist engaging critically with the normative practice of whiteness, but teachers must be careful to create a space where students can air even "politically incorrect" (p. 159) viewpoints which can be challenged, critiqued, and rearticulated through dialogue (p. 159). Students "need to feel that they have a personal stake in how the discourse of race marks their own identities" (p. 161). This interpretation links the film to ideological assumptions about racial identity. Giroux is interested in having students see this ideology and in changing their raced assumptions about their white teaching identities. Like modern emancipators, the only viewer credited with a critical viewpoint is Giroux, and his is the politically correct one. Not unlike LouAnne Johnson, and somewhat ironically then, it is the white Giroux who will provide the answer for his students' (and readers') lack. Giroux's position in his critical reading of the film is what

McWilliam (1997) calls "the missionary position" (p. 220), a pedagogue with a "redemptive social vision" (p. 221).

Another powerful reading located between emancipatory modernist pedagogy and problematizing practices is Luttrell's (1996) reading of *Stanley and Iris* (1990), the popular love story of an illiterate white man (played by Robert de Niro) transformed by a working class woman's (Jane Fonda) literacy teaching. Luttrell offers her reading of the film as part of a larger critique of the gender politics of literacy teaching. She suggests that the discourse around adult literacy teaching (and not unlike some ESL work both with adult immigrants in Canada and EFL teaching) has certain problematic assumptions that *Stanley and Iris* exemplify. Adult literacy education assumes that it is women's responsibility to teach literacy (because of their "instinctual" loving and caring nature), that anyone who can read can teach literacy, that there are false distinctions between male=rational/women=emotional at work, and that the self-esteem that results from much successful literacy work should not be understood as an automatic outcome but rather an achievement (p. 348).

In the film, Iris's literacy work with Stanley is undervalued by various mise-en-scenes where she teaches him to read while doing her household chores like ironing. Literacy work is seen to be another domestic job. Iris's volunteerism is thus interpellated as a labour of love, like raising a child (p. 349). Iris and Stanley's growing love for each other parallels that of a mother's love for her child in, for example, his complete dependency on her in the early stages of his literacy learning (p. 353). Stanley, meanwhile, is constructed around "masculine" interests such as mechanics and science and through Iris's love is transformed from a dependent illiterate to a fully employed

literate man who offers to take care of her (p. 357). Luttrell is critical of this one-on-one relationship between Iris and Stanley that the film privileges. The focus should not be on the learner but on his learning process (p. 358). This leads to her radical suggestion for change in literacy education, that of not privileging the one-on-one relationship beginning with the mother/child bond as the primary source of literacy learning.

Luttrell's *Stanley and Iris* offers interesting observations of literacy. She reads "reality" into the film by building parallels between real and reel discourses of literacy. The reflection, however, is problematic and thus the film represents a negative portrait of literacy, one that should be resisted. Luttrell's thrust is away from the intimacy of literacy and toward a wider social sphere of literacy teachers such as other members of the family and community. The fact that she does offer suggestions for changing literacy education situates her article toward problematizing practices. Her singular reading, her skepticism of romantic love in the pedagogical relationship, and the refusal to see Iris as the locus of power locate her reading as also liberatory modernist.

Turning the focus toward students is Whatley's (1988) examination of several movies that highlight adolescent male students. This text also borders emancipatory modernism with problematizing practices. She looks at how popular films, in contrast to sex education materials in school, construct male adolescent sexuality. Whatley's examination of popular films leads her to several discursive strands concerning male adolescent sexuality. These include: men and virginity where nerds are usually virgins or change from nerd to hero through sexual experience; men's sex drive in which "perpetual heat" (p. 110) describes cinematic adolescents; metaphorical and literal penises in which the assumption is that normal men have a healthy and active one; the

function of the penis which is to “nail” (a reference to sexual intercourse that suggests pleasure for neither the man or woman); women as objects where women who are “nailed” gives status to the “nailer” and where women can be traded or given away; the phallus as a car; and power and homophobia where references to men as “girl” or “faggot” are insulting to heterosexual adolescent boys (pp. 109-118).

Whatley positions film as “an active shaping force of adolescent sexuality discourses” (p. 118) which educators should challenge. She finds most disturbing the message that men’s sexuality equals (economic) power as well as the homophobic construction of heterosexuality. Whatley suggests the films will convince boys that “their sexuality is controlled by raging hormones and expressed in powerful cars” (p. 120) unless critical pedagogy intervenes to make clear the relationships. Here again is the modernist notions of film-as-dominant and of the teacher-as-liberator, freeing adolescent boys from the dominant cinematic constructions of their sexuality. “Heterosexual boys” are a unitary subject, and other readings of the film are absent.

Nevertheless, Whatley’s text does differ from other modernists in this section. For one thing, the locus of her examination is adolescent boys’ sexuality, again, a somewhat taboo or silent topic. She draws attention to specific spoken language from films connected to adolescent male sexuality, for example, “nail”, suggesting the importance of language in understanding a complex topic such as sexuality in film and its relation to real boys. The pedagogy she indicates does not silence boys’ sexuality but rather entwines it with an analysis of cinematic power. Watching these films as part of the school curriculum, she suggests, many adolescents will not only enjoy the movies but will equally enjoy analyzing the sites of power (p. 129). Analysis of previously

silenced and important topics and the acceptance of pleasure in pedagogy are elements of problematizing practices.

Another film concerning the construction of students is the movie *Exotica* (1994) that focuses on the image of the schoolgirl. Two interesting readings of the film are offered. The first by hooks (1996) is in this section and the second by Kelly (1997) is in the next section. The *Exotica* is a nightclub whose customers and employees serve to weave multiple plot lines. One concerns an *Exotica* dancer, Christina, who dresses in a school girl's uniform and dances to Leonard Cohen's "Everybody Knows." Her ex-boyfriend Eric is DJ and MC and always introduces her with the question, "What is it



Image 2.4 Mia Kirschner as "Christina" in *Exotica*, 1994

that gives a schoolgirl her special innocence?" Yet, her dance portrays sexual abuse. Christina has a regular customer, Francis, for whom she performs lap dances in her schoolgirl costume, for whom she babysat his daughter Lisa, and to whom she reveals the sexual abuse she suffers at home. Francis's black wife was killed in a car accident and his daughter was murdered, found in a schoolgirl's uniform like Christina's. It is evident that Christina's dance is therapy for Francis and for her as well.

hooks's reading is located in liminality. For her, the film represents the normalized practices of cultural hybridity and she immediately recognizes that the film is not set in the United States. It is set "where difference is tolerated and border crossing more a norm than a contrived spectacle" (pp. 28-29), an idealized society. hooks centers her reading around the themes of betrayal and yearning and the inability of the characters to attain what they desire through Christina's dance. Francis, the father and husband, is unable to be the all-protecting white man to his family, and thus turns to *Exotica* and Christina in the hopes of regaining the power to protect (pp. 29-30). This of course cannot be and instead he finds reconciliation through Eric who confronts Francis with his loss. Christina's continual re-enactment of sexual abuse through her dance does not satisfy the desire for recognition of her pain. Instead, she leaves Francis's car (the symbolic father) and returns home (pp. 32-33).

hooks's reading finds the film unproblematic. (It is important to note, however, that she does not find most films this way.) *Exotica* is an exemplar text offering the "correct" representations of social identities. Her reading applauds the common thread

of desire for connection and the fear of loss for all characters regardless of race or gender. Her reading is critical to the extent that it centers on desire and the struggle of characters to transgress and reconcile loss. The absence of engaging a problematic and the univocality of the reading situate it in emancipatory modernism.

2.4 Problematizing Practices

A somewhat umbrella term, *problematizing practices*, draws on a number of positions to subject construction including feminist poststructuralism, postcolonialism, and queer and critical race theories (Pennycook, 2001, p. 5, p. 42). They question modernist notions of science and language as objective systems and posit a view of society and subjectivity as discursively constructed. Work in this section is also underscored by its interest in *multiplicity*. One expression of multiplicity is not simply acknowledging that other viewers agree or not with the writer, but rather that there are other views with particular causes and from particular positions.

The practice of providing multiple readings is problematic, not in and of itself, but because it necessitates addressing some of the difficult questions inherent in a diverse social group such as “students” or “viewers” or indeed “myself.” Multiple readings can be offered in different ways. Some writers offer their reading and then engage with others that are different. In much of the work in this section, the researcher/professor asks education students to watch and respond to movies of teaching. Multiple readings distinguish this section from the previous two strands of critical work where a singular reading of the film or films is elaborated and other readings are absent or made present through an essentialized and unidentified audience. Another way of inscribing multiple readership is by coupling the emotive experience of

the film with the writer's (distanced) critique of it. This type of multiplicity articulates the feminist slogan that the personal is political. Writers are also interested in how films are experienced in diverse ways and through diverse and previously absent indices of power, such as pleasure and race. Work in film and education here treats the viewer's pleasure of watching film as a position of power rather than as under the influence of a dominant message although this effect is not dismissed.

Freudian concepts of human desire and fantasy structure some of this work while other work draws on liberal, modernist, and poststructuralist theories to make sense of diverse responses to watching films. Importantly, multiplicity here comes to mean that writers do not necessarily position themselves as *not* modernist, but rather draw on elements of critical work in all its forms. For example, while I read the distinguished cultural critic and critical pedagogue, Henry Giroux, as a fairly solid modernist liberator, some writers here draw on Giroux in their practices of making taken-for-granted processes problematic.

There are also attempts in this strand at self-reflexivity, a crucial aspect of poststructuralist pedagogy, and a point on which emancipatory modernists are woefully silent (Pennycook, 2001, pp. 84-85). Self-reflexivity takes various forms in recent educational work. Lin (2004), for instance, comes to realize the negative effect her high expectations have on busy students through a student comment (pp. 282-284). As a result, she suggests that teachers openly involve students in commenting on their teaching styles (p. 284). Self-reflexivity here means engaging and having students engage in critiquing the teacher with the outcome of changes in teaching style and curriculum content and delivery. For F. Butler (2000), reviewed below, self-reflexivity

involves responding quickly to education students' time restraints in completing the research protocols she had set out for them. F. Butler changes her initial protocols so that her project will fit better with the students' busy lives. In these examples, self-reflexivity interpellates students or research participants with power and the teacher or researcher making changes based on that power.

Self-reflexivity also comes to mean a critical awareness of one's politics and the limitations of that knowledge, a kind of hyper-reflexivity. For example, in Smith's (1999) work below, she is inclusive of other readings of a film but acknowledges her inability to really accept them or adopt them as her take on the film. In working through issues of race and desire in Chapter 4 of this study and in previous work (Mackie, 2003), self-reflexivity begins with an urgent call to question discourses of whiteness and gender, and recognize how these inscribe subject positions. It is a re-direction of the gaze at others to the gaze at themselves. Writers here, then, attempt to account for differences in readings and to re/read and re/inscribe themselves.

2.4.1 Robertson's (1997) *Stand and Deliver*

Having been passionate about the movies, I have been able to observe the power of cinema to produce the unexpected -- feelings and affects for which an account cannot easily be made. (Robertson, 1997, p. 75)

So begins Robertson's "Fantasy's confines: Popular culture and the education of the female primary-school teacher" in which she explores data from her class of 12 white women studying to become primary school teachers. Together they have watched *Stand and Deliver* (1988), and responded to it in discussion and journal entries. From the above quote, the strand of critical work is hinted at. First, Robertson is explicit in identifying where her own passion lies. Second, she poses the difficult task of

understanding the structures of women's emotions vis-a-vis films. Third, and contrary to earlier strands of critical work, she observes that film produces "unexpected" feelings. Remember that for emancipatory modernists, the audience's feeling is singular and predictable. Robertson includes her own journal excerpts and excerpts from the students' responses to the film. She attempts to decenter herself as "objective researcher" by drawing extensively on her journal and student responses. Multiple avenues map her position that cinematic representations of teachers such as Escalante affect uneasy fantasies of learning to teach.

Robertson draws on Freudian psychoanalysis to develop her case for fantasy's involvement in learning to be a teacher. Thus far in the literature review, there is an absence of Freudian notions of difference and identity. While Freudian theory is well known in psychology, it is not limited to this field alone. Indeed, it is a significant resource for feminist film studies and feminist poststructural work. Feminist work that engages with Freudian notions of male and female difference applies it to studies of the feminine. Robertson's text addresses this gap in the literature of psychoanalytical perspectives on film and education.

How does she involve Freudian concepts in her analysis? She observed that five of the twelve students had their most intense response to a short scene in the movie. In this scene, Escalante's students post a letter of love for him. The scene triggers in Robertson's students daydreams and fantasies of receiving a similar letter of love and devotion. Freud's notion is "that speech performs as a vehicle through which unconscious effects are established" (Robertson, 1997, p. 81). Through certain forms of language such as faltering, trailing off, and dreamy voices, students express their

unconscious epistolary fantasies about teaching and themselves as teachers. Important to the fantasy are the various forms of concealment the students enact. Robertson:

The senders post tributes to themselves, thus concealing and revealing what cannot be spoken: a desire for recognition and to be the container of that (knowledge) which their (imaginary) students must attribute to them in order to be (themselves-imaginary teachers and children) complete. (p. 83)

Asking for recognition is concealed in the act of posting. At the same time, the imaginary students reveal that it is the teacher who has made them complete. In turn, she is complete. The letters are both narcissistic and idealized fantasies of teaching and the teacher and children are idealized partners in the pedagogical act.

If Robertson's analysis of the data ended here, it would more appropriately contribute to a critical thinking approach. However, Robertson continues to problematize the fantasy of teaching-as-love, suggesting that the love fantasy can serve as a metaphor in the construction of white female teachers at primary school, a point also made above by Luttrell (1996). For example, women who devote themselves to teaching their love object are subdued and dispossessed of articulating such rights as dignity, compensation and recognition for their efforts (Robertson, 1997, p. 84). Primary school teachers are interpellated in public discourse as having a love and conviction for children that should go beyond demands for more time and institutional and social status. The desire to be recognized contains conflict in the form of concealing the love. The idealized and narcissized fantasy hides this hostility from consciousness, thus creating the ego-ideal (p. 86). The letter serves to nourish the teacher in her self-formation of an idealized identity while at the same time deceiving her by silencing the low status associated with primary school teaching. Robertson's students were aware of

and expressed their offense at being subalterned in the school system, and pedagogically, this knowledge can be juxtaposed with the dream of love.

Robertson also questions the students' awareness of their whiteness. Here she suggests that while they stated awareness of gendered positions, the students never questioned how their race was imbricated in privilege. Thus, the love fantasy may also serve to legitimate colonial images of teaching where the white teacher knows all and the children are ignorant (p. 87). It also serves to silence another kind of letter, one in which the children reject the teacher (p. 87). By questioning how the fantasies of teaching (here sparked by a scene from a movie) may provide both spaces of pleasure (love from students) yet confinement (concealing important issues of social identity), Robertson turns away from modernist binaries of dominant/oppressed to reposition research subjects/viewers as critical participants in self-construction. Film is an intermediary between the already inscribed body and the reflexive mind, at least in terms of gender.

2.4.2 F. Butler's (2000) *Stand and Deliver*

F. Butler's dissertation is similar to Robertson's (1994) in that they both examine the responses of preservice teachers to three or four movies about teachers. However, F. Butler's purpose is to design and evaluate a module for teacher films in education. She is especially interested in using films as an approach to reflexive practice and social change. She analyzes the data from discussions, questionnaires, journals and written responses to the teaching module. 60 students in an undergraduate teacher education program in F. Butler's home, the Bahamas, provided data.

The data concerning the effectiveness of the film module were positive. Students commented that the group viewing of films (where verbal comments circulated), the later discussions, and journalling helped to reflect critically about cinematic teachers, the students' choice to become teachers, the diversity of teaching styles and identities, various situations they may be confronted with in teaching, and the benefits of listening and learning from each other.

In reference to *Stand and Deliver* (1988), F. Butler reports that participants found it to have the most impact on their perception of teaching (pp. 115-116). One reason for this is that it is based on a real teacher. Compare this response to Ayers (1993) and Farber and Holm (1994) who found the film not real enough. F. Butler's subjects also commented that it showed the complexities of teaching, the competencies the teacher needs to be successful, and the nonconforming attitudes teachers must assume in order to awaken students to their potential (F. Butler, 2000, pp. 116-117). Compared to the other filmic teachers the participants observed, *Stand and Deliver's* Escalante was named most often as the teacher they wanted to emulate (p. 122).

F. Butler insists, however, that her work with films is not a simple "view and respond" approach. Students also read Hall's (1980) article on preferred, negotiated, and oppositional readings of texts, excerpts from Foucault's (1977) *Discipline and Punish*, Gore's (1998) "Disciplining Bodies", and her own writing. She also creates collages of cinematic scenes that she sees as problematic, and asks students to reflect upon them (F. Butler, 2000, p. 131). While F. Butler's study is practical, like Summerfield's (1993), in its offering of specific pedagogical tasks, it insists on a depth of engagement with the structures of the film that Summerfield's does not. Furthermore,

F. Butler's pedagogy is intertextual in its approach. For example, essay questions assigned after viewing and reading include:

Do you find that the school subjects taught, and the way they are taught, are part of a 'disciplinary' apparatus? . . .

Does your disciplining ever take the form of an 'imperializing' or 'sovereign' power? How so? . . .

What surveillance systems do you find in operation in your school? What behaviors 'on the margins' are these systems designed to monitor and control? . . .

Obviously, many people suffer from being in a weak 'relational' position in a power relationship. Do you think that 'power' is always a negative force? Are there 'productive powers'? (p. 165)

The questions call for reflexivity while drawing on the previous work of discussing and responding to films and articles. In drawing on various poststructuralist texts, Butler's pedagogy exemplifies problematizing practice. Students need to draw on multiple resources including film to answer questions that link themselves to wider circles of discipline, power, and marginality. What is silent in the above two discussions of problematizing practices is the result or effect of Robertson's classroom research or F. Butler's research and pedagogy, except as a research resource.

2.4.3 Review of Problematizing Practices

Turning now to other multivocal studies, Page (1991), Trier (2001a, 2001b, 2002), Mitchell and Weber (1999), and Bell (1995) combine their interpretation of films with student responses to films and other texts, and like F. Butler (2000), Trier and Mitchell and Weber offer their practices with film in teaching education courses. Page's (1991) study of 30 women re-entering university draws on Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" as social class (a rather different understanding of Bourdieu) and, like

Robertson (1994), Raymond Williams's "structures of feeling" is drawn on to analyze the data. Participants individually watched the film *Educating Rita* (1983) about Rita, a working class wife and hairdresser returning to open university in England to complete her education, and her alcoholic professor who challenges Rita to develop her own opinions and is in turn transformed by Rita. Data were collected from individual interviews and a group discussion that followed the viewing of particular scenes.

Page is interested in analyzing participant reading strategies. She finds that the re-entry women's readings do not constitute a single interpretive community as in Radway's (1994) group of women romance readers, but rather depending on their different habitus -- on what discourses they could access -- offer different interpretations of Rita's gendered cultural capital. Working class women, for instance, did not see Rita's hope for the future as through having another man while middle class women, in contrast, believed in the possibility of Rita having a cross-class relationship (Page, 1991, p. 119). The participants engaged with and made sense of those of Rita's challenges that connected to their experiences. Page's reading of their data addresses the multiple social identities the entry women assume:

Against a background of a web of familiar relationships that enmesh and restrain a woman in a private, non-public role and function, as daughter, sister, aunt, wife, or mother, divorced, married, or single is the re-entry woman student seeking to enhance her future life choices and options. Stripped of the "comforts" and "protection" of her home, her daily circumstances at school are those of student and/or research/teaching assistant, quite simply a voice "down under" in a position of subordination seeking knowledge, skills, validation. (p. 150)

The re-entry women structured their readings of the film through their own experiences in present and past marriages, pregnancy and mothering, interruptions to their schooling,

working and studying at the university, and domestic conflicts. The students, Page suggests, are not simply popular film consumers of a dominant image. They bring to the film gendered social and cultural positions that, like Rita, they are trying to change through education.

Page's text has elements of emancipatory modernism (for example, essentializing class or "re-entry woman" as markers explaining differences in film interpretations), yet her text is not simply an ideological reading. Like Robertson's (1994, 1997) work, it attempts to locate the structures of feelings the film elicits and tie these to women's multilayered identities. This position of the reader as already in/formed contrasts with much emancipatory modernist work where the reader is constructed as needy and uncritical and brought to critical consciousness by the teacher.

Another study that draws on the notion of habitus is Trier (2002) who uses film in a similar fashion as F. Butler (2000) does in her teaching. Trier introduces his students to postmodernist notions such as Gee's (1996) definition of literacies (Trier, 2001a) and Bourdieu's habitus (Trier, 2002) through essays or excerpts. Students in his practicum teacher education course view a teacher movie such as *Teachers* (1984). They then read and respond to an excerpt from Gee or Trier's interpretation of the film. Finally, they select a film from a list of teacher films he provides and write a response to it, taking up poststructural notions they have read and discussed. Compare these pedagogical practices of establishing links between popular film and social practices such as literacy to Summerfield's (1993) work with *El Norte* (1984) that remains largely between the film text and the individual.

Like F. Butler (2000) and Robertson (1997), Trier (2001a, 2001b, 2002) provides lengthy passages of student responses illustrating how they have understood the readings via a film such as *Teachers* (1984). The responses also offer a challenge to, for example, the traditional idea of literacy as a set of skills to be acquired (Trier, 2001a, p. 306), and students refer to the film *Teachers* and the discussions around literacy when they do their fieldwork and practice teaching and observations (p. 312). Unlike emancipatory modernists who overstate their pedagogy, Trier does not claim that a single project such as these are transformational, an implicit goal of his pedagogy. Yet, the film work continues to be referenced and drawn upon later in the semester, evidence that the students are still working through the problems.

Work that border crosses the three strands of critical pedagogy is by Mitchell and Weber (1999) and Weber and Mitchell (1995). One of their suggestions is close readings (1999) where studying and comparing films can bring about awareness of stereotypes (critical thinking) and reveal the social agendas and messages the films support, critique, or reproduce (p. 171) (emancipatory modernism). Questions for close readings include: What are the surface structures of the film? What is it explicitly saying? Who created it? How and why? What are the deep structures and counter-texts (e.g. film reviews)? What are the implicit messages? What images or stereotypes are created, contested, or perpetuated? What room for ambiguity or interpretation does the text provide? How does your (the student's) close reading relate to your experience in education? (p. 173). The questions similarly take up multiple critical positions, with the final two questions articulating problematizing practices.

Mitchell and Weber (1999) illustrate close reading by providing one for *Dangerous Minds* (1995), comparing it to *To Sir, With Love* (1967), a film Weber reviewed in their earlier book (Weber & Mitchell, 1995). The surface structures of the films (who the teachers are, who and what they teach, their view of teaching, their portraits of heroic teaching, their rebellion against the curriculum), and the deep structures (clothing, language codes, insider/outsider perspective, their social identities, soundtrack effects) are identified by Mitchell (Mitchell & Weber, 1999, pp. 174-178). Weber continues the close reading by examining the implicit messages of the film through LouAnne Johnson and Sir's teaching styles. Their text (1999) does not primarily concern films. Rather, it questions how teaching identity is formed and how it can be re-invented. This ambitious goal can be aided in part by the task of cinematic close reading.

The final study that engages students is Bell's (1995) work with the film *Pump Up the Volume* (1990) that concerns an alienated high school student, Mark, who is given a short wave radio and starts broadcasting his opinions about life, high school, and the state of society. Bell finds that Mark's views express cynicism and despair, hope and possibility (p. 179) and soon the strict principal wants to shut Mark down. Bell's work has elements of both modernist liberation and poststructuralist pedagogy. Bell finds that the movie does not represent a radical social vision and that although Mark offers a radical critique of American society, his solutions are liberal (p. 201). Bell's reading of the film is similar to some modern emancipators (Cohen, 1996; Dalton, 1999; Giroux, 2002) who see teacher films as representing the status quo.

In addition to his reading, Bell (1995) holds conversations about the film with four white student-teachers in an education program after they have viewed it. The data from the conversations suggest to Bell that any hope the film may represent for social change resides within the filmic moment and is not transported outside viewing time. This limitation of the film coupled with the student educators' limited critical sensibilities underscore the difficulty of appropriating popular texts for critical literacy and liberation pedagogy (p. 210). The student-teachers are committed to individualism and do not talk about teachers working together (pp. 221-223). He concludes that:

... these people in their professional teaching activity will have only marginal success in developing any substantive critical thinking and critical literacy in their classroom practices [because they] have been raised in the same critically barren educational environment as most of us have been. (p. 226)

Clearly, cynicism is also in large supply in Bell's research. He uses the four student-teachers (who have not been named or described) to make the point that "they" and "us" have been educated in the same uncritical context. However essentialized and over-determined this point is, it is the least problematic element of the study. A more serious problem of research ethics is at work here. Bell supersedes the participants in the study with his own polemics on the crisis in education, so that the student-teachers are interpellated as individualistic with limited chances at success in participating in critical pedagogy.

Nevertheless, Bell's text is also full of the awareness of contradictions and attempts to work through them. Like others (Brannon, 1993; Ellsworth, 1989; Trier, 2002; Weiler, 1991), he finds the gap between the discourse of critical pedagogy and the practice of critical pedagogy incommensurable. Bell (1995) is critical of critical

pedagogy, stating that it “remains inaccessible to teacher educators in their classroom practices” (p. 157). He believes that popular films can develop critical literacy and classroom practices that will work against the alienation and uncritical individualism characterizing American society (pp. 160-162). Bell articulates film as pleasure, hope, bodily experience, and contradiction. He believes that the transformative potential of critical pedagogy must be linked to the politics and practice of pleasure (p. 234), in part by incorporating the physical body in pedagogic practice (p. 236) and by a differently defined relationship between teachers and students (p. 238). Bell has no happy endings or magic potions for what he finds is a crisis in education. Bell, then, his research ethics notwithstanding, adds elements to critical pedagogy that emancipatory modernism does not. These include a critique of itself, cynicism toward both the present educational system and that which emancipatory pedagogy holds out, and the acceptance that viewing bodies are vessels of hope and pleasure.

To re-cap the work in this section, problematizing practices thus far illustrate the element of multiplicity in various ways. First, F. Butler (2000), Trier (2001a, 2002), and Mitchell and Weber’s (1999) methodology is intertextual, that is, relationships are built between the visual text (the films), written text (essays, excerpts), and spoken texts (discussions). Second, films are connected to multiple social practices: identity formation, emotive processing, literacy, body disciplining, social class formation, and power. Third, student data does not simply confirm the writers’ interpretations of films or provide space for student voices, but rather the data present problems (sometimes solved, sometimes not) in the form of attempted understanding of the multiple meanings and expressions students make of films. The next studies within the problematizing

practices strand do not work with education students as these previous studies have, but rather juxtapose the writer's response with other readings of film.

The first is Smith's (1999) article concerning the film *Lean on Me* (1989). Morgan Freeman plays the black principal, Joe Clark, who is hired to take over a high school that was once progressive, challenging, and full of white students but is now full of violence, drugs, disrespect, and black students. Smith first presents her own reading in which her reasons for the film's offensiveness are given. Recognizing that singular readings are insufficient and arrogant (p. 27), she provides other readings of the film from African-American parents of students who attended the school in which she was principal, and from black and white colleagues at the same school. Smith reads Clark as a Christ-like father figure, a savior of especially fatherless students, suggesting that single mothers are part of the problem. He expels bad students and fires teachers that challenge him. Such scenes, Smith suggests, construct appropriate educational administration and teachers who are reluctant workers unless an authority figure is present (p. 11-15). The educational system does not need more resources, just better leaders and committed teachers. When this simple solution is put into place, students are then able to pass the standardized tests they need for a better future. Smith finds that the offensive elements of the film concern the constructions of race, class, and gender. African-Americans commit most of the offensive acts, the school changes from a 1960s affluent white school to a 1980s poor black school, and women are part of the solution only to a limited extent (p. 18-19). Smith, like Bauer (1998), connects the film to a presidential era (Reagan), and makes the case that the film "is a dangerous pedagogical and political statement" (p. 20).

Smith decenters her reading by providing the remarks of other viewers. She accepts that films do not make a single statement but many depending on the position of

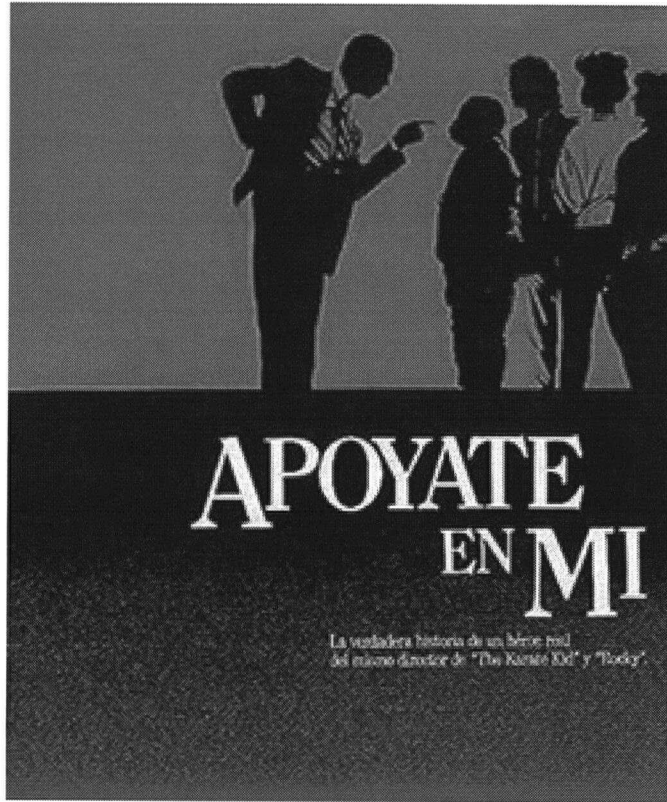


Image 2.5 Morgan Freeman as “Joe Clark” in *Lean on Me*, 1989

the viewer, for instance, the parents of school children. African-American parents of students at her high school read Clark as a “care-giver, a leader, a man of righteous indignation, of power, of action, of god” (p. 22). While the bad guys were black and white, the good guys were exclusively black. The problems at the high school were ones which parents of any race would not want. These parents believed that in the absence of a Clark-type principal at their children’s school, the parents themselves had to be vigilant in keeping their children from drugs and other problems (p. 23). Smith’s African-American male students found a model in Clark while some identified with one or more of the cinematic students and wanted to be helped by Clark. The African-

American female students were less enthusiastic about the movie although they also were not bothered by the stereotypes and identified Clark as someone who could help their own boyfriends and as a man they would like to marry. Smith accepts these other views of the film as "the most accessible" of the alternative readings she heard (p. 24).

One view that was less easy for her to reconcile was from an African-American administrative colleague. Although his administrative style was different from Clark's, he also encountered African-American students who wanted him to go easy on them because he was the same colour. "Clark gave [the administrator] permission to do so with vigor" (p. 25). Even harder to reconcile were the attitudes of several of Smith's European-American teaching colleagues. These teachers did not identify with the negative image of teachers in the movie. Rather, it vindicated their message that education was important, that parents and students are also responsible, and that administrative due process blocks rather than helps schooling (p. 25). Regardless of how Smith received these other readings of *Lean on Me*, she learned "that singular readings deny what could be a supremely human enterprise, a conversation that incorporates both head and heart" (p. 30). Smith's text engages with oppositional readings to her own. Instead of silencing them by absence, or pointing out how they are weak and flawed, they enable a dialogue of difference. The different readings provide a much larger space for viewers-as-subjects. That is, viewers may: express ambivalence to the movie (black school girls); desire to be one or more of the characters (black school boys); use the cinematic principal to articulate his own desire (black administrator); find vindication through the film's message (white teachers); find

questions of cinematic identity problematic (white principal and writer). Doing so helps construct a complex, disunified readership.

Another way of reading films through multiple lenses is given by Joyrich (1995). She undertakes the problem of finding a reading between the binary choice of viewing positions with a film she has loved for many years and teaches -- *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1969). The two choices open to her (and to a certain extent are particular to her) are the one in which she has been disciplined into, screen theory, which is highly suspicious of the second position, pleasure, and specifically the immense pleasure she takes from viewing *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. The latter position she locates within feminist cultural studies in which psychoanalytical notions of fantasy, like Robertson's (1997) text, are foregrounded. Joyrich (1995) attempts to discuss less what the movie depicts and more what the movie has led her to consider regarding pedagogy, namely spectatorship, identification, and pleasure (p. 48). She begins with her pleasure, indeed, fascination with the film, yet within several pages her analysis (given in italics) begins to take over the autobiographical meanings the film has produced. The struggle is to write through the difficulties rather than beyond them.

One of the problems Joyrich encounters in her critique is the expendability of authority, namely the theorist, feminist, or cultural critic (pp. 57-58), a point similarly made by C. Luke (1998). Poststructuralism posits multiple positions for subjects who themselves are able of critically reading their world. The function of the theorist is denied because viewers can find for themselves the cracks in the film's representations. In Joyrich's case with *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, she uses the film to teach the structures that reproduce gender, but she also believes she has learned and continues to

find pleasure in it (p. 59). By refusing to illuminate the solution to the problem of writing through polarized theories, she offers her text as productive tension between oppositions.

An approach similar to Joyrich's is Kelly's (1997) reading of *Exotica* (1994), the film of the sexually abused exotic dancer/schoolgirl. Like Joyrich's pleasure versus disciplinary gaze, Kelly has a "fascinated disturbance" (p. 92) with the film. Kelly refuses, like Joyrich, to offer up simple answers to complex questions such as:

[W]hat are viewers to make of a film that constructs such a direct and disturbing relationship between male voyeurism and the murder and abuse of schoolgirls? What forms of literacy might position young women and men to read and to challenge such significations and to resignify desire more firmly on their own terms and in their better interests? (pp. 96-97)

Instead, she links the schooling of female sexualization (as victims needing to protect themselves) to a discourse countering this (the director's) message. The transformative potential of the film's message is limited as it suggests that it is the responsibility of schoolgirls/women to counter the dominant male gaze. The film is further limited by not assigning women more empowering, more desiring subjectivities (p. 101). Being able to read multiple texts for the constituents of the social and cultural worlds is the work of critical literacy educators (p. 102) where the schoolgirl as subject can be re-read and re-constructed.

Like emancipatory modernists, Kelly situates films as cultural texts that need inclusion in the curriculum in order to identify the film's dominant and uneasy images of subjectivities. Doing so is a step in reconstructing the limitations films hold out. Unlike liberation pedagogy, however, she centers desire and its manifestations such as

voyeurism and fetishism, including her own as “fascinated disturbance” in a theory of literacy. Like Joyrich (1995) and Robertson (1997), Kelly (1997) makes problematic the positioning of female and male desire and pleasure. She is also mindful of the limits of her readings. Hers is not the definitive critical take on *Exotica*, but rather a place from which to ask questions (p. 92).

I turn now to two studies of cinematic professors. Long (1996) analyzes popular images of professors including cinematic professors from the 1960s to the 1990s. These she considers as anti-intellectual in portraying professors as pompous, arrogant, mistrustful, unethical, foolish and wacky (p. 32). She contends that cinematic portraits stem from a history of anti-intellectualism in American society that began after the American Revolution. Long draws on, among other sources, an interesting quote from Thomas Jefferson in 1789:

State a moral case to a ploughman and a professor. The former will decide it as well and often better than the latter, because he has not been led astray with artificial rules. (quoted in Long, p. 33)

Films like *Quiz Show* (1994), the story of a professor who cheats on a TV quiz show, and *The Nutty Professor* (1963) the story of a silly and nerdy professor, fuel this long-standing American anti-intellectualism. Long recognizes the power of popular film and connects it to the social and political practice of American anti-intellectualism. She positions film as having a strong influence on public opinion where “public opinions and popular culture are *mutually reinforcing*” (p. 36, italics added). A relationship of mutuality between viewer and viewed suggests a crucial difference between problematizing practices where the viewer is afforded a critical and active role in

viewing and emancipatory modernism where viewers are passive and dominated by film.

A similar statement about history professors is made by Polan (1996) in contrasting popular film and literary images of history professors. History and historians are minimally present in popular cinema and when history is present, it is without contemporary importance (p. 253). The public assumes that historians do nothing but relate the accomplishments of the deceased. This public opinion *leads to* historians' invisibility in popular film. Polan suggests that the field of history needs to examine this invisibility "so that it does not blithely continue a descent into cultural irrelevance" (p. 255). Here, the relationship of power between viewers and film is reversed from that which modernists hold out. Public opinion of historians *creates* the invisibility of cinematic historians. Like Long (1996), Polan (1996) implies an interesting social relation between the public and the popular. Both Long and Polan position viewers in connection to the power viewers have as a collective in public opinion. As mentioned above, this indicates a shift from emancipatory modernism regarding the subject. Now the subject/viewer constitutes public opinion and is not a passive recipient of the ideology of films. Instead, there is a mutual relationship between viewer and viewed, and a collectivity whose power can change popular cinematic representations.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has reviewed literature on film and education. It has illustrated and built upon three strands to critical pedagogy (Pennycook, 2001) by providing reviews of the film *Stand and Deliver* (1988) and reviews of other studies of popular film. The review focused on the positions in which writers in the various strands interpellated

Strand of Critical Work	Student/Audience Position	Researcher/Teacher/Writer's Position	Position of Film
Critical Thinking	learner of visual skills	objective, film critic	text to be critiqued
Emancipatory Modernism	uncritical, unaware of politics oppressed by film	critical, provides awareness of oppression, liberator	text to be resisted, dominant
Problematizing Practices	already formed and critically aware, coconstructor in subjectivity	reflexive problem poser, claims own subjective space	text used as resource for coconstructor in subjectivity

Table 2.1: Summary of Student, Teacher, and Film Positions

viewers, films, and in turn themselves. Table 2.1 illustrates these positions. The literature review underscores the variety and dichotomy of critical practice. It is of course inevitable that in raising critical questions about complex social texts such as film, writers and researchers take many routes and sometimes do not know the exact destination. This is particularly so when they involve more participants/readings of the film than their own. Studies which do constitute much of the problematizing practices strand and virtually none in critical thinking or emancipatory modernism.

The review has attempted to answer the question, Who speaks for whom and how in studies of film and education? Table 2.2 maps this path. One interesting similarity among the studies is the way in which any approach to critical work takes up questions of race, power and desire. However, they are distinguished in how they frame the questions. To illustrate race and power, let me take up an exemplar study from each

Strand of Critical Work	Who Speaks?	For Whom? For What?	How?
Critical Thinking	writer/teacher/researcher, mainly (white) men	undeveloped students, apolitical pedagogy	univocally objectively scientifically leaves answers
Emancipatory Modernism	writer/teacher/researcher, mainly (white) men	uncritical students, ideological pedagogy	univocally powerfully resistantly assuredly leaves answers
Problematizing Practices	writer/teacher/researcher, student-teachers/ research subjects, students, colleagues, parents of students, personal/political past/present selves, black and white, mainly women	already in/formed subjects, pedagogy of difference, undermining polarity	multivocally self-reflexively unassuredly subtly leaves questions

Table 2.2: Who Speaks for Whom and How in Studies of Film and Education

strand: Summerfield's (1993) suggestion for the film *El Norte* (1984), Giroux's (2002) reading of *Dangerous Minds* (1995), and Smith's (1999) reading of *Lean on Me* (1989). In Summerfield's critical thinking, non-whiteness is *implied* in her use of "cultural minorities", that is the word "cultural" stands in for the word "racial." In emancipatory modernism, real whiteness is explicitly stated as racist but real whiteness is again *implied* through the writer/liberator in Giroux's work and assumed to be uncritical and unaware in white students. Multiple races with multiple readings are explicitly stated and problematized within the gaze of the white reader in Smith's article. In terms of how the three strands take up questions of power, in critical thinking, power is again not

explicitly discussed but implied to be possessed by the writer and the students vis-à-vis cultural minorities. Power is explicitly located in emancipatory modernism in the film-as-dominant text and implicitly in the writer. In problematizing practices, many reel and real people have power although it is through the power of the white or black woman's pen that more space is provided for multiple others.

Desire in various interpretations is another theme running across the three strands. In Bodnar's (1996) critical thinking work, desire or the Spanish word "ganas" comes to mean sensitivity, commitment and sacrifice to teaching (p. 56). In emancipatory modernism, Farber and Holm (1994) and Dalton (1999) read a less powerful form of desire into the audience's assumed feeling, that is, desire is a hope or wish for transformation in education. Bauer (1998) deals explicitly with eros in cinematic teaching while Whatley (1988) looks explicitly at boys' sexuality. hooks (1996) reads the desire in *Erotica* as a desire to connect with people who have also suffered loss. In problematizing practices, desire is articulated through dreams of love and concealment (Robertson, 1997), through hopes of changing habitus (Page, 1991), pleasure (Bell, 1995; Joyrich, 1995), and fascination (Kelly, 1997). Again, the way in which writers relate to desire differentiates the strands. In the first two strands, desire in any form remains in the cinematic text and may be transferred to the audience (who, remember, is never described but rather normalized as white and usually male). In the last strand, desire can be stated and identified by the writer but often it is experienced by the writer and indeed the writer in part bases her understanding of how desire works by examining her own.

I found that the process of reading film is self-informing (and therefore, although not necessarily, decentering) when the reader processes the film in respect to other readers and readings. These "others" may also be one's self in a space of liminality, that is, the threshold or marginal self between two understandings. Reflexively interacting with different readings is more than positioning one's work *against* other understandings. Rather, it is an attempt both to locate other readings in relation to their writers and accept them as legitimate. This is what may be called reflexive film reading and can lead to a hyper-reflexivity of the reader's gendered and raced location. I found that the overwhelming majority of reflexive film readers was female.

I also found that the politics of race and gender were articulated in vastly different ways according to the educator's self-awareness and the awareness s/he brings to the pedagogy of films. In critical thinking, educators read films without acknowledging awareness of their own social and political positions except, perhaps, as "objective" or as having an interest in "minorities." In emancipatory modernism, educators explicitly discuss the politics of the film as politically incorrect representations of an idealized pedagogical vision. Their own raced (and other) positions, however, are left intact while at the same time their readings imply a reordering of racial (and other) relations. Problematizing practices respond to the text in multiple ways. These include multiple readers of a film, the educator's reading from different locations such as personal and professional, and the use of different genres of writing to express viewpoints that may otherwise be silent.

Chapter 3:
METHODS OF INQUIRY

[W]hat is left of the subject once it is decentered, and where are we then to find its agency?

(J. Butler, 2000, p. 31)

J. Butler's question underscores the revisioning of subjectivity from self/other positions to a decentered, liminal self. The study is an attempt to decenter discourses of self/other by locating structures of identity and desire in ESL. This chapter details the three methods of inquiry undertaken for Chapters 4 through 10 and the various forms of data used to read the locations of identity and desire. Chapter 4 is a self-interrogation in which I am interested in positioning myself as a corpus of cinematic memories. Chapter 10 similarly draws on two experiences in learning and teaching poststructurally. Kelly (1997) has been my main inspiration here. For Chapters 5, 6, and 7, I attempt an ethnographic reading of 24 films with ESL (Figure 3.1), viewing them through a feminist postcolonial lens. I follow the lead of Shohat (1991a, 1991b) and Shohat and Stam (1994) in reading for cinematic tropes and themes that construct ESL, English, and ESL teachers and students. For Chapters 8 and 9 (teacher and student data respectively), I read for the ways ESL subjects position themselves temporally and corporeally in relation to cinematic teachers and students. Work on the social construction of bodies (Foucault, 1978) and in particular student bodies (Gleason, 1999; 2001) has been influential here.

3.1 Memory Data

Part of my project is the decentering of white space by locating whiteness via memories of popular cinema. Like Rosenberg's (1997) study of women remembering their learning of whiteness, I am interested in how whiteness is produced and how memories map onto social texts and discourses of race. The challenge is to decenter whiteness to a liminal space. In such a project, Dyer (1997) cautions that:

Title	Year	Setting	Starring	Country
Anna and the King	1999	Thailand, 1862	Josie Foster Ling Bai Chow Yun-Fat	USA
Anna and the King of Siam	1946	Thailand, 1862	Irene Dunne Jean Darnell Rex Harrison	USA
Black Narcissus	1947	India, 1930s	Deborah Kerr Sabu	UK
Bossa Nova	2000	Brazil, 1990s	Amy Irving Antonio Fagundes	Brazil
El Norte	1984	USA, 1980s	Christina Kokubo David Villalpando Zaide Guitierrez	USA/UK
Good Morning, Vietnam	1987	Vietnam, 1960s	Robin Williams Chintara Sukapatana	USA
Henry V	1989	France, 1415	Geraldine McEwan Emma Thompson Kenneth Branagh	UK
Indecent Proposal	1993	USA, 1990s	Demi Moore Art Cabrera Robert Redford	USA
Inn of the Sixth Happiness (The)	1958	China, 1930s	Ingrid Bergman Curt Jergens	USA
Iron and Silk	1990	China, 1980s	Mark Salzman Sun Xudong	USA/Japan
Jungle Book (The)	1994	India, 1860s	Lena Headey John Cleese Jason Scott Lee	USA
King and I (The)	1956	Thailand, 1862	Deborah Kerr Rita Moreno Yul Brynner	USA
King and I (The)	1999	Thailand, 1962	Miranda Richardson Armi Arabe Martin Vidnovic	USA
Last Emperor (The)	1987	China, 1930s	Tao Wu Pete O'Toole	France/Italy/ UK
Lilies of the Field	1963	USA, 1960s	Sidney Poitier Lilia Skala	USA
Miss Mary	1986	Argentina, 1930s	Julie Christie Nora Zinsky Donald McIntire	Argentina/USA
Out of Africa	1985	Kenya, 1930s	Meryl Streep Keith Pearson Stephen Kinyanjui	USA
Please Teach Me English	2003	South Korea, 2000s	Angela Kelly Na, Yeung-Ju	South Korea
Seven Years in Tibet	1997	Tibet, 1930s	Brad Pitt Jamyang Jamtsho	USA
Stand and Deliver	1988	USA, 1980s	Edward J. Almos L. Diamond Phillips	USA
Stripes	1981	USA, 1980s	Harold Ramis	USA
Tarzan	1999	India, 1860s	Minnie Driver Tony Goldwyn	USA
Tropic of Cancer	1970	France, 1960s	Rip Torn Bernard Taine	USA
Where the Spirit Lives	1989	Canada, 1930s	A. MacDonald Michelle St. John	Canada

Table 3.1 Alphabetical List of Popular Films with ESL

[t]he point of looking at whiteness is to dislodge it from its centrality and authority, not to reinstate it (and much less to make a show of reinstating it, when, like male power, it doesn't actually need reinstating). (p. 10)

To dislodge the centrality of whiteness requires an examination of whiteness as the taken-for-granted, normalized race and its relationship to racial power.

Chapter 4 extricates memories I repeatedly recalled as I questioned myself regarding the intersections of learning to be a white woman ESL teacher and popular films. Although many moments and texts were recalled during this period of self-questioning, just four films were recalled *repeatedly*. They are *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962), *The Sound of Music* (1965), *Harum Scarum* (1965), and *Billy Jack* (1971). The methodology I employed took several months and involved a continual process of raising questions around my subjectivity. The steps in the recall process involved first the extraction of the image or cinematic moment. Rapidly following this initial memory were other memories from the same film or other films. I question the meaning these cinematic images and moments held for me then and now in regards to race, gender, and desires. What desires to be and to have did these movies construct for me?

Important to the process of remembering is the notion that memory, too, is something we *make*, not something that *is*, so that my memories of the films I saw with my sister, my little girlfriends, and my mother may or may not be the same memories they share. I am interested in working in the liminal space discussed in Chapter 1 in order to decenter the white woman ESL teaching subject. Here again, the modernist notion of the essentialized viewer will not hold nor will the notion of the original text, a text with a singular meaning.

3.2 Cinematic Data

3.2.1 Film Selection

My second source of data is films with ESL. In choosing films to read, I wanted to be as extensive as possible. I therefore determined that any film which represented ESL no matter the length of scene or the significance to the plot would be included. Like Trier (2001b), I wanted to examine any film even if the ESL was incidental. There are several countries from which the films originate, although primarily the United States (15 of 24). Two TV series from Britain are not on the list because I could not find them. One was a 1970s situational-comedy about an ESL evening course in Britain. The other was a mini-series about slavery in Britain. The woman of the house held ESL classes for her servants in the kitchen. She and her servant fell in love.

I limited the selection of films to cinematic ESL/EFL and not as another dialect of English. This excluded the wonderful films *Pygmalion* (1938) and *My Fair Lady* (1964) in which Eliza Doolittle engages Professor Henry Higgins to teach her upper class British English in order that she may become a British "lady". I similarly eliminated *The Miracle Worker* (1962), the story of Anne Sullivan teaching Helen Keller and *Children of a Lesser God* (1986), both about teachers of students with a hearing disability. Although a case could certainly be made that these films involve similar social processes in terms of identity and language learning (for example, Eliza acquires not only upper class British English but also a very different identity), omitting them was more a matter of management than anything. Even at a time when the list was 18 films, one wise professor suggested I had too many.

After making this determination, I then looked at the available films for signs of teaching/learning in order to classify a film as ESL or not. The signs included the presence of a book, blackboard, desk, or other physical sign of teaching/learning. In addition, if a character self-identified as a teacher or student, or if a character asked another character to teach him/her English, these films remained. However, if a movie contained a scene in which one character helped another by translation or pronunciation, but in which there were no signs of schooling as the ones above, then these films were not considered "ESL films." Examples of these films include *Rush Hour* (1998) when Chris Tucker helps Jackie Chan pronounce and sing in Black American English or in the Indian movie *Lagaan* (2001) in which attempts are made to learn both Hindi and English. Similarly, the film, *The Sleeping Dictionary* (2003), in which a young English officer sent to Sarawak on the island of Borneo and a local woman help each other learn the other's language, regrettably receives no attention here.

Originating mainly from the United States but also including Argentina, Brazil, Canada, South Korea and the United Kingdom, the films are set in these countries (except the United Kingdom) as well as China, France, India, Kenya, Thailand, 1930s Tibet, and Vietnam. The earliest time represented is 1415 (*Henry V*, 1989) with 13 of the 24 set between the height of British colonialism (1860s) to its decline (1930s). The remaining 10 films are set from the 1960s to the present century. ESL content may be several minutes in some films, while in others, ESL teachers and/or students are the focus of the work.

It is important to note that I did not research data bases for films with ESL. For example, I did not search for Australian films with ESL although they may exist.

Similarly, Bollywood (films made in Mumbai, India), a much larger industry than Hollywood in terms of the number of films produced each year, may have produced films with ESL. I reserve these likely and interesting omissions for future examination. The listed films have come from memory, chance television viewings, and suggestions from friends, colleagues, and family.

3.2.2 Methodology

The methodology employed for Chapters 4, 5, and 6 is a close reading of films with ESL using a lens of feminist film studies and cultural studies. The ethnography is not defined within classical anthropology that once:

looked at clearly defined others, defined as primitive, or tribal, or non-western, or pre-literate, or nonhistorical – the list, if extended, soon becomes incoherent. Now ethnography encounters others in relation to itself, while seeing itself as others . . . The ethnographer's distinctively intimate, inquisitive perspective turns up in history, literature, advertising, and many other unlikely places. (Clifford, 1986, p. 24)

The present study is one of those unlikely places. I attempt to read the cultural assumptions of the films regarding concepts of the subject, power, and desire, knowing that the object of my focus, what I see and read into the films, is as much about who I am as it is about what I say they are. I am aware of the contradiction in antiorientalist work that while white westerners intent is to destabilize the western gaze at others, we also reproduce it in the act of such analysis (Chow, 1995, pp. 12-14). What I try to do in the analysis of films is to bring previously silenced topics and subjects into focus. So while the study is by a white westerner, of mainly white reel and real teachers, it is also about undermining ESL subjectivities such as “uncritical ESL students”, “the native speaker”, and so on. Like Norton and Kamal (2003) who inscribe Pakistani school

children as speaking back to western scholars about learning English, the data analysis in the present study locates knowledge and power in previously unseen or absent subjects.

To read the films in this way, I watched them repeatedly. The number of times I watched each one depended on their accessibility and the length of ESL shots. The longer the scenes with ESL or if one of the main characters was an English teacher or a student, the more times I watched the movie. I have watched a movie such as *Iron and Silk* (1990) a dozen times, and I have also used it in teaching. I needed to spend more time on movies with more ESL simply because it took longer to make notes and write dialogue.

For those films with just several minutes of ESL and where ESL is not part of the primary plot line I watched them two or three times. These include *Stripes* (1981), *Henry V* (1989), and *Indecent Proposal* (1993). For movies such as *Black Narcissus* (1947) and *Out of Africa* (1985) in which there are also only a few ESL or ESL related scenes, I needed to watch them several times in order to dwell within the movie-as-data. Because the plots have as much to do with various forms of desire as with colonialism's failure, it was important to watch them many times in order to relate the image with the social statements that the film was (unconsciously) making. In the case of *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* (1958), I have seen the first half of the movie over 100 times. For a few years during the present study, it was my favourite movie and because I suffered from insomnia, I used it as a pleasant way to fall asleep. When I woke up in the middle of the night, I simply hit the play button and began watching it again. I knew how it ended -- the cross-racial couple would reunite after the teacher had risked her life to lead 100

Chinese orphans to safety during World War III -- so it rarely failed to calm me back to sleep.

Once I was quite familiar with the films, I began then to see relationships among them in terms of the cinematic characterizations of teachers and students, the similarities of particular shots, the acceptance and resistance to teaching and learning ESL, the moral degradation of identity loss, the hopeful possibilities that learning English holds out, and how the language of the film helped to construct these. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are an analysis of such relationships.

3.3 Data from Teachers and Students

3.3.1 Research Setting

University-College of British Columbia (UCBC), Canada, is situated in the interior of British Columbia. The subjects were teachers and students in the ESL Department at UCBC, a relatively small institute with an enrollment of approximately 3,000 full-time students. Short courses, certificates, diplomas and undergraduate degrees were offered in this single institution. UCBC was in transition to becoming two institutions, a university and a college, while this document was being prepared.

It is the primary responsibility of the International Program at UCBC to recruit, receive, orient, find homestays for, advise, and generally take care of international ESL students once they arrive. The International Program also helps landed immigrants in the ESL Department. The enrollment of ESL students fluctuates at approximately 200, the majority from Asian countries (South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and China), full-time and international. Depending on national economies, world politics, and public health concerns (such as SARS), the enrollment increases or decreases. Full-time students take

25 hours of non-credit ESL instruction a week, and when they reach level five of a six level program, full-time ESL is 15 hours per week. Credit courses such as Business or English can also make up their program from levels four to six. Students are given a placement test to determine their level in the program and from there, students increase their level by receiving a grade of 60% or more in each of their courses. A level one student could theoretically complete the program in 22 months. To receive a passing grade, students must demonstrate learning through a number of assessments and evaluations such as classwork and homework assignments, quizzes and tests.

Like the level one to four students, the ESL teachers are in class for 25 hours per week 10 months of the year. They are identified as "vocational instructors" by the union under which their contract is negotiated. Teaching is their primary responsibility with related duties such as curriculum and test writing. There are no research or other professional expectations under this contract. With a few exceptions, the curricular unit of analysis is theme, driven by one- and two-way interactive tasks. Courses in grammar and pronunciation are organized around discrete point such as verb tense and segmentals. Writing courses are generally organized around genre. The general intent of the program is academic English. The teachers are considered, as the ESL Department is, support in the sense of preparing students to go on to credit courses.

There are several cinemas and many video shops in the city in which the data were collected. The one shop specializing in foreign, international, art house and other non-Hollywood videos went out of business the year I collected data. However, much of this video collection was purchased by the university-college and is available to staff and students. The city has a few small film festivals each year. Foreign and other hard-

to-access films are shown once or twice a month. It is a predominantly white community with the highest number of immigrants (7%) from Germany. First Nation/Indian reservations are within minutes from UCBC and it has a First Nation association, coordinator, programs, and research agendas.

3.3.2 Subjects

The 14 ESL student subjects were diverse in their ethnicity, residence in Canada, age, education, and desire in learning English. They ranged in age from 18 to mid-40s. There were 11 females and 3 males. Four were from Japan, five from South Korea, and one each from Brazil, Haiti, India, Iran, and Taiwan. Three were immigrants to Canada and 11 were on student visas. The landed immigrants were female, and the Haitian and Indian landed immigrants had children. The other immigrant was Japanese and had recently married a Canadian. I had not met the students before the research began.

Most student participants had studied English for several years including secondary school and university. For some, this was their first semester in an English medium institution while others had been attending the ESL courses at the institution for over a year. Some were taking other university courses with the intent of graduating with a bachelor's degree from the institution while others were returning home in the near future to complete their university degrees or continue working. The Indian student had a diploma in computer programming from India. One South Korean female was studying English education and another was studying English literature in South Korea.

Regarding the teachers, I knew all but one of them in the study and socialized outside of work with several of them. The teachers were white and in the age range of mid-forties to mid-fifties. Seven were female, one was male and one described himself

as male “unless I’m being FABULOUS.” Except this subject, the teachers had children ranging in age from 10 to 30 years old. All lived with partners. Two learned German as children, and one of these was born in Austria and moved to Canada when she was five. One was born in Britain and moved to Canada as an adult. All of them had some second language ability that ranged from beginner to advanced. Six had researched or taught in non-English speaking countries for extensive periods of time. The other three had vacationed outside of Canada and one of these had been raised in an English milieu in Quebec.

They had taught ESL for a minimum of 10 years, a maximum of 20, and an average of 15 years. They had various academic backgrounds. Four had a bachelor’s degree in education with another one in ESL. One had a bachelor’s degree majoring in film studies with a diploma in TESL. Another had a bachelor’s degree in arts and a TESL certificate. One teacher had a master’s degree in curriculum, and one had a doctoral degree in anthropology. As a highly experienced subject group in teaching ESL, they contrast sharply with the subjects in Bell (1995), F. Butler (2000), and Robertson’s (1997) work with preservice teachers, and Page’s (1994) work with re-entry women (Chapter 2). I refer to the teacher-subject group as “expert teachers” due to their extensive ESL teaching experience.

3.3.3 Film Selection

For this part of the study, I selected two films for viewing from the list of films with ESL (Figure 3.1). The students’ time was limited to the scheduled class time, an hour and 50 minutes. For that reason, I needed to choose films that were shorter in length so that the student subjects and I could watch them within this time limit. I had

several films that were more than two hours long so these were rejected. I wanted to include films in which ESL was a considerable part of the plot and characterization. This protocol again eliminated several films. I wanted the films to be as recent as possible because students had complained about viewing films in class that were "old." I wanted the students to engage with the films, so I chose ones that had been made in the 1990's. Again more films from the list were omitted. This left *Tarzan* (1999), *The King and I* (1999), *The Jungle Book* (1994), and *Iron and Silk* (1990). I eliminated the first two because they were animated movies with children as the intended audience. The other two were PG (parent guidance) rated.

That left *Iron and Silk*, an independent film in which Mark Salzman, the real teacher, plays himself as Mark Franklin teaching in China. I felt sure that both teachers and students would engage in this film. The other film, *The Jungle Book*, I was less sure of as it has a young target audience. This version of *The Jungle Book* is live action, not animated as in the 1967 children's version of the same name. It is also very different from the animated version. For example, in the animated version, Mowgli (the Indian boy raised in the jungle by animals) remains a young boy but in the version I chose he is a young man and learning English and romance are important to the story. I thought that because the students were young themselves they would relate to Mowgli and Kitty, the main characters of the movie. As it turned out, even the student in her 40's enjoyed the movie and made many interesting comments related to identity. Only one student was not happy with this choice but not because it was immature. With the teachers, however, two of them used the fast forward button while watching, another watched it sporadically as she made supper, and another had seen it with her children before and

did not watch it again for the study. Since there was a lack of interest in some teachers, I would consider the time element as secondary to age appropriateness in a future audience study.

The two films held other interest for the study beyond the protocols above. They showed both traditional and alternative ways to learn language, and this proved to be an interesting point for the student subjects. There was a male teacher in one film and a female in the other. It was important not to have two of the same gender as I was interested to see how, if at all, identification would be gender related. And while they were each based on a book, one was autobiographical and the other fictional. This also was an interesting point of contrast.

3.3.4 Data Collection

In order to research human subjects except for oneself, the ethics committees at the two institutions involved had to approve the research protocols. Approval of the research protocols had to be received in order for the project to begin. Once that process was complete, I began collecting the three forms of data -- questionnaire, interview, and discussion -- and analyses of these data make up Chapters 8 and 9.

To select the volunteer students, I approached the teacher of the advanced level listening/speaking ESL course. I chose the advanced English level in order that language would be as small a barrier as possible to collecting sufficient data. To glean interest in the project from students, the teacher of the course broached the project in his class. Students seemed interested. He then asked for volunteers to participate in the study and all agreed. If they did not want to volunteer, they were given the option of study time. (See Appendices A, B, and C for the consent forms.) Their participation

was not assessed as part of any grade or assignment related to the course and the teacher was not present during the film viewing or data collection. The teacher was able to redesign the curriculum so that film viewing could take place during class time in the classroom. This was necessary as many of the students had very limited time outside their courses and assignments.

Approximately half of the students participated fully in the data collection. Some of them watched and discussed only one movie. Some watched part of the movie and did not discuss it but did the interview. What kept them from full participation in the study was their commitment to other courses they were taking such as Business and English. I included in the study those students who at a minimum watched and discussed or were interviewed about one movie. They first completed a questionnaire (Appendix D) about their background with movies. We then watched each movie and held a one to two hour group discussion after each movie. (See Appendix E for the discussion and interview questions.) After listening to the tapes of the discussions, I then interviewed each student, clarifying or inviting them to elaborate on their discussion and questionnaire comments. The interviews varied in length from 15 minutes to 40 minutes. The discussions and interviews were taped and transcribed. The data collection took place over a two-week period.

As for the teachers in the study, the co-chair of the department introduced my research project in a general way at a staff meeting. She mentioned that I was interested in inviting the participation of as many teachers as wanted to watch and discuss two films, complete a questionnaire, and be interviewed. Nine teachers of the 13 present at the meeting agreed to participate in the study. (See Appendices A, B, and C for the

consent forms.) In our initial discussion of the project, the teachers thought it would be more convenient if they watched the films privately in their home whenever they had time. They watched them alone, or with partners or children, and a few of them watched while doing something else or used the fast forward button. Like the students, the teachers had limited time to commit to film viewing and discussing. The discussions took place on campus, first in a meeting room, then in a classroom. A time convenient for most teachers was arranged for the discussion of the first film, *Iron and Silk* (1990). We met in a meeting room for over an hour. The teachers had viewed the film within the last week and completed the questionnaire earlier that week (Appendix F). Seven teachers participated but one of these participated by writing out her comments as she could not attend this discussion. I began the discussion of each question by reading out her comments first. For the second film viewing, *The Jungle Book* (1994) and discussion, all the teachers participated. We met in a classroom after each teacher had previewed the film. I interviewed all but one of the teachers in their offices and in the case of one teacher, in the cafeteria. The teacher I was unable to interview was busy with a hectic schedule. The data collection from the teachers took place over a two-month period.

3.3.5 Data Analysis

To analyze the data, I used a software program for qualitative data called N4 Classic. N4 stands for NUD*IST revision 4 (Non-numerical Unstructured Data * Indexing Searching and Theorizing). Revision 4 is the student version, and is less powerful than others but was more than adequate for the study. I also had a bound copy of the data. I began the analysis by reading the bound copy and listening to the tapes.

Reading the data raised questions and these I could answer more quickly by using N4 than by searching by hand or by the “find” button with word-processing software. N4 efficiently pulled together data that in turn helped me re-focus. I am aware of the argument against using such software for qualitative data analysis. It can distance the researcher from the richness of the data. However, in this case, I was the sole investigator, watching the movies with the students, listening to and interviewing the participants. I was still able, therefore, to read the quality of their responses.

I read the data discursively. By that I mean I was looking at where they located, positioned, or interpellated popular film in relation to learning/teaching and identity. I read for the ways in which identity and film were discussed or denied, dreamed and desired, described and debated. As I stated in Chapter 1, it seems clear that popular film holds a position of power, but how does this power work? Where is it? How is it resisted? I held these questions in mind throughout the analysis. I first drew primarily from their questionnaire data to find where they located popular film culturally and educationally, and how they self-identified as ESL students and teachers. These data make up the first part of Chapters 8 and 9.

The remaining parts of the analysis are arranged according to the discursive themes I read from the data. However, I found difficulty in “capturing” the movement of the data. The word itself can mean seizure, yet discursively read data is difficult to pin down. It seemed that the moment I patterned the data, the less enlivened it became, and the more counter data appeared. It was a curious dilemma, and one that I believe other researchers must grapple with. The problematic is the cynicism of “the truth” of the subject coupled with the stagnancy of relativeness. For example, although I have

described the teacher population as white and expert, this overarching identification could not hold the differences in how they exercised power in their life as it related to teaching or the power of film images to engage them in change. At the same time, the differences were so many that I became discouraged in my desire to construct a meaningful theory. The neatness, the categorization that represented security and foundation refused to present itself. It was through these moments of frustration and discouragement brought on by modernism's insistence on the grand narrative that I began to understand how the politics of difference underscores poststructuralism. Between the grand narrative of modernism and the diversity of positions informing problematizing practices was, again, that liminal space.

Chapter 4

CULTURAL MEMORY, FILM, AND DESIRE

To recognize the social and cultural status of the category 'white', which most often seems natural to white people, involves conscious effort on the part of white women.

(Weedon, 1999, p. 176)

... memory work is not just a means of sharing personal experiences but a way of investigating how and what we choose to remember; how these choices are socially, politically, and linguistically informed; and how we might remember differently.

(Schenke, 1996, p. 156)

4.1 Introduction

Weedon and Schenke's quotes propose making conscious naturalized self-knowledge and doing so through questioning memory so that we can locate ourselves differently. The present study attempts this by drawing on multiple sources of data and ways of examining them. In this chapter, I question how films have informed my identity as a white woman ESL teacher. Meaningful cinematic memories from between the ages of seven to 14 constitute the analysis of four films. I want to suggest that the past has claims on the present (Bal, 1998), that challenging and positioning one's memories of critical experiences productively contributes to theories of poststructuralist pedagogy, specifically in both the hyper-reflexivity of some poststructuralist discourses and the multiple and changing positions subjects inhabit.

Questioning one's gendered and raced identity has also been taken up by Chalmers (1999), Dyer (1997), A. Luke (1998), McIntosh (1988), and McIntyre (1997). In Dyer's book, *White*, he begins his examination of photographic and cinematic images of whiteness by turning the lens on himself as a white man and his early experiences with racial difference. A. Luke's article concerns learning to be an Asian male in part through social texts like movies while McIntosh focuses on the discourses of fe/maleness and whiteness she reads in academia. In McIntyre's study of white teachers' discourses on whiteness, she discusses some of the challenges in learning about her whiteness through the study. Like this previous work, I too am interested in how I came to be a white woman and the constituents of that identity as represented in films.

In this chapter, I examine four films and how they helped to construct social positions of race and gender, and contributed to particular desires in language teaching. The memories were elicited by asking how my identity as a white women ESL teacher had been structured by popular films. The chapter is organized into four sections defined by: *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962), *The Sound of Music* (1965), *Harum Scarum* (1965), and *Billy Jack* (1971).

4.2 *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962)

I was spellbound in my theatre seat watching *To Kill a Mockingbird* and identified completely with Scout (Mary Badham), a girl of my own age, gender, race, and pixie haircut, who narrates the story from an older age. Scout's single father/lawyer (Gregory Peck) unsuccessfully defends a black man, Tom (Brock Peters), accused of raping Mayella (Collin Wilcox), a poor white woman. Despite Atticus presenting evidence that Tom could not possibly have raped Mayella, Tom is found guilty, and he is murdered as he leaves the town for his imprisonment. The story unfolds in Alabama in the 1930s, mainly over the summer holidays, and Scout and her slightly older brother, Jem, watch the trial, play outdoors, taunting and later befriending their reclusive neighbour, Boo. The story encompasses two narratives, that of the trial and of the relationship with Boo. The central questions in the story revolve around race, gender, and difference, all through the eyes of a girl my age who looked like I did. The relative sameness of my body to Scout's was an important conduit for identity formation. As A. Luke (1998) points out for Asian men, the absence of cinematically similar bodies to the viewers' can create an invisible and demasculinized identity (p. 85).

There are several interesting threads from this movie that contributed to my

associations of gender, race, and class and entwined these with various forms of desire. I admired Atticus. Not only was he a patient father, he was also firmly against the racial prejudice of the community. For me, he became "the great white father" (hooks, 1996) appearing to be more generous and noble than the poor white men while the black man, Tom, depends on him for his freedom. It seemed obvious that Atticus was right and the racism the poor white community demonstrated was wrong. The poor white community was "the bad guy" mainly because of Mayella's father's lying of the events and Tom's murder. At the same time, I felt sorry for Mayella because she was obviously being controlled by a mean father who beat her and then made her blame and publicly accuse Tom, a man that she secretly desires. Tom is indeed big, strong, and polite. Tom testifies that Mayella embraced him while she testifies that she asked him to stop and help her with some chores. Like Scout, I was in awe of the trial where Mayella is made to tell in court her story of being raped by Tom, a scene very similar to another imaginary rape of a white woman by an Indian man in *A Passage to India* (1984). In both, the secret and shameful desire of a white woman for a dark man is transformed into a rape fantasy which is then made public by white men through an intensely emotional trial behind which the community has rallied.

To Kill a Mockingbird was released in 1962, a time when white supremacy in the United States was threatened by the Black Liberation movement. The story of Mayella's rape by a black man stands in for the threat confronting the white community. The film juxtaposes various forms of desire and in doing so, sets up raced, classed, and gendered divisions: the desire for racial justice against the desire to oppress black people; Mayella's desire for Tom against her father's desire to control her; Tom's desire

to be a “Southern Gentleman” and help Mayella against Atticus’s desire to help Tom.



Image 4.1 Gregory Peck as “Atticus” and Brock Peters as “Tom” in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 1962

That this film has remained in my memory and was recalled repeatedly as I questioned the learning of whiteness speaks to the power that film has as a form of pedagogy. I trace my own white longing to empower oppressed people to this film. Certain postcolonial tropes also spring from this early cinematic experience, and underpin this desire. These include, first, the class- and gender-based trope of moral superiority constructed through the lawyer as “great white father”, a defender of black equality using eloquent and articulate speech, patient in teaching his children various moral lessons yet strong enough to shoot a rabid dog. This image of the middle class white respectable father is juxtaposed with Mayella’s father, a man from a lower class,

an unemployed drinker whose incestuous relationship with his daughter is hinted at as well as his physical abuse of her, a man who shows disrespect and curses. Second is the trope of interracial desire as dangerous. Mayella's responsibility as the oldest child is to look after the younger children while at the same time, her father neglects her except through abusive acts. Tom, as someone who often passes by her home, is familiar and desirable. Tom sees she needs help, indeed feels sorry for her even though she is white, and wants to help her. Yet these responses to each other result in shame or death.

The context in which I viewed this movie is also influential in the film's impact on my developing sense of race. I saw the movie in a small city in Yukon, Canada. I was born and raised in northern Canada, and my racial privilege developed in opposition to the unprivileged position of First Nations people. Later in the same year as I watched *To Kill a Mockingbird*, I had a second lesson in race. My older brother's bicycle had been stolen, but he knew where it was, so my father drove him there, and I went along for the ride. This was the first time I saw a First Nations community up close as their housing was always separated from white housing in the four northern communities where we lived. My dad, brother, and I drove through what was then called "Indian Flats", the flat part of Whitehorse beside the river. (It is now called "The Flats" and is no longer an Indian residential space). Like the black residences in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, many First Nations people lived separately from the white community. The houses were mostly small, unheated, with broken windows, open doors, and the roads unpaved and pot-holed, a "third world" community within a "first world" country. The bike lay in front of the open door of one house. A dark boy, my brother's size, stood and watched from the doorway as my dad put the bike in the trunk. No words

were exchanged.

Both the film and the contact with a First Nations community were critical incidents in my constructing race. They associated in my mind "Indianness" with *otherness* through poverty, theft, and voicelessness in the case of First Nations people, and sexual attraction, wrongful treatment, death, and the failure of the white man to rescue or provide safety in the case of men of colour. I did not learn to hate First Nations people, but to feel sorry for them. I did not learn to hate people of colour but to associate them with victimization, helplessness and sexuality. These early critical incidents began to entwine race with desire. They associated in my mind the dark/male other with poverty and racial inequality and injustice, and the white/self with privilege, sexual desire, and the desire for social justice. The racialized other became attractive, poor and at the mercy of white privilege, yet a man able to offer and take. My white female identity mixed sympathy for the dark/other with a desire to help him while being attracted to his resistance. Mayella's poor whiteness similarly evoked sympathy for her untenable position yet disdain for her denouncement of Tom.

4.3 *The Sound of Music* (1965)

By the time *The Sound of Music* and the following film, *Harum Scarum* (1965), were released my family had moved "south", to the city of Edmonton. Here there were many more cinemas than in Whitehorse and it was also the first time we had a television. I saw *The Sound of Music* at the Saturday afternoon matinee. Like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the theatre was full. Julie Andrews plays Maria, a postulant at an abbey in Salzburg whose abbey life does not seem to suit her. The Mother Superior suggests she take work as a governess for the Von Trapp family. A widower, Captain Von Trapp

(Christopher Plummer) has seven children and is courting the Baroness whom he hopes will take over from Maria. Maria mothers the Von Trapp children, teaching them songs and comforting them. The children love her and soon their father too falls in love with her. The young Maria and the older Captain marry, and the Baroness, who does not like children much, drops out of the picture. Meanwhile, Captain Von Trapp is being coerced into joining the Nazi party. Maria and the Captain realize they must leave Austria, and following their final singing performance, they escape, heading over the mountains.

The movie helped to construct two important tropes relevant to teaching English. The first was the unquestioned presence of the English language in the world. I knew the story was set in Europe, but because the story unfolded in English with little or no attempt at even a German-Austrian accent let alone subtitles, I accepted *unquestioningly* the *natural* presence of English-only in the film. I interpellated and constructed this nation and its citizens not so much as English speakers (I did not question that their mother tongue was English), but rather as “just like me”. Not only did Maria and the others speak in English, but also they *sang* in English. English-as-everywhere/anywhere was the taken-for-granted trope. The language of the world was my language, no question. I explore this problematic further in Chapter 5.

The second trope was articulated through Maria. She was the character I identified with even though I was closer in age to the younger children. As the governess, her role was to teach the children, and her “lessons” were very connected to the children. She was encouraging, fun and entertaining, and much of the lessons took place outside. She was full of sympathy and empathy for them. She understood their

circumstances from their point of view. She had a strong sense of their emotional states, and their different ages and stages of desire. She was the all-knowing, all-seeing governess/teacher. This powerful eye of Maria was combined with motherly love for the children, made even clearer by the juxtaposition of the Baroness's cool distance. The teacher-as-supermother became the unquestioned standard.

In this all-knowing position, Maria is able to defend the children's misbehavior and advocate on their behalf to the Captain, their father. She tells him what the children need from him, and he listens. She is rewarded by their love and affection and a new social position, that of a married woman to a handsome and respected man of considerable means. The cinematic heterosexual romance here made available a "pattern of desire" (Davies, 1993) I was able to take up. Maria's transformation from postulant/school girl to woman is apparent through her change of body language, costume and gaze at the Captain. The character of Maria, her transformation, and her curriculum were very appealing to my young self.

The memory of that matinee movie cannot be separated from a small but thrilling incident that occurred while I was watching the film. A boy my age was sitting beside me. During the film with my arm on the armrest, he accidentally covered my hand with his! Realizing my hand was already there, he quickly apologized and put his hand back at his side. In the dark, we briefly looked at each other, and for a moment, my imaginary world held just him and me. I laugh now as I think of that girl, being touched if only accidentally while the cinema was filled with a powerful story of love, transformation and resistance. The cinematic subjects of *The Sound of Music* were contributing to my identity as a young girl longing for womanhood.

4.4 *Harum Scarum* (1965)

I was at the age for sleepovers and after one of these we went to the Saturday matinee to see Elvis Presley in what recent reviews on Amazon.com (keyword: *Harum Scarum*) insist is the worst Elvis Presley film ever made. But we were just little girls swooning, giggling, and sighing in the cinematic presence of the star we loved. Critics we were not. Set in a Middle Eastern country called Babilstan, Elvis plays Johnny Tyronne, a teen idol on a good-will mission. Johnny's recent movie in which he rescues a Middle Eastern country from the bad guys is shown to an audience of royalty, officials and diplomats in order to build diplomatic relations between the United States and Babilstan. However, soon after the screening of the movie, Johnny gets kidnapped and the kidnapers try to force him to assassinate the King of Babilstan. The King's brother has hired the kidnapers. He escapes with the help of a traveling dance troupe of thieves. On route, he meets a beautiful woman and they fall in love instantly. She is the King's daughter but Johnny does not yet know that. When she learns he is going to kill her father, she runs away to warn her father. Johnny helps the King instead of killing him, and in the end, the lovers are reunited.

I was thrilled to be sitting in the front row of the theatre with my girlfriends. We were on our own and the sleepover mom would pick us up after the movie. We were very excited to watch Elvis. We were particularly delighted when he sang a song to one of the dancing troupe's adopted children, a girl of about our age: "Hey little girl, you sure look fine. I'd like to take you home and make you mine." None of my friends, I am sure, loved him as much as I did. Not only was he handsome and sexy, but my mother had told me that when I was born, the doctor said I looked like Elvis Presley

because my hair was black and combed back like his. My mom was offended but later when I heard this story, I was thrilled to have looked like Elvis, another instance of female identification with an attractive powerful male. In the scenes involving singing and kissing, we could not contain ourselves on the seats but slid onto the theatre floor, covering our giggling and moaning mouths from a combination of embarrassment and rapture. He really was the King, and we really were just girls.

What strikes me about this particular Elvis movie is the exotification of the Middle East, very much part of the visual discourse of Said's (1979) orientalism. The exotification was accomplished through signifiers in the mise-en-scene, that is, through

set design, costumes, the arrangement and movement of figures, the spatial relations (who is obscured, who looks dominant, and so on), and the placement of objects which have become important within the narrative (Turner, 1988, p. 60)

The female characters were costumed in *I Dream of Jeannie* clothing (a popular American sit-com of a genie who helped her "master"). The bottoms were sheer, wispy and loose, the tops bra-like. The men wore turbans, long flowing gowns, loose pants and a sash. The women had long dark hair. The harem was located in the palace. It gave me the impression that harems were a waiting space where the women waited to be summoned by the King. They had little to do but take care of Johnny when he was there. This discourse of the harem as an exotic, erotic, and luxurious time and place remained until I began reading in feminist postcolonialism. Ahmed (1982), Alloula (1986), Grewal (1996) and Lewis (1996) offer postcolonial critiques of the visual harem as it has been represented by white men and women in postcards, travel writing, and paintings, respectively. Mernissi's (1995) insider's autobiographical account of her

Moroccan harem girlhood similarly repositioned the colonial/postcolonial harem of my young imaginary. Harem women laboured. Even though they had servants, much of their time was taken up in domestic work. In films with ESL, the harem as a space of language learning is taken up in Chapter 5.

Unlike the previous films, Johnny's story offered up several meanings of travel to far away lands. Travel was full of adventure, danger, singing, romance, and fun. That so many of the harem women were attracted to Johnny suggested, like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the coupling of racial others with desire and interracial love. Johnny, the white man, is positioned as the hero who rescues not only women but also a nation. Of *Harum Scarum*, Shohat and Stam (1994) state that it projects a

puritanical obsession with sexuality . . . [where] the harem images offer an "open sesame" to an alluring and tantalizingly forbidden world, seen as infinitely desirable to the instinctual primitive presumably inhabiting all men. (p. 161)

All this brazen masculinity unfolds through the medium of English. Like *The Sound of Music*, little or no attempt is made to incorporate Arabic or even an Arabic accent into the mise-en-scene. Again, the world communicated unquestioningly in English.

4.5 *Billy Jack* (1971)

When the credits began rolling for *Billy Jack*, my mother began to walk out of the cinema, but I did not want to leave. I wanted to know who had made this extraordinary movie, but much more than that, my teenaged self wanted the movie to go on. Entering the film story, I felt at home there. It filled me with a sense of how powerful resistance can be and how this can be achieved through schooling. "Freedom School" was started by a white pacifist woman, Jean (Delores Taylor), on an Arizona

Indian reservation. The students or "kids" were from the reservation but there were also Chicano, black, and white kids from the town who were living in a difficult home situation or who, for other reasons, chose to go to Freedom School. Many of the girls were my age and had long straight hair parted in the middle exactly how I wore my hair. The central character, Billy Jack (Tom Laughlin), is a Métis and ex-Green Beret back from the Vietnam War to live peacefully on the reservation. Jean and Billy love each other and are both committed in their own ways to protecting the school from persistent attacks by the racist community that also fears and hates "dirty" hippies.

When a pregnant hippy white girl of fifteen runs away after her father beats her, Billy finds her exhausted on the reservation. The white sheriff suggests she stay at Freedom School. The girl, sheriff, Jean, Billy, and the white doctor who attend the girl, decide to keep her whereabouts a secret so that her father, the deputy sheriff, will not find her. The secret gets out, however, and the deputy sheriff/father with the influential, wealthy and racist Pocor father and son behind him encounter Billy, the kids, and Jean several times throughout the movie.

Most of the encounters are violent, with Billy using his martial arts skills, his rifle and his keen sixth sense to defend the kids, the school, Jean and even the wild stallions on the reservation. Jean protects the school by providing spaces for the students to talk about their values and perform theatre related to social issues of the time. Jean is raped by Pocor's son who also sexually molests another woman. He murders an Indian boy whom his father suspects is the father of the deputy sheriff's daughter's unborn child. Jean begs the only witness to her rape to keep it a secret from Billy because she knows that his violent temper will be provoked. Billy's keen sixth sense leads him to

know about the rape and he kills Pocor. Billy is severely beaten, shot in the stomach, and in the last scene arrested and taken away to jail, but not before he and Jean have negotiated the continuation of the school for another ten years with Jean as the "directrice."

Billy Jack continued to entwine my identity with race, desire and, more specifically than *To Kill a Mockingbird*, with visions of how education could be. I again had the "great white father" in the figure of the antiracist sheriff. However, since he was "old", his stature paled in comparison to the attractive, protecting, and strong Billy who was certain of his values but was nevertheless on a path of learning. Jean was a powerful white woman because she was the "directrice" and because of her passionate commitment to antiracist schooling and her alternative pedagogy such as letting the students guide the curriculum, insisting on creativity, performance, rôle playing, and street theatre. She was a committed pacifist, feminist, and a loving mother-type, attractive in her tight pants, long blonde hair, and mild voice. Unlike the girl, Scout, in *To Kill a Mockingbird* in which the racism and anti-racism unfold despite her, Jean actively resists the racist community that surrounds Freedom School. At the same time, her pedagogy builds the confidence of kids that, because of racist society and their resistance to it or their particular circumstance, may lack self-esteem. Native traditions are central to the curriculum. The kids participate in or observe various aspects of native culture such as a cremation and a snake initiation. Jean is also aware of Billy's position in relation to the community (people there fear him, some respect him), to the kids at Freedom School (they love and admire him), to his continued apprenticeship in Indian culture, and to his male/warrior identity.

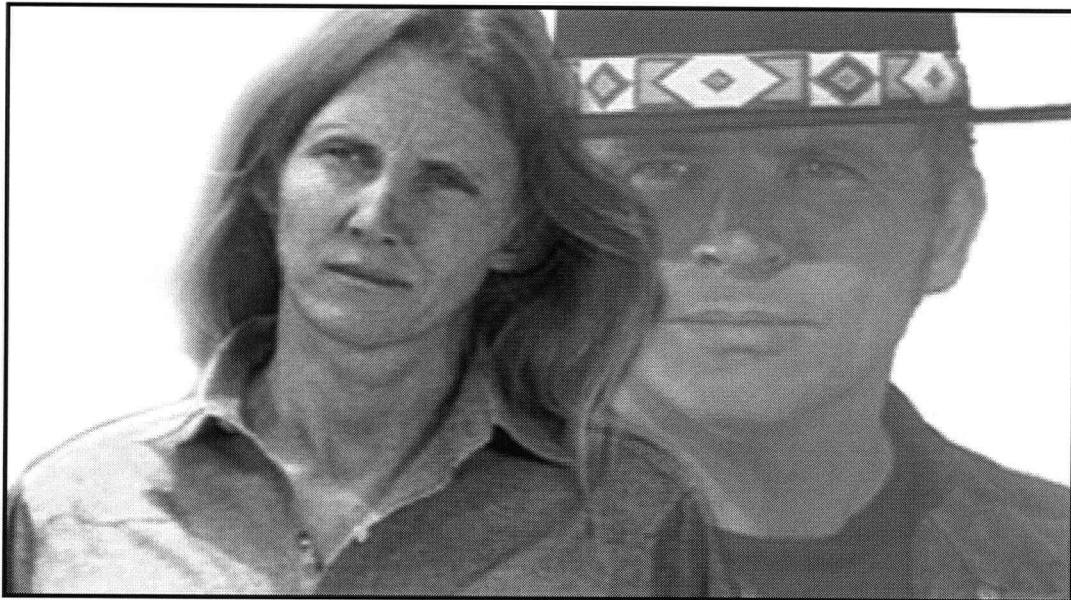


Image 4.2 Delores Taylor as “Jean” and Tom Laughlin as “Billy Jack” in *Billy Jack*, 1971

Near the end of the movie, when it seems clear that Billy is going to be killed by the white police and Pocor’s followers, Jean expresses her feelings towards him. She loves him, cannot imagine the school without him, but cannot understand why he has set himself up to die, why he can’t give himself up and face a jail sentence instead of death. Her words turn the eventuality of his death around, opening up the scene for a negotiation between what she and Billy want for the school and what the police want from Billy. It is resistance in different ways: Billy resists what he calls the white way (giving in) while Jean resists the inevitability of his death by suggesting that death is the easy way out and the struggle is in keeping the school going. Here is a representation of a white woman not only in sympathy with and attracted to racial others but working with them to re-work racist structures.

This was great stuff for the teenaged Ardiss. Jean and Billy made an incredibly attractive couple. Their biracial love once more suggested this possibility for my own

future. But more than that was their combined and contrasting commitment to producing knowledge and identity by beginning with who the students were corporeally, spiritually, and culturally. Such representation is not unproblematic, however, as it produces an essentialized native subject as inherently spiritual and connected to the natural world. Then, however, I was full of longing for that same recognition. Some of my teachers did incorporate forms of narrative and performance but within the constraints of a large suburban school.

Until this memory work in learning whiteness, I had not realized that *Billy Jack* had become a cult movie. I should have realized that fact as there are often copies of *Billy Jack* for sale close to where I live, on the Westbank Indian Reserve in British Columbia, Canada. There is also a web site, <http://www.billyjack.com>. Because it has cult status, *Billy Jack* again speaks to the strength of film-as-pedagogy, and underpins my later interest in antiracist pedagogies of freedom/liberation and resistance.

4.6 Summary and Comments

This section has responded to the question, *How have films contributed to my identity as a white woman ESL teacher?* I revisited four films from my childhood recalled repeatedly as I questioned myself. I mapped out memories and impressions of the movies with knowledge from feminist film studies, postcolonial studies, and poststructuralist pedagogy. Doing so enabled me to pull out discursive threads relevant in learning white womanhood and teaching racialized others. These themes are:

- (1) non-white men as strong yet needing protection from whites or protecting themselves, sexually restrained but desirable (men), sexually assertive (women);
- (2) whiteness as great white father/mother, hero, antiracist;

- (3) poor white men as guilty, racist, abusive; poor white women as vulnerable;
- (4) white woman teacher as motherly, understanding, compassionate, committed, advocate, antiracist, vulnerable;
- (5) pedagogy as passive resistance, listening to learners, loving, playful, negotiating;
- (6) transformation through romantic love, commitment, struggle;
- (7) white feminism as working *with* not working *for* racial others (Roman, 1993, p. 82), awareness of sexist language, active pacifism;
- (8) English as unquestioned standard in the world;
- (9) heterosexual romance as an inevitable and welcomed event.

Why were these films recalled and not others? First, remember that my question was quite specific: *What popular films contributed to the construction of my white female teaching identity?* The specificity narrowed my memory to particular films where race and gender were particularly important. Second, there was some event or impact surrounding each movie, what Bal (1998) calls “an emotional aura” (p. viii) that made these memories precisely memorable. In these cinematic memories, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962) coupled with entering a First Nations community, a boy’s touch during *The Sound of Music* (1965), the sleepover event coupled with *Harum Scarum* (1965), and the intensity of *Billy Jack* (1971) provided an event-full presence of the films. Significant, too, is the easy identification to characters that looked like I did and were my age. “Looking like I did” meant in large part the colour and length of hair. Could a girl/young woman’s hair be a factor in identification? According to Weitz (2001), how American women wear their hair is quite strategic. She points out that in white and non-white women’s resistance to cultural norms of femininity or in their

accommodation of them, hair was used to gain power. Sameness of hair enabled me to access the character, for example, Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and witness like she did, the racist society against which her father fought. (More on hair and cinematic identification is discussed in Chapters 5 and 8.) Another reason these movies were recalled was the impressionable age at which I saw them. Like British juvenile literature of the late 19th and 20th centuries that emphasized empire to its impressionable audience (Chaudhuri & Strobel, 1990), the cinematic curriculum of my youth has held in many ways. Fifth, the familial context in which I was raised is significant. My parents were left leaning politically, and by the time I was an adolescent, my mother, abandoned by her husband, became a (reluctant) liberal feminist. Thus, I was a witness to my single mother's struggle for control and identity.

I have argued that viewers have available to them a number of positions in response to cinematic images and narratives. My argument in this chapter underscores the position that a young and impressionable girl responded in the way that was expected by the social practices of a particular time and place. Through the seemingly innocent practice of a young girl going to the Friday movies or Saturday matinees, much more than entertainment is happening. A world of racialized and gendered desire is settling in and making itself comfortable. The body becomes a palimpsest written over with images and narratives that both secure and compete with each other. An example of securing is the naturalization of the English language in the world through the movies *The Sound of Music* (1965) and *Harum Scarum* (1965). An instance of competing images is the power yet vulnerability and victimization of white women in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962) and *Billy Jack* (1971). I argued that the location of desire can be

found in visual texts such as films that are witnessed at impressionable ages. A white and feminized subject emerged *in relation to* racial others. I saw them but I was racially invisible. The subject I am now constructs a cultural memory of the films that will differ from women looking through different lenses. Revisiting these films, I felt acutely, like Joyrich (1995), my past selves as viewers, my doubles, and the act of recall destabilizing the subject the films helped to construct.

Turning the gaze upon myself may be understood as furthering the knowledge of “postcolonial white womanhood” rather than of furthering knowledge of “subaltern postcolonial womanhood.” This is not my intent. Rather, it seemed necessary to question my own formations of identity in order to understand more fully others’ such as the students’ and teachers’ identities in Chapters 8 and 9. To draw solely on and make public how I interpret what other people say of themselves, in this case what teachers and students say about their teaching and learning in relation to popular film, without also thinking and making public my own formation as an ESL teacher, was morally problematic. To make objects of, for instance the teachers, was untenable not only because of our relationships as colleagues and friends but also because as a feminist I have long questioned the researcher’s position as objective. I believed I could understand more fully the process of becoming white through the cinema if I too was an active participant in the inquiry, making my self into an object of my own gaze. Hall’s (1997a) question, “Can identity itself be re-thought and re-lived, in and through difference?” (p. 43) is relevant here. While I could make arguments for either answer, I have addressed the answer “yes” in this chapter by attempting to make visible racialized and gendered threads of subjectivity as they relate to popular films.

Chapter 5

CINEMATIC METAPHORS FOR ESL:

DISCURSIVE ELEMENTS

The “English eye” sees everything else but is not so good at recognizing that it is itself actually looking at something . . . It is strongly centered; knowing where it is, what it is, it places everything else. And the thing which is wonderful about English identity is that it didn’t only place the colonized Other, it placed *everybody* else . . . Identity is always, in that sense, a structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the negative.

(Hall, 1997b, p. 21)

To catch sight of how the camera is reproducing not just an image but the imperial imagination in action as it captures the “colorfulness” of the other, might further break down the colonial hold on education.

(Willinsky, 1998, p. 154)

5.1 Introduction

Hall's quote makes the point that a centered (British/English) identity whose white male history mapped the world is unable to locate itself in relations of looking at others. Willinsky's quote addresses the project of undermining such colonial looking relations and underscores the purpose of the following three chapters, a hopeful contribution to the decolonization of ESL pedagogy.

This chapter differs from previous examinations of popular films and education reviewed in Chapter 2. Many of the 24 films I read here have not been considered in educational studies of popular film. *The King and I* (1956), *El Norte* (1984), *Stand and Deliver* (1988), *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987), and *Indecent Proposal* (1993) are the exceptions, and extended and powerful interpretations have been offered in the case of *Stand and Deliver* (Ayers, 1993; Bodnar, 1996; F. Butler, 2000; Dalton, 1999; Farber and Holm, 1994; Robertson, 1997). As *Stand and Deliver* has already had considerable attention in this document and as the ESL students are not the focus of the film, I only mention it in passing in this chapter. *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987) has also been read by Giroux (1994). I do take up both the film and Giroux's reading later in the chapter. Other films with ESL are only briefly noted in previous studies of film and education such as *The King and I* (1956) in Dalton (1999). The chapter therefore redefines the genre of "teacher films" or popular films in education.

Similarly, many studies in interpreting multiple films concern exclusively American films and mainly blockbusters (Ayers, 1993; Bauer, 1998; Dalton, 1999; Farber and Holm, 1994; Giroux, 2002; Trier, 2001a; Whatley, 1988). In work where a single film is examined, these also tend to be American blockbusters (Bell, 1995; Cohen,

1996; Long, 1996; Smith, 1999). In contrast, this chapter examines films from several countries that are both Hollywood mainstream, for example, *Indecent Proposal* (1993), *Out of Africa* (1985), and *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997) and independent films such as *Miss Mary* (1986), *Tropic of Cancer* (1970), and *Where the Spirit Lives* (1989).

Independent films and films made in non-English speaking countries are still popular in the sense that they continue to be broadcast on television and are also the object of academic study. For example, there is a chapter devoted to the film *Miss Mary* (1986) in a book about the director of the film, Maria Luisa Bemberg, and her work (Kant  ris, 2000). Another example is *Please Teach Me English* (2003) which was popular in South Korea but not accessible in theatres and shops where I live. Including such films repositions them *alongside* Hollywood/American films. In this way, non-Hollywood films are interpellated with more power than the absence afforded to them in previous studies. As well, by including a diversity of films with ESL, different forms of power and ESL identities are also made available.

Second, as the majority of the films are set in British colonial times (13 of 24 are set between the 1870s and 1930s) and in countries of British interest (Canada, China, India, Kenya, Thailand), I looked to postcolonial studies to help me understand how films produced ESL subjectivities. Indeed, depicting colonial times in colonized lands or not, the films are rich in postcolonial discourses of self/other. Whether set in 1980s Los Angeles (*El Norte*, 1984) or 1860s India (*The Jungle Book*, 1994), binary identities of self/other, teacher/student still comprise constructs such as Pennycook (1998) describes: white/black, emptiness/absence, cultured/barbarian, adult/child, and cleanliness/dirt (pp. 47-65). Many of these relationships are readily available in films

with ESL, yet, importantly, characters do not always fall neatly into these binaries. In addition to postcolonial studies, and unlike most previous analyses of film and education, the present study also engages with cultural studies and feminist film studies to further a theory of poststructuralist and feminist ESL pedagogy.

This chapter is organized into two sections. In the first, I look at colonial tropes available in films with ESL. In the second part, I focus on the setting and content of the ESL curriculum. Questions guiding the examination are: What cinematic metaphors for ESL are available? How does the language of the film help to construct these metaphors? What spaces do ESL and ESL subjects inhabit in teaching and learning? What is being taught?

5.2 Metaphors and Tropes for ESL

5.2.1 The *Worlding* of English

I suggested in Chapter 4 that movies set in non-English speaking countries such as *Harum Scarum* (1965) and *The Sound of Music* (1965) underpin a powerful and ubiquitous presence of English language. Spivak's (1985) term, *worlding*, is helpful here. *Worlding* is a process of othering colonized people and their land. When colonialists entered other people's countries, their discourse about the land and its people produced themselves in self-other relationships, for example, as civilized/barbaric, and the colonized land as empty and uninscribed (a point I discuss below). Extending Spivak's term to the worlding of English in popular films with ESL, a particular position for English is produced, that is, the unquestioned position of English language in the world, or the *worlding of English*. This is a problematic trope for its inherent cultural misrepresentation. The worlding of English cinematically is so

widespread that, like whiteness, it goes unnoticed. Except for films made in non-English speaking countries, *Bossa Nova* (2000), *Iron and Silk* (1990), *Miss Mary* (1986), and *Please Teach Me English* (2003), English with few or no subtitles is spoken by everyone, regardless of first language or knowledge of English. A second issue is the lack of sub-titles. In addition to the frustration of not having access to what non-English speakers say, not providing translation for them assumes that what they say is unimportant. This serves to void colonized/ESL people. Cinematic ESL students learn to speak quickly, already know English, or are silent so that the audience hears almost exclusively English. The rare ESL teacher speaks the local language but seldom uses it. When there is a communication difficulty for lack of language knowledge in or out of the class, the assumption again is that the student or non-English speaker must make the effort to use English more accurately. Most often, when the white teacher is in a non-English speaking country, the teacher's monolingualism is located as natural and adequate as everyone else speaks English, and if they do not, they should. English then is produced as inherently superior by its sheer presence over the silence of other languages.

This trope is also problematic for the analysis of who is teaching what to whom. For instance, Ingrid Bergman plays the "real" British lay missionary, Gladys Aylward, teaching in 1930s China in the Hollywood movie, *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* (1958). Chinese is spoken very little although Gladys is shown eagerly learning Chinese. When she goes to the countryside and teaches songs and asks the village children and adults to read the next book, she uses English. Is the film audience to imagine that she is speaking in Chinese? Are we to think it is a Chinese book she hands

out? Or (and this is the assumption I believe the film makes) is she teaching them in English to sing English songs which they do indeed sing later in the movie? According to Rowbotham (1998), teaching hymns was among the selected religious work women could do. Yet, according to her biography (Burgess, 1957), Aylward “spoke the language as fluently as a native” (p. 97). Hollywood is infamous for its historical inaccuracies, yet as I argued in Chapter 1, cinematic narratives and images may complete viewers’ knowledge about something inexperienced such as the work of a lay missionary in 1930s China.



Image 5.1 Robert Donat as “The Mandarin of Yang Ching”, Curt Jurgens as “Colonel Lin”, and Ingrid Bergman as “Gladys Aylward” in *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, 1958

When Chinese is spoken in *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, it is most often done so by white actors playing Chinese or Chinese-Europeans, another racialized Hollywood strategy. Although Hollywood sometimes now hires actors from the country in which the film is set, they still speak English and subtitles are seldom provided when a language other than English is spoken. Similarly, in *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997), the conversations transpire in English with a few words of Tibetan here and there. Indeed, Harrer, the teacher to the Dalai Llama, is represented as resenting his colleagues fluency in Tibetan and rather is successful in minimal use of Tibetan. Again, the reel Harrer does not reflect the real man. According to his autobiography (1994), he was fluent in both spoken and written Tibetan and must have used Tibetan, at least initially, when he taught the Dalai Llama. The point here is that even when real English teachers are fluent in other languages, the cinematic representation is monolingualism. The English monolingualist is the standard, normalized identity of ESL teachers, and English the standard for the world.

An exception here is *Iron and Silk* (1990), Mark Salzman's movie about himself teaching English in 1980s China. Teacher Mark has studied classical Chinese at an American university and he learned to speak Chinese by working at a Chinese restaurant in the United States. Teacher Mark's competence in Chinese is stated as well as displayed in conversations with Teacher Pan, his wu-shu teacher with whom he seldom needs Chinese explained or repeated. His Chinese ability and understanding of wushu is in stark contrast to Teacher Mark's students who, he says, sing the wrong song at his farewell party. One critical reading of the language pedagogy in the film is that it is Teacher Mark, the American, who learns both Chinese and wu-shu very well while his

Chinese students do not, and that the film positions the American as more capable in comparison to the Chinese. However, another critical reading takes up the teaching side of pedagogy: it is the Chinese teachers and their methods that excel at their profession and the American who does not -- he learns well because he has excellent teachers and conversely his students learn little because Teacher Mark is not a very skilled teacher. Lather's (1992) question, "How do our efforts to liberate perpetuate the relations of dominance?" (p. 122), is relevant here. The first reading, in its attempt to be critical, *necessarily* reinstates or recenters the superiority of the white westerner. The second reading moves the peripheral Chinese to the center and renames them as powerful and capable. Again, it is not a question of which reading is correct and which one is not, but rather which reading speaks for whom, why, and under what conditions.

5.2.2 Freedom

The learning and teaching of English as *freedom from* certain social restraints and *freedom to* participate in knowledge and conditions identified as desirable is another trope. Both teachers and students are implicated in the freedom from/to trope. English teaching abroad enables white women freedom from the constraints placed upon them in Britain where employment possibilities were limited in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Chaudhuri and Strobel, 1990; Rowbotham, 1998; Tinkler, 1998). The cinema has frequently addressed this freedom for colonial women, although Shohat (1997) notes that the reverse (Asian and African women traveling to the west) is much less common (pp. 196-197). Cinematic representations of colonial ESL teachers include the mythological figure of Anna Leonowens as portrayed in the four film versions of the book *Anna and the King of Siam* (Langdon, 1944) where she is able to support herself

and her son in Siam by teaching the King's children and wives. In these films, her freedom is in marked contrast to the royal harem women who are represented as oppressed and limited (Donaldson, 1990; Kaplan, 1995; Mackie, 1998). Yet the story unfolds around her efforts to make the King provide a house for her outside the palace, a place she finds confining. Similarly, in *The Jungle Book* (1994), Kitty, the daughter of a British army officer, finds that by claiming the role of English teacher, she escapes the constraints of her confined upbringing in British-India. In *Black Narcissus* (1947) and *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* (1958) we have two portraits of Christian teachers of English who find their calling away from the patriarchal structure of church and England where their access to higher status work is limited. Baroness Blixen of *Out of Africa* (1985) is contrasted with other white European women in the movie. She works with and cares for the black workers and their families and does work normally reserved for men (Kaplan, 1997, 88-91). In two films set in the 1930s, *Miss Mary* (1986) and *Where the Spirit Lives* (1989), the white women have freedom to leave their homes to teach in a place where they believe they are needed. In *Where the Spirit Lives* the teacher's experience at the Indian residential school leads to radical shifts in recognizing her raced and nationed roles in the oppression of her students' lives.

A contradictory trope to ESL teaching-as-freedom is portrayed in teachers of diasporan students set in the 1980s and 1990s in the United States where teaching ESL is a last resort. *Stripes* (1981) and *Indecent Proposal* (1993) represent teachers as losers, with no particular interest in ESL except as a job. English teaching holds out no ticket to freedom, and, indeed, it is undertaken only as a desperate last resort. In *Stripes*, the teacher quits his adult education teaching job to become a private in the U.S. army.

Similarly, in *Indecent Proposal*, a young married couple's relationship is threatened after they accept an offer of a million dollars from a wealthy man if he can have a night alone with the wife. While the wife is trying to build her life again, she takes an evening job teaching citizenship classes to immigrant students. It is only when she has lost everything that she begins teaching ESL for citizenship. In a film set in 1960s France, *Tropic of Cancer* (1970), a writer with no income moves from Paris to the countryside to take a job teaching English in a boys' school. In these films, teaching English is a desperate last measure when other sources of income are lost.

However, it is different for diasporan students than for their teachers. In *El Norte* (1984), *Stand and Deliver* (1988), and *Indecent Proposal* (1993), the students have access to work, money, pride, higher education, and citizenship. In *Indecent Proposal*, the American classroom for citizenship is decorated with large posters of American money. The millionaire in pursuit of the wife/teacher pulls up in a limousine. The students at the back of the class are impressed with this and comment in Spanish (again not translated). After the class, the millionaire says that the students are "nice people", that "they want the dream." They too are in search of the streets-paved-in-gold notion the cinematic United States offers immigrants. The story is that once English is learned, success will follow. The freedom to/from trope is also evident with ESL students who either claim for themselves a freedom through English or whose freedom by learning English and being associated with the English speaker is claimed for them. Students are free: to be "a civilized man" (*The Jungle Book*, 1994), from being "a little people" (*The Last Emperor*, 1987), from foot binding (*The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, 1958) or to grow a much needed garden (*The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*).

The illusion of English as economic and social freedom is made apparent in several films. Regarding students, in *El Norte* (1984), the sister dies from a disease she has contracted after a rat bites her in the old sewer pipes she has crawled through between Mexico and the United States. In *The Jungle Book* (1994), Mowgli, the jungle boy turned man, rejects British culture as does Komi/Amelia in *Where the Spirit Lives*, a story about the forced assimilation of Indian children to white Canadian culture. In these films, non-white male and female students see through the veil of freedom. Here, postcolonial travel stories, as hooks (1998) argues, have different headings: migration, relocation, enforced assimilation, and homelessness (p. 48).

For cinematic white women teachers, their freedom, too, is limited. Miss Mary, despite her public appearance, is a lonely, repressed colonial subject, punished for not staying within her colonial role. Kitty, the colonial daughter in *The Jungle Book* (1994), soon learns that the romance, developed during English lessons with Mowgli, threatens the men around her, and she is also punished by being sent back to Britain. The freedom Sister Clodagh (*Black Narcissus*, 1947) may have expected as Mother Superior in the Himalayan nunnery soon dissipates as the sisters' own passions surface.

5.2.3 Heroic Duty

Portraits of ESL heroes are accomplished through the mise-en-scene, dialogue, camera shots, Hollywood stars, and other signifiers which, taken separately or together, portray students as children, lacking, needy, diseased, and dirty. In turn, the other half of the binary is constructed: teachers as liberators, caring and administering affection and love, or disciplinarians inflicting necessary punishment to accomplish the civilizing mission. Teaching subjects rise to the many challenges set before them in the film

narrative. English education is imaged as being the duty of teachers, and as the *mission* of missionaries and other colonizers, particularly women. This identity for women had been solidly constructed by both British women travelers and missionaries and circulated not only among women readers of popular texts in Britain in the late 19th century but also in royal circles in Siam (a point discussed further on).

Indeed, a portrait of heroism emerges in some films. Jodie Foster as Miss Anna in the most recent film portrait of Leonowens, *Anna and the King* (1999), does nothing less than rescue the entire Mongtук kingdom from civil war, in part by strategically placing fireworks that thwart the King's enemy. Gladys Aylward of *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* (1958) rescues 100 orphans by leading them over a mountain pass and across



Image 5.2 Ingrid Bergman as “Gladys Aylward” saves 100 Chinese orphans in *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, 1958

a river in China while the Japanese bombs fall. As with Aylward's real proficiency in Chinese, the film again denies her "reality." Apparently, she rescued 200 orphans (Burgess, 1957). Teachers are fulfilling a duty, either to Christianity by converting students or to Empire by civilizing students.

Part of the audience's viewing pleasure in this heroism is narcissistic or scopophilic (Mulvey, 1975). The audience, ESL teachers or otherwise, enjoy an identification with the often glamorous and heroic portrayals of ESL teachers by stars. They/we save lives, barely escape death, tutor powerful students, are desired by students, and help "needy" and grateful students. Stars have always figured as ESL teachers, from Ingrid Bergman (*The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, 1958), Deborah Kerr (*Black Narcissus*, 1947; *The King and I*, 1956), and Julie Christie (*Miss Mary*, 1986) to Peter O'Toole (*The Last Emperor*, 1987), Sidney Poitier (*Lilies of the Field*, 1963), and Brad Pitt (*Seven Years in Tibet*, 1997). Stars signify various meanings to viewing audiences, and these meanings are related inter-textually (McDonald, 1995, p. 83). That is, our identification is not only with the cinematic teacher heroically performing her colonial duty but also with other knowledge of the stars, for example, their other movies, politics, sexuality, and so on.

5.2.4 Romantic Desire

Romance and desire is of course a common trope in many ESL films. If the pleasure of viewing liberators and rescuers is not enough, these heroic feats are accomplished while a romance with a local and/or powerful male is blossoming. In *Henry V*, the King of England (Kenneth Branagh) is united with his future wife, the daughter of the King of France (Emma Thompson), once King Henry has won the Battle

at Agincourt in 1415. She has prepared for their meeting by having her lady-in-waiting give her English lessons. With Aylward (*The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, 1958) and Leonowens (*Anna and the King*, 1999), their teaching/liberating concurs with a romance with a Dutch/Chinese army officer and the King of Siam, respectively. The Hollywood version of Aylward has the promise of her and her Dutch-Chinese lover united at the end of the movie. According to her biography, however, her man was Chinese and after saving the children, she lost interest in the idea of marrying him (Burgess, 1957).

In the case of the four versions of the Anna Leonowen's story, the films were based on a novel by Margaret Landon (1944) that in turn was based on two books by Leonowens, *The Romance of the Harem* (1873, reprinted in 1991) and *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* (1870, reprinted in 1980). Historians still debate the accuracy of her books, and the films do not resemble her books apart from dates, places, names and general circumstances. In regards to the cinematic and literary romance between Leonowens and the King, it is purely fictional. Interestingly, the romance becomes greater as each successive film is released. The first film in 1946 represents only a slight tension between them. The video cover has Leonowens in a collared blouse done up to the neck and pinned closed with a brooch and ribbon. In the next film, 1956, the dance scene is suggestive of interest in each other. In this video cover, Leonowens is wearing an off-the-shoulder pink gown with cleavage. By 1999, in the live action version, they are kissing and falling in love, and the video cover shows her naked from her neck to her chest which fades into a sun-blazed Siamese setting. The 1999 *animated* version returns to the 1956 dance scene with Leonowens back to a pink off-the-shoulder dance gown but no cleavage.



Image 5.3 Deborah Kerr as “Anna Leonowens” and Yul Brynner as “King Mongkut, of Siam” in *The King and I* (1956)

In terms of her employer, King Mongkut, it is significant how the four video covers represent him. Most importantly, in all but the animated version, he is behind Leonowens. The first two Kings were played by Rex Harrison (1946) and Yul Brynner (1956), two white Hollywood actors. In these covers, they stand above Leonowens. In the live action 1999 cover, Chow Yun-Fat, a Chinese actor from Hong Kong, is lower

than Foster and significantly smaller than her and the other King Mongkuts. Only in the animated version do the King and Leonowens stand side by side at approximately the same height, taking up approximately the same amount of space on the cover. In all four covers, he wears a jacket or shirt that has a mandarin collar so that little if any skin is shown except his face. The exception is the animated King who is naked under his open jacket. Questioning the racial signification of the covers suggests that Leonowens is the superior character in the three live action versions but in particular in the 1999 version. Films like these are full of historical inaccuracies, but films mainly aim to entertain, not to reflect reality (Turner, 1988, p. 3). Historically accurate or not, films may cause us to change, may inspire us, and may also deepen our beliefs in whatever is familiar. In this case, ESL is interpellated with interracial desire.

Romantic liaisons also occur between students and teachers, as in *Tarzan* (1999) and *The Jungle Book* (1994) both set in 19th century India. The romance is discouraged by white British men, and attempts at controlling the couples' desire is at first successful. Controlling real contact between white women and Indian men became more important to colonial white men after the 1857 Indian rebellion against the British in India. Whether or not it was justified is questioned by Sharpe (1993) and Tuson (1998). In the end, however, the cinematic student and teacher are united in *Tarzan* (1999) and *The Jungle Book* (1994). In *Bossa Nova* (2000) too, the teacher and her student fall in love and, despite obstacles, are together in the end. The romance between teachers and their students or other characters, however, also ends in disaster, with both of them being punished for their desire. In *Miss Mary* (1986), the teacher is seduced by one of her young charges and the next day is fired for it.

Sublimated white desire is a theme running through the story of nuns who try to transform an ex-harem 8000 feet in the Himalayan Mountains into a nunnery complete with a dispensary, school, and class for girls. The setting of *Black Narcissus* (1947) brings back memories of the Mother Superior's previous romance in Ireland. Another nun, Sister Ruth, falls in love with the only white man in the film, a Mr. Dean who appears in short shorts and an open shirt and lives for pleasure. His costume juxtaposes their nun's habit and complete coverage of their body except face and hands. Sister Ruth fails to renew her vows and runs to him in a dress and make up. He wants no part of them, saying he loves no one. She, too, is punished cinematically for her defiant position and openly passionate desire, and is killed in an accident.

In the late 20th century settings of China (*Iron and Silk*, 1990) and Vietnam (*Good Morning, Vietnam*, 1987) the romantic efforts of American male suitors of local women are unsuccessful. In *Iron and Silk* (1990) Teacher Mark's interest in a Chinese woman is made impossible in a similar way as *Good Morning, Vietnam's* (1987) teacher, Chronauer, played by Robin Williams, who desires one of his students. Both women know that their status at home will be unfavorable when their white suitors return to the United States. It is their resistance to the white male American English teachers that frustrates the teachers. More about such resistance is discussed in the next section.

5.3 Cinematic ESL Curriculum

5.3.1 Curriculum Settings

The typical classroom with a blackboard, and/or other teaching technologies (discussed further on), chairs or floor sitting space, and perhaps desks is the common

setting for most of the films either inside a building or out. In this section, however, I look at the wider setting of first, the land and how it contributes to a certain interpellation of the teacher and students, and second, the uses, both past and present, of the room itself.

The first setting is the strikingly similar “land of nothing”, or *terra nullius*, in three films, *Miss Mary* (1986), *Where the Spirit Lives* (1989), and *Out of Africa* (1985). The importance of this trope to colonization is stated by Pennycook (1998):

The view of the emptiness of colonial lands was officially described in the doctrine of *terra nullius*, which denied the very existence of people in many countries. (p. 55) (italics in original)

The filmed land is feminine and virginal (Paulston, 1996, p. xxi; Shohat, 1991b, pp. 51-52), available for the civilizing mission of mapping and English language and culture. Filmic language portrays *terra nullius* in the camera angle, depth of field, movement, dialogue, music, and mise-en-scene. Spivak (1985) argues that the fictioning of the colonized (Indian) land as uninscribed simultaneously writes the colonizer as Master and the Indians as other. She notes that:

the necessary yet contradictory assumption of an uninscribed earth which is the condition of possibility of the worlding of a world generates the force to make the “native” see himself as “other.” (p. 133)

Spivak’s use of “contradictory” signals the fiction of *terra nullius*. The land, indeed, was not empty. As I shall argue below, the cinematic *terra nullius* creates other fictions for English education and its subjects and objects.

Miss Mary (1986) is an independent film by the Argentine director, Maria-Luisa Bemberg, and is largely autobiographical of her life as a child in a wealthy family raised by British governesses (Burton-Carvajal, 1999, p. 339). *Miss Mary* was Bemberg’s

fourth feature-length film, her first being in 1981 made just before her sixtieth birthday (p. 331). In *Miss Mary*, Bemberg offers a critique of patriarchy and the ruling Argentinean class. Julie Christie plays Miss Mary Mulligan, the British governess to three children of a wealthy Argentine family.

Miss Mary arrives in 1938 from Britain by boat and train to a small country train station, and is driven to the family's Tudor mansion in the country. The land is pampas, quite bare of people, buildings, animals and activity, except the car transporting her to the mansion. The genealogy of the pampas as "empty" and "unpopulated" is traced to an early 19th century description by the Argentine traveler, Sarmiento (Pratt, 1992, p. 186). For Bemberg as well, the pampas represented "the metaphysical landscape of nothingness" (Burton-Carvajal, 1999, p. 342), and in this nothingness, there is an anonymity, and the illusion that whatever happens goes unnoticed. In the absence of a social panopticon, mental and sexual repression takes place in this family, as well as a sexual encounter between Miss Mary and one of her charges, the son of about 18 years. Real sexual relations between nursemaids and governesses and their male charges were not uncommon, as was sex and sexual abuse between the nursemaids and governesses and their male employers (McClintock, 1995, p. 85-87).

Miss Mary's curriculum is prescribed by the philandering father of the household, who above all wants a healthy dose of Christianity and his daughters well-supervised, but it is also partly constructed by herself, as a British colonial woman subject. Her liminal space is thus constructed through her social power via her Britishness and her repression by both an idealized colonial womanhood and the repressive patriarch (Christie, 2000; Kantaris, 2000). Through daily instruction in and

outside of the classroom, Miss Mary's charges learn English at the same time as they learn to say their prayers in English and learn upper-class British culture to which the ruling class of Argentina aspired. The stereotype of the superior British woman working with non-British people (heathens) was already well established in British popular culture through women missionaries and their writing (Rowbotham, 1998). In her Victorian and imperial snobbery, Miss Mary is both the perpetrator of repression toward her charges, but also a victim of repression as a female employee of a strong patriarch.

The opening scene depicting *terra nullius* in *Where the Spirit Lives* (1989), a Canadian film, is strikingly similar to that of *Miss Mary* (1986). Miss Kathleen Willenberry, played by Ann-Louise MacDonald, also arrives by train in the province of Alberta, Canada, also in the 1930s, and is also taken by car, this time to the King George V Indian Mission School, a two-story brick building. Like the Tudor mansion where Miss Mary lives and teaches, the Indian Mission School where Miss Willenberry teaches and lives is also the prairie, in the middle of nowhere. Again, such filmic language produces a colonial discourse of a virgin land, a frontier where the country is quite uninhabited, natural, and undeveloped, giving the impression that nothing happens there, and is available for anything.

Miss Willenberry's curriculum is also prescribed by the patriarch, this time the Reverend of the school, but it is also ingrained with her own white woman's values. Again, in this *terra nullius*, away from the watchful eye of a wider society but in part inscribed by that society, sexual, physical, and emotional abuse occurs. Historically, as with the liaisons between governesses and their charges, dangerous liaisons between residential school employees and aboriginal students took place through the

government-sanctioned process of forced assimilation. Battiste (1986), Chrisjohn and Young (1997, pp. 40-60), Grant (1996, pp. 269-275), and Kelm (1998) describe the residential schools and the insistence on "English only" as a large part of the cultural and linguistic genocide which was enacted upon Canadian First Nations people. The forced removal of children of the Doukhobor Sons of Freedom in 1957 and Japanese internment of children during World War II are two other examples where ethnic and racial minority children have been forced to submit to Canadian school policies (Gleason, 2001, p. 190).

In *Out of Africa* (1985), Meryl Streep plays the real Baroness Karen Blixen, a European owner of a coffee plantation in Kenya around 1913. Again, the opening scene is a particularly interesting example of the colonized land and people as represented by emptiness and absence. The camera views the Kenyan landscape panoramically with the train traveling through it. The sun rises and sets, creating a romantic, natural sense to the country. The land is empty, with no people, homes, animals, fields, or farms. The master trope of the colonized land as feminine, as female body, as "the dark continent" is readily available here (Shohat and Stam, 1994, pp. 148-151). Kenya is a virgin land, untouched by any (white man's) hand. It is in a pure state of nature, a bare and open frontier. Unpopulated, it is therefore available for exploration, exploitation, inhabitation, and English education.

The train, carrying Blixen and her many and expensive possessions, stands in for the phallic penetration of which so much white masculine colonial discourse is a part. The train stops. The camera then focuses on the white man, Finch-Hatton played by Robert Redford, who empties his bounty, two white elephant tusks, onto the train.

When the train starts up again, Blixen asks, "Aren't you boarding?" Finch-Hatton replies, "No, I'm going on." Blixen asks incredulously, "On? To where?" while glancing out to the land as if there was no where he could be going. He knows the virginal country has much to offer the hunter, but she sees nothing but emptiness.

Kipnis (1993) compares this Kenyan landscape in the film to the American frontier (p. 202). It is this trope of *terra nullius*, a land with nothing, that helps interpellate Blixen's duty as providing English language education for the Kikuyu who live on and work her land. Finding an empty land and then developing it with a coffee plantation, it is not much of a stretch to finding people empty of culture and language and fulfilling her duty to teach them English. Blixen builds a one-room schoolhouse on her property, and finds a missionary to teach basic English.

In order to help viewers affirm the civilizing and Christianizing project of colonial education, the land is depicted as void. The buildings where the ESL lessons take place arise out of blank space. And whatever takes place there is unknown to people outside the school. Anything can happen and no one will know. In this sense, *terra nullius* signifies again the possibility of exploitation but the anonymity and justification for doing it. Viewers are invited to enter the cinematic identities of ESL by way of the camera-as-panopticon. Remarkably, whether in Argentina, Canada, or Kenya, the teachers or school owner arrive to a land void of people and activity. The voiding of colonized land by the camera establishes for viewers a devaluation of the country and its people. It is a powerful image, and sets up viewers (and Miss Mary, Miss Willenberry, and Baroness Blixen) for the instruction/imposition of the language and cultural lessons that follow.

The harem is another non-traditional setting for English lessons in *Black Narcissus* (1947), the four versions of the Anna Leonowens story, *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* (1958), and *The Last Emperor* (1987). In *Black Narcissus*, the nuns teach in a palace once occupied by a harem-owning mogul. References to the previous harem abound, and these contrast sharply with the sexual tension and repression of the nun's "harem." Here race and gender are distinguished by black male and female promiscuity through wall paintings and white female chastity in the habit and work of the nuns. As mentioned earlier, the location of the school has a disturbing effect on the sisters. The Mother Superior looks back nostalgically at her previous lover, and Sister Ruth is jealous over what she sees as the Mother Superior's attention to the British Agent.

In the live-action versions of Anna Leonowen's teaching life (1947, 1956, 1999), the harem is portrayed as a space where the King's wives engage in gazing at Anna, a spectacle in her hooped dress and bonnet. In the closeness to other women, Anna, the widow, shares her longing for her husband with the King's wives. However, within the harem there is a hierarchy. Anna becomes part of this hierarchy when the first wife asks for her help with the King. While the harem wives can influence him, their power is diminished in comparison with Leonowen's. Here, race is distinguished by a hierarchy of influence, access to knowledge, and social status (wives versus a paid employee).

Similarly, in *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* (1958), the Mandarin's concubines at first make fun of Aylward, but later she wins over their respect too. The Mandarin is displeased with this, as Aylward's western influence and ideas of women's roles extend to the Mandarin's concubines. He asks her to stop giving them a voice. When harems

are part of the film setting, then, desire is sublimated to other pursuits. The white woman teacher's identity is built through her independence, intellect, activism, influence, and chastity while the non-white women of the harem are imaged as desiring her access to power and knowledge. In these films, harem-as-classroom offers the audience a juxtaposition of good girl/bad girl politics.

Although not a harem, Emperor Pu Yi's polygamy unfolds in the rooms of the palace, where only men including his diplomat tutor, Mr. Johnston (Peter O'Toole), may enter. Otherwise, eunuchs attend to the Emperor. Here, the classroom is also a place where his tutor, like Leonowens and Aylward, exercises much influence over Pu-Yi. Mr. Johnston overrules the Chinese authorities in the Emperor's life. Mr. Johnston is portrayed as asexual and when the Emperor asks if he has a wife, Mr. Johnston is taken aback and answers, "No", as if there were no other answer. This again contributes to the colonial notion of undersexed whiteness/oversexed otherness. In part, the harem and polygamy and those confined therein also contribute to the freedom trope with the teachers able to come and go against the confinement of racially othered students.

5.3.2 Curriculum Content

The question of content involves how the cinematic curriculum serves particular colonial and postcolonial representations of ESL subjectivities and English itself. I discussed earlier the Christian mission of some cinematic ESL teachers. Here, teaching English language is teaching the word of Christ, the Bible and the world of Christianity, which, through British colonialism, had much control. Cinematic missionary teachers and those associated with teaching Christianity have students work their way from sounding out letters of the alphabet and words (*Out of Africa*, 1985; *Black*

Narcissus, 1947; *Tarzan*, 1999; *The Jungle Book*, 1994) to the performance of recitations, songs, prayers and hymns (*Miss Mary*, 1986; *Where the Spirit Lives*, 1989; *Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, 1958), to reading silently and out loud (*Where the Spirit Lives*, *Inn of the Sixth Happiness*). This is by no means a cinematic curriculum of the past. There are indeed dozens of web sites and other promotions through language schools and even large, international conferences such as TESOL to teach English and Christianity (Pennycook and Coutand-Marin, in press) in the real and present world.

The control of the cinematic Christian curriculum was administered variously from individual missionaries such as Gladys Aylward, to the principal of the school in *Where the Spirit Lives* (1989). In the case of *Out of Africa* (1985), Baroness Blixen arranges for a missionary to teach for free in her little school. The ruling domestic or national patriarch either rejects the Christian curriculum, as indicated in a letter from King Mongkut (discussed in the following chapter), or demands it as in *Miss Mary* (1986). When Miss Mary is having her initial meeting with the father of the three children she will teach, he insists on particular content:

- P: I want you to teach them a little bit of everything: English, history, needlework, art, etc, but above all I want them well brought up and closely supervised.
- M: May I say, Senor, that all the young ladies I have brought up attained a state of marriage in an eminently suitable condition.
- P: You're a Catholic I presume.
- M: It's in the contract.
- P: I also want lots of religion.
- M: Yes.
- P: Religion keeps women out of trouble.
- M: (nods in agreement)

He links Christianity to the virginal condition he expects his daughters to have when they marry and makes Miss Mary responsible for this. Indeed, men cannot be

responsible for virginity because, as he also states, "No woman is safe as long as there are men around." I think it is important to see Miss Mary and the other women in the film as both repressed by such patriarchal control and also empowered by it. It is a contradictory duality adhering to many women in the films, and one I take up further on in the chapter. It is also important to understand the relationships between Christianity and desire and how these are gendered and raced. These include the desire to fulfill colonial duty by holding out an identity of chaste, clean, orderly, controlled and controlling, and linguistically and culturally superior. Imperial women and colonized women too were rewarded for such behaviors through employment opportunities and the possibility of a better life socially and materially. Contrary to the insistence of Christianity in the curriculum, Aylward's companion, Colonel Lin (*Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, 1958) argues the uselessness of proselytizing hungry Chinese people who only want a bowl of rice, and then laugh at her after they have eaten it. Yet, she persists in her commitment to offer mule train men a bug-free inn, a hot meal, and a Christian story while they eat.

Another film that links Christianity to racial divisions is *Lilies of the Field* (1963). Set in Arizona in the early 1960s, and shot in black and white, Homer Smith (Sidney Poitier) plays a carpenter on a road trip to the west coast of the United States. With just a few dollars left, he accepts to do some repair work for Mother Maria, the head of a group of four white nuns from East Germany, Austria and Hungary who escaped over the Berlin Wall. They are poor and cannot pay him, but Mother Maria does not tell him that. Instead, after he finishes the work, she insists that he eat supper with them (an egg and a piece of bread and water) and stay the night because the next

day she has more work for him. That evening, they continue studying English with a phonograph and a Berlitz-type program of listening to phrases in German, then English and repeating. He offers to speak English for them, and he begins with the word “black”, pointing to black things including his skin and contrasting it to their white skin. He also introduces southern dialect (e.g., “ya’ll” for you all). When someone calls him a “gringo” which is Spanish for white man, he replies, “Gringo. I don’t know whether that is a step up or a step down.” From the beginning then, Smith foregrounds his blackness and brings awareness to its construction through various scenes, both funny and serious. Smith and Mother Maria battle over control of his wages (he wants to be paid but she has no money), commitment to Christianity (he carries a mini Bible and can quote from it, but does not go to church), the construction of the chapel she wants (he



Image 5.4 Sydney Poitier as “Horace Smith” and Lilia Skala as “Mother Superior Maria” in *Lilies of the Field*, 1963

begins, quits, but eventually finishes it), behavior she does not like (he sleeps in and drinks alcohol), and who gives the orders and who obeys (they both call each other "Hitler".)

She believes he has been sent by God to build the chapel. He rejects that notion. Instead, he takes on the job of the chapel to change the racist idea of the only white male character in the movie, the owner of the nearest building materials and equipment store. Smith is a carpenter and can operate heavy earth-moving equipment. The owner calls Smith "boy", a racist term for black men, and suggests that he could not have the ability to be the contractor for the nuns' chapel. In fact, until this meeting, Smith was on his way to the west coast, but changes his mind when he notices the obvious racism. It is the racial gaze of the white man that motivates Smith's desire to complete the chapel, teaching nightly English lessons at the kitchen table. Mother Maria wants to identify Smith as the black carpenter sent by God, but Smith's interest in the chapel is representing a black identity of know-how and competence.

In *Out of Africa* (1985), Blixen "hires" a missionary to teach English in her school. The black students' voices are heard after the missionary teacher has them repeat the alphabet from the letter "g" to "w" and then "g for girl." Years later, he has worked up to the sentence, "he - - eats - - elephant." However meager this lesson is both in terms of pedagogy and viewing time, there is an opportunity for asking who controls what students say, and who benefits from their learning. Here, the answer is Blixen.

As well as the world of Christianity and its many associations, the cinematic curriculum makes tremendous use of various technologies for teaching. Teachers have maps, magazines, slides and projectors, sports equipment, books, bicycles, blackboards,

flash cards, phonographs, tape recorders, cameras, coloured chalk and even the accoutrements for high tea through which lessons on British manners are taught. Such objects signify the advanced intelligence and development of the civilization and country of the English teacher while suggesting that once English is acquired through these objects, such advancement and freedom will be available to the students themselves.

The most evident educational object is the map. Mapping the world was another of colonialism's projects, a way of gaining panoptical space of the Empire in a single visual image, an idea similar to McClintock's (1995) *panoptical time* in reference to the colonial construction of the evolutionary family Tree of Man (p. 37). Mapping colonized land was also a way of *worlding* (Spivak, 1985) the land. Once it was known and visualized, it could be controlled. In the cinematic English classroom both colonial and postcolonial, maps are lessons in imperial knowledge and superiority (the four versions of the Anna Leonowens' story, and *Seven Years in Tibet*, 1997). They are also a way to dream of escape from its brutality (*Where the Spirit Lives*, 1989). In *Anna and the King* (1999) and *The King and I* (1999), Leonowens presents the world map as a surprise and a privileged piece of curriculum. This map, she tells the class, will replace the old map of Siam. The King's son opposes the world map's representation of Siam as not the center of the world and too small (*Anna and the King*, 1999). A shoving fight ensues between the Prince and Anna's son. In the end, the map stays, and by the end of the movie when the King is bedridden and the son must take over, the Prince is eager to stop Siamese customs such as everyone bowing in the presence of the King. Accepting

the map of the world, like other curricular technologies, represents the necessity of progress vis-à-vis colonialism and letting go of the encumbered and limited past.

Another interesting example of mapping is *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997).

Heinrich Harrer, the Austrian mountain climber played by Brad Pitt, escapes a British



Image 5.5 Brad Pitt as “Heinrich Harrer” in *Seven Years in Tibet*, 1997

prison camp in India during World War II and enters Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. He is hired to survey the city, another mapping assignment. Harrer teaches the Dalai Lama world geography by drawing a flat map of the world on the classroom floor and in a jar puts the names of countries from which the Dalai Lama must pick and place correctly. Harrer similarly uses a globe to teach him about world time zones. The Dalai Lama has a film projector and films but no theatre. He asks Harrer to build one for him and Harrer

powers the projector using an old car. He is the one who knows how to use these machines including the film projector. According to Harrier's autobiography of this time of his life (1994), it was the Dalai Llama who was skilled in all things technical. The real Dalai Llama had already taken apart and put together the film projector (p. 249). The reel Dalai Llama asks and in some scenes begs Harrier to teach him more. The lessons often begin with Harrier's question, "What else do you want to know?" Harrier, as the panoptical teacher, provides the answers to everything except matters of the heart, that terrain reserved for the Dalai Llama. In the documentary *Seven Years in Tibet* (1956) made by the real Harrier and Dalai Llama, the Dalai Llama has asked Harrier to film him in a ceremonial procession. The Dalai Llama upsets western colonialism's gazing relations between self/others by looking directly at the camera and therefore the audience.

Earlier in this chapter, the trope of romantic desire was discussed through the various romantic liaisons teachers and students have with each other and with others. The content of the cinematic curriculum underscores this trope through direct sexual content (*The Last Emperor*, 1987; *Tropic of Cancer*, 1970; *Tarzan*, 1999; *The Jungle Book*, 1994; *Miss Mary*, 1986). However, the sexual content of the films must be understood through the discursive space in which it is produced. Let me begin with *Tropic of Cancer* (1970). The writer, Henry Miller, must take an EFL job teaching conversation in an all boys' school in 1960s Dijon, France, a place he says is "so dismal, so chill, so gray." He is without any means, borrowing money and meals from friends and lovers and their husbands. The job offers room and board but no salary. Rip Torn

plays Miller and overvoices the film with excerpts from the novel of the same name (the novel is set in the 1930s) .

Completely unprepared for teaching, he begins his first lesson by asking the students, "What shall we talk about? Anybody have anything they want to talk about?" The class is one-third empty, and the boys are slumped over on their desks. The class is decorated with pictures of elephants. In voiceover the viewer hears, "Poor kids." Thus begins the following lesson on the subject, the "physiology of love".

- T: Let's consider how the elephants make love. Pachyderms although they are pretty heavily built, they get pretty spry when a male gets a bone on.
- S: A bone on . . . ?
- T: Some animals have a bone in their penis and hence this expression, "A bone on." (Writes it on the blackboard.)
- Ss: (Laugh.)
- T: Happily, according to Gourmont (writes the name on the board), this boney structure is lost in man. Now think what would happen if ya' had half the human race walkin' around with a bone on.
- Ss: (Laugh.)

In the next lesson, the classroom is full and the students are attentive and sitting up.

This lesson is question day, and many hands eagerly rise to ask the teacher a question.

- S: Sir, yesterday you was telling us about the whale.
- T: Yeah, this noble beast has a penis two meters long. (Gestures.)
- Ss: (Laugh.)
- S: C'est pas vrai. (It's not true.)
- T: Yes, that's quite true, my boy, and that's only in repose!
- Ss: (Laugh.) (Take notes.)
- S: And the kangaroo has two?
- T: It's a double penis. One for weekdays and one for Sundays.
- Ss: (Laugh.)
- T: (Laugh.)

It is the male-focussed sexual content that transforms the class from a dull room half full of disinterested boys to an enlivened place where the boys are eager to ask questions about various animals' anatomies and all through the medium of English. The availability of the scene cannot be understood without looking into the discursive context of its production. First, it is set in France, and in popular discourse, the French have something inherently sexy about them. This intertextual knowledge positions the above classroom scenes as viable in that discursive space. Second, Miller is known for the amount and directness of sexual content and coarse language in his writing. The novel on which the film is based was banned for 27 years in the United States. This focus is brought to his cinematic English class, and to his now enthralled and captive audience of French adolescents. The cinematic Miller is obviously enjoying himself too, and indeed, the curriculum and the boys' response to it are the only pleasurable times he spends in Dijon. Knowing that he cannot speak what is really on his mind (his lovers in Paris), he draws on what is at hand (pictures of elephants) to engage the boys and himself in the unspeakable. However, the minute he has an offer of a job in Paris, he leaves on the next train. This portrait of an American ESL teacher is in stark contrast to the colonial portraits of Miss Anna (*The King and I*, 1956), Miss Willenberry (*Where the Spirit Lives*, 1989), and Mr. Johnston (*The Last Emperor*, 1987) who are dedicated to teaching and whose pleasure with the students comes from popular practices of singing, music and sports. The audience expects or permits, through the discursivity around the film, that Miller's teaching will be explicitly about sex and colonial men and women teachers' lessons will not.

However, returning to colonial settings of *The Jungle Book* (1994), *Tarzan*, (1999), and *Miss Mary* (1986), other cinematic white women teachers have a contradictory way of showing their sexual interest. It is men of different races, cultures, status, and age who make the first request and the white women who immediately refuse. Their refusal in language is problematic as it contradicts their obvious interest in the men. Their interest can be understood variously through, first, the disciplined expectations of the audience (i.e. "we" have come to expect/want sexual tension), and second, different signifiers such as gazing into each other's eyes, touching, previous scenes of longing, disinterest or resistance to cultural expectations, "love at first sight", delight at meeting him, and his attention to her. Shortly after the man's expressed interest, the women too express their interest in the man. In *Miss Mary*'s case, it is only a matter of seconds. It is a case of a voiced refusal that nods to her prescribed colonial subjectivity as asexual (not like "them"), yet undercuts it by silent language to the contrary.

Cameron and Kubick (2003) are helpful in understanding this contradictory message. In their study of sexual refusals in heterosexuals and homosexuals, they point out that there are uses of "no" that do not indicate straightforward refusal, and indeed, are another way to say "yes." A poem helps to illustrate this point:

Refusal

i have said no
at the moment of desire

the word spoken, the silent wish
betray me
at once the desiring body
at once the body upholding

my (still colonial) sex

and your question – no?
and your body desiring
thrusting

the coupling of pleasure
with power

Such uses of “no” are part of a “ritualized move in a game, used to signify a formulaic resistance whose function is, precisely, to be overcome” (pp. 39-40) or a “cultural tendency to eroticize power differences” (p. 40). The cinematic teachers vessel both the power that colonial whiteness inscribes them with (upholding an asexual subject expressed vocally) and their sexual desire expressed in various nonvocal ways. The viewer likewise expects both the refusal and the intimacy that is on the near horizon. Indeed, it is the coupling of these contradictory messages that creates the sexual tension. However, in other cinematic spaces, refusal really does mean “no”.

Regarding non-white women and sexual interest depicted in colonial times (*The Last Emperor*, 1987; *The Jungle Book*, 1994), they offer no such ambiguity. Rather they initiate and develop the sexual encounter. It is the Chinese Empress who knows how to be intimate. She has learned it from her American tutor, Miss Windsor. In *The Jungle Book*, the Indian woman enters immediately the kissing proposition invited by Mowgli's father. Such cinematic discourse of the “oriental woman” constructs a sexualized subject. In anti-orientalist writing, critiques are made of the construction of the “strikingly sexed” (Uchida, 1998, p. 162) oriental woman in the United States. Uchida suggests that, “Asian women are confined to the two roles of either the Lotus Blossom

or the Dragon lady and never play complex characters” (p. 167) in films and other forms of popular culture. For *The Jungle Book* and *The Last Emperor*, a similar argument can

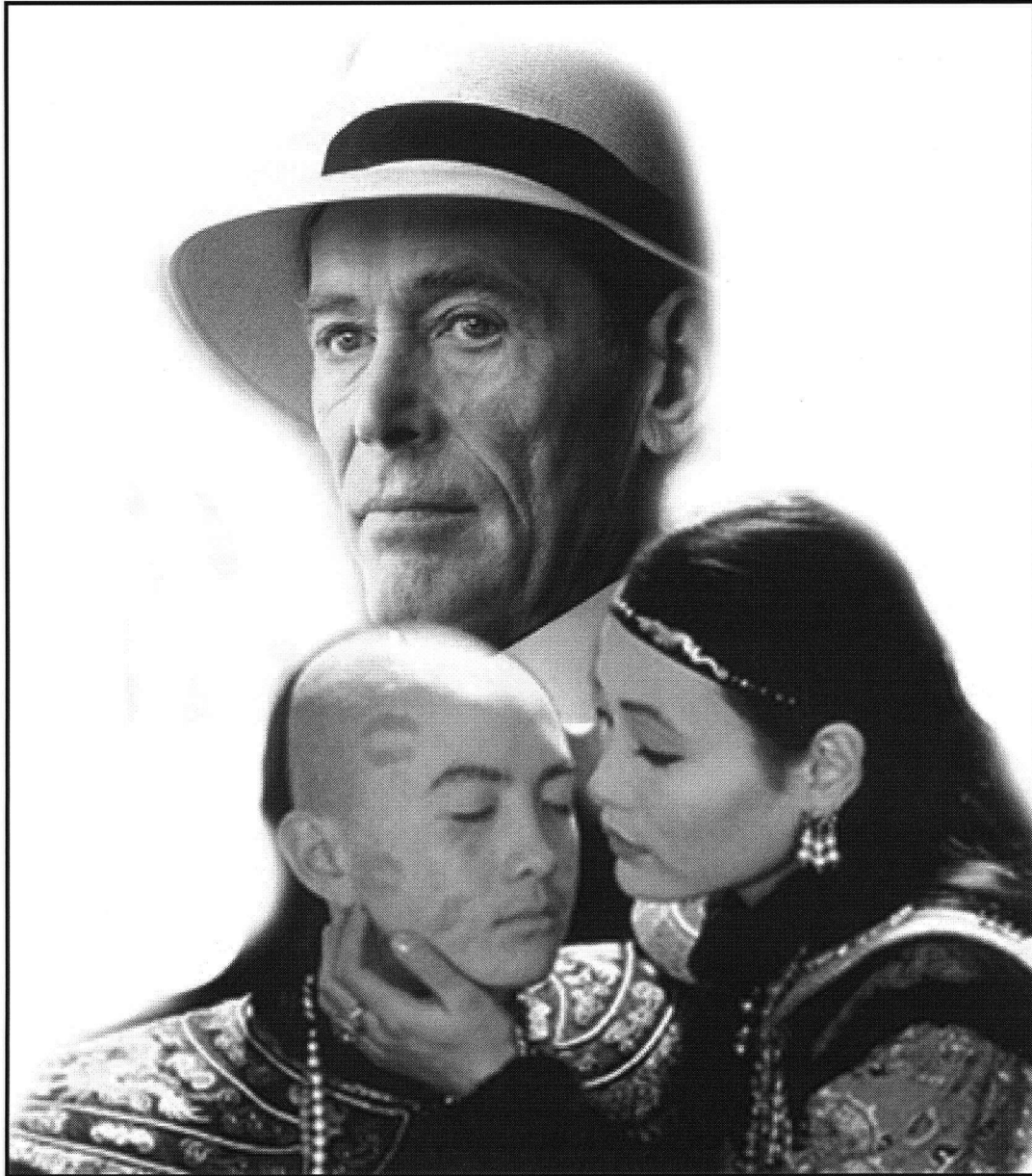


Image 5.6 Peter O'Toole as “Mister Johnston”, Tao Wu as the 15 year old “Emperor Pu-Yi”, and Joan Chen as “Empress Wan Jung” in *The Last Emperor*, 1987

be made for the women as sexualized in relation to her Chinese husband (*The Last Emperor*) or in relation to white women (*The Jungle Book*). The Chinese bride and

Indian woman fulfill the expectations of their cinematic men, themselves constructed as asexual (Chinese) or sexual (Indian).

Against the constructions of Asian men as asexual, A. Luke (1998) reads the Hawaiian-Chinese-American actor, Jason Scott Lee (Mowgli in *The Jungle Book*, 1994), as sexualized. A. Luke:

Until I saw Jason Scott Lee onscreen in the 1990s, I hadn't seen a sexualized image of the Asian male that looked real to me, or that looked like me, an image of the kind of boys and men that we might become, who we should hang out with, the kinds of partners, lovers and families we might encounter. (p. 85)

Here, Mowgli's sexual interest in Kitty is read by A. Luke as a welcome change from

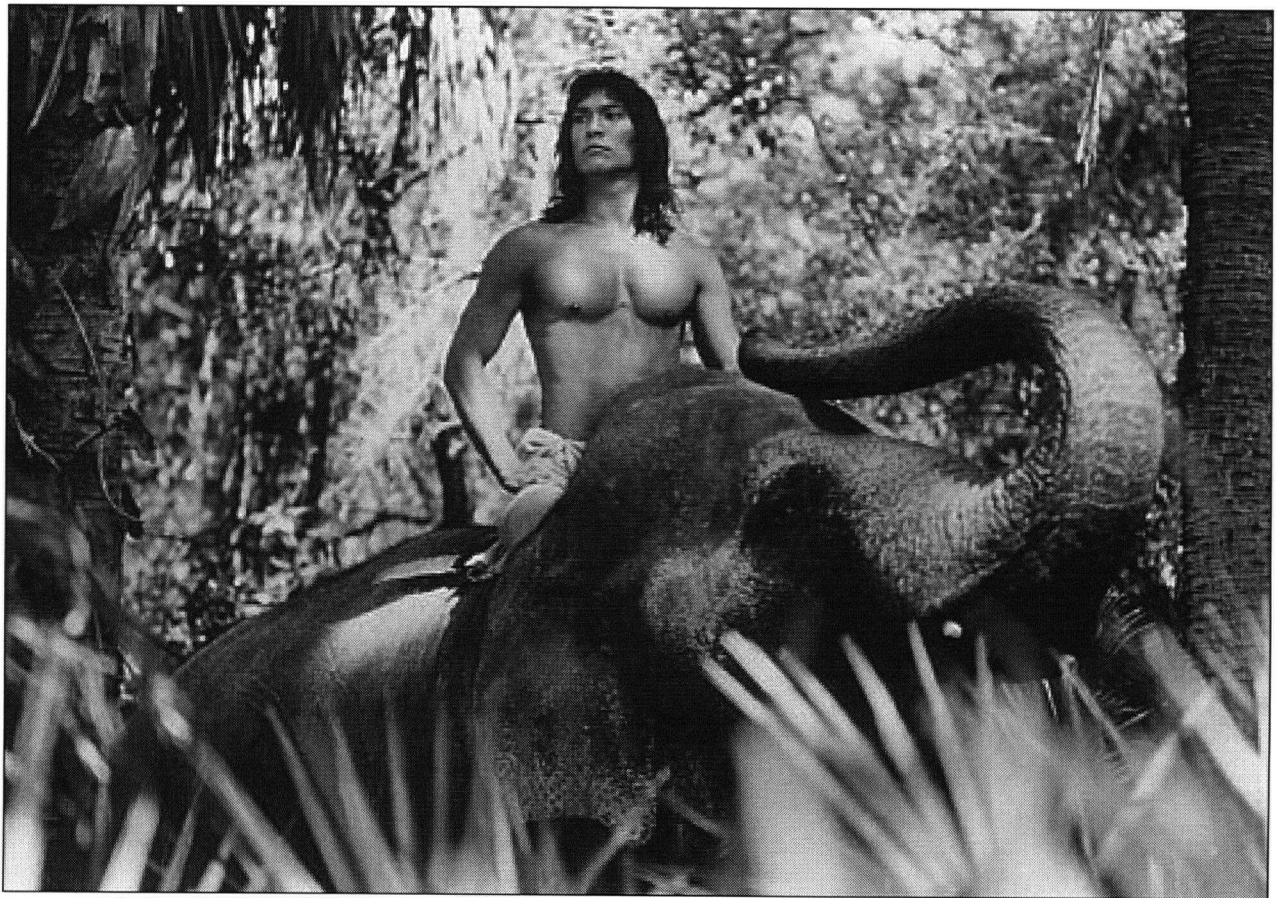


Image 5.7 Jason Scott Lee as "Mowgli" in *The Jungle Book*, 1994

other images of Chinese-American men. These include the Asian men in *The Joy Luck Club* (1993) as “non-emotive, repressed and desexed props” (p. 85) and Chinese-American men as “the Good Chinaman portrayed as subservient, loyal, trustworthy to white males in power and the Bad Chinaman portrayed as greedy and violent” (p. 85). While Asian men are made asexual and therefore nonthreatening for white men, cinematic Asian women are made sexual (Uchida, 1998). It is important to see the discussion of popular cinematic representations of Asian women and men’s relative sexiness within a context of gender and racial power relationships. In other words, it is not that an asexual identity is undermining and a sexual identity is powerful, or vice-versa. It is rather how and for what purpose such identities and their concurrent power are constructed. For example, cinematic Asian men’s asexuality undermines their power whereas colonial white women are powerful in part because of their asexuality.

Whether set in colonial or postcolonial time, the cinematic ESL curriculum entertains both teachers and students. From *The King and I* (1956) and its catchy tune, “Getting to Know You”, to a game of American baseball in *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987), the curriculum makes students and teachers happy. They sing, dance, listen to music, tell jokes, watch movies, tease each other and have parties. American teachers are often very funny, as in *Good Morning, Vietnam* when Chronauer teaches 1960s American hip talk. In *Stripes* (1981), the soon-to-be-American soldier teaches his smiling students a popular song. Miss Windsor, the American tutor of the Empress of China in *The Last Emperor* (1987), has taught the Empress the quick step, a dance the Emperor hopes his new wife knows as he is eager to learn it. The Chinese adult students in *Iron and Silk* (1990) perform a song for their departing teacher, a rendition of “Jingle

Bells.” Indian students in *Where the Spirit Lives* (1989) perform songs at the Christmas party for the white audience. Viewing such performances through a postcolonial lens, the interpellations of the ESL curriculum articulated by students again underscore the racialized dimensions of the continuing ESL project. Non-white students are generally receptive to the curriculum-as-entertainment. The struggle of learning to speak is at best an aside in most movies. Rather, the English curriculum is fun.

The intent of the performances instantiates both the learning of language and acceptance of postcolonial discourses while simultaneously silencing others. For instance, Pu Yi, the last Emperor of China, is severely restricted and kept ignorant by his tutor and others such as the Lord Chamberlain, the Japanese, and the Governor of the re-education camp (Rony, 1988). Pu Yi’s tutor, Mr. Johnston, introduces the Emperor to western education and ideas of political reform while encouraging his interest in western popular culture, sports, and clothes. Despite the Emperor’s desire to learn more about the student protests against the Republican government’s decision to give territory to Japan, Johnston keeps him ignorant of a curriculum based on the Chinese political realities such as the revolution outside the Forbidden City. Rather, he is sympathetic to the Emperor’s desire to leave the Forbidden City and speak his mind while keeping him interested in things modern, popular and western.

Despite the singing and sports, it is the failure of Japanese imperialism in China, British colonialism, and American imperialism in Vietnam that are the underlying themes in *The Last Emperor* (1987), *Black Narcissus* (1947), *Out of Africa* (1985), *Where the Spirit Lives* (1989), and *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987). Furthermore, the

torments of the cultural and linguistic curriculum for both colonized and colonizer is portrayed in *Where the Spirit Lives*, *Black Narcissus*, and *Miss Mary* (1986).

5.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have drawn on cultural, feminist/film, and postcolonial studies as well as biographical texts to help me locate several overarching cinematic metaphors for English and ESL. They include: the naturalization of English in the world; the freedom, romance, and civilization that mark English as a currency for those who have it; and the possibility of a “rescue hero” identity for a teacher. I have also tried to locate the postcolonial discourses for cinematic classroom space and ESL curriculum. The common threads linking the curriculum were the never-seen-before (by students) content and delivery including Christianity, various technologies for teaching and learning such as the map, sex and sexual passion, as well as entertainment. Two settings for the curriculum were common. These were terra nullius and the harem.

Several arguments are made in this chapter. The first is that both Hollywood films and independent films make use of similar postcolonial tropes and themes such as terra nullius. Both the Argentinian feminist filmmaker, Maria Luisa Bemberg, and the American director, Sydney Pollack, made use of terra nullius to make similar statements. Both independent and Hollywood films also represent white women’s oppression by white men. The point is that trying to analyze films by distinguishing between Hollywood and independent films, by constructing them as opposites to one another in order to hail one over the other, creates another hierarchy of cultural forms.

The chapter also made the argument for a critical reader that can read from various locations within the text, for example, *Iron and Silk* (1990). By identifying with

the *learners* in the film, I read Mark, a student of Chinese and wu-shu, as a far superior learner to the Chinese learners of English. However, by identifying myself with the *teachers*, I could read Mark as an inferior teacher of English and in contrast Teacher Hai and Teacher Pan as superior teachers. The question here should not involve the “correctness” of the interpretation, but rather, the purposes served by each.

Another argument was made for disrupting cinematic stories with biographical stories in order to make the point of the constructedness of both. On one hand, we have reel identities of, for example, a monolingual English speaking missionary in China who falls in love with a Dutch-Chinese colonel and who rescues 100 orphans. I contrasted this story with Aylward’s biographical story of a bilingual woman who rescues 200 orphans and decides against marriage to her Chinese army officer in favor of independently moving around China. The point of such contrasts is the disruption of the cinematic and limited identities.

I also argued that the cinematic desires to teach cannot be separated from colonialism’s project of controlling the world religiously, linguistically and culturally. Teachers work *in service* to colonialism. However, I also argued that other desires propel them to step outside of their service to colonialism. An example here is the desire white women teachers have for control over their own lives, outside of colonial patriarchy.

Chapter 6

POSTCOLONIAL DISCOURSES AND CINEMATIC ESL IDENTITIES

Racial social geography, in short, refers to the racial and ethnic mapping of environments in physical and social terms and enables also the beginning of understanding of the conceptual mappings of self and other operating in white women's lives. (italics original)

(Frankenberg, 1993, p. 45)

A pedagogy that explores the subjective embodiment of desire and the mobilization of desire in and through social forms and practices will inevitably confront its own claims on eros.

(Kelly, 1997, p. 124)

6.1 Introduction

Frankenberg and Kelly's quotes underscore the attempt I am making to map the cinematic structures of ESL race and desires. This chapter continues to read cinematic ESL, this time more specifically regarding the representation of students and teachers. The questions guiding the reading are: How do films position ESL subjects? What cinematic language helps to construct them? What relations of power and desire constitute ESL subjects?

The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first discusses the rituals, coming-of-age experiences, and resistance of ESL students. The second main section examines teachers and their backgrounds and desires to teach, the spectacle-making of white teachers, and finally teachers and gender.

6.2 Representations of ESL Students

6.2.1 Rituals and Initiations

One of the most compelling rituals is that of cleaning the students before English lessons start. Cleaning is their first initiation to the world of English language and culture. They are dirty and black in contrast to the teachers' cleanliness and whiteness. Cleansing is performed *on* students not *by* them. There is no privacy here, suggesting that bathing is somehow new to the students, that they do not require privacy for what would be considered by the teacher as a private act. The comedic, playful bathing of Mowgli by Kitty and Dr. Plumfort in *The Jungle Book* (1994) contrasts sharply with the brutal, concentration camp-like hosing of the Indian student, Komi/Amelia, in *Where the Spirit Lives* (1989). Similarly, when the lay missionary Aylward in *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* (1956) adopts an abandoned Chinese baby by the side of the road, Colonel

Lin questions her ability to look after it. She replies that there is nothing more to looking after a baby than cleaning, clothing and feeding it. Of course, she has her Chinese servant to help her with this. In these scenes, cleansing signifies ESL as a step toward Christianity and being a civilized English-speaking subject.

After cleansing comes re-clothing. Students' old clothes are replaced by new and clean dress. In *Where the Spirit Lives* (1989), Komi/Amelia gets a gray dress, Mowgli (*The Jungle Book*, 1994) and Tarzan's dirty loincloths are replaced by clean Indian clothes and western men's suit and tie respectively. Indeed Morton (1993) notes in comparing the cinematic Tarzan with the literary character that due to his loincloth, the Tarzan on film has low status and is unable to speak well because a clothed western man speaking with a near-nude western man makes conversation uncomfortable, even impossible (p. 108-109). In the above cases, new and clean western dress creates social expectations about and conditions for language learning. They learn to speak *only after* they have been clothed like westerners. Similarly, the illegal immigrants who leave Guatemala to work in the United States in *El Norte* (1984) replace their traditional Indian clothes with American style clothing, and the Emperor of China in *The Last Emperor* (1987) similarly abandons his Chinese silk robes also for western suits. Through such dramatic costume changes learning English is again implicated with transformation, a liberation from the dirty, old, encumbering past in favour of the clean, new, comfortable and present world of English.

Students are similarly initiated to the presence and power of English through haircutting. In a dramatic scene in *The Last Emperor* (1987), the Emperor Pu Yi himself cuts his queue, the long braid worn by men in China. His decision has been influenced

in large part by his English tutor who encourages him in all things western and “modern.” It is an encouragement to leave the past behind, and to live in the presence of western modernity. Real queue cutting or not signaled the contest between remaining traditional (keeping the queue) and becoming modern (cutting the queue). Godley (1994) argues that part of the reason for cutting the queue was that overseas Chinese complained that foreigners derided their queues. In *Where the Spirit Lives* (1989), Komi/Amelia’s hair is cut for her at the residential school in Alberta, Canada. She weeps as her hair drops to the ground, signaling a loss of her own power, culture, and identity. These cross-cultural costume changes signal the possibilities of entering other cultures. Sometimes the changes are beneficial and wanted, at least initially, with the desire to change brought on by western influence. Other times they are rejected as the clothes have failed to permit entrance in the dominant white world. In a quite different context in *Henry V* (1989), as noted earlier, the daughter of the King of France (played by Emma Thompson) is prepared by her French lady-in-waiting to meet King Henry (Kenneth Branagh) for the first time. She asks her lady-in-waiting to teach her English. While cleaning, dressing and combing the princess’s hair, the maid teaches her the words for hand, finger, and nail. Later, when Henry talks to her privately to propose marriage, she is only able to follow a little of his English. Nevertheless, she is prepared enough to agree to marriage.

Another cinematic initiation is that of renaming students. Students are renamed by teachers or other school personnel, as when Astokomi randomly becomes Amelia (*Where the Spirit Lives*, 1989), an initiation she has no choice in. Yet in *Iron and Silk* (1990), the students ask Teacher Mark to give them new names. This scene in the film

certainly held true for my own experience in teaching English in 1980s China. Students wanted us, their teachers, to give them western names and to call them by these names, but how we were to do this? When their Chinese name sounded like a western name, as in Lin/Lynne, we chose Lynne. When this failed, we looked at the student and then sometimes a person we knew would come to mind. Thus, I gave the name "Elvis" to a Korean-Chinese student I had because his thick dark slicked-back hair and long pale face reminded me of my ex-cinematic heartbreaker. I have questioned my Chinese students in Canada regarding who, now, gives them their names? Their "native" English teachers in China still hold this power, but it is also now a name they choose themselves. How? Most often self-naming is through the students' associations with a western film star and less often by phonetic similarity. Is it simply a change of name, or are other social re-identifications at work? Thompson (2004) argues that binomality impacts social mobility, and that in the case of Korean-Americans, binomality is a struggle over social identification, allowing entrance to membership in a community and creating distance from other communities. Norton (2004, April) suggests that binomality is "a window on other issues." These issues include the worlding of English as an international language and English and transnational identities. In cinematic binomality, English naming moves from an initiation that is forced to one that is desired, from disempowering to celebrated.

But students are not the only ones to be renamed and not the only ones who are redressed. In *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997), when Heinrich Harrer finally arrives in Lhasa, Tibet, his clothes are filthy and hair unkempt. Unlike the students above who are given a new identity, he is returned to his former identity after bathing, shaving, hair cutting,

and donning newly made western clothing. Gladys Aylward in *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* (1958) must dress in Chinese clothes before she is allowed to go to the market. However, this new costume does little to hide her identity as she is still seen as a danger to a Chinese child she tries to console in the market. Later, Aylward receives an embroidered Chinese silk dress from the Mandarin she works for and who respects her. She wears it to a dinner he has arranged with the town council, a dinner at which Captain Lin, her love interest, will be present. In the Chinese costume, she is recognized at once as beautiful, and Colonel Lin declares his love for her. In *Iron and Silk* (1990), the students insist that they not call Mark Franklin by his first name alone although he prefers that. Instead, they “solve a contradiction” by calling him Teacher Mark. Similarly, other teachers are referred to by their title Mr. or Miss followed by their given names, as in Miss Mary (*Miss Mary*, 1986) and Mrs. Anna who is also referred to as Sir (*The King and I*, 1956).

There is a difference, however, between the above cinematic representations of students as heathens and in need of cleaning, clothing, haircuts and Christianity and those students who are Buddhists. The Dalai Lama in *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997) and King Mongkut’s children in the four versions of the Leonowen’s story are Buddhists. They are already clean and brilliantly clothed, their hair is neat and their living areas are immaculately clean. Importantly, their teachers, Leonowens and Harrer, are not juxtaposed with the students in terms of cleanliness (although as I stated above, Harrer has to be returned to his previous look after living in the forest and mountains for several months). Rather, difference is constructed in the teachers’ wealth of valuable knowledge about the world and its technologies and the students’ ignorance, although

they are powerful leaders. In the Anna Leonowens's stories, Anna advances by finally getting the brick house outside the palace the King promised her in a letter to her. In *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997), the Dalai Llama teaches Harrer much about being with people and in the world, so that, for example, Harrer comes to see the importance of being a father to his son.

6.2.2 Coming of Age

Students seek out their English teachers to help them enter womanhood and manhood. Komi/Amelia, the Indian student in *Where the Spirit Lives* (1989), comes of age during her first year at the residential school. As soon as she begins menstruating, she tells Miss Willenberry, the teacher who has befriended her, and asks her for "the white ritual to become a woman." The teacher responds with,

Well, there is no ritual, Dear. That sort of thing is all a part of your old ways. You're a Christian now. Now listen, say a little prayer of thanks to God, and go and see the nurse. She'll tell you all about what to do.

But Komi/Amelia, not yet a palimpsest overwritten by white language and culture despite Miss Willenberry's tutelage, asks another Indian girl to help her perform the ritual that she remembers from her village. Jaine (1991) writes that for the Canadian Eastern and Plains Indigenous people, the onset of menstruation was acknowledged and young women were "respected as possessing the power to sustain life" (p. 38). When no Native knowledge was available for this rite of passage for Native women, children were afraid and embarrassed (Gleason, 1999, p. 125). Before beginning the Native ceremony, however, Komi/Amelia asks Jesus to forgive them if it is wrong. By performing the ceremony, she contests the gendered and racial subjectivity Miss Willenberry demands of her, insisting as she does throughout the film, that her Native identity be recognized.

Like Komi/Amelia, the eldest girl in Miss Mary's charge begins menstruating, and the younger girl calls for Miss Mary, not the neurotic and distant mother of the girl. After Miss Mary explains that she is a woman now and can have children, the girl/woman is full of joy and suggests celebrating her entrance to womanhood with a party. But Miss Mary chastises her, saying that she must not tell anyone or talk about her menstruation, and she must stay in bed despite the girl's insistence that she feels fine. Miss Mary denies her her emotions, and instead ingrains in her gendered and classed values of empire. This discourse of menstruation as something to hide, to be silenced, to manage has also informed western womanhood historically through television and magazine commercials (Al-Khalidi, 2000; Luke, 1997).

In contrast to this instruction in female imperial values, the son's coming-of-age in *Miss Mary* (1986) is handled somewhat differently. Family tradition insists he go to a brothel on his 18th birthday for his first sexual experience with a prostitute his uncle has arranged. Sickened by the experience, he turns to Miss Mary with whom he has been infatuated since her arrival. She would send him away, but he persists and she agrees. In her arms, the boy/student becomes a man, and she turns from governess to lover. But the neurotic mother sees her naked son sneaking back to his room, and in the morning, she dismisses Miss Mary. Following his philandering father who has also made a pass at Miss Mary, the son as next-in-line patriarch of the family and now an adult, feels it is within his right to approach his governess sexually.

Similarly, coming of age means a first sexual experience in *The Last Emperor* (1987). The Emperor wants to be a "modern man" and expresses this desire in various forms in the first half of the movie. Like Miss Mary's boy/man and the arranged

prostitute, a marriage has been arranged for the Emperor, and it is expected that they will be intimate on the evening of the marriage. While they are kissing, he hears the ladies-in-waiting taking off his and the Empress's elaborate wedding clothes. The Empress knows they are disrobing them but he does not. He opens his eyes and looks bothered. The Empress says, "If Your Majesty thinks it is old fashioned to make the rain and the wind with a stranger, we can do like a modern couple to begin with." She stands up, puts out her hand, and says, "Good-night." He shakes her hand, bewildered, and replies, "Good night," as she walks away. Her tutor, the American Miss Windsor, has taught her about all things western.

In *Black Narcissus* (1947), the young Indian General has been attending the nun's school to learn French. On the way to school, he sees the nuns' Indian helper, Aiya, beating a young woman, also a student at the nun's school. The student has stolen a chain from the nunnery to wear around her neck. Aiya insists he take the whip and continue the beating himself so he can start "to become a man." He wants no part of this beating and instead gives the young woman one of his own gold necklaces.

In these scenes, gender and colonial ideals cannot be understood separately, but rather are interdependent. With the girls, the teacher and governess try to control them with colonial ideals of femininity. Circuitously, Miss Windsor's tutelage of the Empress similarly controls the marriage night. However, Miss Mary's desire is in conflict with her colonial ideals, and is unable to fulfill her feminine and class duty of turning her male student away. In *terra nullius*, the expression of joy around menstruation is silenced, and the expression of sexual desire in a dangerous liaison is seen and punished.

The Prince, similarly refusing to fulfill his duty in becoming a man, refuses to whip the young woman.

6.2.3 Resistance

English education, teachers and imperial discourse are also rejected and resisted by students. They cast off the imposed, superimposed, and impostor illusions that English offers and remain in or return to their communities. Mowgli (*The Jungle Book*, 1994) and Komi/Amelia (*Where the Spirit Lives*, 1989) want no part of their forced enculturation. After suffering humiliation at a British military party, Mowgli literally strips away layers of clothing as he runs away from the formality and brutality of what he sees as British manliness. If being a man means killing animals for sport, then Mowgli will be an animal, yet he knows he is not. This scene was an emotional one for the students and teachers of the study, as I shall discuss in Chapters 8 and 9.

Komi/Amelia's own resistance takes several forms. As mentioned above, despite Miss Willenberry's insistence that recognizing womanhood is something from her past (and therefore to be forgotten), she performs one anyway with the help of her girlfriend. She also speaks her native language at school, an act that was strictly forbidden. In reality, Haig-Brown (1988) notes that the primary stage in the Canadian government's cultural genocide of Native peoples was the elimination of Native languages where school punishments such as pushing sewing needles through students' tongues if they spoke in their language were routine (p. 11). In Harper's (1997b) historical overview of difference in Canadian education, she similarly points out that it was both language and religion that First Nations people were required to give up (p. 193). Total assimilation was the stated policy regarding Canadian Indians. Yet, "the

institutional environment did nothing to prepare students for assimilation” (Haig-Brown, 1988, p. 16). Komi/Amelia’s resistance must be seen in this light. She is not simply a representation of a “bad student.” Rather, she represents the struggle for survival and resistance to a system of racial injustice and genocide on which the acquisition of English and the loss of Indian languages completely depended. When Komi/Amelia discovers that the woman who supervises the girls is sexually abusing her girlfriend, another routine practice (Gleason, 1999, p. 128), Komi/Amelia questions her about it. As a result of the abuse, her girlfriend hangs herself, and Komi/Amelia runs away. The cinematic First Nations resistance parallels resistance to residential schooling that Native



Image 6.1 Clayton Julian as “Pita/Abraham” and Michelle St. John as “Komi/Amelia” in *Where the Spirit Lives*, 1989

people in Canada have always exercised (Archibald, 1993; Haig-Brown, 1988; Persson, 1986). Resistance in the form of reports of such sexual, emotional, and physical abuse in real residential schools continues to be brought to light (Haig-Brown, 1988; Jack, 2000).

Miss Mary's charges also offer resistance to her in the form of pranks and refusals. For instance, the older girl refuses to give her name to Miss Mary. Soon after arriving, the two girls present her with a welcome present, a bottle of "Argentine perfume", as Miss Mary later refers to it. When she smells it, however, she realizes that it is urine. They always check under the bed for monsters, a superstition that Miss Mary disapproves of but that their mother has taught them.

In *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987), Tuan (played by Tung Thanh Tran), the ESL student, resists the U.S. army/disc jockey/teacher's sexual desire. Soon after Chronauer arrives in Saigon in 1963, he sees Tuan and follows her to her ESL class. There he bribes the teacher to let him take over the class. The story entwines Cronauer's unsuccessful pursuit of Tuan, his continual resistance to army authority about what he can and cannot play and report on during his morning program, and his friendship with Tuan's brother, Trinh (played by Chintara Sukapatana), a member of the Vietcong resistance. She continually resists his attempts to be alone with her. Giroux's (1994) reading of *Good Morning, Vietnam* and of Tuan, however, views her differently.

I would like now to take up now an extended criticism of Giroux's reading of Tuan as it pertains to themes I am developing, namely, resistance and the reader's location of power in cinematic ESL. Giroux draws primarily from western Marxism to argue for a radical theory of pedagogy where *resistance to dominance* is a key

theoretical underpinning. He reads many teaching films (for example, Giroux, 1994, 2002), and while he suggests that critical pedagogy offers multiple readings, he offers none beyond his own (Weaver & Daspit, 1999) even when he instantiates critical pedagogy with his own classroom practice with films (Trier, 2001b). Giroux's reading of the film relies on essentializing the characters, constructing them as unitary and negative figures. At the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, he wants to offer a counter discourse to the one he believes is the dominant discourse. For instance, Giroux (1994) reads Tuan as:

nearly invisible except as an object of lust and desire. Though she refuses to date Cronauer, her identity is completely constructed within his patriarchal gaze. Her refusal is not expressed as a form of resistance to American imperialism or to relentless assaults of Cronauer's sexism, but to the Vietnamese custom of civility. Tuan refuses to become romantically involved with Cronauer because her family and community frown on such behavior by Vietnamese women . . . Tuan is portrayed as a tragic character who has to repress her desires because of the inconvenience of the war. Tuan becomes nothing more than a stick figure, a Barbie doll that merely testifies to the frustration, heterosexuality, and virility of the lonely American hero. (p. 40)

The problem with this positioning of Tuan is the powerlessness with which Giroux interpellates her given the trope of ESL teaching-as-desire and that desire is a powerful resource for identity formation (Kelly, 1997; Robertson, 1997). Tuan holds much power over Chronauer. In fact, it is the power of her beauty that incites Cronauer to follow her to her English class and bribe the teacher into letting him take over. Giroux understands Tuan's refusal of Cronauer's interest as simply following Vietnamese custom and not as resistance to American imperialism. Yet, it is precisely her desire to hold to Vietnamese culture and her community and not accept American cultural practices that position Tuan with power. The fact that her brother is a member of the Vietcong resistance

indicates Tuan's attachment to Vietnamese independence. Perhaps, for Giroux, it is her white and feminine clothing, soft voice, and petite stature that belie her resistance to American imperialism.

Giroux (1994) locates Tuan's desire in sexual attraction to Cronauer, repressing her desire for him because of the war. My reading of Tuan's desire, as I have stated above, is to hold up Vietnamese culture in regards to dating and thus refusing, like her brother, American culture/imperialism. Furthermore, I see no indication that she is attracted to Cronauer. She does go on chaperoned dates with him but more out of his insistence than attraction to this big, hairy American buffoon. As for Tuan being "a stick figure, a Barbie doll", without her as with Vietnam itself, Cronauer's (America's) tragic story would never have been told. Tuan and her brother act both overtly and covertly in defense of what is theirs. The story is certainly told through the white American male viewpoint -- "within his patriarchal gaze" -- but herein is also Giroux's (critical) reading. Agency is afforded to Cronauer but not to Tuan or her brother Trinh.

For Giroux (1994), the film "erases any sense of collective agency or responsibility and builds its narrative structure around the emotional and heart-rending experiences of the isolated, alienated American resister" (p. 40) while my reading finds power in others. Movies are made with specific audiences in mind, and here an American liberal male audience was the probable target. I identified with some of the teaching scenes. There I recollected some of my own classes similar to Tuan's. In the main, I bonded with characters who legitimized the illegitimate: Tuan making Chronauer follow her rules and thereby legitimating Vietnamese independence; Trinh standing up for Vietnam; Garlick (Cronauer's helper) laughing at his ridiculous

commander; Chronauer playing popular music to the troops and reporting on Vietcong bombings, both acts against the rules. I saw Tuan and Trinh as strong, elegant, c/overt, and fierce and Chronauer as a not too attractive yet very funny if somewhat goofy guy. What lens am I looking through here? The question needs asking at some time in the assignment of power and resistance vis-à-vis the romance trope. My point is the importance of recognizing where one places one's desire. What is apparent are Giroux's two versions of the film and of Tuan: that which he believes is the "dominant" reading and that which he speaks about (the critical reading). That there may be readings that understand the characters in ways other than Giroux's is not apparent.

I am arguing for critical studies of cultural texts or human subjects that locate "dominant" discourses and the changes to such discourses as much as they locate subaltern, subversive, and *other* discourses and changes there. Such studies undermine the polarity of power distribution in dominant/other relationships, identifying as they do so an *othered* character with agency. For instance, who would, say, a female student from Vietnam choose to identify with -- a character with no agency, as in Giroux's Tuan, or a character who has power, as in Mackie's Tuan? The answer of course will not always be one or the other. It may also be both or neither. The point is that choosing to construct *others* as invisible and powerless is a reading from a particular position.

Another example of resistance is from an interesting scene in *Iron and Silk* (1990). One of Teacher Mark's students responds to a picture Teacher Mark is holding up to the class. It is an atom bomb being dropped on Japan. The teacher is using the picture to practice past tenses. The students question Teacher Mark about his feelings

toward his country, knowing that the United States dropped the atomic bomb on Japan. Teacher Mark answers that most people think it helped save lives by bringing the war to an earlier close. The student counters that the Chinese had already won the war against the Japanese in China. This instigates a discussion about what media, capitalist or communist, provide the truth. One could read this student portrayal as a naïve product of communism or as critically engaged with a visual curriculum. Is it a question, again, of smorgasbording possible readings of the text, choosing which appeals the most? Or is it reading difference as complex and multiple, no matter how soft the voice or how imperfect the English? This section has taken up the latter question.

It is also significant that resistance takes place outside of the text. In response to a request to film *Anna and the King* (1999) with Chow Yun Fat as the King of Siam and Jodie Foster as Anna Leonowens in Thailand, the film board of Thailand refused to allow production of the film. It was felt that the King was portrayed falsely as a brutal buffoon and the revisions to the script still did not change that representation (“Thailand Rejects”, 1998). The 1946 version was allowed but the following 1956 version with Yul Brynner as the King and the animated musical of 1999 were and are still banned from Thailand. In response to the banning, a web site, <http://www.thaistudents.com/kingandi/index.html>, was constructed by Thai students in English at the Sriwittayapaknam School. On a class trip to Singapore, the students saw the movie and bought all the versions of the film (another form of resistance). The web site presents the facts of Anna Leonowens’s life and the fictional representation of her life, reviews of the two books she wrote and reviews of the four films. It invites readers to comment on the books, films, web site and the controversy of the banning. The

banning and the students' web site are two forms of resistance to the Hollywoodization of history and to the act of banning as censorship.

The recent banning of the Leonowens story follows the real King's own banning of Christianity in her curriculum. In a letter to Leonowens, King Mongkut gave clear instructions about what she may have thought was her mission:

And we hope that . . . you will do your best endeavour for knowledge of English language, science, and literature, and not for conversion to Christianity; as the followers of Buddha are mostly aware of the powerfulness of truth and virtue, as well as the followers of Christ, and are desirous to have facility of English language and literature, more than new religions. (Leonowens, 1873, p. 19)

And indeed, there is no overt instruction in Christianity in the movies. It is more her self-righteous imperial position in contrast to the King's brutality and ignorance that the film board of Thailand may have found insulting to their contrary knowledge of the King.

6.3 Representations of ESL Teachers

In this chapter and the previous chapter, cinematic teaching identities have been indirectly constructed through the discussion of the colonial and postcolonial tropes they uphold, through that which the students are not, and through their role in articulating the curriculum. In this section, I focus on the teachers' identities in terms of their professional and personal backgrounds, their desires in teaching, the processes of being othered, and gender.

6.3.1 Backgrounds

In terms of their backgrounds, white colonial females holding teaching positions are two imperial daughters, three missionaries, a governess, and five teachers while a

mountaineer, a missionary, a doctor, two scientists, and a diplomat make up the white male teaching force in imperial settings. ESL speakers also teach English in *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997) (Harrer, the mountaineer), *Black Narcissus* (1947) (an Indian boy translator and a female Indian student), and *The Jungle Book* (1994) (Mowgli's father). White women's primary colonial duty pertains to the upkeep and maintenance of the students' bodies and souls, enculturating them into imperial and Christian discourses while doing so in English. For white men, a wider array of occupations and backgrounds predominate their colonial duties, and teaching English is secondary. From the setting of the 1960s onward, white female teachers are a real estate agent and a teacher. White male teachers are a writer, a sinophile, an army DJ, a university graduate, and a teacher. Two non-white male teachers are portrayed in *Stand and Deliver* (1988), a Bolivian immigrant to the United States, and in *Lilies of the Field* (1963), Sidney Poitier plays a black American builder. Both men and women teachers are single, except for Escalante in *Stand and Deliver* (1988), and there are single mothers -- the widowed Leonowens, and Aylward in *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* (1958) who adopts five children.

6.3.2 Desires to Teach

Desires to teach are variously motivated. In colonial times, the upholding of Christianity and British colonial values underpins the desire to teach. As discussed in Chapter 5, colonialism opened up the world for white women to work, travel and have adventure and romance within the limitations that colonial discourse constructed for them. When teachers step outside colonial boundaries of womanhood, they are punished or find themselves being (unwantingly and unnecessarily) protected by white men.

However, they may also challenge and resist colonial roles for them and succeed in their mission. Aylward in *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* (1958) is an example here.

Because she is not educated and worked as a parlour maid in Britain, the head of the British Mission in London will not send her to China, saying that she is not qualified in any way that China needs. She works at several jobs, saving enough money to travel to China on her own. Once there, she helps to start the Inn of the Sixth Happiness in a remote mountainous village. The idea is to offer mule train drivers a clean and bug-free *kaan* (communal bed) and a hot meal while entertaining them with stories of the life of Christ. When she is successful in China, the same man that refused her in London, apologizes to her and offers her a high post in the mission. It is crucial to understand her success in light of the real failure of the Chinese to look after themselves and their children. The individual white missionary, then, is the hero, not the Chinese resistance to Japanese imperialism.

Similarly, Baroness Blixen in *Out of Africa* (1985) pushes the boundaries of acceptable work for colonial women. By owning, operating, and defending her own farm and school in Kenya, she could be considered by liberal feminists to be a cinematic model of feminism. However, viewing the movie through a postcolonial lens, the movie and Blixen's updated portrait seem more a scapegoat for colonialism's failure. She loses everything -- her farm, her servants, Denys Finch-Hatton (her lover played by Robert Redford), her health (her ex-husband gives her syphilis), and her possessions. All of these she has attempted to control, including Finch-Hatton who leaves her after a quarrel over him not staying home enough. Kipnis (1993) states that the film is "a series of running jokes at [Blixen's] expense" (p. 202) who is portrayed as "diseased and

demanding” (p. 199). Certainly, Blixen’s desire to have “her Kikuyu” learn English is another way to exercise control, as I discuss in Chapter 7.

Colonial white men’s desire to teach, on the other hand, is motivated by professionalism as in Dr. Plumfort’s interest in teaching Mowgli. Dr. Plumfort suggests Mowgli will be a fascinating study in language learning. The scientist in *Tarzan* (1999) is similarly interested in gorillas, but when Tarzan makes himself known, he thinks Tarzan, too, would make a splendid specimen. These interests, while seemingly innocent and objective science, also tie the colonial project of collecting, studying and displaying colonized people and their worlds to discourses of race and othering. Harrer’s interest in *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997) is a combined need to support himself in Lhasa and to gain status through his association with the Dalai Lama.

6.3.3 Teachers as Spectacles

There are several cinematic moments when white ESL teachers are *othered* in their colonial settings. When Tibetan, Chinese, and jungle people first meet their white teachers, they find the teachers curious. Harrer’s blonde hair is a source of fascination and amusement for the young Dalai Lama as is Leonowen’s hooped skirt. The King’s wives try to look under it to see if she is really shaped that way. Aylward, despite her costume change from European to Chinese, is chased by angry Chinese women when they see a white woman, “a foreign devil”, helping a child. Emperor Pu Yi scrutinizes the look of Mr. Johnston when they first meet, as does Tarzan of Jane who pokes at and touches her. In *Iron and Silk* (1990), Teacher Mark tries to disguise himself when he sets out to say good-bye to his Chinese girlfriend. He dons sunglasses and a medical mask. Here is the frustration and loneliness in being othered. For example, Teacher

Mark asks his Chinese tutor if she thinks he is ugly, if he has a big nose, “da bi.” She replies that she thinks his face is three-dimensional. Despite Teacher Mark’s sinophilia, his race identifies him as an outsider and in turn frustrates his access to Chinese culture and love. This scene, too, was significant for the students’ viewing, as I discuss in Chapter 9. Importantly, *othered* white teachers mainly exist momentarily as a curiosity. Through their superior knowledge, heroism, technology, and so on, their *othered* status is a mere cinematic moment, usually for fun.

Although Miss Mary and the family she works for are the same race, she is a cultural outsider and very lonely. After her first day, Miss Mary writes a letter to her mother, weeping and sipping something alcoholic. The letter is completely false, painting a much rosier picture of her arrival than she really had. She tells her mother that the whole family was there to greet her at the train station, when it was only the brother of the patriarch. She writes that the girls are friendly and delightful when they have been cruel and dismissive of her, and that the whole family danced the tango on the

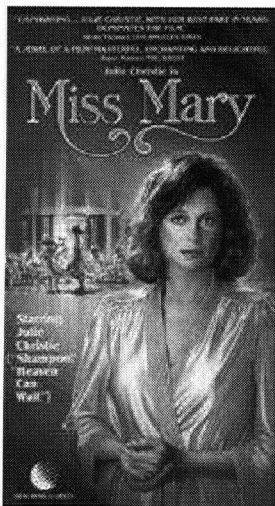


Image 6.2 Julie Christie as “Miss Mary” in *Miss Mary*, 1986

deck outside in the moonlight when they did not. She is perhaps interested in giving her mother what her mother would like to think about Argentina and her daughter's life there. She wants her mother to think that she has been accepted as one of the family, and not positioned as a somewhat lowly outsider.

6.3.4 Teachers and Gender

The othering of white women also takes place through their gendered (and colonial) identity. Their space is domestic even after traveling to a foreign country. They live where they work. The space is thus divided into private quarters (usually the women's bedrooms) and more public spaces of classrooms, harems, kitchens, and chapels. In a sense, these women teachers are homeless, like other women who work and live in another family's home, often without their own families or friends (McDowell, 1999, p. 90). With late 19th century women, their clothing of nuns' habits and hooped dresses with hats provide a sense of personal space about them. They generally love the students, like a mother or romantically, and provide food, shelter, clothing, medicine, and education for them, whether the children want it or not. When students resist white enculturation (*Where the Spirit Lives*, 1989; *The Jungle Book*, 1994; *Tarzan*, 1999), white women are sympathetic yet ineffectual in changing the conditions.

They are positioned between the white male patriarch and the students in terms of power. They relay their opinion and support of students to white men (head of school, fathers) but they are powerless to implement any changes. When there is no patriarch, as in *Out of Africa* (1985), Blixen controls the school, among other things, but, as I argued above, she loses it all in the end due to circumstances she cannot control.

The position of power white women inhabit between patriarch and non-white students is an interesting and contradictory one. At the same time as woman-as-colonial figure articulates particular subjectivities such as civilized, she resists the very order through which she is identified. Colonial women repress and control, yet are repressed and controlled. Their desires (for love, companionship, and independence) conflict with the priggish, distant, and domestic subjectivity in colonialism.

Meanwhile, weapons and war underscore masculine identities. Explicit teaching of weaponry is the basis for two cinematic lessons in *The Jungle Book* (1994) and *Black Narcissus* (1947). In the first instance, Mowgli has a lesson in English weaponry and warring from Captain Boone, Kitty's fiancé. Boone gives Mowgli a tour of the weapons room. He teaches Mowgli the names and uses for various weapons. At the same time, he tells Mowgli that the British kill animals for sport, not to eat them. This conflicts with Mowgli's jungle rules in which animals are killed only to be eaten. Mowgli finds Boone's values incomprehensible. In *Black Narcissus*, the nuns are faced with a classroom full of children who speak no English or Hindustani. Added to this challenge is the fact that the General who used to live in this palace/harem turned nunnery, has offered to pay anyone that will go to the school or the infirmary the nuns are establishing. A disagreement among the Sisters ensues:

Sister Ruth: The schoolroom's overrun with children. With nothing unpacked yet, no one understands the language, there's too many of them anyway and they smell . . . they look very stupid to me. Remember they can't speak a word of English or Hindustani . . .

Sister Honey: The brothers [priests had earlier tried to establish a school there but failed] left a blackboard in the school. I'll draw things on it in coloured chalk and they can tell me their

name for it and I'll tell them the English. And I can take their names and ages and they can register.
Sister Ruth: You can't call that a lesson.

The Mother Superior agrees that this is a good place to start. Joseph Anthony, a bilingual young Indian boy, is assigned to help out in the classroom. Later, he

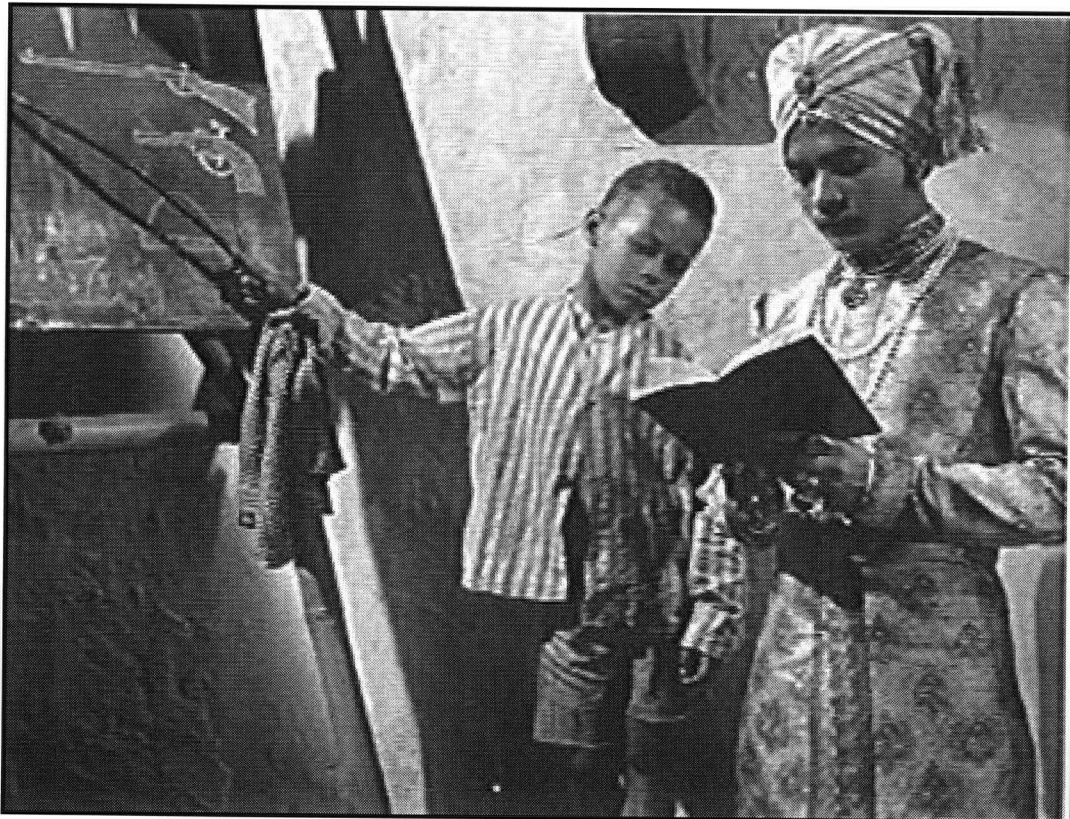


Image 6.3 Eddie Whaley Jr. as “Joseph Anthony” and Sabu as the “Young General” in *Black Narcissus*, 1947

teaches a lesson that Sister Honey has drawn on the board in chalk. He points to each picture and has the students repeat the words: canon, warship, bayonet, dagger, and gun. It seems an odd lesson considering it takes place in an ex-harem/nunnery classroom.

Nevertheless, it underscores the associations of weaponry and war with teaching English and Christianity, and with masculine power.

Masculinity in eleven of the films is associated with various violent revolutions or wars that begin or are in progress. Those depicted are the Battle of Agincourt in France, the attempted takeover of the Mongkut Kingdom of Siam by the King's brother, the invasion of China by the Japanese, World War II, and the Vietnam "conflict." A knife is used by Mowgli's father to point to pictures of animals to teach him English and sticks, guns, and hands are used to threaten students or beat them into submitting to the cultural curriculum (*Where the Spirit Lives*, 1989; *The Jungle Book*, 1994; *Tarzan*, 1999).

6.4 Summary and Comments

This chapter continued the inquiry of films with ESL by examining how ESL identities are structured. I argued that students are initiated into the colonial world of English by rituals related to the control of their bodies. It is teachers and other school officials that mainly exercise control over them, who silence the joy of coming to womanhood, and who catalyze first sexual experiences for male students. The control is an attempt to reinscribe the students as English-speaking, English-looking colonial subjects. Yet students resist this control in various ways, from using their first (forbidden) language to playing tricks on the teacher. Taking up Giroux's (2002) reading of *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987), I also argued the importance to critical multiliteracies of recognizing reel students' resistance despite the students' othered position.

In the teacher's section, I pinpointed a number of differences between women and men's backgrounds in teaching, and their differently structured desires to teach English. I examined the notion of *othering* teachers, but argued that the white woman as spectacle was humorous but did not leave teachers in a subalterned position. Rather, they occupied a liminal space where their sympathy for and control of students conflicted with patriarchal control of the teachers' themselves.

Profiling many and diverse movies in the last two chapters has allowed me to make important moves. First, such diversity brings popular yet unknown and important films such as *Miss Mary* (1986) to the foreground. Second, rather than a singular, united and essentialized representation of ESL, a more complex representation comes through. The weakness in using such a large cinematic database is that the detailed language of films and how this language produces meaning is necessarily limited. However, I address this weakness in the next chapter where I focus on two films in depth.

Chapter 7

SEMIOLOGY AND CINEMATIC LITERACY:

CLOSE READINGS OF *OUT OF AFRICA* AND *THE JUNGLE BOOK*

... my school was to me a favourite place on the farm, the centre of our spiritual life ...

(Dinesen, 1937, p. 34)

7.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts a close reading of two films with ESL. Here I am interested in bringing in the language of the film to again locate the constructions of race, gender, and desire. While the previous two chapters have been productive to an overall sense of cinematic ESL identities, critical feminist multiliteracies should also involve an examination of film language such as the film's mood, costumes, script (including its silences) and social context.

The first film I read is the multi-academy award winner *Out of Africa* (1985). In the first and second parts, I continue my focus on race and gender identity as they pertain to the contest over English in this reel Kenyan context. In the third part, I examine the context in which the film was produced, and how a 1980s colonial nostalgia film attempts to represent colonial failure. In the last part, I juxtapose this *problematized reading* of Blixen and the film with a *critical thinking* reading of the characterizations. This juxtaposition again raises questions for critical feminist multiliteracies that engage film.

The second film I read is one I chose for the participants of Chapters 8 and 9: the story of Mowgli and Kitty's struggle for love and freedom against the constraints of reel colonial India. While the representations of self/other are readily available here, this second section is also interested in locating the liminal identities underpinning the narrative of resistance.

7.2 *Out of Africa* (1985)

The introductory quote to the chapter comes from Isak Dinesen (1937), the penname for Karen Blixen played by Meryl Streep in *Out of Africa* (1985). According to Dinesen's biography (Thurman, 1982), Blixen was first interested in finding a Montessori teacher from Sweden for an evening school to teach both the children and adults who worked and lived on her land in Kenya, but she abandoned these initial plans and instead found a missionary from the Scottish mission who taught reading and the Bible (p. 180). She argued to Finch-Hatton, her British lover, that "civilization will take possession of them in one way or another, and so I think one should see that it happens in the best way" (Dinesen, quoted in Thurman, p. 180).

Importantly, because they had already been interpellated as ignorant and needy, the argument was not what the Kenyans wanted for their education. The contest was over, rather, "the best way" to be possessed by civilization. Cinematically, there are four different solutions expressed. The reel Blixen's solution is what the real Blixen stated in her memoirs and letters, that is, learning English. However, the reel Blixen is not at all interested in the introduction of the Bible. The other solution is presented by the British, that of keeping them illiterate in English. Kenyan education should not concern the colonialists. The third is from Finch-Hatton who represents more a cowboy than a British hunter and adventurer by using American English instead of British. The reel Finch-Hatton believes the Kenyans already have their own stories to tell and that they do not belong to the white settlers in any case. Interestingly, through the filmic discussions of English education and other themes, the responsibility for colonialism's failure comes to rest on Blixen and away from white men, as I discuss below. The

fourth is an intervention by Chief Kinanjui in the linguistic imperialism imposed on his people. He successfully negotiates a limitation on the age of the learners.

Out of Africa is based on the memoirs of the same title by Dinesen. Winner of seven Academy Awards for Best Picture, Director, Screenplay, Cinematography, Original Score, Art Director, and Sound, *Out of Africa* signifies the standard yet changing colonial filmic tropes as articulated by Hollywood through Universal Studies. Blixen went to Kenya in 1913 to escape the life she led in Sweden. She married her cousin and thus was titled, Baroness, while he gained access to her wealth. On her farm, she built a schoolhouse. The film is not primarily about the school, yet there are several scenes in which the school and the children's education in English are the locus of the narrative. I first read a scene from early on in the film before turning to specific scenes related to English language education in order to examine in detail how gender and race are constructed cinematically.

7.2.1 Signs and the Construction of Race and Gender

Subject identification by race and gender begins early in the movie, and it is interesting to see how language intersects with race and gender here. The viewers see Karen Blixen traveling by train to her new home in Nairobi, the *terra nullius* discussed in Chapter 5. In this scene, the train stops so that a white hunter, Denys Finch-Hatton, and his black workers can load ivory tusks onto the train. The mise-en-scene contains the stationary train, Blixen dressed in a white nightgown standing outside the door of the last passenger car, Finch-Hatton dressed in khakis and carrying an elephant tusk, a black man dressed in a shawl and wrapped skirt walking beside Finch-Hatton also carrying an elephant tusk. The tusks are being loaded onto the next car carrying large wooden

crates. On top of the crates, black men, dressed in sleeveless wrapped dresses and barefoot, are walking. Part of the script from this scene is as follows:

Blixen: (Speaking to the black men. Hand gesture of shooing.)
Get away from there! Shoo! Shoo!
Finch-Hatton: Shoo?
Blixen: Oh, that's all my crystal, my Limoges!
Finch-Hatton: Ah! (Sarcastically) They didn't know it was Limoges.
(To the men) Ta keni hupa!

This scene is rich with signs such as words, gestures, intonations, and objects. The word "Limoges" is a signifier and carries meaning -- expensive French china -- for those viewers who understand its value. "Limoges" also signifies a relation to Blixen, an absurdness in that the china seems out of place in Africa and that Blixen has crated it so far. For those who do not understand the value of Limoges, the word "crystal" adds some context.

The word "shoo" accompanied by a rising intonation, a back-handed gesture, and a displeased facial expression all meant for the black men walking on the wooden crates with the Limoges inside, are also signifiers carrying meaning. The meanings are several: Limoges is something valuable, it belongs to Blixen, she wants to protect it, the men walking on the crates are lesser beings than her, perhaps not human, as the signifier "shoo" is usually meant to drive away flies. That these words do not communicate their intended meaning to the men on the crates as they do not understand them signifies various meanings about Blixen, herself a signifier, and the men, also signifiers.

When we add race and gender to the reading, still other meanings become available. Both the white man and the white woman *look* at the black men, and tell them what to do. Their gaze is a signifier of racial looking relations: Who looks at whom

signals a relation of seeing and power (Kaplan, 1997, pp. 65-66). Whites are interpellated with power in their gaze at the black men. Couple their gaze with the words of forbiddenness, and the meaning is intensified. The words of forbiddenness -- "Get away from there" -- are presumably spoken in two languages, first in English by the white woman which is not understood by the black men, and second in another language by the white man which is understood by the black men. But significantly, the words are not translated either into sub-titles or by Finch-Hatton. That no subtitles for the language of the black men are offered is yet another sign holding various meanings for the viewers, for instance, that it is a language unworthy of that kind of recognition, that its meaning has already been made clear *through* English, that the *effect* of the white man speaking Kikuyu words is what is important, not the language he uses. That Kikuyu is not translated in effect sets up a linguistic relation between English and the African language in which English is more important.

Language and power also concern gender. The sign of gender contains various meanings: as a white man, Finch-Hatton holds a commanding role over two languages and the black men, and thus is able to rescue Blixen's Limoges from possible breakage. Both the white woman and the black men are imaged as relating to the white man through his power over them, through his control of language. He is identified as powerful and *enabled*. As a white woman, her concern is for her objects, the valuable Limoges, and while she does take action to rescue them from possible breakage, she is unsuccessful, *disabled* without the white man's powerful linguistic intervention. As a white woman subject, she is driven to protect her Limoges but lacking the language to do so. Meanwhile, Finch-Hatton's tone in, "Ah. They didn't know it was Limoges,"

shows her up to be silly, almost ridiculous in her drive to protect her material possessions, and as unable to understand that the word "Limoges" would not help her do so. It is the first such scene of several in which the white female subject signals a ridiculousness. Later, near the end of the film when she has failed in her endeavors to farm the land, she herself will recognize how ridiculous her attachments to these European objects such as china have been. The white female subject in *Out of Africa* stands in for the colonial desire to protect its European wealth and its failure to do so.

The colonial subjects as adult/child are also represented in scenes such as these. The white male controls all, the symbolic father-master. The white female, the symbolic mother, is bordered between her desire and her lack of ability to fulfill it except through him. The black males are bordered between the colonized other as acquiescent slaves but naked and silent dependent children protected by Colonial Father, at a distance from Colonial Mother. Costumes, too, signify these relationships. The black men's costumes, including their being shoeless, is a way of *undressing* them; semi-clothed in comparison to the fully-clothed whites, they appear more childlike, as well as lacking and needing. Blixen has been dressed in white, a favorite film colour that signals the "good guys" and colonialists alike, and in her dressing gown, a sign of her unpreparedness and difference from the men, black and white alike. Finch-Hatton, the white hunter, is fully prepared with hat, rifle, bullet belt, boots, long pants, and colours aligned with those of the African landscape: if he does not fit in, at least he knows what he is up against. His clothes signal his capabilities and knowledge.

7.2.2 The Contest Over Teaching English

In the following scene, Finch-Hatton and Blixen are dancing at a New Year's eve party after a drunken British guest has told her that teaching the alphabet to the Kikuyu is "none of her damn business".

- Finch-Hatton: You do stir things up, Baroness. When they said they'd like to read, how did they put that exactly? I mean, did they know they'd like Dickens?
- Blixen: You don't think they should learn to read?
- Finch-Hatton: I think you might have asked them.
- Blixen: Did you ask to learn when you were a child? How can stories possibly harm them?
- Finch-Hatton: They have their own stories, they're just not written down.
- Blixen: And what stake do you have in keeping them ignorant?
- Finch-Hatton: They're not ignorant. I just don't think they should be turned into little Englishmen. You do like to change things, don't you?
- Blixen: For the better, I hope. I want my Kikuyu to learn to read.
- Finch-Hatton: *My Kikuyu, my Limoges, my farm* -- it's an awful lot to own, isn't it?
- Blixen: I have paid a price for everything I own.
- Finch-Hatton: And what is it exactly that's yours? We're not owners here, we're just passing through.
- Blixen: Is life really so damn simple for you, Finch-Hatton?
- Finch-Hatton: Perhaps I ask less of it than you do.
- Blixen: I don't believe that at all.

The European imperial woman here is interpellated as one whose duty it is to provide English literacy to the ignorant children, one who carries with her "things" like china, and one who believes her educating mission is for the better. The politically charged dialogue becomes a seduction scene (Kipnis, 1993, p. 203), leading to their first kiss on the dance floor. Minutes later, she asks her husband to move out after finding another woman's underwear in their car. Here then, we have again the mission of English language teaching linked to desire and romance in a far-away land.



Image 7.1 Meryl Streep as “Karen Blixen” and Kikuyu in *Out of Africa*, 1985

An interesting point about Finch-Hatton’s role in this film is made by Kipnis (1993). Whereas the male colonizer is usually portrayed as the forceful one, penetrating and taming the colonized, in *Out of Africa* (1985), Finch-Hatton, as this scene indicates, is conscious of the negative consequences of colonization. He seems to respect their culture, and would leave them as Kikuyu: “They have their own stories . . . They’re not ignorant . . . I just don’t think they should be turned into little Englishmen.” By presenting the woman colonialist as diseased (Blixen contracted syphilis from her philandering husband) and demanding, the metaphor of the colonized land as woman/sexualized becomes colonization-as-sickness.

In another scene linking race, gender, and language teaching, Blixen must convince the chief of the Kikuyu, Kinanjui, played by Steven Kinyanjui, that reading is

a good thing. Blixen, Farah, the Chief, and three of his men are standing in front of the newly built schoolhouse. The Chief chops a notch about three and a half feet from the ground in one of the school posts. Farah translates Chief Kinanjui's words for Blixen:

Chief Kinanjui: (speaks in his language as he cuts the notch)
Farah: This chief says children higher than *this* (pointing to the notch) must *not* learn to read.
Blixen: (As Chief Kinanjui and other tribe members are walking away) Tell him that all the children must go to school.
Farah: No Sabu. He is a chief. *You* are not a chief.
Blixen: That is absurd.
Farah: It is not good for tall people to know more than *this* chief. When *these* children (pointing to the notch) are tall, then this chief can be dead.

Several observations can be made from this interchange. One is that the question of language learning is contested. The black Chief's direction is clear, and the notch signals his decree. It constructs an identity of the black Chief as *speaking*, defending his power and status till death against the intrusion of the colonizer's language. Second, the language question in this postcolonial text is inflected with gender and race, and a hierarchy is established which places the black Chief above the white female landowner. Although presumably she could force all children to school or at least try to, she does not, signaling again the failure of colonialism and the film's location of that failure on the white woman. Third, Farah plays two crucial roles as her main servant -- teacher of local politics and translator. He intervenes in her ignorance, and raises her understanding to a level where she can at least tolerate Chief Kinanjui's decision. She does not question Farah's authority in local knowledge. We begin to understand how the Chief sees the white woman in this scene. Later, we learn more about the black

Chief's attitude toward the British. Some years have passed, and the threat of tall children learning English has passed.

Chief Kinanjui: (speaks in his language)

Farah: This Chief says tall children can come to school now, Sabu.

Blixen: Tell Chief Kinanjui that reading is a valuable thing. His children will remember him well.

Farah: This Chief says British can read and what good has it done them.

This brief interchange around the language question is powerful as it again creates a black colonized subject speaking back to white colonization, and specifically to Blixen's comment on the value she places on reading. English literacy is contested, and the black Chief ridicules the white colonizer.

7.2.3 Colonial Failure and Reading Contexts

Another consideration for the film is the social context in which it was produced. *Out of Africa* (1985) is an American film produced when the colonial era was preparing to end in Hong Kong. Decolonization was underway and various criticisms of colonialism were forthcoming. Grassroots human rights movements such as aboriginal organizations in colonized countries like Canada were also demanding recognition of and compensation for oppressive hegemonic structures. This popular film represents in part that decolonization. *Out of Africa* portrays the paradoxical social understanding of colonialism in 1985, that is, a recognition that colonialism failed, yet that its discourses still adhere to a nostalgia about that era of history. Its failure is recognized in various ways, mainly through the female subject as noted earlier, in part by her diseased body. But it is not only her body that signifies the disease of colonialism, but also her many failures in Kenya. First, Blixen fails to put the land under her control, and second, her

desire to be with Finch-Hatton more than he wishes to be with her is unfulfilled. While she wants him to be at home with her, he wants to be free to roam the land, a nostalgic representation of the meanings of colonialism and of the American frontier for the white male subject. Here, Blixen becomes the scapegoat for colonial ideology (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 166).

There is a sense of nostalgia throughout the film. The music, Blixen's love for the land and people, Finch-Hatton's desire for freedom and adventure as well as her freedom in escaping a dull life in Denmark, and the intensity of their love affair all make the colonial life something to be fondly thought of. The colonial subjects being constructed through this film are thus inseparable from the language and significations of its images and sounds and from the social context in which the film was produced.

7.2.4 A Critical Thinking Reading of *Out of Africa*

The interpretation given above could be considered a *problematized feminist reading* (drawing on the three strands to critical pedagogy from Chapter 2), in that it makes problematic the subject position of Blixen, a white feminist colonialist. A different critical reading of the film, that of *critical thinking*, also envisions the film as feminist but leaves Blixen in tact while being critical of the white men. Here, it is Blixen who is the hero, bringing the best of colonialism -- literacy -- to her part of Kenya. She insists on the Kikuyu learning to read English as she knows English will be part of their near future, and indeed, already is. She is an avid reader herself, and books, reading from books, and quoting from literary works are central to several scenes in the film. Such presence for English literacy is lovingly bestowed as in the scene when Finch-Hatton is washing the Baronness's hair and reciting Coleridge's, "The ryme of the

ancient mariner". Despite English being a second language for Blixen, English literacy is an important part of the fullness of her life, and if the Kikuyu are to be colonized, then reading English will benefit them.

It is also Blixen who exhibits heroic strength in the face of each setback that threatens her life. For example, she transports supplies overland to a place she has never been. It is she who is stable financially and emotionally. Blixen, as Kaplan (1997) notes, works alongside the Kikuyu on the land, planting and separating coffee beans (pp. 89-91). Her desire to care for their health is evident when she takes the time to have the infectious leg of a young Kikuyu boy tended to. Her affection for Farah, her main house servant played by Malick Bowens, is also apparent. She depends on him for translation and for cultural information. Farah supports her morally and physically when she becomes ill.

In contrast to this portrait of Blixen, the white men in the movie are selfish colonialists, weak, and immature, and two of the three main white male characters die. Finch-Hatton makes his living from ivory and is against literacy. His manservant, who follows him everywhere from hunting to walks on Blixen's property, is only given recognition when Blixen asks about him. We first see his manservant in the scene depicting terra nullius, when the train stops for Finch-Hatton's ivory. But the camera never focuses on Finch-Hatton's servant. He is in the background of terra nullius, a nobody, demasculinized in his stooped and half-clothed appearance. The white male hunter, Finch-Hatton, is identified by backgrounding black Kenyans and Somalis like his manservant while Blixen's white female identity is built around bringing them to the foreground of the scene.

However, the colonial freedom Finch-Hatton seeks kills him in the end when his plane crashes. At the funeral, Blixen reads four stanzas from Housman's (1896/1951)

"To an athlete dying young":

The time you won your town the race
We chaired you through the market-place;
Man and boy stood cheering by,
And home we brought you shoulder-high . . .

Smart lad, to slip betimes away
From fields where glory does not stay
And early though the laurel grows
It withers quicker than the rose . . .

Now you will not swell the rout
Of lads that wore their honours out,
Runners whom renown outran
And the name died before the man . . .

And round that early-laurelled head
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl's.

Whereas the young man in Housman's poem will retain his honour after death, the reel Finch-Hatton has accomplished very little in his life, and there are no honours for him. The town neither cheers for him, nor do they carry his coffin. His life is uncelebrated in contrast to Housman's young man. Her choice of poem seems to belittle his life and to compare it to hers/"a girl's". Thus it is Finch-Hatton who is made ridiculous through the reading at his funeral.

Similarly, Finch-Hatton's friend and business partner, Berkeley, who lives with a black woman, also dies when he contracts black water fever. Meanwhile, Baron Blixen is a philanderer, borrows money from Baronness Blixen, and offers no help on the farm. Indeed, when she needs him, his vanity intercedes and he rushes off to fight and be a

war hero. He really did just marry her for her money. The other white men, apart from the missionary teacher, are seen drunk at parties, driving around in cars, or at their club drinking. It is from this male-only club that she was abruptly removed in the beginning of the movie. However, toward the end of the movie when she has lost everything, the men at the club offer her a drink there and raise a glass in her honour. This scene signifies her heroism, and indeed, her superiority to them.

Juxtaposing two interpretations of *Out of Africa* raises questions concerning poststructural multiliteracies. At first glance, the questions may seem to be: Which reading is the one I believe? Which reading is “correct”? As may be evident by now, I believe there is no clear answer to either question. I understand both of them and believe neither is “correct” or “incorrect”. Indeed, I question the very notion of “correctness” and of “trueness”. The line of questioning I am arguing for in my research, rather, would particularize the readings. In other words, questions should situate the readings, and include: Who is reading? Under what conditions do they offer their reading? What is their interest in that particular way of understanding the film? Who benefits from that interpretation? Who is silenced by it?

I turn now to a film for which multiple interpretations will also be given, first in the section below and then in Chapters 8 and 9.

7.3 *The Jungle Book* (1994)

The Jungle Book (1994) is a Disney production based on characters from the Rudyard Kipling (1933) stories about a young Indian boy, Mowgli, raised in the Indian jungle by wolves. There are two versions of the movie, animated and live action. The live-action version is the focus here. Mowgli is captured by British soldiers and is

taught English by the daughter of a British major (Kitty) and their doctor (Dr. Plumfort). Mowgli (Jason Scott Lee) grows up within the first fifteen minutes of the film and falls in love with Kitty whom he knew as a child before an accident separated him from human contact and his father died. Kitty (Lena Headey) is already being pursued by a British army officer, Captain Boone (Cary Elwes). Her father, Major Brydon (Sam Neill) and Captain Boone disapprove of her feelings for Mowgli which have developed through the English and British culture classes she is teaching jointly with Dr. Plumfort (John Cleese).

Captain Boone turns out to be a greedy man, interested mainly in stealing treasures from Monkey City, the location of which only Mowgli knows. After Kitty breaks off her engagement with Boone, her father decides to send her back to England, but en route she, her father, and the doctor are kidnapped by Captain Boone, his fellow officers, and Indian cohorts. Mowgli helps her father and the doctor escape. Kitty is used as bait to force Mowgli to lead Captain Boone to Monkey City. Once there, Captain Boone is killed, and Mowgli and Kitty return to her father.

7.3.1 Producing Raced Male Identities

I am again particularly interested in reading the gendered and raced identifications of character development in this film. I look first at the male characters. Kitty and her father, Major Brydon, are traveling by elephant caravan in the interior of India for the first time, heading for Brydon's army post. Mowgli and his father are with them. Major Brydon, as the narrator, informs viewers that both children have lost their mother. Mowgli's father, who that evening will be mauled to death by the great Shere Khan or King of the Tigers, is guiding the group.

Mowgli's father and Mowgli are identified within the first few minutes of the film as sexually assertive and connected to the natural animal law of the jungle. In the opening scene, Mowgli watches as his father gives a flower to an Indian woman, kisses her, and then turns and winks at Mowgli. Later that evening, Mowgli tries the same thing with Kitty. He enters her tent, hands her a flower, and puckers up for a kiss, but Kitty backs away. Then, after many years of being separated from human contact, Mowgli happens upon Kitty in the jungle. She has left her painting lesson to explore the jungle. He tries to solicit a kiss with a flower she has dropped but he is again unsuccessful. Later, after searching for and finding Kitty in her room, he tries again, and this time she takes the flower but does not kiss him. Backing away from his expectant lips, Kitty asks, "What is it with you and flowers and kissing?" It is the Indian man who is connected with sexual appetite repeatedly asking for his desire to be fulfilled by the white woman, while she is connected to the upholding of white sexual mores of refusing. The sexual assertion in pursuing the white woman, Kitty, suggests racial and gender differences. The colonized male is set up as sexually assertive.

Captain Boone, however, is built around another type of pursuit: wealth from the colony. The one time he asks for a kiss, Kitty refuses him but in a playful way. The other kisses between the white couple are perfunctory, for example, to say thank you, and not sexualized. Boone is interested in treasures from Monkey City. As the colonizer, his white masculinity values most the wealth he can take from India at any cost, including losing Kitty. As discussed in Chapter 5, the British in India created an image of the sexually aggressive Indian man, especially after the Mutiny of 1857. Real Indians in the British army revolted and several hundred white women and their children

were killed or died later from diseases in the siege (Tuson, 1998, p. 295). However, the accounts were grossly exaggerated, and were used as an excuse for brutal reprisal against the Indians. Thereafter, the Indian man was seen as a predator of helpless white women who had to be protected (Stoler, 1995, p. 251; Tuson, 1998, p. 298; Ware, 1992, p. 38, pp. 232-233). This was also true of other colonial settings (Ware, p. 231), as it is in war today (Cameron & Kulick, 2003, p. 146). In fact, white women's arrival in colonial India changed many relationships between Indians and white men (Tuson, 1998, p. 293; Ware, 1992, p. 37). *The Jungle Book* portrays this period of Indian colonization. Kitty is protected from Mowgli's advances by Captain Boone and his fellow officers who capture him, lock him up and beat him. Captain Boone's concern for her safety, "Did he touch you?", is coupled with his greed in acquiring wealth from Monkey City.

Another quality is assigned to the Indian men. Mowgli's father and especially Mowgli are identified as having some inherent connections to the natural law of the jungle. There are several examples of this. Mowgli's father one night gives Mowgli a lesson in English. As his teaching material, he uses a ceramic pot that has the impressions of animals on it. Pointing with his knife, he asks Mowgli to identify each animal. Mowgli gives the names in his first language, but his father insists that Mowgli give them in English which he is able to do. That Mowgli must learn the English words for jungle animals signifies an interesting construction of the Indian man within the British Empire. Father and son need English in order to work for the British, and this work is related to the jungle world. Another example of their connection to the jungle is when Mowgli's father explains to Major Brydon why Shere Khan is now hunting the

Indian hunters. Shere Khan knows they have killed more than they can eat. They have broken jungle law and must now be punished. Later, when an elephant gets spooked, it is Mowgli who calms it down. When Mowgli is separated from Major Brydon's entourage, Mowgli becomes friends with many young jungle animals and thus survives. Associating the ESL learner with the jungle otherizes Mowgli. The jungle is a dangerous place, a place in which the English are lost, afraid, and killed. Yet Mowgli is at home there. Could it be that he too is a jungle animal? That he, by *nature* understands the jungle? Captain Boone certainly views him as such as do Boone's fellow officers. They call him an animal, a savage, vicious, and uncivilized, thereby locating the superior identity of civilized man in themselves. Yet, the white men depend on Mowgli and his father for their knowledge of the jungle. Mowgli's father is their guide; only Mowgli knows the way to Monkey City; Major Brydon needs Mowgli to secure the release of his kidnapped daughter from the hands of Captain Boone. Mowgli's strength and knowledge are continually contrasted with Captain Boone's authoritative and militaristic violence. Mowgli has a natural strength and knowledge of nature versus Boone's military authority to lock him up and have him beaten.

An interesting moral division is built between these two men. Mowgli rejects the wealth from Monkey City; he helps his animal friends throughout the movie and cries when one is shot; when Kitty asks what his feelings were when they first saw each other in the jungle, he replies, "Fire, a great fire." On the other side is the colonizer, Captain Boone who will kidnap and kill for wealth; he knows the history of terrifying weapons, including his personal favorite which can rip out an enemy's stomach; his interest in Kitty is ambiguous. As far as Kitty is concerned, the white men's dependency on

Mowgli and their relative weakness emasculate them while strengthening Mowgli to a position of becoming her desired object.

7.3.2 Producing Raced Female Identities

Women, of course, are identified quite differently from men, and white women and Indian women differently from each other. Kitty is portrayed as being different from her British women peers (as Blixen is in Kenya) and also white men's culture as represented by Captain Boone. There is a tension throughout the film between what Kitty wants to do and who she is, and what she is allowed to do and be and what is proper. Kitty, the little girl who Mowgli watches in her tent, is a prim little British girl. Wearing a white ruffled nightgown, her hair in ringlets, waltzing with a phantom partner, she runs away and screams when Mowgli reaches for a kiss. In orientalist paintings, clothes or their absence often signify Europeanness or exoticism (Lewis, 1996, p. 146; Ware, 1992, pp. 139-140). For Kitty, her clothes, hair, and activity signify her distance from the oriental landscape as well as her class within Britain. Yet, seconds later she calls Mowgli back and throws him a bracelet that was her mother's, another refusal that is not (Chapter 5). In her painting class with other English women, she is the one who dares to cross the bridge to the "other" side -- the jungle, who is able to identify the kinds of monkeys they will paint, and who can translate the sign for the bridge. The other white women in the painting class seem to be very much in the British world of India. However, Kitty at least has knowledge of the Indian side, identified as it is with the jungle, and she knows Hindi. She is unafraid, and while her white men are bound to protect her, she sees that their protection is not necessary and tells them so. She and Mowgli seem to have much more in common than do Kitty and Captain Boone,

or Kitty and the other white women. At the ball where Major Brydon announces Kitty's engagement to Captain Boone, the other white women and Boone's fellow officers ridicule Mowgli whereas Kitty dances with him, runs after him when he leaves, and defends him. Here the colonizing female teacher is empathetic and compassionate, driven by her love for the other/student.

Nevertheless, Mowgli is imprisoned and beaten until Kitty persuades her father to release him and let her and Doctor Plumfort teach him English. Their case is that it is their duty "to help him re-enter man's world." As Ware (1992) puts it, "British women had a unique duty to bring civilization to the uncivilized" (p.127). Kitty and Doctor Plumfort also argue that it would be a "fascinating case study of the child's development, his ability to learn language, to reason, to find out the effects of growing up away from civilization." Their interest is grounded in western rationalism, a combination of duty to help a needy student and an opportunity to increase scientific knowledge. Here again, we have the polar oppositions of colonizing teacher and colonized student: man's world/animal world, adult/child, reason/emotion, and civilized/savage. But Kitty is attracted to the prisoner Mowgli, reaching for his hand and saying his name, a gesture witnessed by Captain Boone. Her interest in Mowgli the man is subverted to her teaching him, "to help him re-enter man's world."

With the British as ESL teachers, their lessons, like the first one with Mowgli's father, also have a strong cultural component. Mowgli must first be cleaned, and here the teachers create another polar opposition: their cleanliness/his dirtiness. Doctor Plumfort helps him bathe, but he resists that in a playful way. Mowgli must also be measured for new clothes which he also playfully, or childishly resists: the adult/child

relation is further constructed. Then he learns in order as they appear in the film: the alphabet, how to stir English tea, single words held up on flash cards, and sentences such as, "These are animals. Animals are our friends", and waltzing. He learns by listening to and repeating after Kitty and Doctor Plumfort, and by watching and following their actions. Their materials are books, flashcards, and slides. During the lessons, his attraction for Kitty grows. In one lesson, he compliments Kitty. After repeating, "Birds are beautiful," he then tells Kitty, "So is you." In fact, learning English is coupled not only with a growing mutual affection between Kitty and Mowgli but also plenty of antics and fun. But she can only go so far in colonial India. When he invites her to stay with him in the jungle, she replies, "I can't. There are conventions, formalities, things that are just not done. I must do what is civilized." She upholds those very characteristics which oppress her -- white woman as morally superior and needing protection. That she must do what is civilized is echoed by her father who reprimands her when she returns home late from being with Mowgli. He insists she return to England despite her desire to remain in her home, India. Like Daphne Manners in *Jewel in the Crown* (1984) and Adela Quested in *A Passage to India* (1984), Kitty must be protected from becoming too connected to India. However, if she has a better offer, meaning a proposal from Captain Boone, then she may stay.

The Indian women, and only four are briefly shown, are associated with sexual readiness, sensuousness, and silence. None speaks a single word. The first returns a kiss from Mowgli's father even though she is a total stranger to him, one of a group of women they pass on the jungle path. Another Indian woman is a dancer at a men's club where Captain Boone is a customer. And the other two are pictured with an Indian man

in a slide used for Mowgli's English class. Doctor Plumfort's lesson here, projecting the white man's fantasy of ownership of multiple women (Lewis, 1996, p. 112), is: "One man, two women. Lucky man." All the women, regardless of colour, are the object of men's desire. But it is interesting how the racial divisions occur in this movie: white as sexually closed and Indian as sexually open.

Whether these reflect the cultural norms of the period is another matter. In hooks's (1996) analysis of the film *She's Gotta Have It* (1986), she emphasizes that the black woman's portrayal as eager and willing to be with men and to have many partners contrasts sharply with the chastity and monogamy held in middle class black culture in the United States (p. 229). Similarly, according to Stoler (1995), white women in the colonies "confronted profoundly rigid restrictions on their domestic, economic and political options, more limiting than those of metropolitan Europe at the time and sharply contrasting with the opportunities open to colonial men" (p. 210). But the interesting point of these gendered and racial identities is not to discover whether they do or do not reflect what "real" (reality is positional and contingent) British or Indian sexuality is or was, but the truth effects of such film identities, a point previously made by Pennycook (1998, p.181). In the case of English language teaching, such movies re/produce deeply embedded patterns of colonizing and colonized stereotypes of teachers and students, as well as methods of teaching, rationales for certain curriculums, textbooks, fees and tests, government funding decisions, motivations and interests in teaching and learning, and relationships in and out of the class itself. True or not, the film image conveys knowledge.

The racial and gender boundaries apparent in this examination of Kitty's position in India and in relation to her male Indian student suggest that the colonial setting itself prompted a development of race and gender relations. The British Empire setting separates the races in binary positions: civilized/animalistic, protector/aggressor, sexually closed/open, adult/child. White woman's role was to maintain this opposition: Kitty must do what is civilized, and not spend the night with him in the jungle. Teaching Mowgli English is her duty, to help him enter a "man's world." But she must not go further than this, and when she does, her movement towards the Indian man is severely restricted, and her life possibilities limited and oppressed by the white men who presumably love her. It is the Indian man who represents a life Kitty wants.

In Kitty's situation, the restriction was not only because Mowgli was Indian but also because she was attracted to him. It was necessary to control her interest because it emasculates Captain Boone in whom she loses interest. She must therefore be separated from Mowgli while Mowgli must be killed. After Kitty breaks off her engagement with Boone and refuses to apologize to him, he tells Kitty:

I realize this adolescent infatuation you have with this savage has addled your brain. But I cannot allow you to make a fool of me, and I will not lose you to some puerile jungle boy.

In *The Jungle Book*, the empire produces gender and racial differences by controlling white women and casting them as upholders of white standards, and as irrational, emotional people who need protection, while at the same time cementing the white men as rational, ego-driven, and jealous people who must at all costs control any relationships between white women and Indian men in order to maintain their superior position. On the Indian side is Mowgli: childish to Boone, attractive to Kitty. At the

same time, Kitty is not completely accepting of her colonizing role, and in the above quoted scene, slaps Boone's face. However, the next day she is on her way out of India to England at her father's request.

7.3.3 Cinematic Hybridization

As strict as these identities seem, however, there is some hybridization. A useful term for understanding identity is Bhabha's (1994) *hybridity*, a 19th century word for describing physiological mixing of races but since the 20th century, the word has meant a cultural phenomenon (Young, 1995, p. 6) where re-formulations and re-readings of cultures, ethnicities, languages, and races present themselves. In cultural and postcolonial studies, hybridity is a dialogic between dominant colonial discourses and discourses of the other where the other appropriates colonial discourse, re-assigning meaning and therefore authority. A language example is blacks appropriating the word "nigger" to address themselves. In doing so, the negative power that white language holds for "nigger" is deflated. "Nigger" comes to mean solidarity, as in "Brother." Importantly, the context of *who* says what about whom must be examined, so that the "positive" uses of the word "nigger" lie, in this space, within black people. "Hybridity makes difference into sameness, and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer different" (p. 26) Hybridity works both ways therefore. If the language and culture of the *other* change, this necessarily means changes to postcolonial discourses of self. In transforming the dialogic, the bipolar elements are not simply reversed but they transform in the reversal. There are also many examples of such hybridity in popular culture. Young white men wearing

hip-hop clothing is a hybrid. Young white women who use the talk of black women as in, "You go, Girlfriend!" is another. Even "fusion cuisine" is a hybrid.

The four main characters in *The Jungle Book* do not perform in the strictly bipolar opposite identities I have just discussed. As with other movies that "have incredibly revolutionary standpoints mixed with conservative ones" (hooks, 1996, p. 3), *The Jungle Book's* colonizer/colonized portraits are neither as obvious as earlier films with ESL such as *The King and I* (1956), nor are the portraits as strictly defined. In many ways, Kitty embodies a life of contradictions. An interesting question is, How does she negotiate race, gender, and class differences with the men around her? Her enjoyment and pleasure are with the Indian man, cast as an animal by the British. She is not afraid of the jungle, yet she is forbidden to go there. Her wish is to remain in India, but she must do as her father wants. If she remains in India, it must be as the wife of Captain Boone, yet she has decided against him. She does not need protection from Mowgli, yet both her father and Captain Boone negotiate her life for her. Kitty the teacher also becomes Kitty the student. She learns about Mowgli's jungle home. He teaches her about animal communication and the jungle. As a woman in the white colony, she is positioned between both worlds, or somehow part of both. Here again is Bhabha's (1994) notion of the "third space of enunciation" (p. 37), a liminal space created by the ambivalent relations of colonial discourse. Third space is occupied by hybridized subjects, transfigured by their appropriation and mimicry of the other side.

How is Kitty able to enter the Indian world without the cruelty that Captain Boone exhibits? It is not because she is innately empathetic but because the position that she represents (already other, already irrational, emotional, and sensitive) affects her

choices and her viewpoint of the Indian other. Kitty's white femininity and Mowgli's Indian masculinity share many common characteristics. She upholds, yet at the same time rejects, some binary oppositions -- proper/improper, sexually closed/open. Other binaries break down and she, as (woman) other in white culture, and Mowgli, as other in colonial India, are on the same side, that is, they are both emotional, morally superior, and gentle. In this other masculine identity, Mowgli is attractive.

The usual binary opposition is also upset by portraying the white men, Captain Boone and his cohorts, in the corrupt role. It could be argued, however, that their act of treason is revolutionary. Indeed, during the kidnapping, one of Boone's cohorts, Sergeant Harley, yells at Brydon: "I've had 25 years with the likes of you without making a penny from it, so don't you 'Sergeant Harley' me, you silly wee man." He rejects the inferiority associated with his class and military rank. Still, their interest in treason is purely selfish and greedy. It is the white men who become a danger to the white woman. Their lust for greed, however, kills all of them. In fact, Boone drowns by the weight of a knapsack full of treasure he is unable to loosen from his back. Thus, as Nandy (1983) notes, the colonizer is a "self-destructive co-victim" (p. xv).

The movie also allows a cross-racial relationship. In other movies relating cross-racial sexual relationships such as *The Jewel in the Crown* (1984), also set in India and *Out of Africa* (1985), the relationships fail and the characters are punished. Neither Mowgli nor Kitty dies, and in fact they are reunited with her father in a happy ending with them kissing in the parting shot. Mowgli is the man Kitty desires. It is interesting to note that a non-Indian actor, Jason Scott Lee, whose skin is not as dark as the corrupt Indians who side with Major Boone, is the object of the white woman's desire. (Teacher

and student responses to Jason Scott Lee as Mowgli are discussed in Chapters 8, 9, and 10.) In the same way as orientalist paintings portray many pale and blond slaves and concubines (Lewis, 1996, p.171), the movie had to appeal to a white audience and a too-dark hero kissing a white woman may not have been as popular.

Mowgli also struggles with his identity. By being the teacher to Kitty, Mowgli upsets his passive student role, and gains strength. And later in the film, he casts off his association with white man's culture. Learning English means he is now caught between the rational world of white colonialism with its cruelty and competition and the natural world of the Indian jungle where he has animal friends who protect him and whom he protects. He is not a man, he is not an animal, but he chooses to return to his jungle home. Shortly afterwards, Mowgli becomes Kitty's protector, Boone the aggressor and Brydon the helpless one.

Major Brydon's identity too is not neatly defined. He appears to be more generous and noble than the other white men, another example of the "great white father" (hooks, 1996, p. 87). Brydon praises Mowgli when he calms the elephants, chastises the men when he sees they have beaten Mowgli, and tells him, "I think a man lucky who can count you among his friends." Major Brydon appears more moral than Boone and the other white men. He is depending on Mowgli to return Kitty safely. By taking up his position of male protector, Mowgli gains friendship with the white authority figure. Mowgli's romantic interest in Kitty is now coupled with gaining acceptance of the great white authority.

7.4 Summary and Comments

The detailed reading of the films *Out of Africa* (1985) and *The Jungle Book* (1994) entailed creating meaning among the sign, the viewer, and the context. Reading cinematic language such as costumes, script, and the mise-en-scene in relation to identity and language learning suggests that a multiliteracy taking up films will need to draw on film language, for doing so helps understand the social politics of the film. I argued that postcolonial gendered and raced identities of colonizer/colonized hold in these relatively recent movies but again that liminal identities are also found in the white and black characterizations. I also offered two readings of *Out of Africa* (1985). I positioned these in contrast to each other in order to again make the point that it is not so much the individual interpretation of a cultural text that is needed for critical multiliteracies but rather questioning who reads what for whom.

ESL students and teachers come to class with popularly conceived knowledge about cultures outside their own, derived in large measure through movies such as *Out of Africa*. We enjoy the romance and adventure. But as part of a critical literacy curriculum, we should also be interested in adding to our pleasure a deeper understanding of how we learn to become who we are, how movies such as these conquer us through the hegemonic fantasies of romance and adventure, but also how identities are contested even in brief exchanges by subaltern characters such as Chief Kinanjui. In addition to locating liminality in Hollywood and Disney movies, a critical feminist multiliteracy also envisions the inclusion of a film such as *Out of Africa* counterpointed by an antiorientalist film by an African film maker such as Sembene's *Emitai* (1971), as Shohat and Stam (1994, p. 176) recommend.

Chapter 8

TEACHER DISCOURSES OF FILM AND TEACHING

It is, as I have argued, primarily by looking that we speak our language of desire. Our libidinal speech acts consequently consist more often of images than of words. But the look has chronological as well as affective priority over the word. Not only do we begin seeing before we can speak, but it is also due to a specifically visual imperative that we turn to language. Words are born out of our desire to make available to consciousness what would otherwise remain fully beyond our knowledge: what we have already seen and what we hope yet to see.

(Silverman, 2000, p. 101)

8.1 Introduction

This chapter reads the data from nine teaching subjects with an average of 13 years of ESL teaching experience, mainly in Canada, who draw on film to construct thematic curricula. They are therefore highly informed visual readers. The teachers offer active memories of films and revisit emotive sites experienced as teenagers. They cite critical film viewing moments from their past, respond to films with ESL they watched for the study, and discuss their desires and dreams of themselves as teachers. The chapter seeks to understand how experienced teachers interact with popular films with ESL. Guiding the analysis are the following questions:

- (1) What position does popular film hold in their pedagogy?
- (2) How do teachers position students vis-à-vis film?
- (3) How do teachers position themselves vis-à-vis film visions of themselves and their profession?

In the first section, I discuss how and to what extent teachers make use of films. The second section is organized into the various ways the body is constructed in relation to teaching and learning. After that, the ways teachers position themselves critically vis-à-vis films are examined. The final three sections present an analysis of data related to respectively, *To Sir With Love* (1967), *The Jungle Book* (1994), and *Iron and Silk* (1990).

8.2 Classroom Uses of Film

The cinematic text offered a wide range of possibilities for the seasoned ESL teachers in the study, both in their on-going professional identity formation and also as a

classroom resource. Not surprisingly, the teachers made use of popular films as an aid to teaching. Most teachers used *theme* or *genres* as the curricular units of analysis and resources and tasks were put in place around each theme or genre. The film was used to develop each theme or as an ending to the theme or a reward for completing the theme. Most showed it in its entirety in the classroom or the campus theatre. One teacher recommended particular films to be viewed out of class if students had time. Some teachers showed film clips to illustrate teaching points such as body language. Popular films were thus an integrated part of the curriculum, a resource which was considered, planned, and exploited for its value in language learning, opening up viewpoints, and seeing "real" life. In contrast to the view that films are simply shown to students without a curricular context or as "edutainment", these teachers placed films strategically in the curriculum and chose films they believed were appropriate to the language ability of the students. In responding to which films they had previously shown in ESL classes, teachers listed many films each or the most recent film they had used in a particular course, and how the films supported particular themes, issues, or reading texts.

Films were an educational resource which teachers exploited for their helpfulness in building listening skills, stimulating discussion, and developing colloquial vocabulary. Teachers believed that popular videos were "a diverse teaching tool" (Shelly) which could be used for language learning, in particular, fostering listening ability. They were exploited as an aid to helping students build on the listening abilities they possessed when the chosen film was appropriate to their language level. Films gave "students an opportunity to listen to the language, listen again sometimes, discuss,

ask/respond to questions” (Shelly). Popular films could be controversial and stimulate discussion. Megan wrote:

[Film] can be an excellent strategy to generate controversy that can be a great aid to having students participate in discussion. If they feel strongly about an issue they may make a stronger commitment to involve themselves in the discussion even if they don't have all the language skills.

The student viewer is constructed as a body whose listening, speaking, and feeling capacities are improved or released through film. Popular film is endowed with enveloping the body, entering it and bringing forth a response. The body has sense components which film can develop. How does film achieve this?

8.3 Corporeality and Difference

8.3.1 Visuality and Learners' Bodies

Silverman's (2000) introductory quote to the chapter argues for the primacy of visual images over speech acts both because babies see before they speak and because what is seen creates a desire to speak. After learning words for mother and father, my son's most spoken word for several months was “dash” then “das”, used when he pointed at something. It meant “that” from the question, “What's that?” He wanted to name what he saw and built his vocabulary in this way. Visuality is much more about making and giving meaning than language teaching and applied linguistics give it credit, although Stein (1999, 2000, 2004) has argued for its importance in multimodal literacies. I argue for an investment in cinematic images in curriculum that engage the visuality of films and the desire to speak to the images as in/forming texts by informed/forming subjects. The teachers in this study also recognized the value of cinematic visuality in language learning.

Indeed, one of the interesting appeals for teachers in mobilizing films for curricular support was the aspect of *visuality*. Visuality helps engage the students in

learning language or the content of the theme or issue raised in the film. Mike believed that film provided “visual meaning” as well as a way to compare genres and stories. In using film to support the novel *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937), Mike wrote that the film “provides a visual meaning to the novel’s words.” Casey commented that the advantage to video over audiotape was through the “visual display”:

Most people respond to a visual display -- they become more attentive. They enjoy the color and movement and listen to what characters are saying in a more focused way than they do on a tape (audio).

Visuality fosters language learning by drawing the viewer into a sensual experience of sound and colourful, moving images. Viewing movies was a “visual experience” in comparison to written texts. Moving images granted an embodied learning experience, different from reading written texts. Leslie saw films as a “more visual experience” than reading material where students are “able to discuss it, to see it, to participate in it.”

Participating in the film entails activity, an active viewer.

“Visual experience” was also credited with altering the mind. Shelly commented that:

visual experience -- seeing the places, types of people, scenery, images that are *broadening* for them and therefore part of the overall ESL learning experience and cultural education. (italics added)

Here the ESL viewer/learner is distinguished from other learners by their narrow visual experience of people and places in Canada; yet this lack of experience can be made up with cinematic images. Similarly, Megan commented that film “can also be very helpful to introduce various themes and content material and to *provide insight into alternative ways of thinking*.” (italics added) Again the film is interpellated not only as a helpful language learning strategy, but one that alters thinking by adding to the visual resources

of the mind. Finally, Leslie commented that, “video/film has a way of *empowering* students to learn in a real contextual setting.” (italics added) In our interview, I asked Leslie to elaborate on this comment. She responded that, with her curriculum focused on issues, films were a way to present the issue so that students were able to “embrace it . . . making it so much more real to them.” I am interested here that Leslie connects film and students with words such as “embrace” and “empowerment.” What does it mean that students can embrace issues through watching films, or that they are empowered by watching films? The visual command of the video in the classroom with its images, music, and star-studded performances by admired actors casts a spell over the audience. The curricular issue comes alive, is made real, or more real than simply the teacher’s command at the front of the class or a written text. The cinematic presentation of the issue is adoptable, enabling more learning.

While not being adopted without cautionary notes (discussed further on), popular films were part of every teacher’s curriculum to one extent or another. The visual world of film was seen as a powerful learning resource. Students attend to it because of its moving visuality and this in turn provides a meaningful use of language while at the same time improving listening abilities and promoting speaking. Visuality holds a certain status, capturing learners in its world while opening up other worlds to them.

8.3.2 Films and Teachers’ Bodies

Cinematic teachers and movies about teachers had a profound and continued influence on the ESL teachers in this study. Despite questioning the realism of films and thus their counter-identification with them, teachers nevertheless recognized films as having profoundly influenced: the decision to become a teacher; the desire to be a

certain type of teacher; particularizations about teachers and teaching; and the desire to break from tradition as a student or a teacher.

As with the discourse on student learning and films, discussed above, the teachers' bodies were also a locus of interaction with films about teaching. Teachers recalled particular movies that had and still move them. Remembering *The Miracle Worker* (1962), the movie about Anne Sullivan teaching Helen Keller language, Mike and Casey commented:

Mike: I think [*The Miracle Worker*] for me was the movie that affected me in terms of what teaching means because it was such a very dramatic case of transformation that Anne Sullivan had given this girl a world, a world of perception that she didn't have before. As a linguist, of course, the whole idea of not being able to have access to language and then figuring it out without those stimuli or without those clues was a fascinating project. It really made me aware of the profundity of language and its influence on us. So that was the film. I think it has really profoundly influenced me. I think at some level I want to be an Anne Sullivan . . .

Casey: I am really glad you mentioned that movie because I had forgotten that movie. But that also includes me. It resonates. I can still feel some of the scenes.

Mike: I still cry at the end of it.

Mike and Casey's language defines the emotive space between the viewer/viewed: "It resonates. I can still feel some of the scenes", "I still cry." They have entered the story, felt it, cry at the learning of language. The words "really profoundly influenced", "resonates", "feel", "cry" position viewers of this movie as sensing, sensitive people.

Mike's axis of response is at the same time clinically scientific: "a very dramatic case of transformation", "perception", "as a linguist", "stimuli", "a fascinating project." The polarity encompassed in this liminal viewing space occasions a complex viewer who enjoys the movie as a sensitive man and as an interested scientist who desires "to be an

Anne Sullivan”.

The joining of the teacher’s body with the film not only occurred at the moment of viewing or the moment of remembering but also in the classroom. In discussing *To Sir, With Love* (1967), an often-cited movie that influenced teachers (discussed in detail later), Barbara commented:

I sometimes *feel I am* Sidney Poitier when I encourage the not so confident student or when I show the utmost patience with the arrogant or “Mr./Mrs. Know-It- All” student. (*italics added*)

Mike’s wanting to *be* an Anne Sullivan or Barbara’s feeling she *is* Sidney Poitier interpellate cinematic teachers with a vast potential for articulating particular dreams of teaching and in engaging audiences in particular teaching identities. The teacher/viewer vicariously occupies the cinematic teacher in the act of teaching.

8.3.3 Producing Difference

Cinematic hero teachers had the opposite effect on Shelley. She disconnected reel teachers from her external self, indicating the limitations of teaching films for continued self-formation. On this point, Shelly said:

I can’t be like [the teachers in *To Sir, With Love*, *Anna and the King*, *Educating Rita*, *Dead Poets Society*, or *Stand and Deliver*] . . . but, somewhere inside, I’d love to stand on the tables, shout, sing, and dramatize. They give me a nudge. I make my attempts like any teacher, I suppose. I want to have that enthusiasm, be “special”, give it my all etc. Alas, the reality is most often not like that at all. But I think those films and others have given me examples, models that I like to aspire to in my own small ways.

Shelly locates her teaching identity as unable or confined within a particular reality. In comparing her teaching identity to film teachers, Shelly self-identifies in language of inability and diminution: “I can’t be”, “I make my attempts”, “I want to . . . Alas”, “my

own small ways.” While obviously enjoying the inspiring cine-teachers and their teaching practices and holding dreams to be like them, “somewhere inside, I’d love to . . .”, Shelly demarcates her reality as “most often not like that at all.” Yet, even with the unreality of film images of teaching, films “nudge” her in the direction of the cinematic teacher as “models . . . to aspire to.” Here she claims her subject space as different from reel hero teachers.

For Clara and Karen, movies sparked memories and a weaker nudge to change their teaching than Shelly’s quote above indicates. Clara differentiated herself from the other teachers in the study by her lack of identification with reel teachers and with her identification with students. Clara:

I still don’t see strongly that movies influence my teaching, but when I watch movies I can relate to them or have memories about, or ideas about being taught or being a teacher and saying, “OK. I am going to change.”

Clara’s identification was most often with the students, and more about this will be examined later in the chapter. A pupil in her mother’s classes when Clara was young, she mentioned her mother as an influence in her teaching, and this early relationship, mother-teacher/daughter-pupil, continues to inscribe her identification with cinematic *students* and learning, rather than teachers and teaching. Despite seeing “every teacher movie”, cinematic mothers/teachers were “too much larger than life.”

Like Clara, Karen staked out a space of difference from cinematic teachers and her colleagues while recognizing the effect of reel teachers on her classes. For Karen, “a number of movies melded together have given [her] ideas as to what may or may not work in the class, i.e. *To Sir, With Love* and *Dead Poets Society*”, but cinematic teachers

had no bearing on her identity as a teacher. Karen's sense of her teaching and herself in the classroom was derived from day-to-day lessons of teaching. Karen:

I know if I go home at night and I think, "Gee, I really had fun in that class today. The students had fun I know because they were laughing and they were asking questions." And other times I go home and I say, "Today was not such a good day for me. I know it fell flat and then if it falls flat it's me", I think, because I am the teacher. I am the one who sort of pulls the rest of the train along. There are days when you are not sort of, you know. It is just my own sort of inside feeling that I have. It is not anything I have read in a book or anything. It is just, I think, over the years how I felt.

Karen's standard of successful teaching was her own standard, applied to herself alone and one she did not use to judge other teachers. Karen positioned herself as unconnected to institutional standards, comparisons to peers, professional discourse on teaching -- "It is not anything I have read in a book . . ." or media discourses of teaching. Like the cinematic teachers played by Sidney Poitier and Robin Williams in the movies Karen mentions above, she is a teacher working within the class, responding to an intuitive sense of the day's lessons and the students' response to them. The immediate community of her classroom and how the students have responded and how she feels about the day's teaching shape her identity. Karen's community of influence on her teaching identity contrasts with Mike's:

Another influence for me here is other teachers because I am always thinking about my teaching in terms of its acceptability to other professionals, whether I am doing a professional job and that would be judged by professionals. To me that is also part of my identity.

An inner dialogue creates part of Mike's teaching identity with other teachers, other professionals who would judge him. Karen, on the other hand, does not engage with professional discourse and disciplining of her teaching. Nor does she engage much in the disciplining gaze of cinematic heroes. For Clara and Karen, cinematic teachers were

entertaining images that stayed within the text. The cinematic teachers remained as filaments of ideas for teaching, but not as dreams or desires of teachers to be like. However, in interview both Karen and Clara's position shifts dramatically, as I discuss later.

Another teacher who did not identify with filmic teachers but with students was Megan. Megan recalled a specific scene in Francis Truffault's *The 400 Blows* (1959) where a young boy at a French boarding school is involved in a pillow fight and the screen is full of feathers. Megan:

The contrast between the soft, white beautiful feathers and the boys' act of complete rebellion against the rigid code of behavior at the school is very powerful. I certainly found high school to be very restrictive, not an open place of learning as I'd hoped, and the scene of anarchy was inspiring in terms of the potential for change.

Since her youth, she has been an avid fan of European film, studied film at university, and was involved in experimental filmmaking. In terms of viewer positions, Megan has a differently *disciplined* reading of film. As a student and budding filmmaker, Megan had attended lectures in Vancouver given by the noted feminist film scholar, Kaja Silverman. Indeed, Megan lent me Silverman's important volume, *The Subject of Semiotics* (1983) which brings together theories of psychoanalysis, feminism, structuralism and semiotics. Megan inhabited a viewing space with a vocabulary for making films and appreciating them as a form of art. As noted above, she could not see cinematic teachers as relating to herself as a teacher, and this boundary did not change in the context of the interview:

I don't see them as there was a teacher that I wanted to be. I see them in a much broader sense in terms of the whole esthetic of film and the opening up of boundaries rather than representations. I can't think of a film that I

would point to and say, "Yeah, I always wanted to be that type of teacher." It doesn't work that way for me.

Megan's interest in film (esthetic) precludes her identification with reel teachers.

Having made films, she now reads them for angles, film stock, editing and other filmic language as well as viewing pleasure vis-à-vis the film as a separate entity. Megan's words, "opening up of boundaries", suggest film's potential for the closed, bounded viewer-subject. Films influenced the way Megan felt, thought, and saw the world.

I was excited by the possibility of breaking down barriers and looking at the world in a new and fresh way. I enjoy the sense of enigma in a film, unanswered questions that make the audience a true participant. I suppose I bring some of that to the classroom. I like to generate open-ended discussion where there is no right or wrong answer and perhaps to open the students to new possibilities or new ways of seeing things.

Her interest in films carries over to her ESL teaching where she believes they hold potential for language learning. In this relationship between film and viewer/learner, the film "opens" learners and breaks down barriers (between social understandings, film and viewer). Films do not provide viewers with answers, in the form of representations of identities of who viewers could be, but rather with "open-ended discussions", "no right or wrong answer", "new possibilities", and "new ways of seeing things." Such positioning of film (as possibilities, open-ended, no right or wrong) extantiates the postmodern turn in pedagogy, as Gazetis (2000) also points out.

For Shelly, Karen, Clara, and Casey, their teaching identities were in part produced through differentiating themselves from reel teachers and the other real teachers in the study. Shelly distanced herself from heroic teachers by taking up a much smaller space than cinematic teachers who climb on desks and call out. Karen relied on an inner sense of selfhood in claiming a different space for herself while Clara's

difference was made possible by an early impressionable relationship with mother-as-teacher. An academically disciplined reading of films produced Megan's difference from reel identifications and from her colleagues' comments.

8.4 Cautionary Notes and Critical Perspectives

The main concern regarding teaching with films was the level of listening difficulty for the students. Clara cautioned that while showing popular movies can be an effective teaching strategy, "it is easy to lose students who don't have the listening skills to follow the movie." Clara believed that advanced level students provided more opportunities to show films. Here, film loses its visual power as its sound track overpowers students that have little listening skill. Shelly echoed this concern that "the film or segment shown must be appropriate to the English ability of the students." Both Rod and Mike commented that popular films could be effective in the classroom "if appropriately chosen, part of a theme, prepared" (Rod) and "if done right" (Mike). Both Clara and Mike commented that student disinterest or boredom was also a potential problem with using popular films. For them, the issue was losing the students through a lack of interest, and additionally for Mike it was guilt, or what he called "this little wilty thing in the back of my mind that I am shirking my duties by showing [a film]."

These concerns carry their own discursive value in terms of teaching subjects. An ESL teacher of 20 years, Clara seldom used full-length movies, listed only two she had shown, and commented that popular films had no bearing on her identity as a teacher (as discussed above). To assuage her concerns of students she may lose in her selection of video, Clara simply did not show full-length films. For Mike, he countered his concern for doing it "right" and shirking his responsibilities by teaching specific

points related to the video and to the students' reasons for studying English. In his advanced academic preparation reading class, Mike showed the film version of a novel the students had read (discussed earlier). Mike asked "students to compare/contrast the novel and the film, thereby highlighting structure, genre (how do films differ from print)." In an interview, Mike provided more detail on how he used *Of Mice and Men* (1937):

I also do things like show them how the film has been structured. I relate it to literature. I say, "Okay, that's the sequence. See how they have moved the camera from that view into that view. Well what they are doing is they are changing the topic from this to this. And this is how they would do this in a piece of writing."

Mike expands the notion of literacy as learning to read and write to learning the language of film-as-apparatus. Such concerns about using popular films in the class identify teaching subjects who care about students' interests and language capabilities and needs. In one case, the concern is met by having a non-film curriculum. In the other case, the concern is overridden by working with a relevant film in precise ways.

In addition to these classroom concerns, teachers discussed cultural concerns about popular film. Casey first began to consider the effects of popular film in a global context ten years ago when a friend told her of an experience traveling to Thailand. The villagers gathered around a TV and VCR for evening entertainment where they watched many American movies. Casey:

But somebody had done their marketing and supplied everyone with a TV and VCR and that was completely out of context with how they lived. It was catapulting them into the 20th century. Very strange in a lopsided way because they didn't have all these amenities. A distorted view, I think. That was when I first started thinking about it. That must be happening in lot of countries, I thought. But because I am not that politically active, I haven't really done anything with those thoughts. But I don't think it is a good thing. I think it must, it's going to MacDonaldize the world or something. It's going to have a kind of evening-out effect. I don't think I would like to see everyone hold the same values, and start adopting the

same traditions. If you speak to Mexican students, what's happened anyway in Northern Mexico, people are celebrating Halloween instead of their own tradition, which is on November 2nd. They are starting to distort, they are starting to change the way they celebrate and change their rituals. Some of that comes from television and video, I am sure.

Casey was surprised that the villagers did not have appliances but had a TV that they watched on a dirt floor. Her concern with popular film was also that American movies were, first, portraying an America that was either streets-paved-in-gold or dangerously violent, and second, that representations of the United States were unitary and hegemonic ("MacDonaldizing the world"), changing and distorting other cultures. The TV at the front of the room is watched by all and disciplines audiences into a particular world. Casey's assessment of the effects of American movies on other cultures enables change to local culture but she would prefer the villagers keep their own traditional and timeless culture. A panoptical power is associated with popular film leaving the viewer powerless to reject the images or adapt them to local considerations. Casey respects different cultural values, and is critical of Hollywoodism and the limited possibilities it holds for cultural worlds. Her concern is with the distortions of the image and also of the distortions to unrepresented cultures.

Mike took up a second critical standpoint related to culture. As discussed above, Mike has a specific method of working with popular film and his movie selection is also particular to the goals of the course. He distinguished between popular film and art house, queer and international film, and between well done and poorly done popular film, saying, in regard to the latter distinction, "I just make a difference between what I find light and fluffy and mind candy versus something that makes me think." In discussing how he worked with the novel and film, *Of Mice and Men*, Mike commented

that, "Students often profess to enjoying the novel more, a coup in my eyes since I've won them over from popular media to literature." Again, Mike distinguishes, hierarchically, between popular media and literature: he has "won them over." In an interview, I asked him if this was an elitist attitude, echoing Steinberg's (1997) use of the terms "elite or high culture" and "low culture" (pp. 18-19) and Cohen's (1996) statement that postmodernism is composed of, among other disruptures, "the erosion of the boundaries and hierarchical distinctions between high culture and popular culture" (p. 397). He replied:

I don't know whether it is elitist so much as snobby. I couldn't think of myself as an elitist per-se, but I am a bit of a snob when it comes to it, not popular culture per-se, but badly done.

Literature and film are for intellectual, thinking audiences, whereas "badly done" popular film is "mind candy" and entertainment. In Mike's cultural hierarchy, forms of culture are deconstructed into thinking/mind candy with a distinction between popular as non-intellectual versus art house and international film as intellectual. Mike is critical of especially American popular film whose viewing requires little thought, and this would also explain his feelings of guilt in using popular films in class.

The teachers' concerns can be categorized into those in which film-as-text interact with viewers as listeners, viewers as victims of American cultural hegemony, viewers as entertainment seekers, and viewers as thinkers. As listeners and victims, viewers hold a subordinate position both to film and to teaching strategies. The film's largesse in the classroom or in the village common space overpowers through complex rapid language or overshadows local culture with images of western culture. The film text has the power to lose viewers linguistically (see also Duff, 2002), to dominate

viewers culturally, and to stimulate viewers' thinking. Teachers position film strategically in or out of the curriculum, either doing it "right" or not doing it very much. Teachers' positions in relation to films are as active strategists in involving or removing films-as-curricular text, and as political observers of the cultural power of film.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into three films the teachers remembered or responded to: *To Sir, With Love* (1967), *The Jungle Book* (1994), and *Iron and Silk* (1990).

8.5 *To Sir, With Love* (1967)

Before his memorable role as a teacher in *To Sir, with Love* (1967), Poitier had played a student in *Blackboard Jungle* (1955). Both Rod and Megan discussed the latter film. Rod recalled that the movie was "shot as Black and White -- generally a depressing effect" in which the teacher had a "tough challenge to reach turned off, inner-city kids." He recalled the "scene of a visit to an upper-class school -- a total contrast -- students eagerly studying LATIN!" Poitier then won an Oscar for his performance as a carpenter and ESL teacher in *Lilies of the Field* (1963), examined in Chapters 5 and 6. Poitier's long service to the movie industry is well known, and like Denzel Washington now, Poitier commanded a sexual appeal as a black male actor (Kereos, 1999). *To Sir, With Love* is the teacher movie that "many reserve their greatest fondness for" (p. 72). *To Sir, with Love* was named more often by teachers (seven out of nine) as one of the films influencing their teaching identity. Other films also mentioned as influencing teachers were *Educating Rita* (1983), *Dangerous Minds* (1995), *Blackboard Jungle* (1955), *The 400 Blows* (1959), *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1969), *The Miracle Worker* (1962), *My Left Foot* (1989), *Billy Jack* (1971), *The King and I* (1956), *Good*

bye, Mr. Chips (1939), and *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987). These last movies were mentioned once or twice. Five also noted *Dead Poets Society* (1989). In *To Sir, with Love*, Sidney Poitier plays a teacher of mainly white working class high school students in Britain. He dismisses the curriculum. He puts in place what he believes will help the students and keep their attention. In turn, he is loved and respected by them.

8.5.1 Hybrid Identification

I was interested in the cross-racial, cross-sexual, cross-national identifications of the seven white teachers, five of them female, with the cinematic black teacher of Poitier. Cross-identification, as Robertson (1994) points out, “jumpcuts a multitude of subjective barriers (gender, class, ethnicity and occupational differences) in order to perform the mobile identification” (p. 111). Part of the hope of liberal discourse on multiculturalism, feminism, and ability is that when minority groups and women assume roles of authority as politicians, teachers, physicians, CEOs and so on, their role modeling will inspire other members of the same gender, race, and ability. The presumption is that the black Poitier as “Sir” inspired black youth. But he also inspired white female and male youth. The impact still felt from *To Sir, with Love* is noteworthy considering it was first seen and felt over thirty five years ago. The teachers viewed the film as teenagers, an impressionable age.

How did Poitier’s Sir make an entrance into the teachers as youths? Rod found the film to be a “very inspiring” movie, one that also “moved [Shelly] as a young person.” Mike used the phrase “the Sidney Poitier genre” in relating his experience:

But in the sixties when that genre came up, the Sidney Poitier genre of teacher comes in and saves the lives of this disaffected marginalized

youth. I was a youth and not experienced with that. Those movies moved me in a profound way.

They were attracted to the "idealism" (Mike), the "standard, an ideal" (Casey) that is "on another pedestal" (Shelly). Part of the attraction to Sir was the "optimum teacher-student relationships" (Casey) which Sir works hard at making, particularly through his curriculum decisions. Sir is:

a young high school teacher who struggles to connect with his classroom of all-white British students. After a while, he realizes that teaching from textbooks is not going to reach them, so he begins to teach them about real life and they appreciate him for that. (Casey)

What appeals most to Mike through this struggle of Sir's is "the adoration/respect/love of the students for their teacher." The power of the film goes beyond the attraction to an inspiring ideal teacher for Barbara, as noted earlier. In teaching ESL to international students in Canada, Barbara, raised and schooled in Britain, wrote, "I sometimes feel I am Sidney Poitier . . ." . Barbara is the *embodiment* of Sir.

Karen saw the film at age 17 when "you are out to save the world." She was teaching swimming at the time and "really liked teaching." Karen related the film to her age, her fondness for teaching, and another popular medium, *Life* magazine. Karen felt:

very indignant [over] a picture in Life magazine of a little black boy who was six years old, or five years old, and was so hungry he was eating the plaster off the walls. I thought, "How can this be happening in North America?" And so when I saw [*To Sir, with Love*] I thought, "Now there is somebody who is going out and doing . . . doing something good. He is going to save something like the little boy who was eating the plaster off the wall and give him some hope."

Karen identified the importance of her age in relation to other events occurring at the same time as she saw the movie. Taken together, these events helped her take a step toward becoming a teacher. Remember that Karen wrote that popular films did not influence her teaching identity, yet Poitier's Sir remained in her memory as a poignant

image of teaching, giving hope to his students. However, at the same time as Karen was attracted to the idealism Sir carried, there were limits to her identification to Sir: "I never thought I was going to go out and save anything, I was just going to go out and sort of *do*." Similarly, Mike "liked the idealism of adult-sets-kids-on-the-right-track" while at the same time conflicted by reality:

I saw myself as wanting to do that but at the same time not wanting to actually work with those kids. I was torn between the idealism of the film and the reality of having to do a day-to-day kind of job in a violent setting
...

While Sir's idealism and the results he attained were profound, working with children in a working class, inner city setting did not appeal to Karen and Mike.

How can such cross-identifications be understood? Discourses of film and emancipatory modernist pedagogy assign a colonizing power to that which is viewed. The conquest over the viewer is complete. However, in the present study the viewer narcissistically *is* the viewed, *wants to be* the viewed (Mike and Barbara). The viewed may be admirable but unreachable or uninhabitable (Shelly). The viewed may never provide answers, but an enigma offering possibilities (Megan). The viewed may be dismissed and temporally limited (Megan, Karen and Clara). The viewer may question the reality of the viewed (Clara, Mike, Karen, Shelly). Is this image what we want for the world and its communities? (Casey) The viewed is contestable terrain, made so by questions and cautions. The conquest over the viewer is incomplete or simply, it never begins.

Yet, it must be said that hybridity applies to Poitier's Sir, thus permitting identification with him accessible in the 1960s when the Black Liberation movement was underway. Sir is a racial and cultural hybrid. The colonial discourse holding the great white father in opposition to the dirty barbarian is reversed (Kereos, 1999, p. 72). He is always clean, neat and contained in immaculately pressed and cleaned suits,

overcoat, shoes, and umbrella. He has white British mannerisms, a white educated English accent. He is cultured, a class above the students. With their rude outbursts, sexual behavior, dancing in the halls, the female pupils here are othered. Indeed, in one scene Sir admonishes the female pupils with the following words: “your foul language . . . your crude behavior . . . filthy slut . . . filthy games” in reference to what seems to be a sanitary napkin burning in the classroom. Such a cinematic reference to the “filthiness” of menstruation as was discussed in Chapter 5 produces a postcolonial discourse for women to be clean, silent and ashamed of their bodies. The white girls are dirty, the black man is clean. Sir as the black-man-made-white permits white identifications with him.

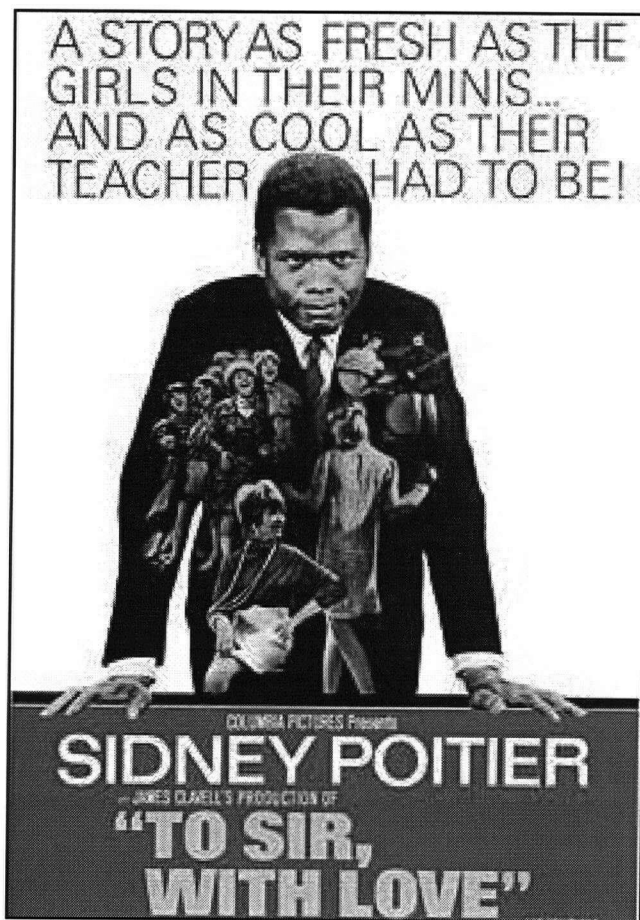


Image 8.1 Sidney Poitier as “Sir” in *To Sir, With Love*, 1964

How does such cinematic hybridity come to happen? One explanation is the historical events at the time. Filmmakers may have hoped to appeal to audiences sympathetic to the black struggle for human rights. They more likely were cashing in on Poitier's sexual appeal and talent. Ten years after playing a black rebellious student in *Blackboard Jungle* (1955), he was Hollywood's biggest star at the peak of his career (Kereos, 1999, p. 73), an "icon" (p. 77). Remember that he had already won an Oscar for his performance in *Lilies of the Field* (1963). Poitier the star had tremendous attraction to white audiences. He was sexy, yet in these movies he was never sexual, never threatening to whites, unlike Mowgli or Tarzan were to white colonial men. Certainly, in *Lilies of the Field*, Poitier working with white nuns posed no sexual threat. In *To Sir, With Love*, while white women are sexually interested in him and he is the object of sexual attention, his response is cool. Interestingly, in his memoir, Braithwaite, the real Sir, is romantically involved with his student, Gillian Blanshard (Kereos, 1999, p. 79). Sir stands on an ambivalent axis of teacher-as-subject: black skin with white power. Voyeuristically appropriating the black Sir's authority in the classroom, white teenaged viewers also stand on a mutable axis of white skin with black power, or is it white power with black skin? The appeal of this tension is recalled decades after its initial impact.

8.5.2 Corporeal Identification

Apart from these seven teachers' memories of the film and Poitier's inspirational Sir, Clara identified with the pupil, Pamela. Indeed, Clara wrote that, "In most of [the films from the discussion], I think I identified with the pupils." As noted earlier, Clara's

mother had been her teacher earlier in her life and this precludes identifying with cine-teachers. Later in an interview, Clara commented about Pamela, the female pupil that is infatuated with Sir, helping him in many important ways. For instance, when other students refuse, she agrees to take flowers to the home of the half-black student whose mother has died. (In the end they do.) Pamela also explains to Sir the reason why a white girl could not go to his home. Clara:

It was nothing I had personally experienced at all, but I identified with her, if I remember correctly. The red hair, the tons of makeup, sort of the brashness of someone was something I didn't know about and I identified with her, and maybe it was too much of a stretch. I didn't even know any black person. But I do remember her, the song and the music.

In the scene Clara references, the year-end dance party is held. Pamela arranges for a song she has written to be sung and asks Sir to dance, requesting that he call her Pamela this one time. She is dressed in white, he in his dark suit. They dance alone on the floor, watched by all. The sexual tension in this "wedding" scene, and in other parts of the movie, make Pamela's attraction to Sir clear. The lyrics to the song Clara remembers are:

The time has come
for closing books
and long last looks must end.
And as I leave,
I know that I am leaving my best friend.
A friend who taught me right from wrong
and weak from strong –
that's a lot to learn.
What, what can I give you in return?
If you wanted the moon,
I would try to make a start
but I would rather
you let me give you my heart.
To Sir, with love.

Readers who have seen *To Sir, With Love* may also have recalled the melody, perhaps sung it in their head as they were reading. The song is a heartfelt and lovely parting gift for Sir. However, when it comes to naming the desire Pamela had for Sir, Clara reroutes the direction of her identification -- "Maybe it was too much of a stretch. I didn't even know any black person" -- silencing the sexual attraction. The memories of this particular scene, even for Clara who believes movies have not influenced her teaching identity, remain. In terms of social categories of identity, Clara is the only one to identify with the red-haired white-skinned teenaged student Pamela while others remembered Sir, the black older male teacher as the primary source of identification. Thus, the lines of connection from viewers to cinematic characters can be drawn by such social and physical characteristics. It is her body as a white red-haired girl with a cinematic white red-haired girl that also permits her memories of the cinematic student.

8.6 *The Jungle Book* (1994)

The Jungle Book (1994) (discussed in Chapter 7), is set in colonial India and very roughly based on Rudyard Kipling's book, *All the Mowgli Stories* (1933). However, the film tells the Mowgli story mostly from the time he was a young adult. He spots Katherine, his love interest, in the jungle one day and follows her home. She is the daughter of Major Brydon and is soon to be the fiancé of Captain Boone, a greedy man interested in finding treasures and wealth. However, while teaching Mowgli, Katherine becomes attracted to him. In the end, Captain Boone dies and the lovers are united.

8.6.1 Mowgli's Body

Teachers' data of *The Jungle Book* focused on Mowgli. The first comment regarded his eyes. As the teachers and I were getting settled in the classroom in which the

discussion of *The Jungle Book* would take place, two were laughing as they entered, discussing something about the movie I could not hear. I asked them what they were laughing about. Apparently, after viewing the movie, they had talked about Mowgli's eyes but were reluctant to discuss them again in the research setting. I was curious about this "forbidden" or "politically incorrect" earlier discussion. As we got started on talking about the film, Clara suggested that Megan talk about the point made earlier:

Clara: Well, Megan has to talk about his eyes.

Megan: The eyes were too weird. I couldn't look at the eyes. They were animal eyes . . .

Karen: That is interesting because that was one of the things I commented on watching the movie was that he didn't look Indian. The eyes weren't, you know. Because the little boy starts out being Indian and then when you see the grown man, he is no longer Indian.

Megan: Yeah, I think my comment was the expression was so overdone. But then the whole movie was really over the top, you know there was forced status throughout, so I think that was part of it. Being overly expressive and showing the animal side more than needed to be.

Taking the subject position of critic, Megan and Karen reject his eyes as: "weird", "animal eyes", "didn't look Indian", "no longer Indian", "the expression was so overdone", "overly expressive", "showing the animal side." Megan and Karen had a specific image in mind or knew which images were unacceptable for the actor, Jason Scott Lee's Mowgli. Megan's critique (remember that Megan has a background in film studies) is conducted within the film images themselves -- ". . . the *whole* movie was over the top . . . forced status *throughout* . . . *overly* expressive" (italics added) Her concern is with the characterization vis-à-vis the eyes and expressiveness of the eyes. Similarly, Karen points out the discrepancy in the boy Mowgli and the adult Mowgli, again through his eyes. The adult Mowgli did not look Indian. Through the

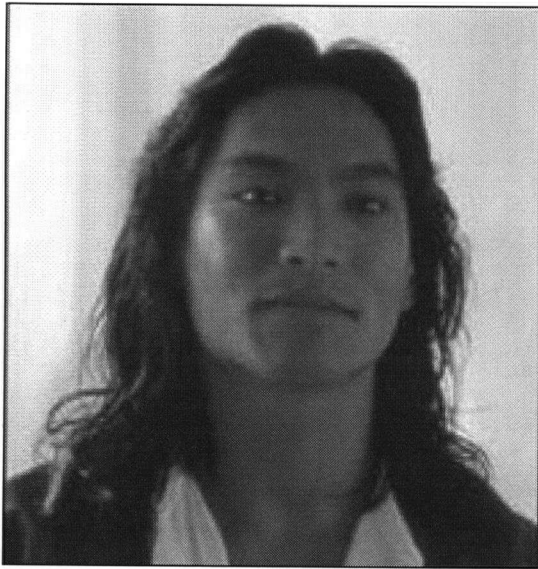


Image 8.2 Jason Scott Lee as “Mowgli” in *The Jungle Book*, 1994

contest over his eyes, Mowgli’s identity is positioned *in* the film-as-text and related to the viewers who take the position of film critic. Examining these data on Mowgli’s eyes brought to mind another contest over ethnic identity in a different setting examined in Chapter 10.

Another identity of Mowgli’s body is through *film-as-social vehicle*. Here film becomes a social text, interacting with moviemakers, history, and viewer. Mike draws on the discourses of history and colonialism to discuss Mowgli’s ethnic identity. Mike:

I think also it is showing us a child’s side. I think to a great degree his expressions were meant to convey innocence and childlike nature which again is one of those stereotypes of that time of the savage that they are like children. They need to be led out of the darkness . . . Probably the fantasy, hope and desire there is turning a primitive into a civilized person. That is sort of one of the responsibilities of the Raj, is to bring enlightenment to the masses. That is one of the things that sort of recurred in my mind as I was watching this, setting it in the time context. There is this identity factor that is the issue there. Who is Mowgli? Is he an Indian kid, is he a British kid, or is he an animal? And it is very much part of the gestalt of the time.

Mike positions film as a text within the vision of the director and other filmmakers -- "his expressions *were meant* to convey." (italics added) He sets the characterization within a historical context "of *that* time", "the Raj", "the gestalt *of the time*" when colonial discourse created an "innocent", "childlike" "savage" needing to be "led out of the darkness", "enlightenment to the masses." (italics added) Mike is aware of the film's postcolonial discourse in terms of Mowgli's characterization. Mike makes a similar point on the questionnaire, writing that he identified with Mowgli because he was "the outcast trying to fit into 'normal' society (savage: queer)." The British were, "Morons passing judgements based on ignorance and puffed-up self-importance (Brits/Mowgli; fundies/queers)." ("Fundies" are fundamental Christians.) The viewer is a *social critic*, viewing film as a social construction connected to a particular discursive history. The viewer's social identity, "queer", is likewise connected to Mowgli's, "savage", as is their *otheredness* by fundies/Brits.

8.6.2 Mowgli's Clothing

Mowgli's taking off or putting on clothing sparked other interests in teachers. Teachers related the film vision of ESL teaching in colonial India with sexual and personal desires, and teaching and traveling experiences. Mike's interest in Mowgli's body is parenthetical in writing and as an aside in discussions, perhaps because he thought his (queer) comments were, as with the data on eyes, not acceptable for the research setting. Mike enjoyed the images of Mowgli's partially clothed body and was envious of a hug that Mowgli gives to his wounded bear friend, Baloo: "Oh to be Baloo!" Mike also envies Mowgli's physique saying, "My fantasy was to look like Mowgli." Except Clara's silenced attraction to Sir above, Mike's statements are the

only ones in the data related to sexuality and sexual attraction. It is Mike's attraction to Mowgli coupled with his sense of humour that provide the seamlessness in the teacher-as-asexual portrait. Mike speaks the unspeakable.

In a scene early on in the film, Mowgli finds his way to Monkey Temple, a secret place containing treasures. A monkey dressed in clothing and holding a jeweled dagger entices him to enter the dangerous yet treasure-laden temple. Up to this point, Mowgli has only worn a short loincloth, but after seeing the monkey, he dresses in the temple like the monkey. For Casey, this change of clothing signals a desire for acceptance:

I wonder . . . if he just wanted to be a human being, because he put on clothes just as soon as he got into the monkey temple. He found the jewels, he found the dagger, and he saw that a man was holding the dagger and probably saw that this man was dressed in clothes, this creature was dressed in clothes and he identified with this creature, this human-like creature, and he dressed up as a prince right away. So I think he also wanted to be part of society. I think he felt excluded.

Here, the putting on of clothing signals a desire to enter and be part of society. The change in Casey's language for the monkey as first "man", then "creature", and finally "human-like creature" suggests the tension and excitement of the cinematic moment. Mowgli sees a monkey (as more similar to his body than other jungle animals) in clothes he does not have. The clothing enable a performance of difference.

After Mowgli has learned some English, he attends a party to announce Kitty's engagement to William. Mowgli is dressed in a princely Indian costume and as Kitty has taught Mowgli to dance, they take a turn on the dance floor. This makes William jealous. William and his friends mock the regally clad and waltzing Mowgli. The dance is avenged by William's friend pushing Mowgli onto a table of food. Mowgli runs from the dance to the outdoors, stripping away his clothes as he runs. This scene was moving

for teachers. In the following excerpt, Shelly couples this scene with a trip she made to Japan.

I was mostly moved when Mowgli ran away from the party and tore off the clothes because he was free again. He was escaping from the very confined world that he didn't really belong in . . . I was taken aback when we went to Japan last May for fifteen precious days, not very long, but I just learned from it because it made me stop and think when the young Japanese come here and probably other cultures too. You hope you are not [feeling superior to students], and I hope I am not. But I do think that, I have thought, "Oh, they don't always know very much", when we want to have a discussion and you are working so hard for them to express ideas and so on, so of course you never want to generalize, but I find myself sometimes thinking those thoughts, and how can I get them to pull out some ideas and enter into what we are trying to do. And to expand on that then, I may at times, make that generalization, you know that they don't know very much, and so why I mentioned Japan is I was so overwhelmed and I was just, and they come from this amazing culture and in spite of their orange hair and their huge shoes and the way they look [in Japan] is pretty crazy to young people. Deep inside they know a lot and they have a depth because of their culture. It just really blew me away. So I think we can forget and so I always try very hard to keep in touch with that and talk to them and talk to them about China or wherever, just pull myself back and remind myself of that. So I think that Mowgli's breaking free was sort of, you know, that world. His culture was so important.

The clothing, along with English and learning British etiquette, have permitted entrance to the British world in India. But Mowgli doesn't like it there. Stripping off his clothes means escape from this world of British superiority to enter his previous jungle world. Shelly hopes she does not hold this same superiority toward her own students. She also speaks the unspeakable, that when she is trying hard to hold a discussion in class, to "pull out some ideas", she finds herself "thinking these thoughts." Her trip to Japan reminds her of the culture that "pretty crazy" students with orange hair and huge shoes have. Due to this culture, students she teaches "know a lot and they have a depth". The students' appearance of red hair and high heeled shoes signal the appropriation of

“western” looks but localized and hybridized to make a completely different look, one that is distinctly Japanese. The different and new look occupies a distinct third space, a palimpsestuous combination of European and Japanese design. Shelly attempts to create a third space herself in the way she relates to students. As language learners who do not contribute to classroom discussions, her (conflicted) assumption is that “they don’t know very much.” However, a visit to Japan challenges this assumption. Students “have a depth because of their culture.” Shelly’s third space, created from two assumptions about Japanese students, restores respect for students. It also establishes Japanese culture as “amazing.” By remembering students’ cultures, Shelly enters her new space for teaching where she talks to students about their countries.

The problematic in this site, as I see it, rests on a dialogue of conflicting images: students’ outward appearance and their silence in class versus the deep (subconscious? inherent?) knowledge of their cultural histories. In other words, the students cannot be thought of as having no ideas to express when they have “a depth because of their culture.” Here the student subject, from Japan and China, has shifted from not knowing to knowing “deep inside”, therefore granting her/him a higher status than before. Shelly’s new space, while not without its problematics such as essentializing Japanese students for example, is gained through an explicit image of British superiority in relation to Mowgli.

For Barbara and Leslie, the same scene of Mowgli stripping away his new clothes after being pushed and humiliated by William and his friends created a similar reminder, through intense feelings of humiliation, embarrassment, and shame, of postcolonial *othering*. Although both thought Dr. Plumfort and Kitty were not as

supportive of Mowgli in this scene as they should have been, Leslie's strong emotive response was toward William and the other soldiers. Leslie:

I think the scene that I was most moved by was the arrogance of the English. I was humiliated, embarrassed to be British or English and it is just so condescending that really stirred that feeling in me. And the judgment that because he couldn't speak English that he wasn't worthy somehow of Kitty somehow or worthy of being respected. And I think it is just a reminder of how we can as teachers not be caught in that trap of somehow feeling that superiority because of being in that position.

Like Shelly, the scene cautions Leslie about the "trap of somehow feeling that superiority" as a teacher of ESL. In contrast to Shelly, however, who comes to the same meaning through a holiday in Japan, Leslie's meaning making of Mowgli and the British comes through a highly charged emotional palette of humiliation and embarrassment at recognizing herself in the representation of ESL colonial self/other cinematic discourse. Barbara similarly found the scene to be "really condescending. In fact, at the end [she] was really ashamed to be British." While William and his friends mean to shame, humiliate, and embarrass Mowgli through their actions, it is white women ESL teachers viewing the scene that feel what it is intended. In contrast to Megan's reading of Mowgli and the British as "really over the top", "forced status throughout", "weird", "so overdone", "overly expressive", the explicitness of the racialized and colonized cinematic discourse succeeds for Shelly, Leslie, and Barbara in bringing them closer to undermining the binary of ESL teaching relationships. Again, Megan refused identification with representations of the teacher as "all knowing" and students as "so powerless and stupid and helpless", saying "I don't think I teach that way."

8.7 *Iron and Silk*

Iron and Silk (1990) was discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, but a brief summary may be useful here. The cinematic autobiography of a young American man teaching for a year in China in the early 1980's is based on the autobiography of the same title by

Mark Salzman. Being a sinophile, he has studied classical Chinese at university, learned to speak Chinese working in a Chinese restaurant in the United States. He has also studied wu-shu, Chinese martial arts. He continues these interests in China while at the same time teaching English to a class of middle-aged students. He has a love interest, a young Chinese woman whom he meets in his institute's library. Other textual resources are available for this film. There are web pages

(<http://www.uq.edu.au/~uejchris/eproject/ironsilk/ironsilk.htm>) developed by an ESL teacher in Australia for use in ESL on this movie as well as a chapter in a reading textbook containing an excerpt from the book (Knepler, 1991). The movie has three teachers: Teacher Mark who teaches English, Teacher Hai who is Mark's Chinese teacher, and Teacher Pan who teaches him wu-shu.

8.7.1 Discourses of Restraint/Freedom

The data suggested a particular discourse about China and the Chinese. The teachers read the cinematic China of *Iron and Silk* as a country of rigidness, restraint, and barriers. Shelly, for example, could not associate with Teacher Hai due to her rigid teacher style. Teacher Hai was "severe" and "tough" and her teaching "rigid." Shelly:

I thought she was a little *severe* in being so *tough* about, "You must learn to do this," and "[The host] should leave the candy there even if [the guest] doesn't want it." It was just too *severe* in that [Mark] had to learn to do it the Chinese way and it wasn't just any acceptance I guess, and that he doesn't have to be taught so *rigidly* . . . I felt strongly about her because she irritated me. (italics added)

Remember that Shelly's data from *The Jungle Book* spoke to her interest in listening and learning from the students about their culture. The high value she places on learning from students (also shared by Mike and Megan) conflicts with Teacher Hai's way of

teaching Mark language and culture. Teacher Hai's strictness irritates Shelly who, by contrast, locates herself as more accepting of openness in teaching culture. Other teachers read restraint into the film. Megan thought there was not "much movement in terms of what he does, or where he goes or how much he sees." Mark's access to China was "closed to a certain extent" (Shelly) and "limited" (Leslie).

These readings of the Chinese and China as severe, rigid, and closed/other leave unquestioned the position of self/Mark. However, Casey's reading deconstructs the film in its production of binaries:

Teacher Mark represents freedom, progress and improvement . . .
The film to me seemed to pass judgment on socialist China, and through the character of Mark to say, "Americans are effectively, emotionally superior and Chinese don't know about kissing. They do not approve of closeness, fraternization and they are intellectually less agile." Mark becomes a wu-shu master in less than a year. It takes the Chinese years from childhood. Mark taught himself classical Chinese as a child. He picks up modern Chinese just like that. The students learn all the wrong songs, Christmas songs. They are slow to learn.

By articulating the construction of the inferiority of China *in relation to* the "freedom, progress and improvement" of Teacher Mark, Casey's reading undermines the imperial discourses of the film, i.e. Mark is a quick learner, the Chinese are slow. Her examples of education and learning provide further destabilization of the film-as-dominant text.

8.7.2 Realism

Only one of the teachers identified with any of the characters in the movie. Casey identified with Teacher Mark because Mark teaches Asian students and for the most part, so does Casey. Clara identified "a bit with Mark, but not strongly, probably because he was a male and American." Mike only identified with Teacher Mark when the credits started rolling at the end of the film and he saw that Salzman plays himself

and that it is based on his story. But as Mike points out, "I didn't identify with the character in the film so much as the *author* of the film." The lack of realism in the film undermined associations with characters. Realism, or rather, the lack of it, then, was the overriding theme from the *Iron and Silk* data. Teachers' concerns about realism centered on Teacher Mark and Teacher Hai.

Distance between the film and the expert teachers was also created by the cinematic student displays of English. In one scene, the students are reading their homework out loud in class. The assignment was to write a short essay on "My Happiest Moment." Their English is perfectly written and very well read. Mike and Karen point out that if students wrote that well then they did not need his class. Mike added that since the movie had not shown Teacher Mark teaching essay writing, this scene was quite unrealistic. In addition to the lack of realism in the students' English was Mark's ability to learn wu-shu in the short time he was in China (one year) as Casey (above) mentions. Mike, who had been a student of karate for the last few years, "anti-identified with him", observing that "martial arts doesn't work that way. It was way too facile." Megan similarly found Teacher Mark's enterprises false. Megan:

I thought he was very naïve. I thought he expected a lot and somehow these expectations came true in a kind of strange way. You know, really quickly in martial arts and in the classroom. And that didn't ring true for me at all.

That Mark learned Chinese working in a Chinese restaurant was another leap of faith teachers could not make. However, there was one scene that quelled Mike's cynicism. In this scene, Mark is riding his bicycle to his wu-shu class with Teacher Pan. The government has issued a warning that Chinese must not keep company with foreigners.

The gate to the yard of the wu-shu school is slammed shut in front of Mark's face as he approaches. Mike:

When the gate to his martial arts teacher was closed in his face, it was reality crashing down. Now the racism begins to show itself. My verbal reaction was, "Now you know what it feels like" Satisfaction. The cynical side of me was quieted for a moment. And my anti-Americanism peeped through!

Mike is thinking here of the racism that he believes white Americans like Mark have toward other people. He feels satisfied that finally now Mark is experiencing racism from the Chinese. This experience, Mike comments, will teach Mark what racism feels like.

Teacher Hai was similarly located as an unreal and "undeveloped" character to which even slight identification was impossible. Teacher Hai instructs Mark in written Chinese and, more importantly, Chinese culture, for example, how to offer food and drinks to guests at home and the importance of walking them back home. Mark brings up his cross-cultural hurdles and she listens and tries to explain things to him. Clara remarked that not only was she, again, "a bit too larger than life" but also her role as a sympathetic listener and teacher of Chinese culture was also unreal. Teacher Hai was "real patient in explaining things about how things should work and I don't know, my experience is when you finally figure it out for yourself or you never figure it out." Clara had lived in Nigeria and taught at a boys' school. She had not found someone like Teacher Hai to help her understand Nigerian culture

I found these data concerning reality to be very interesting. It seems that the more "real" the "reel" attempts to be (through autobiography, shot on location in China, with the teacher himself not an actor, with a real wu-shu teacher not an actor and with

people who are really learning Chinese), the less “real” the teachers think the movie is. Compare the above data from *To Sir, With Love* and *The Jungle Book* in which concerns with reality are referenced, if at all, corporeally (Mowgli’s eyes). *Iron and Silk*, however, has no element of reality. Teacher Mark’s teaching English and learning wushu and Chinese culture are considered false representations of what the expert teachers know through their experience of teaching and living abroad. They make sense of this film in large part through their identity as “expert teacher” and this is related to their age, holding up the cinematic portrait of teaching and living in another country against their own.

8.9 Summary

This chapter has read the discourses of teacher responses to films with ESL. As a complex social group responding to research questions concerning their desire to teach English and the intersection of these desires with popular film, the teachers took up multiple subject positions. For this group of white teachers, identity with cinema-sized teachers in ESL situations was mainly not a white-to-white or a woman-to-woman process. In discussing the most often cited influential film for teachers (*To Sir, with Love*, 1967), I argued that through the multi-conveyance of hybridity, white teachers were not only touched by Poitier’s Mark Thackeray but held the memory in their vision of desirable identities long after the film had first been experienced. Desire was not located mainly through corporeal sameness. However, when the identification was through corporeal sameness, it seemed that having early real experiences with a larger-than-life teacher/mother, also being a student, and having the same hair colour as the student made connection possible.

Regarding *The Jungle Book*, teachers took up two subject positions in commenting on Mowgli's body, that of film critic and that of social critic. In addition, their comments regarding his clothing underscored a discourse of "humanness" toward Mowgli, the man. In scenes where Mowgli was clothing or unclothing himself, he became a more fully-formed human. In particular, the scene of stripping away his new clothes brought up strong emotions of shame and embarrassment as teachers recognized themselves in the role of the arrogant British.

A final surprising finding was the issue of reality that teachers commented on in *Iron and Silk*. Even though the film is arguably the most "real", its lack of realism prevented any strong identification with any of the three cinematic teachers, American or Chinese, language or wu-shu. Here teachers' "real" experience in teaching English and learning martial arts undercut the film's reliability. In addition, Casey commented on the postcolonial superiority of the American teacher in relation to his students and the Chinese people in general.

More discussion of the results of this chapter will appear in the summary of Chapter 9 when I compare the teacher and student data.

Chapter 9

STUDENT DISCOURSES OF FILM AND LEARNING

When I arrived Canada, I didn't feel much differences and I couldn't find much new things that gave me shock. Unconsciously, I learn North American culture through movie.

(Seung-Hee from South Korea)

Things in movies are fake.

(Wong from Taiwan)

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter of my inquiry, I am interested in how students who are experienced in ESL learning and therefore teaching and textual curricula connect with the films we watched together, and in general how they employed film in their formal or informal English curriculum. The three sections of the chapter deal with a particular theme arising from the students' responses. I first discuss data related to students' viewing habits and their perceptions of film in relation to learning. The second section is organized around the communities that students dream of, hope, or fantasize about and how films work in service to these dreams. In the final section, I unravel the discourse of the unitary and uncritical ESL subject by drawing on the critical responses of three students to the movies *The Jungle Book* (1994) and *Iron and Silk* (1990).

9.2 Learning and Film

I discussed in Chapter 2, the literature review, recent uses of film in the ESL curriculum and in Chapter 8 the teachers' positioning and placement of film in their curriculum. Students were no less convinced than teachers that films were a resource for learning English.

9.2.1 Access to Popular Films

Although students' film viewing habits varied greatly, the data suggest that access to English language movies plays an important role in students learning English. As noted in Chapter 1, students reported watching movies in English in Canada from four times per year to everyday with a mean of 86 movies per year, a mode of 52, and a median of 52. In comparison, the number of movies in English they watched in their country of origin ranged from none to 36 per year with a mean of 15, a mode of 12, and

a median of 12 per year. The difference between the two, a mean of 86 films per year versus a mean of 15 per year, suggests that there is more access to and interest in viewing English films here in Canada than in their countries. Despite access to films in English on the internet and media shops in countries such as Japan with large numbers of videos and DVDs in English (subtitled in Japanese), students are more engaged in this activity in Canada. As to their preference of film language, six preferred watching films in their own language, five in English, and one each for watching movies dubbed in English and subtitled in English. Adding the number that prefer English and the number that prefer dubbed in English gives an equal number to those who prefer watching movies in their own language (six and six).

Students may watch more in Canada than in their birth country for various reasons. Since they often have access to cable or digital television, watching television becomes an inexpensive source of entertainment, and is part of the domestic culture of many Canadian homestay families. Going to the cinema, especially on Tuesday nights, is less expensive in Canada than going in Japan, for example. In the small Canadian city in which the students lived, going to the movies is one of the only affordable forms of evening entertainment. The foreign language sections of video shops, where students might have accessed films in their native language, are quite small, and thus students have little choice as to the language of the film. Taking the mode and median as the indicator for the average amount of film viewing, students watched on average a movie every week. That added at least 90 more minutes per week to their access to an English milieu. In the case of the single student who watched a movie every day, the additional time spent in an English environment was 630 minutes each week!

9.2.2 Learning English

With the amount of movies students watch in English, it is not surprising that they all believed watching movies helped improve their English. Students stated that watching movies in English improved their listening ability (eight students), spoken English (four), and vocabulary and idiomatic English (seven). Etsuko's comment of, "I often use their words as my English", underscores how productive film is as a teaching text. She uses the possessive pronouns "their" to refer to the movie characters and "my" to refer to her newly acquired language. Her choice of words also suggests a transference of power in language learning, and viewing. English here is something to be owned and acquired through viewing. In addition, two students believed they learned non-verbal communication while one student reported that watching movies helped his reading and writing and another, his grammar.

Watching movies with English subtitles was seen as both not helpful and helpful in learning English. Five believed that they were not helpful commenting that they did not read subtitles, that subtitles distracted them from the story or made them lose interest. One student thought subtitles helped understand the story but did not help learn English. Eight students, however, replied that subtitles helped them to read more quickly, to understand the dialogue when listening could not, to spell correctly, to understand the spoken words exactly, and to increase interest in English.

In terms of watching movies in ESL courses, two students reported not watching any. For those who had watched movies in ESL class, the titles they remembered with the number of citations in parenthesis were *Iron Will* (1994) (2), *Fly Away Home* (1996) (2), *Witness* (1985) (2), *Coming to America* (1988) (2), *Mr. Bean* (1989) (2), and *Crazy*

in Alabama (1999) (3). Those that were mentioned once were *Muriel's Wedding* (1994), *My Best Friend's Wedding* (1997), *At First Sight* (1999), *Notting Hill* (1999), *My American Cousin* (1985), *The Butcher's Wife* (1991), *Stepmom* (1998), *Not Without My Daughter* (1991), *Lord of the Flies* (1990), *Smoke Signals* (1998), *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994), *Rainman* (1988), *Mission Impossible* (1996). Three of these movies, *Iron Will*, *Fly Away Home*, and *Smoke Signals*, were movies listed as cinematic resources by teachers in the present study. Of these 19 films, nine are drama, six are romantic-comedies, three are comedies, and one is action.

Students stated that watching these movies was again helpful in learning English. They learned many new words, English slang, English and other cultures, and improved their comprehension of conversational English. In addition, Louise reported that she enjoyed listening and understanding English, and was happy to watch the entire movie even if she did not understand it all. Students appreciated the teacher's effort in having a question sheet and a discussion after the movie. These aids helped them watch carefully and learn what people from other cultures think and feel.

9.2.3 Learning Culture

Language was not all the students learned from watching films. All but one believed they learned culture as well as social issues, problems, and daily life. In the following comment, Etsuko points out the elements of culture that can be seen in movies:

I can understand their cultures from cloth, acting, house, custom. We discussed about these movies after we watched so I could learn what people from different cultures thinks or feels.

The clothing, behavior, housing, and customs depicted in the movies are the visual aspects of culture Etsuko learns. Navi adds that learning culture and language should precede studying in that country: "[I]f we want to study any other country then first learn their cultural rule and regulations, their customs, language use." Filmic images do more than give a picture of what other countries look like and how foreigners act, however. Indeed, Seung-Hee stated that film images helped her avoid culture shock.

Seung-Hee:

When I arrived Canada, I didn't feel much differences and I couldn't find much new things that gave me shock. Unconsciously, I learn North American culture through movie.

Seung-Hee's experience of Canada for the first time without culture shock suggests that films present a reality, one based on images of how people live and act and the customs they follow. In contrast to the notion that films are not reality or "things in movies are fake", a point made by Wong, Seung-Hee not only learns culture from movies but is not shocked by what she sees entering Canada. Movie viewing in South Korea provides a less shocking, less physical cultural initiation to Canada. This suggests interesting changes in how travel outside one's culture is experienced. Real countries become familiar through watching the reel ones on films. New culture is experienced in the theatre or at home. Travelling no longer means going to the unknown, unseen, unexperienced world. It becomes rather a corroboration or a repudiation of visual representation previously witnessed on film. This point could not be made of westerners' new cultural experiences. However, western films are quite accessible in other countries, as I noted about Japan and South Korea earlier, whereas here in Canada, films from other countries are categorized under "foreign" or "international." In relation

to movies from the United States, few are available and these are often “auteur” films (from a famous director).

Ji-Yong takes the point regarding learning culture further. As far as learning from movies is concerned, “[watching movies is] very helpful to listening and understand western culture, and we can’t learn every language or cultural things from Canada during limited time.” Ji-Yong’s point again gives prominence to films in English as a means to learn English and western culture as South Korean students do not generally study English abroad for more than several months to a year. Their English studies can therefore continue.

9.2.4 Alternative Language Learning

The idea of learning English from films brought up other alternative ways to learn language during the discussion of *The Jungle Book* (1994). Maria first commented on Mowgli’s language learning and connected this to another way to learn English.

[Mowgli] may learn English in a different way. Kitty will teach English, not going to a school and teaching English. It is a different way to learn and teach English and one example of that is a person in Brazil. This person is very poor. She works in the street to have money. To clean the street to have a little bit money. She learn it very well, just taking books from the garbage. She learn it very well. Different people learn in different ways.

Remember that Mowgli learned English and culture from Kitty and Dr. Plumfort in various settings including her living quarters and the jungle. Maria was struck by the fact that the street cleaner’s poverty had not kept her from learning English. In contrast to Maria who paid high tuition as an international student and bought expensive textbooks for her courses, the street cleaner had found books in the garbage and learned English “very well.” Maria’s comment was followed by Yu-Jin’s:

I agree with [Maria's] opinion, but the day before yesterday, on the internet, I read a Korean newspaper and there was, they introduced one Korean man, salary man, who working at company energy in Korea. He said he has never been to another country, something like America or Canada, speaking English, and he has never studied English. Sorry. He has never been to another country for studying English, but he studied English himself in Korea and something like memorizing sentences, or listening, writing, reading. So he said he was very, very successful to learn. Actually he could deal with many trade for his company so he said it is possible to learn English without going to another country for learning English. So I was a little bit impressed by him.

Yu-Jin too is "a little bit impressed" by learning English by oneself while still in one's home country. Here the salary man studied by himself by "memorizing sentences, or listening, writing, reading." He used English in trade deals for his company. These ways of learning English counter the popular notion that English learning is better accessed in an English speaking country. To the contrary, Maria and Yu-Jin are struck by the idea of learning without leaving one's country, without access to a "native" English teacher. The way in which the salary man in Korean learns (memorizing) also counters discourses that position Asian practices of memorization as not viable and western practices of speaking with and learning from "natives" as the best route. In any case, as Seung-Hee's earlier comment points out, the real "native speaker" can be replaced by the reel one.

It is popular for international students to travel abroad to English speaking countries to learn. Part of the discourse of successful English learning is the aspect of study abroad with intensive courses, homestays, friendships and cultural immersion. It seems like an initiation into adulthood (for many Japanese), or a necessary part of university completion (for many South Koreans) or a necessity for future education and work (for many Chinese, South Koreans, and Japanese), or any combination of these.

Indeed, students reported having "study abroad" as a dream since they were young. It is however a costly way to learn with mixed results, as Ji-Yong's comment above points out. The possibility of learning English in alternative ways such as Mowgli's, the Brazilian street worker's, or the Korean salary man's was exciting for these students. These alternatives allowed them to have different possibilities for realizing their goal of learning English. Mowgli and Kitty's curriculum revived or confirmed Maria and Yu-Jin's previous knowledge of "non-native" classroom based success. In doing so, the film helps strengthen such success stories of alternative language learning so that the students' dreams of English were not so much contained *within* the film narrative but rather that the film narrative was a conduit for legitimizing narratives the students were already aware of.

9.3 Change and Film

9.3.1 Physical and Emotional Changes

The students positioned film with the power to make several types of changes. The first change was brought up by Seung-Hee. She relates popular western cinema to the popularity in young South Korean women to undergo plastic surgery to look "less Asian" and "more western." Seung-Hee:

In Korea in most western movie, the boys and the girls like very pretty and very handsome. So before in [the discussion of *Iron and Silk*], the students say [Natasha Kinski's] lips is too big. Her lips is very big but Mark said the lip is very full or something like that. The way of thinking is different but our way of thinking, maybe the Korean people always think not like that, the western people lips are big, but now because of the movie or we see many kind of western movie, now we think the lips like western people, the nose like western people, like the blonde hair is kind of like ideal. So many Korean woman would like to have plastic surgery, rising nose and have eyelid or something. I think the movie has effect. It is very important.

Seung-Hee suggests that an industry as globalized as western cinema has the power to change beauty standards of other cultures, and in particular South Korea. Resistance, as it is in the ESL classroom in *Iron and Silk*, gives way to the overpowering western beauty ideal, as stated by Teacher Mark ("the lip is very full"). Seung-Hee's quote begins with the identification of boys and girls in western movies as "very pretty" and "very handsome." She, too, agrees with that standard. She suggests that South Korea at one time had the same beauty standards as China, that big lips were not attractive. Blond hair, big lips, rising noses, and eyelids that characterize western beauty are now sought after by South Korean women. The binary plots western beauty against Chinese and South Korean beauty, with the dominant standard as western. Importantly, Kong-Hee identifies movies as a cause of this shift.

Other students commented on the connection between movies and dreams in learning English. Four students made a direct connection. They believed that watching an admired character in a movie changed them. Movies were also thought to cause the desire to acquire identities through objects, especially in children. Maria:

I think movies influence in our lives because just look children or people like, a children, a girl that it watches a beautiful new movies of princess and she wants the same dress or a boy that saw a fight movie and he wants now the same gun or wants to fight the same as the hero of that movie. So I think it interferes in our lives, the movie.

Princess and hero identities are attainable through the dress or the gun of the character. The movie industry seems well-aware of this given the amount of movie memorabilia available for purchase with movies such as *Shrek II* (2004) where everything from Shrek straws to food, from bed sheets to clothes are on the shelves of major department stores.

In Maria's comment, children are powerless in the face of cinematic characterizations. They are completely open to the possible identities in front of them.

Seung-Hee agreed that children identify more strongly with movie characters than adults do: "[I]n my case when I was young I usually identify me to the character. Usually happens at this age, no old." Seung-Hee positions the influence of films for youth only:

When we're young, we identify us to character in movie. As we grow up, we may try to be like the character in the movie, but once we grown up, we don't get influence from movie, I think . . . This time I just feel movies just for my entertaining. I just see, I just laugh, or I just enjoy. I don't identify with me to the character.

Remember that above, Seung-Hee had stated a direct effect from western movies on young South Korean women having plastic surgery. For Seung-Hee then, such influences are felt by those younger than her, and she was in her mid-20s. In both Seung-Hee's and Maria's comments, resistance by the young viewer is futile. The representations of beauty and heroism become the desired identities whether or not resistance is made. The tone and language of these comments suggest that the shift in identity as a result of watching movies "interferes" (Maria) with who we are, who we should be.

The changes that watching movies can bring about in viewers was also seen as positive, especially in relation to feelings. When students were sad or depressed, movies helped disperse their depression in favour of the mood of the character. Emiko was starting a bachelor's degree and felt overwhelmed by the amount of work she had to do. Emiko recalls the scene in *The Jungle Book* (1994) when Mowgli runs away from the party, stripping off his new regal Indian clothes as he does so. Emiko:

I remember when [Mowgli] escaped from his enrolment, I mean his, I mean the human society after partying. At that time I felt like so refreshed because his situation is similar to mine. My situation actually now I have a really hard time, like I have university, the classes I am taking, so it's like I feel so depressed or sort of like in India, I have a real hard time . . . It's like I have to complete the university course and I have to get a degree. So like I can't get out of here . . . So that's like at the time he sort of like escaped. So that is why he did what I can't do.

While watching this scene, Emiko is temporarily transformed. She identifies with Mowgli's difficulties and feels "refreshed" watching him escape British society in India. The emotional change that this scene produces is experienced in other films with female characters as well. Emiko:

Like when I am depressed or if I am feeling bad, and when I see the movie and there is a character who is really like optimistic, like at the time I want to be like her to be optimistic. Yeah, because she is really interesting. Even though her life is really tough, or whatever, but she looks like happy maybe if she is optimistic. At that time I feel I want to be that kind of person.

The "optimistic", "happy", "really interesting" female movie characters offer Emiko an escape from her "really hard time." Two points about these emotional changes can be made. In the first case of feeling refreshed after watching Mowgli escape, Emiko no longer felt refreshed when she provided this comment and this was two days after viewing. She again was depressed from the demands of taking ESL and university credit courses. The change in her feelings was momentary. In the second case of her general feelings toward optimistic characters facing a really tough life, this identification with the character is similarly experienced as only a moment, "[a]t that time." It is not a moment that Emiko later draws on to keep her spirits up. The second point is that the change the film produces in her is only available *through* her and her emotive condition. That is, it is Emiko's feeling of depression that instigates the change. The movie

provides a story or character but these in and of themselves do not produce change. It is in the interstice between Emiko the viewer and Mowgli the viewed that her feeling is transformed.

Yeung-Sook similarly found that watching *The Jungle Book* cheered up her depression stemming from her slow progress in learning English.

I enjoyed the movie. Some of it cheered me a little bit because nowadays I have some, I was a little depressed because even though I came to Canada 6 months ago I found I making lots of mistakes while I'm speaking English and when I go to somewhere and while I communicate with this amount of people. So that's why I was a little bit depressed about. While I was watching the movie, I noticed Mowgli made lots of mistakes, you know. So at the time I have a kind of empathy. So I thought in Canada, even though Canadians look at me making some mistakes hopefully they don't think I am stupid, you know.

Mowgli's mistakes are playful lessons with Kitty. Kitty falls in love with Mowgli despite (or perhaps because of) his English language skills. Yeung-Sook takes hope from the movie that Canadians do not identify her as stupid through her mistakes. The movie not only changes her mood from depressed to cheered up but also from a person she supposed Canadians identified her as -- stupid. Again, however, the residue of Mowgli's mistakes produces in Yeung-Sook only "a little bit" of cheering up. The limited influence of these emotional changes contrasts sharply with the physical ones of choosing plastic surgery.

What I found very interesting about these data was that despite images of characters that were different linguistically, racially, culturally, and geographically, students positioned the characters as influencing notions of beauty and emotional states. Two notions of the significance of difference can be explored here. One is that difference is invisible, not meaningful to the student viewers. It is rather the romance,

the triumph over difficulties, and the heroism that informs the change. These themes have a universal appeal regardless of difference. In this view of image and desire, the context of the film is pardoned in favor of reducing human experience to a globalized set of plots and characterizations.

A second view mobilizes difference as the appeal. Here the context of the film is important where questions of position come into play: Where do the characters in the film come from? Whose lifestyle do they portray? What position in the world does this country hold in the viewers' eyes? How are the social identities of characters' interpellated with regard to themes of romance and heroism? The viewed is different and powerful. Difference is exotified and desirable. This view is supported by the increase in cosmetic surgery where "flat" noses are made higher and single eyelids are doubled. The language of the desired is English, even when English is not the language of the country being portrayed such as Austria in one of the movies that influenced Yeung-Sook, *The Sound of Music*. This view of difference also recognizes the globalization of the image and the story but suggests that the available film fantasies are limited in their representations of possible desirable looks and stories.

9.3.2 Change and Desire

Between the above changes experienced as momentary or as permanent, the comments provided by Louise locate the power of film to change between these two opposites. Louise:

For my point of about how this movie's influenced who you are is a kind of exhibition. Mean, this influence is short term because everyone is looking for a kind of role model. As soon as you reach what you are looking for in this world you don't need it no more. You are looking for something else. So it change.

Film characters act as role models for Louise. The chosen role model is rejected in favour of another one once she has reached what she is "looking for in this world." Her words, "everyone is looking for a kind of role model", "this influence is short term", "as soon as you reach . . . you don't need it no more" produce an active viewer in the process of creating herself. Louise was in her mid-40s and had determined through earlier experiences what she now wanted from life. She had a strong vision for herself. She expressed much determination in acquiring her nursing credentials at UCBC, despite set backs that stood in her way. Movies were simply part of her plan. She *chose* movies that would support her in her vision and goals. When that particular cinematic role model no longer met her needs at the time, she rejected it and moved to another one. Louise similarly comments that happy or sad moods are actively controlled through movie choices she makes:

So for me is like movie, if I am in a good mood I say, "Oh, I need a good movie today. I am happy and this." And when I am sad, I say, "Oh, okay, that's why", or, "I don't want to see this type of movie"

Movies here, as for Emiko and Yeung-Sook above, can change her mood from sad to happy. She will not watch a sad movie if she is sad, but instead try to change her sadness by watching a happy movie. Louise plays a decisive role in both her changing identity and attaining her goals in part through role models in films she rejects or accepts, temporarily.

Louise had immigrated to Canada from Haiti and found that she identified with Captain William Boone, Kitty's fiancé, another case of cross-racial and cross-gender identification. He, remember, is the greedy man interested primarily in acquiring

treasures from Monkey City. He is determined, at any cost, to get them. Louise found she had much in common with him. Louise:

I can say, as an immigrant, it always happen that when you discover a new place like William, and William is an immigrant, because when William went to jungle he was considered as an immigrant. Yes, you don't speak the language, you don't know the culture, and you are looking for something the same way when someone moved from a country to another country . . . But, there is a law, you have to respect that law. You don't belong to this, you are immigrant. You enjoy, and you enjoy, and you forget there is a law. And what's happened, he found the treasure and was happy, is like he is like immigrant who get citizenship . . . So William, he was too good, and he grab and he grab and he grab . . . He was too greedy. He wants to take everything but he loses his life.

After talking with Louise several times on campus after the completion of data collection, I began to understand her position regarding William. There were several hurdles that stood between her and her goal of gaining a nursing diploma. She had to complete other required courses first and she had to complete the ESL program. Here is what she means by, "But, there is a law, you have to respect that law. You don't belong to this, you are immigrant. You enjoy, and you enjoy, and you forget there is a law." The "law" is finishing required courses that added considerable time to her intended completion data. She was eager to begin now that she knew what she wanted to do.

Louise provided the above data during the interview. I was surprised that Louise would identify with "the bad guy", and during the interview I asked her about this.

Ardis: Now William is sort of you know there is a good guy and a bad guy, and he is a bad guy.

Louise: Not really. The way I see it, he is not a bad guy . . . He knows what he wants, so he doesn't have a choice. He has to fight to get it. And he knows how to get it.

The fact that William dies in the end trying to acquire what he wants does not prevent Louise from identifying with him. My reading of William as the bad guy similarly does



Image 9.1 Cary Elwes as “Captain Boone” in *The Jungle Book*, 1994

not prevent her from her reading of William as an immigrant who is single-minded about attaining his goal. Louise reads him as someone who knows how to get what he wants. Like William, Louise was in strong pursuit of attaining her nursing diploma and would do whatever it took, for example, taking required courses, to obtain it. Importantly, it is Louise who positions herself as in control of her future in relation to William’s cinematic identity.

Students believe that movies influenced changes in themselves. Movies create desired corporeal beauty and objects that are tied to cinematic identities. Plastic surgery creates a step toward a more western and desirable looking face while depression is transformed into optimism in a difficult situation. Movies change feelings through viewers' identification with characters. Movies offer role models that viewers choose and then reject in favour of another more contemporarily relevant one. Viewers positioned themselves as helpless to resist these changes, as wanting these changes, and finally as looking for change and choosing moves to reflect or help desired changes come about.

9.3.3 Change and Fantasy

I was interested in the fantasies, hopes and desires students had regarding learning English and how these may intersect with the films we viewed. Their dreams of English involved English in particular situations or communities. Some students articulated certain tasks as their hope in learning English, for example, reading English magazines like *Time*. Two students envisioned using English in their work in South Korea and Japan. Five students hoped that English would help them in other communities. For example, Seung-Hee, a student of English literature in South Korea, commented that "English can be means to connect me with other country people because now English is like world language." Ji-Yong hoped to "communicate well with Americans and Canadians and with my friends from Japan and China" and that "talking with Western people is very appeal to me." Mikiko mentioned two communities for using English: "I want to get a diploma or degree, and want to teach my future children." Even though Mikiko would return to Japan, she fantasized

teaching her children English. An immigrant to Canada, Etsuko's community was her new Canadian home: "I'm now landed immigrant, so I need English for my life."

Mahvash's fantasy of English was to travel the world. Mahvash:

I just like to learn lots of languages. First of all, I have to complete my English and after that I start another language to travel all over the world and see all the countries, because it is my dream and my best wish.

The identities embedded in their fantasies for English were as co-worker, worldly person, international friend, student, mother (in a non-English country), and Canadian. Students associated knowing English with opening previously closed communities. In this sense, the students' fantasies for learning English coconstructed transglobal identities. This resonates with the worldliness of cinematic English, English curriculum, and ESL teachers as discussed in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Like British imperialism itself, knowing English is associated with entering different communities.

For other students, I was surprised to learn that five of the twelve students reported extremely high hopes for English: "I want that I can use English as well as my native language" (Wong); "to speak English fluently and understand everything spoken and written in English" (Yeung-Sook); "to speak, listen, read, and write in English perfectly" (Yu-Jin); "I wish I can be the same as Canadian. It's my best desire to speak, write, read and understand everything in English same as Canadians" (Mahvash): "I want to speak English perfectly" (Emiko). Two others hoped simply to improve their English and their word choices: "I hope get better and more familiarize with the language" (Maria), and "improving my grammar and pronunciation" (Louise). The first group of desires of perfection, fluency, understanding everything, using English like one's native language, and being the same as Canadians in English suggest that their

future in English depends upon perfection. Navi dreamed of learning “English very easily and quickly in Canada but it is not that much true.” Drawing on *The Jungle Book*, Yeung-Sook similarly fantasized about learning English quickly:

[I]n the movie Mowgli learned English very quickly. It’s the only fantasy I have of myself. This time I think it could be happen because Mowgli’s brain was kind of blank as the white paper, so probably he could absorb much of the language such as idioms and expressions more easily than me.

Both Navi and Yeung-Sook point to the reality of the time it takes to learn another language. Yeung-Sook further theorizes that because Mowgli does not have a first human language, it is easier for him to learn than for her. Echoing Wong’s comment that, “Things in movies are fake”, Emiko also recognized the unreality of Mowgli’s rapid language learning. Emiko:

I just thought about the way they are teaching, how they are teach English, and I think it doesn’t work. Actually I saw that video and after that, like I know like, it doesn’t happen to us. It’s too easy to learn the English, like it is not so easy, right? That was kind of a drama, sort of, it’s not reality.

Here, Emiko’s fantasy to learn English perfectly, the cinematic learning of English, and her real experience of learning English intersect. There is a border between the fantasy (“they”, “that video”, “that . . . drama”) and reality (“it doesn’t work”, “I know”, “doesn’t happen to us”, “too easy”, “not so easy”, “not reality”). The film serves to strengthen her awareness of the time and difficulty in learning English.

9.4 Critical Engagement

One of the popular myths circulating in the discourse of ESL student subjects locates them on the non-critical spectrum of critical learners. This element concerns particularly students from Asia who “learn by rote”, “don’t learn to think”, “aren’t critical”, “have nothing to say”, “just memorize” and of course “plagiarize”. The

problems of this discourse for students are many as it positions the western ESL teacher as the most critical member of the classroom while also positioning students from Canada or "the west" as more able to understand and critique the curriculum and society. Somehow these learning strategies are thought to be the only ones students from "Asia" possess and that these are inferior in a western context. "Asia" is positioned in particular ways too. This way of understanding students produces unsophisticated (in relation to students) textbooks and curriculum where text comprehension and skill building activities and exercises abound, and the content is simplified not only linguistically but also intellectually. Schenke (1996) addresses this feature of ESL textbooks in relation to women's issues and feminism. She found the simplistic content of complex issues frustrating.

That western education produces critically minded citizens is of course not only a gross generalization but also a discourse that in turn builds a different one for eastern education. Do generalizations have any element of "truth" to them? Aren't cultural stereotypes a "natural" way to form identities? In my research and further exemplifying the problematic make up of this binary are students' responses to the question, "What scene or moment in the movie was felt most strongly by you?" They first replied on the questionnaire, and I picked this question up again during the discussions and interviews. In this section, the data collected from discussions and interviews of the two films *The Jungle Book* and *Iron and Silk* undermine particular racial stereotypes concerning ESL students.

9.4.1 Yeung-Sook

I begin first with comments from Yeung-Sook, a 28-year-old woman from South Korea. Her critical response concerned the postcolonial identities in *The Jungle Book*. Identification or not with Mowgli or enjoyment of watching the movie did not preclude her critiquing the racial constructs therein. Yeung-Sook:

As for me I identified myself with Mowgli because, it is not because he is learning another language. It is another reason. Actually he knows the law of jungles and he has lots of animal friends, but it is very precious thing and he has ability to communicate with animals but in white man's society that ability was not important for them . . . the white man don't put any importance on that kind of ability. So the reason I am saying this is, in Canada, . . . we know [South Korean] culture and our own mature thing and something precious thing, so I don't want to, how can I say, they respect our own culture and they recognize our culture is also important thing. You know, valuable.

While I was watching the movie I noticed that Mowgli was very eager to learn English and their culture. But on the other hand, the white man was not interested in learning the law of jungles, how to communicate with animals. It is very contradictory.

Yeung-Sook's comments are critical in different ways. First is Yeung-Sook's reason for identifying with Mowgli. She clearly states that it is not because they have learning English in common. Instead, it is the disinterest white society has in Mowgli's culture and in hers, a valuable and precious thing. When I began my project, I questioned how student identification with movie characters would be made. With characters who were also language learners like themselves? With characters who were the same race, gender, and ethnicity? Yeung-Sook identifies with the low respect for Mowgli's culture from white men, something she too experiences in Canada. Such a reading of the film, I suggest, is what Said (1993) calls *contrapuntal reading* which analyses the dual processes of colonialism and the resistance to it (p. 66). For Said, contrapuntal reading

is used for literary texts referring to colonized lands such as Kipling's *Kim*. I am extending his notion of contrapuntal reading to films. Yeung-Sook's postcolonial critique first deconstructs the responses whites and non-whites have to each other's culture. She then resists it by suggesting in the research setting (a space she knows will be reported on), that it is unequal. Also of importance to Yeung-Sook's reading contrapuntally is that she relates her interpretation of the film to her perception of racial inequality in Canada. Her words, "So the reason I am saying this is . . ." are a clear expression of her intent to make the point and thereby resist the inequity she experiences. Her resistance to racial inequity is not interested in another form of racial hierarchy. Canagarajah's (2002) understanding of resistance is helpful here:

[Resistance] is not a totally destructive practice of *rejecting* the established structure, a vengeful exercise of *replacing* it with another, or the idealistic attempt to *eradicate* power in all forms. The project rather is to *reconstitute* discourses and structures in progressively more inclusive, ethical, and democratic terms. (italics original) (p. 30)

Canagarajah argues against a modernist, emancipatory resistance of "rejecting", "replacing" and "eradicating" relations of power and power itself. Like Canagarajah, Yeung-Sook wants to be included in Canadians' discourses of respected cultures. Her point is well taken. Despite efforts at "internationalizing the curriculum" and "multiculturalizing Canada", postcolonial positions of us/them adhere. Liberal multiculturalism manifests itself in multicultural days, multicultural week, and exchanges of surface culture such as cuisine, holidays, costumes, etc. Of course, ESL students are interested in learning about Canadian culture, but as Yeung-Sook comments, one-way cultural interest shows disrespect and undervalues the other culture.

A third way Yeung-Sook's comments are critical is her consciousness of race in relation to power and culture. She speaks directly to race through her choice of words "the white man" and "white man's society" in her deconstruction of the characters. She ties these references to questions of power when she comments that Mowgli's ability and knowledge of the jungle and animals are a "precious thing", one that white man's society does not have and holds no importance for. She finds the lack of white interest in the jungle in contradiction to Mowgli's interest in English and white culture. She relates that to her experience in Canada where she would like South Korean culture to be valued as a precious and important to (white) Canadians. Her use of the word "white" again frustrates the "uncritical Asian student" discourse.

9.4.2 Mahvash

In response to *Iron and Silk*, Mahvash also shows herself to be a postcolonial film critic. Like Yeung-Sook, Mahvash's comments again instantiate the critical awareness that ESL students are mythologized as lacking. Mahvash was in her early twenties and had immigrated from Iran to Canada several months before I collected the data. She was particularly interested in discussing a scene from the movie. In this scene, Mark asks Teacher Hai if she thinks he is ugly and refers to the Chinese expression for white foreigners, "da bids" or big nose. Teacher Hai responds that she doesn't think his face is ugly, just three-dimensional. Mahvash comments:

He asked her that do you think I am ugly because of my nose and blue eyes? I think that, you know, because he was different from Chinese people in the society, exactly the same as me. I am here, I am like black and I am not like Canadian people. And they always ask something different from me, or they ask something from my country that, you know, some weird questions that, "Have you ever seen snow?" or "Do you know which colour is grass?" and "Have you ever seen mountain around your

city or everywhere?" You know and I thought exactly same as he because he thought he's something different and they don't like him and after that when he went to see his wu-shu teacher, Teacher Pan, the [door keeper] told him that you are foreigner and you are not allowed to enter and see him. It was exactly like me because of some political problems between the two countries. Why I should be punished because I didn't do anything? I like all the people around the world. You know, I respect them and they have to respect me because I didn't do anything. But they exactly treated him the same as, you know, government. He didn't do anything with Chinese . . .

Mahvash's comment is passionately conscious of a system of corporeality and meaning.

Her words occupy a geography of body, nation, and language. She understands Mark's

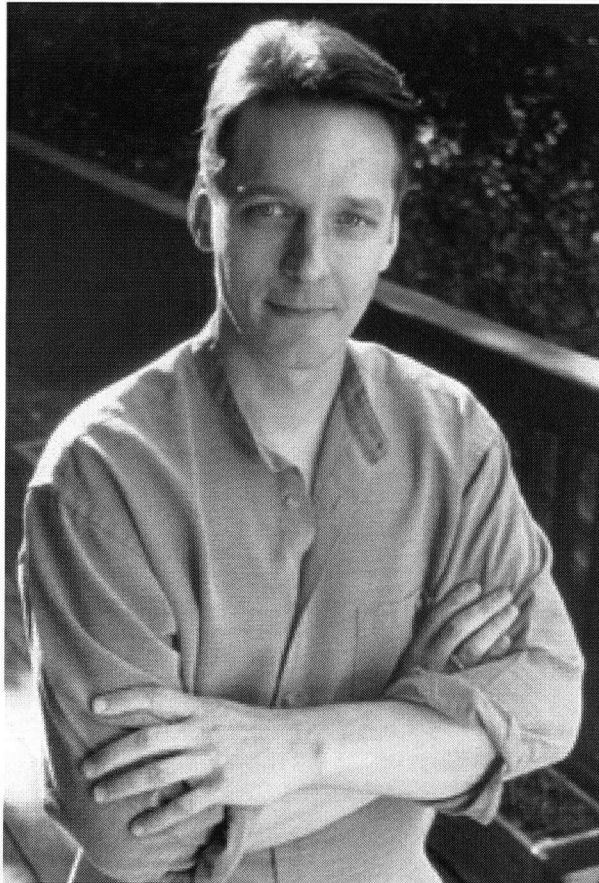


Image 9.2 Mark Salzman as "Mark Franklin" in *Iron and Silk*, 1990

concern with his visibly different body as her body too has been signified as different. She deconstructs these spaces with words such as, "he was different", "I am not like Canadian people", "they always ask something different from me", "he thought he's something different." This space of difference is brilliantly contrasted with her connection to the cinematic teacher: "exactly the same as me", "I thought exactly same as he", "It was exactly like me", "they exactly treated him the same as, you know, government." The interview data from Mahvash continued to define her sense of different/body/colour.

Ardiss: In the discussion, you said something about his question, "Do you think I'm ugly, that I have a big nose?"

Mahvash: I really like that sentence. I think that how he was strange and odd for Chinese, so I am for Canadians.

Ardiss: So how do you feel odd? What do you mean when you say that? Like in the discussion you said you're a black person.

Mahvash: Because Canadian's say that they are white. They ask me, "If a white guy came to your country how would you treat him?" I always ask them, "What do you mean by white? What colour I am?" They say, "Oh no, we mean white like Canadians. You are black." I say, "I am black?" They say I am brown but they never say that, "You are white." They think that it is different.

Ardiss: How does that make you feel?

Mahvash: Somehow different from them. I think when you first see colour, the first meeting is more important than the others. Because when you see him or her, what she wears and the way that she acts and everything, how she talks and these things are really important. But the first thing that makes you to see her more or go out or talk, or spend your time with her or him, based on the first meeting, so when they all meet me, I am interesting for them. They all ask me, "Oh you speak good English. You have no accent." I have accent but not like the Japanese. Like, "You speak good. You dress like Canadian girls." Lots of them told me. But after that it's for the first meeting, and second meeting they ask me some weird questions. Like in second meeting we are like separating, getting apart, this stuff. Because we are not the same.

In learning her difference in Canada, Mahvash comes to learn that her otherness is race-related. Her words that describe the difference are revealing. The words that Canadians use to describe her colour difference, black and brown, are connected to the words "odd", "Oh no, we mean white like Canadians", "weird questions", "separating", "getting apart" while the words for likeness or favourable-to-Canadians are "interesting", "good English", "no accent", "dress like Canadian girls."

To Canadians, Mahvash is not white, not like Canadians. She is black. When she questions their use of the word black to describe her, they say she is brown. The first time Canadians meet her is critical in their identifying her as different. Mahvash observes that despite her good unaccented English, her Canadian style dress, and their interest in her on the first meeting, by the second meeting she also feels they are separating her, othering her with "weird questions". Mahvash offered more questions asked of her by Canadians and one of these she connects with scenes from *Iron and Silk* that were most emotional for her. I was interested in how Mahvash associated Teacher Mark's raced experience with her own in Canada. I reminded her of the comment above she made in the group discussion regarding a scene in the movie when Mark was attempting to go to his wu-shu (martial arts) class with Teacher Pan but the doors had been barred and the doorman tells him that foreigners are not allowed in.

Ardiss: You say [in the group discussion] that, "It is exactly like me that I am a foreigner in Canada with a different culture, so when they called him as a foreigner because of some political problem that it was exactly like me that I am from Iran. So they called me terrorist yesterday. It is really hard to live alone in a country different from your culture." So are you talking about a particular experience that somebody said terrorist?

Mahvash: Yes, one of my friends -- he is not my friend -- he came to me and he was like, "Hey, how are you doing?" It was like, "I am

OK.” He’s like, “I heard that Iranians are terrorists.” I was like, “I don’t know.” So he said, “You came here to terrorize?” I didn’t say anything. I just was like everything was so ...

Ardiss: It was pretty ignorant.

Mahvash: Well, I try to change his mind. It is so ignorant though ... because that was exactly same because of some political problems between America and China. They called an innocent guy as a, “You are a foreigner. You are not allowed to enter.” It was exactly the same as me because of some political problems with me and Iran and America. You would never believe it. It is not for us. We have no interfere with that so they call me terrorist in Canada because of political problems between Iran and America.

Ardiss: Even though you have nothing to do with it.

Mahvash: Absolutely.

Ardiss: How long have you been in Canada?

Mahvash: It is exactly five months.

Here Mahvash adds a political component to her different identity in Canada. Like Mark, Mahvash believes she is innocent from the political relations between Iran and America. She distinguishes herself from her government. However, being from Iran, she is now identified by a friend/not a friend as a terrorist. He asks her if she has come to Canada to terrorize because for him, Iranians mean terrorists. In her short time in Canada, Mahvash had learned that her body now carried several meanings it had not carried in Iran. Not only was it a body with a colour, but it now represented politically violent activity which in turn was referenced to her nation. Mahvash had a tone of exasperation yet was determined to change his mind.

9.4.3 Ji-Yong

Ji-Yong, a South Korean male student was especially critical of the characterizations in *The Jungle Book* and compared them to *Iron and Silk*. East/West identity issues were at the heart of his comments.

- Ardiss: So was there a character that you didn't like in *The Jungle Book*?
- Ji-Yong: *Jungle Book*. I don't like the characters in *Jungle Book*.
- Ardiss: None of them?
- Ji-Yong: None of them. Because Mowgli, I don't like the way the western looks at the Indian or the Asian. Like I feel like they look at us like that. Like a long time in the history and they are like usually the boys are wearing those kind of raggy hair, that kind of thing. The Kitty, the girls is always like that, and the bad guys, I forgot their name, always in the Hollywood movie, those guys always do like that. Nothing special in that movie.
- Ardiss: So would you say that the characters are stereotypes?
- Ji-Yong: Yes.
- Ardiss: From western eyes, like the stereotypical Indian was Mowgli?
- Ji-Yong: Yes. There is stereotype.
- Ardiss: But *Iron and Silk*, did you think there were stereotypes in that movie?
- Ji-Yong: Yes, stereotypes. But it is a little bit different because this is really a true story and this guys is like frustrating. When he went to that country, he didn't have some negative feelings, like he tried to love and the way he operates is different from Mowgli movies. Mowgli movies is really stereotyped movies. *Iron and Silk* is, he is kind of open minded to the Chinese and the different culture and approach them . . . He knows culture is different. He didn't say is primitive.
- Ardiss: And in Mowgli, the English, like William said Mowgli was a savage.
- Ji-Yong: Yes.
- Ardiss: So in *Iron and Silk* you identified more with Mark?
- Ji-Yong: Yes.
- Ardiss: Because you [wrote on the questionnaire], "As the opposite direction with Mark I came here to Canada, North America to study English and I have gone through many conflicts about cultural differences like Mark. I also want to experience to become Canadian like Mark."
- Ji-Yong: Yes.

Ji-Yong listened more than he spoke in the discussions and as the passage above indicates, his interview was halting. Nevertheless, he makes a critical and similar point to Yeung-Sook and Mahvash. He does not like the way Mowgli is looked at by "the

western" in *The Jungle Book*. He feels westerners look at him in the same way. In fact, he does not like the cinematic characterization of Indians and Asians with "raggy hair" and the other characters. Ji-Yong also positions himself as a film critic, criticizing the Hollywood genre. He disapproves of the postcolonial images of colonized India, a "low time in the history." He thinks there is "nothing special in that movie", identifying and deconstructing the characters: "The Kitty, the girls is always like that, and the bad guys, I forgot their name, always in the Hollywood movie. Those guys always do like that." His use of the word "always" in association with "Hollywood movie" indicates that Ji-Yong is not only aware of the genre, but disapproves of it.

Iron and Silk, on the other hand, presents cultural conflicts that Ji-Yong too has faced. That it was based on a true story is important to him. Ji-Yong identifies with Mark's struggles in China. Mark does not have negative feelings towards the Chinese. He does not consider Chinese people "primitive" as the westerners consider the Indians in *The Jungle Book*. Mark is "open-minded", a person Ji-Yong aspires to be like in Mark's interest in another culture. Ji-Yong would like "to become Canadian like Mark", as in Mark's fascination and "becoming" Chinese. This is very interesting in terms of the question of racial identity and films. Ji-Yong dismisses *The Jungle Book* as the typical good guy/bad guy Hollywood movie. He refuses to identify with the Asian/Indian that Mowgli represents to him. The Chinese-American Jason Scott Lee plays Mowgli, but the Asianness of Lee does not interest Ji-Yong. Instead, it is the trueness of Mark's struggles in China, despite Mark's whiteness, that holds inspiration for Ji-Yong.

Mark and Mowgli's struggle to learn about and love in another culture, to gain respect from their new communities was the touchstone of identification with them. Yeung-Sook, Mahvash, and Ji-Yong observed the cultural conflicts of Mark and Mowgli as trying to fit in but firmly placed outside the culture by authority in particular scenes. They saw these conflicts as related to their own. The conflicts were discussed in various terms. First, terms for geographical space demarcated the struggles, as in "jungle", and "Iran" versus "America." Second and related to physical space were terms for nationalities, "Chinese" versus "different from Chinese", "Western" versus "Asian" and "Indian." Words for the students' and characters' bodies, including colour, also defined the struggle: "white man", "black" and "brown" versus "white", "primitive", "foreigner", and "terrorist." The terms signify that it is between various facets of space, from nation to body, that the contest for identity, interest, and respect arises.

9.5 Summary

In this chapter, the student discourses of popular film were analyzed. As with the teachers' responses, the students similarly overran the boundaries of sameness. As critically located students, they made connections to cinematic characters that, like them, felt the postcolonial gaze upon them. The mainly Asian females identified not necessarily with other females or other Asians, but rather with the male characters Mowgli and Captain Boone in *The Jungle Book* (1994) and Teacher Mark in *Iron and Silk* (1990). Identification was made possible through having *similar racial underprivilege* the students identified in Canada and as Mowgli and Mark have in India and China respectively. Similarly, Louise, a Canadian immigrant from Haiti identified strongly with the "bad guy" Captain Boone. Here it was the cinematic representation of

desire and desire's persistence in attaining wealth that was admirable. For both teachers and students, identification to cinematic ESL teachers and students transgressed racial and gender borders to create a liminal and hybrid space of identification.

In comparing the teachers' data with the students' data, one difference was the awareness and articulation of race in the process of identification. Two teachers expressed shame over the representation of British superiority in *The Jungle Book* (1994) and one teacher discussed the colonial discourse of Indians as savages. In responding to their fantasies, hopes and desires in teaching, only one referred to race or ethnicity and that was in regard to students learning about Canada and Canadians. Instead the word "students", "they" and "their" in reference to students were used. Most teachers expressed their desire in teaching as a form of helping students to learn English and make cultural adjustments while three hoped for an equal exchange of cultural and/or language learning between students and themselves. The politics of "colour blindness", that colour does not matter at all (Hunter & Nettles, 1999, p. 392), helps explain this discourse. Student discourses of identification with cinematic ESL, on the other hand, illustrated an awareness of their racialized position within a predominantly white environment. Four students read certain characters as racially disadvantaged and their hybrid identification was through the representation of racial disadvantage. These students were not critical of the film per se but rather used the film to locate and be critical of their racial positions in white Canada. For the students, and in contrast to the teachers' reading of *Iron and Silk* as unreal, the reel racial underprivilege Mark experiences is a conduit for expressing their real underprivilege in Canada.

Teachers and students were generally in agreement regarding the question of learning from films. Both groups believed that film was a resource for learning. A few teachers were reticent for different reasons about using films compared to the fairly complete endorsement by students of film as a site of language and cultural learning. In teacher discourse, learning from films is body-related, primarily through the eyes and ears. Teachers are cautious of these ports of entry, however: learner-viewers may see images that may take over their cultural worlds, and they may get lost listening to difficult script. These concerns were overwhelmingly countered by the student data that, again, applauded films for the amount of language and culture learned.

Subject desire and its relation to popular films with ESL created the liminality the data demanded. Locating desire destabilized the notion of the subject as unitary and consistent. One of the key points of Chapters 8 and 9 is that images of desire in ESL teaching and learning are more about desire itself than the corporeal sameness of the desiring subject to the cinematic object. Liberal multiculturalism posits positive role modeling of minority groups in the hope that minority people will identify with the role model thus helping to improve access to and interest in, for example, education. Chapter 8 and 9 illustrate, however, that identity politics according to a set of socially and historically constructed categories has limitations. As Hall (1997a) puts it,

The notion that identity has to do with people that look the same, feel the same, call themselves the same, is nonsense. As a process, as a narrative, as a discourse, I is always told from the position of the Other. (p. 49)

Identification with one's own colour, gender, age group, etc. is but one way to identify oneself, either personally or professionally.

Chapter 10

POSTSTRUCTURAL PEDAGOGY FILM AS PRAXIS

... we are interested in literacy as more than the process of reading and writing; we conceive of literacy as a social practice that must be understood in the context of wider social and institutional relationships.

(Norton and Vanderheyden, 2004, p. 203)

As a black woman intellectual working overtime to call attention to feminist thinking, to issues of sexism, one who wanted to talk about the convergence of race, sex, and class, I found films to be the perfect cultural texts.

(hooks, 1996, p. 2)

10.1 Introduction

Norton and Vanderheyden's quote situates literacy in a wide sphere of relationships. Here literacy is not constrained within discourses of cognitive processing, but rather it is located among other social contexts and processes. It is in this understanding of literacy that the present study is located. Focusing on reading film as a process of meaning making, I have been arguing that individual subjects negotiate links between social resources and processes, between spaces both intimate and public. The quote from hooks similarly positions meaning-making (literacy) in a social sphere of identity relationships, stating that films are "the perfect cultural texts" to foreground questions of social identity.

But what does hooks mean by "perfect"? That they perfectly stage a dominant discourse of the representation of identities? That they engage students in questioning the representations therein? That films, like no other text, make available the unexpected, the unplanned disturbances that outlast memories of the lesson's initial intentions? I take up these questions of film's curricular potential while continuing the mapping of liminality as a third space from which to articulate difference. I draw on two experiences of trying to teach and learn with films. The first section of the chapter draws on a moment of rupture regarding the film *Pearl Harbor* (2001). The second section tells the story of a graduate class in which *The Jungle Book* (1994) offered valuable lessons.

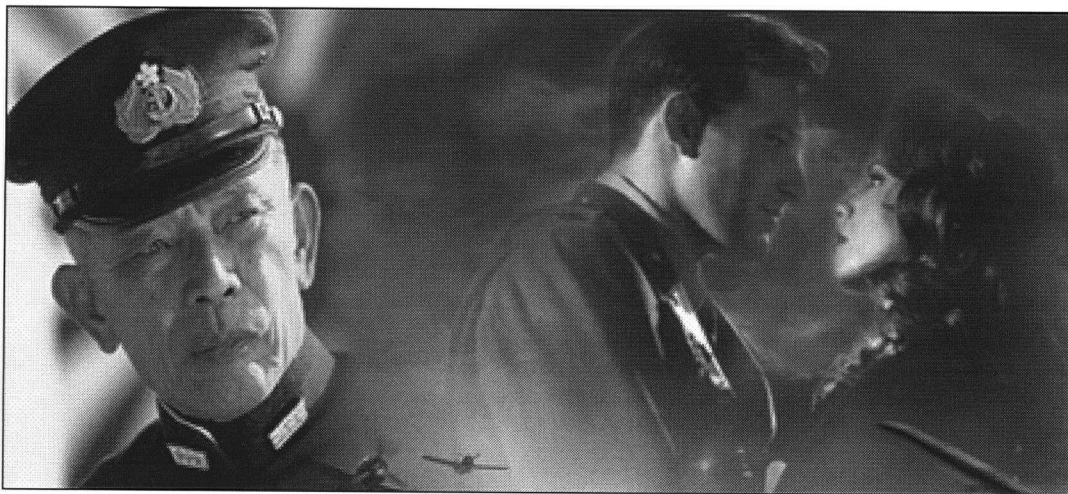
10.2 Disruptions in ESL Teaching: *Pearl Harbor* (2001)

I make use of films in various ways in teaching ESL, including the three strands of critical pedagogy discussed in Chapter 2. For example, using the cult film, *The Crying Game* (1992) enables me to raise questions around the ambivalence of gender and transgender (Mackie & Markley, 2000). For another practice, groups of students deconstruct the cross-cultural identifications in a film in English of their choice and present their analysis in the form of a film critique (Mackie, 2002). The groups have three to four members and each member presents a different part of the critique: introducing and giving a plot summary of the film; illustrating how the language of the film (script, costumes, dialogue, lighting, make-up), constructs cultural identities; and concluding by how they responded to these cultural identities. The student audience votes for the best critique. I then model a film critique, using clips from *Anna and the King* (1999) with Jodie Foster and Chow Yun Fat. I want the students to use English to express the critical filter I presume is there but which I am hopefully teaching them to use if it is not. Some students ask for clarification on the parameters of the assignment such as how long their critique should be while other students ask for help in reading the identities of their chosen film.

One such Japanese student was Mikiko. She was in a group with two South Korean students. They had chosen *Pearl Harbor* (2001). Mikiko was to present the second part of the critique, the illustration of cultural identities. She gave me her ideas about the representations of Japanese and Americans in the movie, but was still uncertain how to read the film in terms of specific cinematic language. She thought the Japanese were ugly and unsmiling. Their kimono costumes suggested to her a

traditional dress that was not popular during that time, an unmodern Japan that she resented. I discussed with her other ways the film divided Americans from Japanese such as the wearing of black clothes, the lack of a social life, family or friends, and the devotion to warring and asked her to juxtapose these with the portraits of Americans. Mikiko incorporated my examples with her own when she presented her analysis. The audience gave feedback in the form of voting and written comments and these I read out-loud to the class.

A South Korean student, Seung-Kyung, was very upset about Mikiko's presentation. In his comment, he wrote that Japanese soldiers *were* cruel and *did* kill many Chinese, South Korean, American and other soldiers. He stressed that the Japanese government still hides this side of the war from Japanese citizens. Backing this comment up in class, he added a question to the Japanese students in class -- Did they know about the war? In answer, the Japanese students held their heads low, and answered quietly, "no."



10.1 Mako, Ben Affleck, and Kate Beckinsale in *Pearl Harbor*, 2001

He was absent the next two days, and Mikiko was absent the next day. When I had a chance to talk to them individually, Seung-Kyung said that he liked Japan and Japanese students and that they were his friends. Indeed, as a teenager Seung-Kyung had lived in Japan for four years and was fluent in Japanese, and this experience certainly precipitated his comments. His disagreement with Mikiko's presentation was that it made the Japanese look like victims when it was Koreans and others who were the victims of the war. The cinematic Japanese were only the victims of Hollywoodism. Not only did he make use of his ability to be critical, but also his critique carried emotional weight. He differentiated the critique of Hollywood identities from his own more "real" experiences of the war. Language was drawn upon to express what Canagarajah (2002) calls a "burning desire to articulate the inequalities" (p. 18) on the topic.

I also spoke with Mikiko and one of her South Korean partners, Miga, about Seung-Kyung's comments. After hearing his question, Mikiko told me she had researched the internet to find out about Japan in the war. I asked her what she had learned, but her answer was, "I cannot say." She was visibly upset. She had learned what is not taught in Japanese school. The Japanese curriculum, tightly controlled by the Department of Education, limits the atrocities the Japanese committed. Even now, the Japanese government will not recognize such colonial brutality as the Korean comfort women in Japan. What started out to be a task in visual deconstruction became a difficult lesson in learning Japan's history and the power of her analysis. However, Miga commented that it was "just a movie" and certainly nothing to get upset about.

The students were in their early 20s, too young to have experienced World War II first hand but old enough to know something about it. In this instance, the film and Mikiko's reading held various meanings to the students I have mentioned. It was a resource for an assignment and not much more than "just a movie" or just an exercise in deconstruction for Miga. It was held at a distance, engaged in for the academic advantage but only as another Hollywood movie. I suspect this is why Miga did not discuss Mikiko's interpretation of the film before Mikiko presented it. For Mikiko, the meaning of the film changed profoundly. At first, it too was an interesting activity in language learning and deconstruction. She exercised her analytical eye, applying it to Hollywood. Then, in the space of 24 hours, the film took on a very different meaning. It was a means of critical interaction with her classroom community. Seung-Kyung spoke back, asking a difficult question. Mikiko found an answer through her research on the internet. The film was a vehicle for learning the silenced Japanese school curriculum. For his part, Seung-Kyung took a risk through his comments and question. He risked friendships and loss of community in the classroom. He was asserting a particular identity within this community. I believe his interest was not so much in his personal identity, however, but rather in bringing awareness about the war to the class, and especially the Japanese students. Having attended school in Japan for four years, he had knowledge of the official curricular discourse on the war.

The film, the assignment, the students' ethnic backgrounds and previous experiences of learning created powerful moments of learning about the war, about the weight of knowledge, and about the investments made in engaging language in support of beliefs. Clearly, for some students, the movie and its analysis could not be dismissed.

Instead, it incited passionate responses and engagements over representation. Bodies and histories collided over meaning.

What was the teacher doing in all this? I was certainly standing on shifting ground. At the same time as I was proud of Seung-Kyung for his comment, I was concerned for the Japanese students. Several options presented themselves. The first and by far the easiest would have been to walk away from the moment, from the topic, from the reality of the disruption. I dismissed this option because it was too powerful and meaningful a moment to let it go unnoticed. After all, the students had made an effort, in particular, Seung-Kyung. Another option was to take up a stand and give my personal opinion. I was drawn to this option because I feel, like Seung-Kyung, that silencing the Japanese role in World War II to students who desire to be transglobal is denying them crucial knowledge in exactly this kind of transglobal interaction in the class. I decided against this option, however, because speaking against the Japanese government's silencing would implicate Mikiko. I believed she had learned the most valuable lesson already, and that was Japan's role in the war. I also believed that she had already felt, as did the other Japanese students in class, public shame when Seung-Kyung had posed his question to them. I believed, too, that she was now conscious of how South Koreans, at least Seung-Kyung, viewed Japanese silence regarding the war.

The third option and the one I chose was to use Canadian atrocities against racial minorities as an example of how governments can be made to change and accept their role in matters of human rights. I began by explaining instances of racism throughout Canada's history. I mentioned the near genocide of First Nations people, the Komagata Maru incident in which 400 people from India were refused entrance to Canada in 1914,

and the internment of Canadian citizens of Japanese descent during World War II. I emphasized the last example, describing the loss of private property and human rights they underwent. I asked the students if they thought I personally was responsible for these actions. They answered I was not. I then explained the compensation granted by the Canadian government to Canadians that were interned in camps during the war. (Each received \$30,000.00, Cdn.). I explained that this was not enough, but was nevertheless the result of a collective campaign against the government by the families who suffered loss through internment rather than generosity by the government. Indeed, I explained the First Nations people were continuing their fight with various levels of government even now. I stopped there. I hoped that my response would accomplish certain things. The first was to keep the class together and avoid separating the South Korean students from the Japanese. I also wanted to save face for the Japanese. I wanted the students to have a sense of why things change and how changes to, for example, the official Japanese curriculum, could come about.

The class was silent. I could not read them. When the class was over, I approached Miga and Mikiko and asked them what they thought of my comments. Mikiko thought it was interesting that a country like Canada had such a racist history. Miga's comment was, "Yeah, so what?" She wanted me to go further, to make the specific point that it was the responsibility of ordinary Japanese citizens to demand changes to the official curriculum in Japan. I agree with Miga, but rather than giving "the answer" myself, I could have asked for possible solutions to the silence in the Japanese official curriculum. Hearing possible solutions would have opened the door

for Mikiko and the other Japanese students to provide solutions and how they may or may not enable speaking the unspeakable.

A fourth option I have since considered is to be honest with the students about my teaching dilemma. I would then give the Ardis-the-teacher response as I did above. I would also give my Ardis-with-her-own-opinion response as I did not, but as I wanted to. Throughout the talk, I was trying not to represent Canada as the exemplar country it sometimes is made out to be, but I fear I failed. At the same time, I was aware of my unwillingness to just come out and say what was on my mind regarding the silences and denials in Japan. Was I wearing my liberal feminist hat in trying to protect the Japanese students? There is an inherent politics in that position in that their protection meant another silence and a denial of Seung-Kyung's position.

The memories of this curricular moment will hold, I believe, for several of the students, in particular for Mikiko and the other Japanese students and for Seung-Kyung and the other South Korean students. The story does not illustrate a "perfect" lesson. However, I would like to believe that, as Pennycook (2004) puts it, "trying to be a critical educator is more often about seeking and seizing small moments to open the door on a more critical perspective" (p. 341).

10.3 Critical Teacher Education: "Women and Imperialism"

Two courses I took in my doctoral program made use of films for critical teaching. This section will remember one of these courses called "Women and Imperialism" from the Women's Studies Program. An untenured American woman taught it. We read various forms of written texts (academic, autobiographies, and novels) and films. The professor foregrounded writing by key postcolonial theorists

such as Said (1979), Bhabha (1994), Minh-Ha (1998), and Spivak (1985). We read novels by Michelle Cliff (1995), Bessie Head (1986), Kamal Markandeya (1956), Flora Nwapa (1966), and Nawal El Saadawi (1975). The novels concerned the lives of third world women. Some of the films we responded to were *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1989) by Trinh Minh-ha, *I'm British but* (1990) by Gurinder Chadha, and *Me, Mom, and Mona* (1993) by Mina Shum. These films concerned the experiences of living as diasporan women and the meanings of racial ethnicity within white cultures. With the exception of Said (1993) and El Saadawi (1980), the authors were new to me. Such a curriculum with its focus on the work of women that were not white and on complex feminist postcolonial questions such as who speaks for whom in issues such as clitorrectomy was at once exciting and troubling.

But the curriculum was not the only resource for locating difference. My classmates included two other white women, a black woman, a Jewish woman, a man from India, a white man, two First Nations women, and a Japanese woman. The teacher was a three quarters European-American with one quarter Native-American. For the first several classes, there was tension among the students that prevented all but three students from participating significantly. In my experience, oral participation in graduate classes ranged along a continuum from those that have an atmosphere conducive to discussion for most of the students and those in which two or three students speak. While the teacher hoped for the latter end of the spectrum, for the first half of the semester, the black, Jewish, and Indian students dominated the class, criticizing what other students and the teacher had said. Issues of race were central to the discussions. If the teacher or one of the remaining students made a comment about

race, either the black student or the Jewish student, but usually both, were defensively critical in their responses. The rest of the class went silent for several class meetings. Foucault's (1978) take on silence is helpful in understanding that the silence in this class was deafening:

Silence itself -- the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers -- is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. There is no binary to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. (p. 27)

Foucault argues against the speech/silence divide, and rather asks for contextualized understandings that structure communication and the meaningful strategies of not/speaking. In ESL, silence has been discussed problematically by Schenke (1991) as fictions students may produce for teachers (p. 50) and as a politics of racial binarism (p. 52). Goldstein (2004) identifies ESL student silence as a result of their fear in mispronouncing English (p. 317) while Stein (2004) argues for "the right to silence" (pp. 108-109) that multimodal pedagogies should affirm in respect of students' dignity.

In this classroom context, I added little to the discussions of race. Although I commented on the experience of being othered while living in China and Japan, these comments were not accepted by the black student and Jewish student as legitimate racism. Their point was that it was impossible for whites to experience racism. In the community of this classroom, my role was instead to listen to "students of colour" and "students with ethnic backgrounds." I had no colour while they had raced/ethnized

experiences, but I, as white, did not. My role as a white student in this class was then to learn about race and ethnicity from non-white non-European students. They centered their experiences and comments. In this class, there was a powerful politics of race where the knowledge that was legitimized came from racial and ethnic others so that their take on the curriculum was authorized and the rest of the students were "discrete" (Foucault, 1978, p. 27) for several reasons. Like ESL fear, we were silent out of the fear of their rightful anger and the fear of being identified as racist. Unlike ESL fear, however, we were silenced rather than choosing silence, and we were identified as unaware of the politics of race. This class was in marked contrast to Hunter and Nettles' (1999) experience of racial politics in a women's studies course where the white students complained about the "marginalization of whiteness" (p. 388). Lest the reader think I am identifying myself as a victim of racial politics, it is crucial to say that the speaking students in this course opened up a line of questioning for me regarding race and the problematics of not/speaking.

One of the course requirements was to present to the class an oral summary and critique of a book from a list provided by the teacher. I chose *Looking Through Imperial Eyes* (1994) a book by Ann Kaplan in which she reads many films set in colonial times, including one film with ESL, *Out of Africa* (1985). When it came to the presentation, the silent students were fearful that our words would be attacked. I knew I would be shaking, that my voice would falter, and it did. Thankfully, I had remembered to bring a bottle of water. I illustrated my presentation, aligning Kaplan's ideas with clips of films that had ESL teaching. This attention to the clips and away from me helped to take the pressure off. After I discussed each clip in relation to Kaplan's book,

I looked for responses from my teacher and classmates. One of the clips I showed was a scene from *The Jungle Book* (1994). In this scene, Mowgli is just beginning his English lessons with Kitty and Dr. Plumfort. Before he begins, however, he must be bathed, one of the initiations discussed in Chapter 5. He is naked from the waist up in this part of the scene. It is a humorous scene and full of postcolonial language of civilized/barbarian, as I discussed earlier. The humour continues in the lesson. The clip is several minutes long.

The response to this scene was strong. A very interesting discussion over representation ensued. The black woman and the Jewish woman were critical of what they saw as the exotification of Mowgli when the camera positions his brown wet body in the center of the screen. This exotification was seen as taking advantage of an otherized character. The teacher pointed out that exotifying others could also be seen as empowering them, i.e. the sexiness carried with it a certain power, a point A. Luke (1998) makes regarding Jason Scott Lee, discussed earlier. Another critical comment from the Jewish and black students was the fact that a Chinese looking actor, Jason Scott Lee, was playing the part of an Indian and that was another form of racism. He did not *look* Indian. The black student recalled white actors who painted their faces black in early black and white movies. Black actors were not wanted. The Jewish student agreed that a “real” Indian should play him. The student from India countered this last comment. I was particularly interested in his response to the clip as he was Indian and watching a Disney representation of India and an Indian man. I noted that while he was watching the film, he chuckled more than any of us. He said he had seen this film several times with his children! What was very interesting was that, in his estimation,

Mowgli's look was well within what was considered Indian looking. India was multicultural and multiethnic and thus Indians had many different physical features and looks. Jason Scott Lee as Mowgli did not appear to be un-Indian to him.

Apart from what was gained through the reading and critiquing of Kaplan's book, this exchange provided me with a fascinating lesson in identity and image. First is a very familiar point to me now, that representation, defined succinctly as "the production of meaning through language" (Hall, 1997c, p. 16), is built in the space between viewer and the viewed. Multiple viewers mean various interpretations. Second is the question of whose meaning shall prevail, at least for the present. In this class the black woman was regarded by me, at least, as having the final word on matters of race. But when it came to the second comment above, that Mowgli did not look Indian, it was the Indian student whose word was final. After all, he should know. He was from India, and she was not from India. Those closest to the image being represented or *thought* to be closest were authorities. This class raised questions for me: Is black the only colour that should speak for questions of race? Where are white and other "colours" in race discussions? Who speaks for whom and why? Who has the right to speak? Who is silent and why? These questions resonate in my teaching and writing, reminders of my silence and talk in graduate life, of what is said and what is silenced in my own teaching, at conferences and in papers.

10.4 Summary

In Chapter 10, I have argued that film is a fluid resource for the ESL class, fluid in the sense that what is being learned is not agreed on, that cinematic representations do/not represent. These moments of "do/not" in the class are available when film

images and histories, for example World War II, come up against each other. However, this may or may not be a planned event in the critical literacy classroom, for example, the responses to the assignment using the film, *Pearl Harbor* (2001). In the context of the graduate class, I distinguished silent students and talking students in discussions of feminist and poststructural film and written texts. I suggested that silence worked for this white Canadian as a strategy of self-identification or avoidance-identification within certain social discourses on race. For talking students in response to *The Jungle Book* (1994), I proposed that a confluence of social identities, histories, and texts converged to produce an energetic contest over the meanings and identity of the cinematic ESL student body. The most legitimate response came from the student with the same ethnic background as the cinematic student.

Neither experience was pleasant or humorous and in this sense quite unlike the liberal notion of the comfortable classroom for all. Other questions need to be raised here:

- (1) Should or can the critical antiracist classroom be comfortable for everyone?
- (2) Should the critical educator make apparent her politics? If she should, then how can she do this without marginalizing or parading students?
- (3) "In order to be the critical subject, must one have been the object of visible power?" (Luke, 2004, p. 27)

Chapter 11

CONCLUSION

How do teachers make a difference in power, knowledge, and desire, not only by *what* they teach, but by *how* they *address* students? (italics in original)

(Ellsworth, 1997, p. 8)

11.1 Summary of Main Arguments

I have made several arguments for critical feminist ESL pedagogies that draw on identity and desire. The first is an answer to Ellsworth's (1997) introductory question (p. 8). The production of knowledge about popular films with education (Chapter 2) structures particular identities for the producer of that knowledge (educators, theorists) and the students who engage both with the film and the educator's viewpoint of the film. Educators and other theorists writing about film assume one (and sometimes more) of three critically engaged identities which in turn structure particular interpellations of the student audience. One identity is that of the objective educator in search of a more or less stable reading of the film. This reading is offered as *the* legitimate product which students are assumed not to know or have but to learn. The second identity is that of the liberator-educator who again has the legitimate reading of the film intended to emancipate students from their politically unconscious reading of the film. The third identity may strategically adopt either or both of the first two but in addition is often expressed in multiples (as Asian, as woman, as child, as pleased body, and so on). This third identity is in the process of producing readings (in the plural) of the film for an already conscious student audience. The point is that any reading of popular films with education will permit or silence particular identities for the educator, student, and film characters.

Locating these identities in literature on film and education necessitates a related argument, that critically self-locating own's desire and identity in ESL multiliteracies catalyzes the undermining of a unitary postcolonial identity (Chapter 4).

By this I mean that a pedagogy concerned with questioning and changing social practices, as critical ESL pedagogy is and claims to be, must necessarily be concerned with questions of political self-consciousness. Luke (2004) names this concern more powerfully as, “the out-of-body experience of watching oneself watch oneself as an object of power and naming oneself as such” (p. 28). Relevant questions for the present study here were:

- (1) What desires and identity of white womanhood have been socially structured through popular film?
- (2) How does a social text such as popular film structure desire?

To answer these questions, I identified overarching themes from many films as well as pinpointed cinematic language that, taken together, structure desirable and desiring ESL identities (Chapters 5, 6, and 7). These themes included various tropes associated with the English language, with learning English, and with ESL teachers, such as freedom, heroism, and linguistic, moral and cultural superiority. In addition, various rituals and initiations structure cinematic ESL student identities. These are variously represented as playful or cruel, chosen or forced. Resistance both in and to the text was another important theme. The point here is that film as a text of entertainment co-exists alongside the film as a text for disciplining and structuring desire and identity in regards to race and gender. The location of these structures provides the possibility of engaging other differently located identities. Indeed, what motivates self-inscription as different from others or as like others is a powerful desire to gain control, status, or respect within a community (Chapters 8 and 9).

I also argued for the importance in critical multiliteracies of a single reader

interpreting films from multiple locations (Chapters 2, 6, 7, 8, 10). This is made possible by identification with different characters, or with identifying with *othered* readers who are portrayed in the film. I illustrated this point by offering multiple readings of several films that identified the relationships of power/desire. For the film *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987), I offered two representations of Tuan. One reads Tuan as a stick-like Barbie figure (Giroux, 2002) and the other as successfully resisting American imperialism. For the film *Out of Africa* (1985), one reading emphasizes the failure of the white woman colonialist while a second reading emphasizes her superiority to white men. Similarly, I juxtaposed two readings of *Iron and Silk* (1990). One reading identified the American as superior in learning language in comparison to his students while the second reading identified the Chinese as superior in teaching in comparison to the American. Poststructuralist pedagogy, I argue, should be aware of the politics of literacy, that is, who reads what and to what ends.

Throughout the study, I have also made the case for *liminality* in ESL multiliteracies. Liminality, that space between or on two sides of a border, is particularly important for people who, like ESL teachers and students, often enter other communities and become racially, culturally, and linguistically, if not religiously, *othered*. I refer both to students and teachers who travel to other countries to learn and teach, and to teachers who, in their own community, enter a classroom full of racial, linguistic, and cultural others. In the present study, I have argued that making meaning from film often involves a partial leaving of one's body and engaging in the cinematic images, the visuality that the teachers in Chapter 9 commented on. That is, making meaning from film is very much a body-related mode of learning. Many senses are

involved. Dolby surround sound envelops the audience. The cinema is dark and the audience usually quiet. The images are huge and thus there is the sensation that the body inhabits a space of liminality, not quite *in* the movie but no quite in one's self. The film's largesse, if it is a really good movie, permits identifications with reel characters and stories that the audience in real life would not access. The experience is something to which even the most critical viewers give themselves over, at least momentarily (hooks, 1996, p.5). Thus, a range of emotions and gestures from laughing hard and slapping your knee to weeping and wiping away tears are unquestioningly permitted in this public space. The responses to film with education could not be contained in the Cartesian dualism of the mind/body unconnectedness. Recognizing the body in the production of meaning is a radical turn from language learning theories based on internalizing a fixed system of language, as Stein (2004) points out. The racialized, gendered, sensing, sexualized, desirous, resistant (and so on) teaching and learning bodies here produced oral and written responses to films that suggest their identities were not only defined by the cinematic text, but also through the text as a conduit for articulating social statements.

Finally, the text has made the argument for disruptions to cinematic desires and identities as well as disruptions in everyday teaching life. Throughout the document, I have drawn upon "real" life (biographies, experiences, memories, and teacher and student data) to interrupt cinematic constructions of ESL desires and identities and the real classroom. These disruptions included: ESL teachers as monolingualists; ESL students as passively accepting English as their language and as uncritical participants in the world; and colour and ethnic blindness in the classroom. I argued that such

disruptions serve two purposes. First, they help to construct a more complete identity for ESL, i.e., many teachers are not monolingualists. Second, they open spaces where *othering* speaks about its relative powerlessness and brings about change in that power axis, for example, a South Korean student disrupting Japanese students' knowledge about World War II.

11.2 Future Work

The present study leaves open a number of avenues for future work. One is continuing research into how ESL subjectivities and English are constituted in other forms of popular media with ESL such as magazines, newspapers, cartoons, music, and internet web sites. A similar project would entail an examination of popular films with ESL from India's Bollywood or other countries. Such research could potentially offer quite different discourses for ESL and English, further undermining the unified ESL subject and the unquestioned position of a British-North American standardized English in the world.

Discourses of race that adhere to ESL are a second line of questioning that needs attention. Norton (2004) has called for specifying questions of transnationalism and language learning within a framework of race. While some work has been done (Amin, 1997, 2000; Butler, 2001; Ibrahim, 1999; Kubota, 2002; Mackie, 2003) and more is forthcoming (*TESOL Quarterly* will have a special issue on race in 2006), questions of race in light of postcolonial discourses of ESL and teacher education have long been too absent. Here the supremacy of whiteness in the global enterprise of English language teaching needs particular scrutiny (Allen, 2001). In light of the multiracial classrooms in which ESL pedagogy is often performed, research is much overdue in areas concerning

race and language and teacher education. Questions concerning the liminal identities students and teachers occupy in the classroom, how these effect change, and how classroom relations are maintained or questioned in light of race need to be raised.

A final line of work should focus on filling the gap in ESL and teacher education practices that problematize, poststructurally, cinematic (or other media) representations of ESL and English. The ESL or ESL-related curricula currently available mainly reside within a critical thinking framework. Examples include the TESOL presentations reviewed in Chapter 2, Summerfield and Lee's (2001) textbook, *Seeing the Big Picture: Exploring American Cultures on Film*, and Pearson Education's on-line guide, *Penguin Readers Guide to Teacher's Using Film and TV*

(www.penguinreaders.com/downloads/PRTGusingfilm&tv.pdf). While such resources may address questions of race and gender, their main political thrust is toward the acceptance, tolerance, or recognition of cultural *diversity* (Summerfield & Lee) or a complete lack of questioning cinematic representations (Pearson Education). In the latter, the pedagogy is based on straight comprehension of the film. What is needed are resources that frame popular culture/film within a pedagogy of desire where the pleasure or disturbance of the narrative and its actors are set against self-formation and knowledge production.

For curriculum building that considers students as stakeholders, students' viewing habits and views of what is learned from watching movies underscore the legitimacy of film in the curriculum and perhaps *as* the curriculum. If students also learn culture from watching movies, then films are a resource to be considered carefully as much for the amount of classroom time spent viewing as for the cultural representations in the movie.

The pedagogical environment in which the movie is planted, therefore, should also be scrutinized. Film, like a textbook or a teacher, authorizes certain knowledge.

Two positions on popular film's potential in the critical curriculum are available. One is taken up by Farber and Holm (1994) and Kereos (1999) who argue that popular films offer little in the way of pedagogy. Their main reasons are that popular films simplify the complexity of the world and that cinematic teachers and students are undeveloped. Another position suggests that even Hollywood movies offer opportunities for teaching poststructurally (F. Butler, 2000; Kelly, 1997; Mackie, 2001; Robertson, 1997). The practices of examining among films as well as close readings of individual films hold a rich potential for a multiliteracy pedagogy for ESL and teacher education where a continual practice of questioning and de-centering visual assumptions is key. Films held up to scrutiny can disrupt, celebrate, and re-design us. They are mirrors held up to our teaching and learning bodies. When we begin to examine fully the reflection, however, much disturbance can follow.

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3. watching a popular film (*The Jungle Book*, 1994), 111 minutes, writing journal entries about my film experience and participating in a discussion about the film, about 60 minutes. This discussion will be tape-recorded.
4. having a one-on-one interview with Ardiss Mackie, about 20 minutes. This interview will be tape-recorded.

These activities will take place at the N campus of UCBC and will take a total of about 6 hours over about two weeks. Ardiss Mackie will answer any questions I have about these activities. I will indicate my willingness to participate in each of the above four activities by signing a separate consent form when participation is invited.

If I chose not to participate, I can have study time in the library, or I can watch the movies but not participate in the other research activities. I will not suffer any negative consequences for not participating. Neither my grades nor my treatment as a student or an employee will suffer for not participating.

If I chose to participate partially, I will indicate when I do not wish to participate by not signing the consent form for that particular research activity or by not attending that particular activity. In that case, I can have study time at the library or attend the research activity but not participate.

Confidentiality:

Information from this research will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be in the possession of Ardiss Mackie. My name will not be used in the data analysis or in reports of this research. Data will be destroyed after five years.

My teacher will know if I participate, but my participation or my non-participation will not affect my grades.

The responses I give during the discussions of the film will be known to the other research participants. Ardiss Mackie has no control over whether the research participants talk about the film discussion when the discussions are complete. In other words, other research participants may not keep confidential my discussion responses.

Benefits of Participating:

I may enjoy watching films I may or may not have seen before. I may also learn other understandings of the film from the discussion. I may also improve and practice my English skills in listening, speaking, and writing by participating.

Contact:

If I have any questions or want more information about his research, I may contact

Ardiss Mackie at

250 767 9020 or amackie@silk.net.

If I have any concerns about my treatment in this research, I may contact:

Dr. Carolyn Szostak, Chair, Research Services, UCBC at 250 762 5445, local 7353;

And/or

Dr. Richard Sprately, Director of Research Services, UBC at 604 822 8598.

Consent:

I understand that my participation in this research is completely voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time from this research. I may also refuse to answer certain questions or give responses. My grades or my employment will not be affected in any way if I do not participate.

I have received my own copy of this general consent form.

I consent to participate in this research.

Subject Signature

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

And/or

Dr. Richard Sprately, Director of Research Services, UBC at 604 822 8598.

Consent:

I have received my own copy of this general consent form.

I consent to view the film, and write journal entries about and discuss the film.

Subject Signature

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

•dubbed in your language? _____

•in your language? _____

7. Do you think watching movies in English helps you learn English? (Answer yes or no. Please explain your answer.)

8. Do you think watching movies in English helps you learn other things. (Answer yes or not. Please explain your answer.)

9. Do you think watching movies with English subtitles helps you learn English. (Answer yes or not. Please explain your answer.)

10. Do you think watching movies with English subtitles helps you learn other things. (Answer yes or not. Please explain your answer.)

III. Popular Movies in ESL Class

11. Have you watched popular movies in English in ESL class before? (including UCBC or other places)

-
12. If yes, what were the titles of the popular movies in English you saw in ESL class? If you can't remember the titles, you can write the stars' names, or anything else you remember about the movie.

13. Do you think watching these movies was helpful in learning English? (Answer yes or not. Please explain your answer.)

IV. Learning English and Popular Films

14. What fantasies, hopes, or desires do you have about learning English?

15. Have any popular films influenced these fantasies, hopes, or desires? If yes, which films?

V. Iron and Silk

16. Had you seen Iron and Silk (1991) before this research? _____

If yes, please answer the next questions.

If no, please go to section VI.

17. When (year) and where (country) did you see it? _____
18. Did you see it in English, with English subtitles, or dubbed in your language?
19. Which character did you identify most strongly with?

20. Why did you identify with this character more than the others?

21. What scene or moment in the movie was felt most strongly by you?

22. What feeling did you have from this scene or moment in the movie?

VI. The Jungle Book

23. Had you seen *The Jungle Book* (1994) with John Cleese before beginning this research? _____

If yes, please answer the next questions.

If no, you are finished the questionnaire. Thank you.

24. When (year) and where (country) did you see it? _____
25. Did you see it in English, with English subtitles, or dubbed in your language?
26. Which character did you identify most strongly with?

27. Why did you identify with this character more than the others?

28. What scene or moment in the movie was felt most strongly by you?

29. What feeling did you have from this scene or moment in the movie?

THANK YOU

Please return this questionnaire to Ardis Mackie's mail slot or in person.

Appendix E:
Discussion and Interview Questions for ESL Students

Name: _____

1. Do you think movies influence who you are? Please explain.
2. Did you identify with any character in the movie? If yes, which one?

Why did you identify with this character more than the others?

How would you describe this character in relation to other characters.

3. What scene or moment from the movie was felt most strongly by you?

What feeling did you have from this scene or moment in the movie?

4. What fantasies, hopes, or desires about learning and teaching English do you think are represented in the film?

How do these relate to any fantasies, hopes or desires you may have about learning and teaching English?

6. Are there any popular movies which have influenced your identity as a teacher or your teaching practices and ideas? If yes, in your discussion, please mention the scene, character, and so on which influenced you.

First Movie

Second Movie

If needed, please continue on the back of this page.

7. What fantasies, hopes, or desires do you have about teaching English?

8. Have any popular films influenced these fantasies, hopes, or desires? If yes, please explain your answer.

III. Popular Movies and Teaching ESL

9. Do you think showing popular movies in ESL class is an effective teaching strategy? Please explain your answer.

10. Have you shown popular movies in your ESL classes before? _____

11. If yes, please give the title(s) and in what way(s) the movies(s) was helpful. If you can't remember the title(s), you can write the stars' names and anything else you remember about the movie

IV. Iron and Silk

12. Had you seen Iron and Silk (1991) before this research? _____

If yes, please answer the next questions.

If no, please go to section V.

13. When (year) did you see it? _____

14. Which character did you identify most strongly with?

15. Why did you identify with this character more than the others?

16. What scene or moment in the movie was felt most strongly by you?

17. What feeling did you have from this scene or moment in the movie?

V. The Jungle Book

18. Had you seen *The Jungle Book* (1994) with John Cleese before beginning this research? _____

If yes, please answer the next questions.

If no, you are finished the questionnaire. Thank you.