REFLECTIONS ON VELASQUEZ'S MIRROR:

ARTS EDUCATION AS ELICITING THE COUNTERGAZE

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the

Faculty of Education

© Angela Maria F. (Marela) Dichupa

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Fall 2006

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Abstract

In this thesis, I investigate the action of the gaze in dialogue. The gaze is an aspect of dialogue that acts as an undercurrent to surface communication. Through its action, the gaze arranges social spaces by ascribing value onto persons, objects, practices and ideas. For the most part it does so unobserved.

The social and interpersonal dynamics that the gaze creates are imbedded in art objects and in the processes of art making. Hence, one of the important tasks of the educator is to elicit the countergaze—a moment of insight when the student recognizes the gaze and its action.

Just as Velasquez held a mirror to the king and queen by painting *Las Meninas*, artists, curators and teachers may also invite moments of insight that have to do with the relational dynamics in a social environment. Perhaps, by holding up the metaphorical mirror, these educators can make the gaze of patrons, visitors and students visible to themselves. Artists, curators and teachers can make contemporary audiences aware of how they, as part of society, ascribe value to persons, things and ideas represented in art and other forms of cultural expression.

Art teachers, like artists, may frame situations, events, issues, ideas, and the like, so that persons who gaze are made aware of how they are creating and recreating patterns in social space. Hopefully, with this insight, the social spaces where art is displayed, talked about and created may become places of personal and social transformation.

Key Words: Gaze, Dialogue, Countergaze, Place, Social Space, Arts Education, Mirror, Diego Velasquez, Las Meninas.

This thesis is dedicated to my mother
Tessie Francisco Dichupa

The section entitled *Gaze in the space of respite*
was written in memory of my friend
Rock Destromp

Acknowledgements

The day I defended my doctoral thesis was marked by an impending storm. It threatened to close down the university. In the course of the afternoon, however, the weather that framed the day would be rendered insignificant. I appreciate the members of my examining committee for making this possible.

My heart felt gratitude goes to Dr. Anne Phelan from UBC, Dr. Michael Ling, Dr. Heesoon Bai, Dr. Jack Martin and my seniour supervisor, Dr. Sharon Bailin. Words cannot adequately express how honoured I feel at the attention you gave my work. As you engaged with it, as you asked me to clarify my ideas, I could not help but feel that the challenges of writing a doctoral thesis was worth those moments of connection I had with all of you in the examination room. You have made my rite of passage truly meaningful.

Yet significant as it was, November 29th is but a day. Credit goes to my incomparable committee members, Dr. Bailin and Dr. Martin, who made it possible for me to come to this point as a scholar and writer. You provided me with shared references by which to frame my work. At the same time, you allowed me to define myself as a thinker. Thank you for making the process of forming a thesis really *about the student*. This to me is evidence of your genuine generosity, and I consider myself fortunate to have learned from both of you.

I am especially grateful to my seniour supervisor, Dr. Bailin, for patiently supporting my efforts to explore and synthesize seemingly incommensurable ideas. Wasn't it such an adventure? You were there through it all, and I could not have had a better mentor in my journey into the academic life. Truly, the memories fill me with a sense of wonder, akin to the view at the end of a hike up a mountain (only better!).

My life as a student has also been enriched by my interactions with other members of the faculty. Thank you Dr. Ian Andrews for opening opportunities for me to include a more global dimension to my work. Thank you Dr. Celeste Snowber, Dr. Slava Senyshyn, Dr. Peter Grimmett, Dr. Jeff Sugarman, Dr. Kevin O'Neil, Dr. Roz Stooke, Dr. Marianne Jacquet and Dr. Geoff Madoc-Jones for the times you've engaged me in conversation and when you simply stopped to encourage me. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the influences of Dr. Heesoon Bai, Dr. June Beynon and Dr. Charles Bingham who I have had the privilege of seeing in action in the context of their teaching and research. I am grateful for your interest in my developing ideas on epistemology, social justice and dialogue.

And what is life in grad school without wonderful colleagues! I have shared a smile, a tear and hearty agreements and disagreements with Hisako Hayashi, Kumari Beck, Mark Weiler, Michael Caulkin, Charles Scott (thanks for the question at my defense), Sarah Hickinbottom, Keiichi Takaya, Bonnie Waterstone, Anne Scholefield, Danielle Vezina, Roumi Ilieva, Soheila

Gholamazad, Thomas Falkenberg, Claudia Ruitenberg, and, (before becoming faculty) Ann Chinnery and Kathryn Alexander. You are all fondly in my mental scrapbook.

To Aojun Li and Dianne Jamieson-Noel, my heartfelt gratitude for your calm presence around and during the moments when time was tight and my nerves were frayed. In both practical and less concrete ways, I felt your support. You both are special to me.

Then in moments when I needed even extra and extraordinary support, I have been blessed to have spiritual sisters. Here's a warm hug to Myn Garcia, Thoko Kuehn, my adopted aunt Ani Celis, Sr. Mary Grace, Kathleen Barnard, Kanthi Jayasundera, Grace Wandolo and Chantal Kasongo.

To Dr. Brent Willox, Dr. Ardis Krueger and Emily de Montigny—please know that I appreciate all you have done to help me remain healthy and fit in all aspects of my life while I wrote. Thank you also to Dr. Erika Horwitz for providing a safe place for me to struggle with moral and ethical questions. I similarly appreciate Neena Shahani for encouraging me to always seek the peaceable way.

There were also those who provided a literal physical space for me to write, think and recover—I will always remember the acts of kindness of Jun and Yukie of Kilala Sushi and Dolores and Bill of Nature's Garden. You are already prosperous.

Still on the subject of space, how can I not mention the extraordinary people who have been my neighbors for more than a decade. Jadzia Prenosil and Pierre Grenier, you just knew when I needed space and when I would appreciate expressions of support. Muchas Gracias.

To people who are family and like family, all my love. Truly, I appreciated your anxious wish that I finish well: I remember once again my sister Thoko, my *tita* Ani, my dearest cousin Johay Parco, and my adopted uncle Jack Huddleston who opened that bottle of champagne after the first draft was written (I wish he lived to see this work competed).

To my brothers Martin, Teddy and Dino, we shared much grief in the passing of our parent Greg Dichupa. We collectively miss him. I know that we can also collectively work out a more hopeful engagement with dialogue here in Canada. Let's do so for the next generation--for Cady, Javi and Matthew.

Finally, I would like to thank two very special people. First, there is Elahe Sohbat. You were present, really present for me. (Are you really in Montreal?) And Myn. Your coming to Vancouver at this time is truly a gift. We said it before, and now we know more than ever, that we are sisters. Words fail to express how much you both mean to me.

And finally, finally, I would like to honour my mother, Tessie Francisco Dichupa. Nans, you have my deepest admiration. You are a woman of courage and grace and I dedicate this work to you.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Diego Velasquez's mirror

Diego Velasquez's *Las Meninas* (see Plate 1 on page 13) has something valuable to bring into the classroom; it brings with it the possibility of the countergaze. The painting is a scene from the palace of King Philip IV of Spain. In this work, the countergaze is the moment of insight when the king becomes aware of the effect of his gaze on the relationships in his court. This thesis investigates how to invite this moment of insight into the social spaces where art is experienced and studied. Velasquez's masterpiece is its muse.

Velasquez uses the mirror to bring the space beyond the painting into the painting; he paints a reflection of the persons who are supposedly looking at the scene. He extends the space taken up by the two dimensions of the picture to include what is in the depth, the reflected image of the reigning monarch, King Philip IV of Spain and his wife Mariana, standing as spectators. Michel Foucault, writes about the reflection in the mirror:

> A reflection that shows us quite simply, and in shadow, what all those in the foreground are looking at. It restores, as if by magic, what is lacking in every gaze: in the painter's, the model, which his represented double is duplicating over there in the picture; in the king's, his portrait, which is being finished off on that slope of the canvas that he cannot perceive from where he stands; in that of the spectator, the real centre of the scene whose place he himself has taken as though by usurpation. But perhaps this

> generosity on the part of the mirror is feigned; perhaps it is hiding as much as and even more than it reveals. That space where the king and his wife hold sway belongs equally well to the artist and to the spectator: in the depths of the mirror there could also appear – there ought to appear the anonymous face of the passer-by and that of Velasquez. For the function of that reflection is to draw into the interior of the picture what is intimately foreign to it: the gaze which has organized it and the gaze for which it is displayed.[1]

The gaze for whom the tableau is displayed belongs to the reigning monarch (since it is his image that appears in the mirror). The painting is an uncommon reply to king's gaze, and as such, it offers the possibility of a countergaze. The countergaze is an instance when the presence of the gaze becomes apparent--whereas ordinarily, it goes unnoticed. The countergaze is the moment of insight that reveals, not only the gaze and the source of the gaze, but also the action of the gaze on the interpersonal and social dynamics between the characters in the picture and the audience.

The past century saw the resurgence of theories of the gaze that emphasize what is relational about the acts of seeing and looking. Theories of the gaze are not only about the purely visual. Instead, as Margaret Olin[2] puts it in her survey of the gaze in twentieth century art theory, the focus of theorists is on the consequences of looking rather than on the mechanics of vision. The more current conceptions of the gaze investigate it in the context of interpersonal and intercultural interactions—as an aspect of how we communicate with one another. It is a subtle dimension of dialogue.

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[1] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 1989), 16-17.
[2] Margaret Olin, "Gaze," in *Critical Terms for Art History,* eds. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, 209 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).

The gaze has an active role in art dialogue. Foucault alludes to this when he suggests that the scene in the painting is one arranged by the passer-by whose image could be reflected in the mirror.[3] With his image painted in the mirror, the king is, in this sense, the director of the interpersonal dynamics in the social space of the palace. The response of Velasquez is just as active as he brings the possibility of the countergaze into his relationship with Philip IV. Through his painting, the artist implicates the king in the scene and discloses the monarch's role in its creation.

This type of agency exhibited by Velasquez is worth tapping and bringing into the art classroom of the 21st century. It has the potential to bring about social change as it challenges the forces--i.e. the gaze--that shape social space. Not all classrooms are social spaces where the countergaze may make an appearance. It takes an uncommon response from the artist, educator and student to invite this to happen.

In my thesis, I present an approach to curriculum and pedagogy that may help to elicit such a response to the gaze. But what is and where is the gaze? How does it manifest itself in the classroom? In their seminal works written in the 1970s, Laura Mulvey[4] and John Berger[5] suggest a definition of the gaze that gives the act of looking an active quality. It is this active, productive and reproductive attribute of the gaze that I explore in my work. This notion of the gaze expresses and explains the unequal relationship

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[3] Foucault, *The Order of Things,* 17.
[4] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema" in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 14-26. The article was originally published in *Screen*16:3,1973.
[5] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Great Britain: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972). This book is based on a four part series aired on BBC in 1972.

between the gazer and receiver of the gaze. The relationship Mulvey and Berger describe is of the kind we traditionally expect between men and women, and the colonizer and colonized. It is also the kind of relationship alluded to by Foucault as he speaks of the gaze of the king as that which has the power to organize the social relationships depicted in *Las Meninas*.

It must be noted however, that Foucault also uses the word gaze to refer to the action of the artist, the ladies in waiting, the princess, and the other characters from within the frame of the painting, looking back at King Philip IV and his queen, Marianna who stand in front of it. In the quote from Foucault at the top of this introduction, the gaze coming from the persons in the canvas is synonymous with the word look. It does not have the same nuance of power attributed to the gaze of the king or that of the gazer in Mulvey's and Berger's accounts of the gaze. The gaze that possesses active and creative properties comes from the persons standing in front of Velasquez's masterpiece--the king and queen—and not from the characters in the canvas.

But where are the student and teacher positioned? If we put a frame around the classroom, where is the metaphorical mirror and who is reflected in it? The persons in Velasquez's canvas merely look, but they are just the representations of the persons who also gaze. As Foucault explains; "that space where the king and his wife hold sway belongs equally well to the artist and to the spectator: in the depths of the mirror there could also appear – there ought to appear the anonymous face of the passer-by and that of

Velasquez."[6] The characters represented in the painting all take their turn to gaze as they step into the space where their image would be reflected in the mirror in *Las Meninas.*

Likewise, we all are, at various times, in the position of being the gazer--the one who is able to create and recreate patterns of relationship in social space. As such, we are all in need of insight on how we affect the spaces and places we inhabit through the way we relate to each other.

Arts education as eliciting the countergaze

In my work, I ponder the implications of the unequal exchanges between those in a position to gaze and the receiver of the gaze as described by Mulvey, Berger and Foucault. In particular, I am interested in how the gaze is involved in the art dialogue that occurs in schools, museums, art galleries, media, and other public spaces. I investigate how position in society--based on race, gender and class--plays a part in the way persons engage with one another as persons who gaze and persons who receive the gaze. Are we really so inescapably locked into a way of relating that is characterized by domination and/or inequity? How can learning art, learning about art, learning about how we regard each other in and through the visual in culture, develop persons who relate ethically in the world? As it evokes the countergaze, *Las Meninas* inspires a curriculum and pedagogy that address these concerns.

This is, however, just a starting point. The countergaze, for all its potential as a moment of insight, is something that the teacher cannot predict

[6] Foucault, *The Order of Things,* 17.

or control. The artist and educator cannot know for sure when the countergaze will occur. And when it does, hope lies in the mere potential that the insight will interrupt and redirect the action of the gaze. This transformative promise is, however, enough to make the countergaze worth recruiting into our schools.

In this thesis, I investigate the action of the gaze, and suggest an approach to art education focused on creating the possibility of the countergaze. Lesson plans based on this approach to arts education may not appear to differ significantly from models that have the art object as the primary focus of study or from those that emphasize the process of art making as an expressive avenue. There would still be visits to museums, galleries and public monuments. Students and teachers would still study art history, draw, sculpt, paint, make installations and study contemporary trends and concepts in the arts.

This is because art is dialogue that has many different overlapping levels of communication. The gaze is an aspect of dialogue that acts as an undercurrent to surface communication. Through its action, the gaze arranges social space by ascribing value onto persons, objects, practices and ideas. And for the most part it does so unobserved. The social and interpersonal dynamics that the gaze creates are imbedded in art objects and in the processes of art making. Hence, to elicit a countergaze, the study of these objects and processes must bring to light that which is inconspicuous--the gaze and its action as it puts persons, things, ideas and practices in their place in social space. This is a task for the educator.

Just as Velasquez held a mirror to the king and queen by painting *Las Meninas*, artists, curators and teachers may also invite moments of insight that have to do with the relational dynamics in their social environment. Perhaps, by holding up the metaphorical mirror, these educators can make the gaze of patrons, visitors and students visible to themselves. Artists, curators and teachers can make contemporary audiences aware of how they put value onto art objects and practices in art making.

Teachers may frame situations, events, issues and ideas so that persons who gaze are made aware of how they are creating and recreating patterns in social space. Hopefully, with this insight, the social spaces where art is displayed, talked about and created may become places of personal and social transformation.

Layout of the thesis

The chapter that follows this introduction is entitled GAZE. In this portion of my work, I briefly define the gaze and its role in creating a hierarchical social space. The social condition that the gaze creates is central to the social justice issues addressed by the countergaze. These are matters that have a bearing on the dialogue that takes place where art is talked about, created and experienced.

My discussion proceeds with a study of various conceptions of DIALOGUE. This is the theme of chapter three. Some theorists and philosophers see our conversations with each other as teleological. For these writers, dialogue is an engagement that is directed towards a predetermined conclusion. On the other hand, there are educators who value open-ended

exchange between persons as pedagogy, through a non-teleological conception of dialogue. The distinction between teleological and nonteleological conceptions of dialogue is of interest to me as I investigate how the gaze acts in social space. The action of the gaze directs objects to destinations in social space. And in so doing, the gaze creates the social patterns that put persons "in their place" in society.

The fourth chapter, PLACE, explores the idea that we relate to each other from our assigned places in a social space. By somehow knowing how we are all positioned socially, we are able to anticipate a range of responses from each other. This pattern of responses consists of the taken for granted reactions that we come to expect as we collectively do our part to maintain the trajectory of the gaze. It may seem that the action of the gaze direct objects and persons to predestined places. Yet response and social patterns are not absolute, and in fact, the action of the gaze may be redirected. If this were not the case, then there would be little point for the countergaze. On the contrary, this moment of insight has its place in the arts curriculum. In light of this, chapter three is also an interrogation of the places from which we may encounter the countergaze. But how do we interrupt the ongoing dialogue that puts us in our places? I end this section with a suggestion that we enter a *space of respite*. To explain how we may enter this space, I draw on the philosophy of Martin Buber.[7]

The title of chapter five is GAZE and COUNTERGAZE. I continue to trace the action of the gaze in dialogue in order to gain insight into its

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[7] See Martin Buber. *I and Thou*, 2nd ed., trans, by Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).

workings. Aside from Mulvey's and Berger's seminal works on the topic, I find that Foucault's notion of the panoptic gaze[8] —a collective regulating gaze—is of particular relevance to an investigation of our engagement with each other. Jacques Lacan's work on the mirror stage[9] also has bearing on the discussion.

In the next chapter called A SPACE, I continue the discussion I started regarding the *space of respite.* I suggest that the action of the gaze and the ongoing hermeneutic dialogue may be suspended when we enter this space of refuge. Art likewise freezes the action of the gaze as it frames social space for our perusal.

I explore Velasquez's *LAS MENINAS* at greater length in chapter seven. I discuss how the artist engaged the king of Spain in dialogue, as he addressed Philip IV as the bearer of the gaze in a monarchy. From the example of Velasquez, I draw inspiration for how we may likewise beckon the countergaze in our educational institutions.

In the next chapter, I reflect on my literal journey as an immigrant to Canada. Being an immigrant has given me an exceptional opportunity to gain a different understanding of my place in the social milieu of Manila. Somehow these insights also inform my teaching practice in Vancouver. In my classes today, I find ways to set the stage for the countergaze. I aim, for instance, to make students aware of how the gaze inscribes value on the different aspects of art: the art work, the art making processes, the artist and the way art itself

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[8] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd ed., trans Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995)
[9] Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage" in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977),1-7.

is experienced. For me, an aim of art education is bring to light the effects of the gaze on these objects and processes.

My discussion in chapter eight, entitled AN EDUCATION, brings me back to my experiences as an art teacher in the Philippines. It concludes the story I relate below--my personal introduction to the countergaze (although I did not have a name for it then).

In Manila, a countergaze

One of my teachers has been so pivotal in promoting what critical pedagogist Paolo Freire calls my *conscientization*,[10] that I think it is fitting that I relate how she has influenced me. As far as I can remember, it is Cecilia B. Garrucho who brought me face to face with social justice issues in the Philippines.

We called her CB in our drama class. Like myself, the other participants in the youth summer workshop were children of professional people. We were leading the rather ordinary lives of students on a break from school when CB and the other teachers of the Philippine Educational Theatre Association shook us out of our complacency. They led us outside our comfortable first world bubble. In Manila, there are areas of well watered gated communities, and sometimes just beside these, are block after block of slum areas. These social spaces are separated, figuratively and literally, by a wall. By crossing the divide, we were able to get a glimpse of what life is like for people who live in the slum areas of Metropolitan Manila.

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[10]Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2002), 67.

That summer, as we entered some of the homes in the slums of Manila, we came to a rather peculiar realization—we found out that for many people in the city, water is really precious. And while many of us in the drama class had our own bedrooms or shared one with only a sibling or two, in the slums, a family of six considered such an amount of floor space to be their entire home. By exposing us to a very different quality of existence, our teachers helped us realize that our life of relative comfort is framed by the third world realities of the rest of our society. CB and our other teachers pointed out to us that only a mere fraction of the population in the Philippines lived in the houses with the lawns. The poor lived well below the standards of decent living, with no running water or electricity and with limited living space.

My classmates in the drama workshop and I were given the opportunity to be in the company of persons who lived outside the walls of our gated communities. We were each introduced to a family who let us into their lives for a day. As we visited for that short time, we realized that exploitation really did exist. We learned, for instance, that when work is farmed out by businesses to the homes in the slums, very often the workers are paid mere token amounts.

It was a profoundly disturbing experience for my classmates and me to come face to face with these realities. And from this, we wrote and performed a play about our society. As playwrights we addressed an audience that included ourselves. This made our own words an echo of what we needed to hear. And as we performed as characters of the play we wrote, our actions on stage were reflective acts. The process of creating the play—from the background research to the writing and the performance--elicited our moments of insight.

The summer soon ended. As school started, and as the middle-class concerns of our lives started taking over our attention, the picture and smells of poverty faded. For a time, the initial sense of discomfort we felt for the situation of the slum dwellers, waned. But the lessons were never lost. The echo continues to reverberate and the countergaze emerges and re-emerges as I am made aware of the undercurrents of dialogue in the various social spaces I inhabit.

I return to this story at the end of this thesis, not because it concludes, but because it continues to encounter the gaze with possibilities of the countergaze. These instances come up as I teach at international schools in Manila, move to Canada as an immigrant, travel as an exchange student to cities in the United States and to Mexico City, and as I create and experience art in different places in the world. I trace my *conscientization* to that workshop one summer in Manila.

Las Meninas continues to counter the gaze in a different time and place.

In my space today, a countergaze

Throughout this thesis, I use photographs, graphics and poetry to re-present my ideas on dialogue, place, gaze and countergaze. This format is inspired by John Berger's book, *Ways of Seeing*,[11] where the author interspersed chapters that use words with purely pictorial essays.

The concluding chapter of my work is a graphic essay. It represents A COUNTERGAZE.

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[11] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Great Britain: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972).

Plate 1: Tessie Dichupa, *A Re-presention: Las Meninas by Diego Velasquez,* 2006,Watercolour sketch. This work is based on Velasquez's original oil on canvas painted in 1656, now exhibited at the Museo del Prado in Madrid. Used with the permission of the artist

Chapter Two

GAZE

The gaze in and around art

The gaze alludes to the presence of persons behind the act of looking. It is always present in social space. It arranges relational dynamics as it puts us in our place and as we likewise put others in their places. The gaze exerts its influence and leaves traces in our shared social life. It is these traces that allow us to somehow know where we stand in relation to each other.

To understand how the gaze acts in social space, I use as my starting point, theories in art that emerged in the mid twentieth century. In their commentaries on theories of the gaze, Margaret Olin[1] and James Elkins[2] note that theories that developed during that era tend to infuse the gaze with negative qualities. Olin, for example, cites Jean-Paul Sartre's "almost paranoid treatment of '*le regard*'"[3] found in his work *Being and Nothingness.* She notes how Sartre "portrayed the state of being watched as a threat to the self."[4] In their introductory text on Visual Culture Studies, Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright's definition of the gaze also alludes to a less than amicable

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1 See Margaret Olin, "Gaze," in *Critical Terms for Art History.*
2 James Elkins, "The End of the Theory of the Gaze," James Elkins, http://jameselkins.com/Text/visualculturegaze.pdf.
3 Olin, "Gaze," 214.
4 Ibid.

exchange that takes place between parties involved. They point out that "theories of the gaze have explored the complex power relations that are part of the acts of looking and being looked at."[5] I say more about this in chapter five, where I draw on the works of Laura Mulvey, John Berger and Michel Foucault to elaborate on this antagonistic view of the gaze.

Instead of focusing primarily on what is purely visual about art, strands of these theories direct our attention to the social and political nature of the act of looking. Olin gives a brief explanation of how these orientations to the visual arts differ:

> In the discourse of opticality, it was possible to talk about vision without saying anything about the actual people who do the looking or the conditions under which they do it.[6]

The term gaze, on the other hand, assumes the presence of persons behind the act of looking. As such, Olin points out that theories of the gaze may be considered part of the more general heading of studies in spectatorship--studies that pay attention to the viewing positions of persons doing the looking.[7]

Investigations on positionality as these relate to the gaze are of particular significance in film and as well as literary studies. In art theory, the gaze has also become an important term because it is, as Olin puts it, "useful for uniting formal and social theory."[8] This means that the gaze could be descriptive of qualities of an art piece and at the same time, it is also relevant in explaining how this piece relates to a social network.

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[5] Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 355.
[6] See Margaret Olin, "Gaze," 208.
[7] Ibid., 208-209.
[8] Ibid., 209.

Thus, traces of the gaze may be found within and outside the frame of an artwork. It is, for example, present in the exchange of looks between characters within a painting, movie, photograph and other works of art. As well, since the term suggests the presence of a spectator, viewer or audience, the gaze is some thing and some action that is also present around the work.

(En)countering the gaze

Reflected or represented in the space within the frame of a picture is the relational dynamics that surround the object of art. Sometimes, the artist may be conscious of representing the relational dynamics that surround us and surround art. And sometimes, aside from portraying the social space around its margins, an artist may also be deliberate in making her audience aware of the part they play in creating the conditions in this space; the artist tries to elicit the moment of insight that exposes the gaze and its action.

In an attempt to bring about this moment of insight, the artist must somehow draw the spectator into the art piece. The painter, the mixed media artist and the moviemaker may play with the boundary between social life and its representation. The painter, for example, may create the illusion that eyes in a portrait are looking back at the viewer. In the case of the filmmaker, the point of view of a movie's narrative may be manipulated by playing with the angle and position of cameras. A film's camera work may make the viewer feel as if he is watching a story from a first person point of view or as an observer.

In *Las Meninas*, Velasquez blurs the boundaries between the artwork and the social space outside the frame by including a mirror in his

composition. This draws the viewer into the painted tableau. With devices such as the mirror and different camera angles, artists effect a particular bond with their viewers. Artists use these devices to put the spectator in a certain position in relation to the work. Perhaps the artist may position the one who gazes so that he recognize himself mirrored in the artwork that represents his society.

So what is the gaze?

The gaze is associated with the sense of vision with the inherent ability of the eye to see. The gaze is associated with the sense of vision, and yet the gaze involves more than sight. From the moment persons *can* see, they *will* likely see an object in a particular way.

The gaze is associated with the sense of sight, but it is not located in the physical eye. We could say that one does not even need to see the eyes to *feel* the presence of the gaze. In fact, as Margaret Olin citing Sartre points out, "if you see the eyes...you cannot see the gaze."[9] The viewer does not even need to *see* the work to exert her or his gaze on it. This is because a viewer's mere presence gives the art object significance.

The gaze is less obvious than the glances that characters in a tableau direct towards each other. Neither is the gaze always as explicit as someone observing and viewing objects. The gaze is associated with the acts of glancing, observing and viewing. But it is not something we are conscious of.

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[9] See Jean-Paul Satre, *Being and Nothingness*, 5th Edition, (New York: The Citadel Press, 1968): Cited in Margaret Olin, "Gaze," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, 218.

It is not intentional. The gaze exists by the very fact that the bearer of the gaze *can* see, and engage with persons and objects in their presence.

And we are all objects to each other. As others mean to us, we *mean* to them. Our merely being present with and to others means that we gaze and receive the gaze. This exchange goes both ways. Hence, the gaze is primarily a relational term.

The gaze is always present in social space. The action of the gaze in social spaces has its influence on objects, processes and practices, as well as on the persons that make, experience and talk about art. It is, however, hidden. The gaze exerts its influence and then it retreats to the background. Yet after it has done its work, it leaves traces in our shared social life. It imbeds itself and leaves traces in tangible cultural artifacts, the methods that create works of art, and in the conversations surrounding these products and processes. The gaze inscribes value as it acts with regard, attention, contempt, longing or indifference towards objects and practices.

In this thesis, I investigate the action of the gaze. I examine how this subtle force, arranges and maintains the patterns of our social life--how it puts us in our place through and in dialogue. I consider how it creates a hierarchical social space and allow inequality to persist in society. Then I search for ways to gain insight on the gaze and its action. This moment of insight—the countergaze--may lead us to interrupt an ongoing dialogue where the exchange of gaze and gaze perpetuates a pattern of relating that continues to be oppressive. The exchange of gaze and gaze is dialogue and part of

dialogue that goes on in various social spaces—in our streets, in our schools, in places where art is displayed, and where we encounter each other.

In the next chapter, I investigate dialogue.

Chapter Three

DIALOGUE

An afternoon at the *museo*

When I want to avoid a crowd in a gallery, I find that one of the best times to see an exhibit is on a weekday, in the fall, when school has started and the tourist season has ended. This is not the case in the city of Mexico where tens of millions of citizens reside and where visits to the museum seem to be an integral part of education. School children fill the corridors of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* on a sunny Thursday morning in October. There are several groups on a field trip this day, taking turns to view the various murals and sculpture. A distinct voice wafts above the chatting school children. It is the animated presentation of a teacher as his charges scan the mural of Jose Clemente Orozco.

In my month in Mexico City, I have come to expect variations of this scene in many public buildings that house paintings, murals and different works of art. On their own on the weekends, children come with a parent to the different museums around the city. I watch a young person stand in front of one painting after another, armed with pen and paper. He regards the work of a contemporary artist at the *Museo de Arte Moderno.* For a few moments he gazes, and then he moves on slowly to the next painting. At

another time, I see a young girl ask a museum staff member to put a rubber stamp imprint on what she had written. This certifies the date when and place where the student makes reflections and observations regarding an artwork. This is a facet of Mexican education.

On the other hand, I usually visit museums and galleries without having to bring pen and paper with me. For no *useful* reason other than interest in an artist's work, I may find myself in a garden of Rodin's sculptures or in a room full of Andy Warhol's serigraphs. As I stroll through the exhibit space, I may recall what I know about the artist's body of work and find links between images and concepts. Once again, I do this for no foreseeable useful reason; I find the activity worth engaging in *for its own sake* (so to speak). I repeat this ritual in different cities when I travel and at various times in Vancouver where I have made myself at home. This is a practice of viewing art that I have somehow acquired through the years. It is something I usually take for granted.

In October 2003, I was in Mexico's capital on a study grant. I was not just a tourist in the city, nor a resident going through the ritual of seeing the latest exhibit at Vancouver's gallery. In Mexico, I find myself bringing pen and paper to the museums to record my reflections and observations, just as the students jot theirs down. Even then, the Mexican school children and I would certainly not engage with the art in Mexico in the same way. To start, these children have family and teachers who may have experienced the historically and geographically situated themes of the murals. In their public museums and buildings, the Mexican students and their teachers are engaged

in a conversation where it is possible for them to look at the work of the muralists and come face to face with an aspect and version of their heritage. The students' interaction with past and contemporary art and artists of their nation cannot be the same as mine.

Yet in entering that space, I too am engaged in the same art dialogue that encompasses the students and their teachers. But ours are different strands of conversation in the dialogue with art and about art in the space of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*—our practices around the viewing of art and talking about the same set of art works intersect but have different ends. And even if a population of schoolteachers and parents experienced the same historical Mexico in the early, mid or late 20th century, they too would engage in a variety of discourses in the dialogue about and around the art of their country.

Plate 2: *In Dialogue with the Artist: School Children and José Clemente Orozco's "Catharsis,"* 2003, Photograph of the fresco Orozco painted in 1934. Photo taken with the kind permission of the Palacio de Bellas Artes.

Engaging in dialogue, entering dialogue...but what dialogue?

When one enters public spaces where art is displayed, talked about and experienced, one encounters many levels of communication. Aside from their literal and figurative meanings, art and other visual artifacts also say something about the social and interpersonal relationships in our society. These more subtle messages are worth exploring in our study of art. Art education as foray into this dimension of art dialogue—where the value of persons, objects and processes are inscribed and communicated--is a medium for addressing social justice issues, particularly those that arise in an ethnoculturally diverse society such as Canada. In this thesis, I am mainly concerned with the action of the gaze in dialogue. In this chapter, I first focus my investigation on the different notions of dialogue.

What is dialogue? Dialogue is an ambiguous term, used in a range of different and overlapping ways. There are, for example, the philosophical conceptions of the word, its operational or specialized definitions, and its ordinary uses (for example, as a synonym for conversation, chat or talk about something). In *Dialogue in Teaching: Theory and Practice*,[1] Nicholas Burbules follows Ludwig Wittgenstein's suggestion that rather than search for a precise definition of a term we should instead consider the various ways a word is used. Burbules points out that:

> Wittgenstein asks us to abandon the traditional philosophical assumption that whatever we know we must know precisely and that imprecision in language is a mark of ignorance. Instead he suggests that a degree of uncertainty and indefiniteness is inevitable, and often desirable, since the purpose of language is

[1] Nicholas Burbules, *Dialogue in Teaching: Theory and Practice* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993).

> to suit our purposes, not vice versa. Effective communication does not always require strict reference to discrete objects in the world (the paradigm of positivistic philosophy)—indeed, for many things we need to communicate about, such as emotional states, strict accuracy is neither possible nor desirable.[2]

I likewise adopt this approach: instead of searching for a precise definition of a word, I look for what Wittgenstein calls "family resemblances"[3] in how a term is used. One of the constant themes in the various definitions of dialogue is the notion that it involves the interaction of persons with other persons, ideas and things. I use this common characteristic as a starting point for explaining dialogue as a form of engagement. Later, I examine a philosophical conception of dialogue as something one enters.

In both these general notions of dialogue, it is the action of the gaze which arranges relational dynamics. It puts us in our place. In this chapter, I explore how relational dynamics position us socially by explaining the social and response patterns that occur in social space. In this space, we engage with each other in dialogue from different social positions.

Social pattern is descriptive of the structures that put persons *in their place* in society. This pattern is defined by the existence of human beings in social spaces that tend to be hierarchical. The gaze is implicated in this hierarchy.

Response pattern is composed of the expected reactions of persons in social space. It is the ways of responding that maintain the action of the gaze and replicate social pattern. A moment of insight is needed to interrupt the

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[2] Burbules, *Dialogue in Teaching*, 55.

[3] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1958): cited in Burbules, *Dialogue in Teaching*, 54-55.

action of the gaze; the countergaze is needed to change the social and response patterns that we have come to take for granted. By creating conditions that make instances of the countergaze a possibility, the art teacher can invite students to respond differently, to learn what it takes to be exceptional as artists and as ethical persons who are in and who are engaged in dialogue.

Engaging in dialogue

In its everyday as well as field specific uses, dialogue may refer to the exchange of ideas, information and other types of messages that take place in different situations. For instance, in information technology, dialogue may be defined as "a structured series of interchanges between a user and a computer."[4] Actors may refer to dialogue as "the scripted words exchanged by performers."[5] As a literary term it could mean "the lines spoken by a character or characters in a play, essay, story, or novel, especially a conversation between two characters, or a literary work that takes the form of such a characterization."[6] The field of practice called Conflict Resolution calls dialogue the "process for sharing and learning about another group's

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[4] Human Systems Integration Analysis Center, "Definitions," HASAIC, http://www.hsaic.org/products/definitions.html.
[5] Coles Media Group, "Glossary of Industry Terms," CastAssist, http://www.castassist.com/talent/glossary.php.
[6] Kip Wheeler, "Literary Terms and Definitions," Carson-Newman College, http://web.cn.edu/kwheller/lit_terms.html.

beliefs, feelings, interests, and/or needs in a non-adversarial, open way, usually with the help of a third party facilitator."[7]

This last operational definition of dialogue alludes to more than a simple exchange of ideas and information. It also refers to a quality of interaction. In conflict resolution, characteristics such as being open and non-adversarial, even when one is not in agreement with another person, are valued. The way participants come to a resolution is considered just as important as having a satisfactory conclusion to a discussion. In this case, dialogue as an exemplary manner of conversation is considered an achievement in itself. This is an idea akin to what Nicholas Burbules refers to as a *process* ideal,[8] with which he associates the role of "communicative virtues."

To develop his thesis, Burbules follows Ludwig Wittgenstein and Hans-Georg Gadamer[9] in their use of games and play as metaphors for dialogue. He draws primarily on Wittgenstein's notion of "language games,"[10] however, to explain the role rules have in the development of communicative virtues "such as patience, a willingness to listen carefully, and a tolerance for alternative points of view,"[11] qualities that support dialogue as a process ideal. This is an interesting approach since, as he notes, "rules talk" and "virtues talk" express different orientations to dialogue. As Burbules puts it:

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[7] Conflict Research Consortium, "International Online Training on Intractable Conflict," University of Colorado, http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/glossary.htm.
[8] Burbules, *Dialogue in Teaching,* 17.
[9] Ibid., 50-65.
[10] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*: cited in Burbules, *Dialogue in Teaching*, 54-57.
[11] Burbules, *Dialogue in Teaching,* 69.

> Virtues, such as patience, a willingness to listen carefully, and a tolerance for alternative points of view, are not, I argue(d), simply the following of internalized "rules" or norms. Rather, they are fundamental characteristics of our way of being in relation to others; we act in these ways because this is the sort of person we have become and choose to be. Virtues, generally are part of who we are, and so it is inaccurate to say we "exercise" them or "apply" them; we express them in our actions and personality at a much deeper and frequently subconscious level.[12]

Burbules suggests that Wittgenstein's conception of rules is particularly effective in addressing the question: If one has virtues why is there the need for rules? Rules "are pragmatic 'guideposts' or 'ideals' that still need to be interpreted and applied in context."[13] And yet rules in language games are reflexive in that "they do not stand outside the communicative process that they strive to regulate."[14] Hence, he argues that there is nothing fixed or defined about the process of interpretation and application of rules. The ability to interpret and work with inexact guidelines can only be acquired over time--through experience and participation in dialogue.

From a developmental standpoint, according to Burbules, rules are guideposts for cultivating the communicative virtues. These qualities enable a young person to enter dialogue and be in dialogue. The virtues become part of the young person just as a skill set becomes part of an athlete's make-up and allows her to be valued as a *certain* kind of player. I extend Burbules' discussion by calling attention to how the cultivation of communicative virtues and the acquisition of skills in playing sports are factors in the

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[12] Burbules, *Dialogue in Teaching,* 69.
[13] Ibid., 70.
[14] Ibid., 71.

creation of hierarchy in social space. Engaging in an exchange or words or sports are just different ways persons interact with each other in dialogue.

There are many parallels between the modes of dialogue that involve language and those that have to do with our interactions in sports activities. In a sports game, there is a range of moves available to players. In due time, with practice and experience, skill and judgment in employing these moves are acquired. A soccer player, for example, practices her ball handling skills to the point that the moves become second nature to her. Through constant training she builds up a range of abilities that gives her the versatility to decide the best plays and moves for various situations. Likewise, communicative virtues become "deeply ingrained dispositions and aspects of character,"[15] developed in the young person when she is drawn into opportunities to engage in dialogue. With exposure and practice on the fine points of conversation, she in due time becomes adept at interpreting and applying social conventions effectively. I would like to emphasize at this point that it is these conventions that guide dialogue, not the virtues. As well, it is the rules that make the game—not the skills.

Rules define the nature of a game, and as such, these guideposts determine which kinds of abilities (and virtues) are worth acquiring. When a young person practices playing with the soccer ball in front of her garage, her ball handling skills become part of her. Then when she trains with her team and engages in a game of soccer, she follows and uses rules according to the ability she has cultivated through her training. Although she may have

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[15] Burbules, *Dialogue in Teaching*, 69.

initially practiced because it is fun to do so for its own sake, developing the ability to move the ball with dexterity has extrinsic value; it helps her contribute to the efforts of her team to win. There is certainly enjoyment in merely playing *for its own sake*. But as we can see in this illustration, it is rules that decide the moves that lead to victory (especially in organized sports such as soccer, hockey, basketball, football and the like). It is rules that determine which skills and abilities are valuable and worth acquiring.

The objective of many games is simply to keep the game going. Such is the case when a couple of friends throw a Frisbee at each other, catch it, throw it back, catch it, throw it back, and so on and so forth. In reference to dialogue in general, Burbules associates this with a commitment to a dialogical relationship. As he puts it: "Just as often, we play for no other purpose than to keep a game moving forward, we often carry on with dialogue in order for further dialogue to occur."[16] An informal game of Frisbee concludes when players mutually decide when it is time to move on to other activities—but it can be taken up again at some future time if a relationship between the players has already been established.

In more casual games, players can make rules as they go along. Regardless of why one plays though, skill is involved in successfully maintaining the game. Developing eye hand coordination is an achievement that helps keep the Frisbee from touching the ground and keeps the game from being an exercise in frustration. So while rules define the game, a degree of skill is needed for a sustained level of play. Rules determine the nature of

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[16] Burbules, *Dialogue in Teaching*, 64.

the game. And when rules change—as in the case when players add parameters to their activity--an informal to and fro may evolve into something more structured. There is something fundamental that is altered. This is what happens when something unstructured becomes an organized sport where the objectives are more definite—such as scoring goals and having the highest score. Moves one may enjoy for their own sake become significant for other reasons.

A good example of this is the sport of snowboarding. It has evolved from a casual activity to something more organized. The sport started as a fringe activity but is now an Olympic event. (I am writing this thesis as the 2006 Olympics is going on, and the announcer called snowboarders "the bohemians" of the games.) Snowboarding--an offshoot of skateboarding--has become a more organized sport. For many of its athletes, inventing moves on the half pipe or the sensation of a ride down a mountain slope are enough motivation to engage in the sport—just like in the earlier days when no medals were at stake. The played-for-its-own-sake aspect of a game has added value in the setting of a tournament. The exhilaration when one gets "big air" is, for example, a reward in itself for a snowboarder. And in the context of the Olympics, another value is attached to this inherent thrill—the possibility of a medal, recognition that one is among the best in the sport, and even monetary rewards in the form of endorsement opportunities when one wins gold. All our activities occur in a social world that infuses sports, games and other dialogues with extrinsic worth.

According to Burbules, the ability to engage in dialogue is an achievement in itself. Educators envision a certain quality of dialogue between teachers and students, and among students themselves as something that is worth attaining on its own. Developing valued attributes in the way we relate to each other is considered as much an aim of education as the learning of math, science, history, art and the like.

I suggest, however, that a closer look reveals that it is difficult to separate the worth of being able to engage either in sports or in any other dialogue from goals extrinsic to these activities. The process ideal that values certain communicative virtues is likewise formed in dialogue. Just as participants may mutually decide that the nature of a game can change from one that is spontaneous and informal to one that is more structured, so can the ground rules of language games change to fundamentally alter the nature of an interaction. Aims of education have this effect on the dialogue in education; they have a bearing on the way students and teachers engage with one another.

Engaging in dialogue in education

Educational theorist R.S. Peters points out that although aims of education are not in themselves endpoints, they serve to give direction to curriculum and pedagogy.[17] What do we want for our students? How do we envision our social environment and how does education support this vision of

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[17] R. S. Peters, "Aims of Education—A Conceptual Inquiry," in *The Philosophy of Education*, ed. R.S. Peters (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 11-29.

our social lives? These are some of the questions that steer teachers and educational institutions.

Aims of education direct dialogue. And educational theorists and philosophers who use dialogical methods do so for a variety of reasons. The Socratic method, for example, is associated with the masterful use of questions in teaching situations. Yet as Paul Woodruff points out, educators may have different ideas on the ends of the question-answer method of the ancient teacher. Woodruff explains that the aim of most teachers who use "open-question teaching" differ from the educational vision of Plato, the author of the dialogues that have Socrates as the main character.[18]

While the goal of many contemporary teachers is to encourage open-ended discussion, Plato's dialogues aim at the uncovering of Truths. The philosopher's metaphysics asserts that the changing world is made up of mere appearances. Therefore for Plato, the search for the *Truth* means that one must "turn the entire soul...away from this changing world, until the eye could bear to contemplate reality."[19] Towards this end, he uses the questioning method of Socrates to engage his companion in critical argumentation. In contrast to this, Woodruff notes that many contemporary teachers, "far from refuting their students, or teaching them to set a high value on being refuted...teach them to be accepting of each other's ideas."[20]

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[18] Paul Woodruff, "Socratic Education" in *Philosophers on Education: New Historical Perspectives*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, 21 (New York: Routledge, 1998).
[19] Plato, *The Republic*, trans Francis MacDonald Cornford (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), 232.
[20] Woodruff, "Socratic Education," 21.

These two kinds of teachers value different types of educational interactions. Their values may even be in such conflict with each other, that the teachers who advocate open-ended discussions may read about how the Socrates in Plato's writings[21] refutes a student and be "shocked to the point of anger at his method." [22] Woodruff further suggests that many of today's teachers would find this manner of questioning "manipulative and over-directive."[23] I argue, however, that open-ended discussions have as much potential to be directive as those that lead students to set conclusions.

Conversations that do not require a predetermined conclusion are also referred to as nonteleological. This view of dialogue is defended by Burbules as a process ideal, one that supports the aims of educators concerned with social justice issues. As an example, he cites the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, who places the dialogical relationship at the centre of the educational process.[24]

Participants in a nonteleological conversation, "commit themselves to an intersubjective relation of exploratory and negotiated understanding

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[21] Martha Nussbaum points out that: "Historically, it is very important to distinguish Socrates' own practice of argument from the philosophical views of Plato, who was certainly an elitist about reason, and openly hostile to democracy. It is not easy to draw this distinction, but it can be done: in some works, Plato represents Socrates as he was, and in others he advances his own ideas, using Socrates as a character... The historical Socrates is committed to awakening each and every person to self-scrutiny. He relies on no sources of knowledge external to the beliefs of the citizens he encounters, and he regards democracy as the best of the available forms of government, through not above criticism." See Nussbaum, "Socratic Self-Examination," In *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 25-26.
[22] Woodruff, "Socratic Education," 21.
[23] Ibid., 21.
[24] Burbules, *Dialogue in Teaching*, 5-6.

without necessarily having a definite outcome in mind."[25] This is seen as a dialogue that creates a more mutual and reciprocal interaction between participants, since in principle there is no dominant party who controls the course of the engagement. Burbules argues that the communicative virtues support this type of dialogue.

The teleological view on the other hand "assumes that dialogue can, and should have a definite, predetermined point."[26] Burbules cites Plato's dialectic--with its aim of uncovering unchanging ideals regarding Beauty, Goodness and Truth--as an example of this directive form of dialogue. Fairly or unfairly, this idea has the connotation of a conservative stance and is associated with the elite classes in society. Claims to an unchanging absolute standard are regarded with suspicion on the chance that some of these standards are merely the dictates of the powerful class.

We can differentiate between the teleological and nonteleological views of dialogue in two interrelated ways: in terms of the processes they use in acquiring knowledge, and by contrasting their assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge itself. In nonteleological dialogue, knowledge is co-constructed by participants and meaning is considered to be fluid. The opposite is attributed to the teleological view—knowledge is uncovered because its meaning is unchanging; it is fixed. The student-teacher relationship for the former may be characterized as a partnership, and for the latter, as one of guidance given by the teacher to the student as the latter uncovers knowledge.

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[25] Burbules, *Dialogue in Teaching*, 17.
[26] Ibid., 5.

To illustrate how these views of dialogue differ from each other, Burbules highlights the distinction that Freire makes regarding the "banking view" of education which considers knowledge as something static which can be "deposited" into students, and a view that seeks a more collaborative approach to teaching and learning.[27] In the latter, dialogue is considered to be the "sealing together of the teacher and students in the joint knowing and re-knowing of the object of study."[28]

Nonteleological dialogue is often referred to by Burbules and is similarly describe by other writers[29] who also point to this open-ended nature of dialogue as, "a phenomenon of discourse (*parole*), not of formal language (*langue*); it is a human practice, responsive to context and changing purposes."[30] Charles Bingham explains the distinction between discourse and the teleological conception of dialogue by showing how these involve different notions and uses of language.[31] He challenges the normative expectation in our conversations--that when we speak to each other, we generally take for granted that our words are intended to represent experiences, feelings, ideas and objects accurately. According to Bingham, this expectation is an illusion.

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[27] Burbules, *Dialogue in Teaching*, 5-6. See also Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.*

[28] Ira Shor and Paulo Freire. "What is the 'Dialogical Method' of Teaching?" *Journal of Education*, 169 (1987),14: quoted in Nicholas Burbules, *Dialogue in Teaching*, 5.

[29] Nicholas Burbules mentions Paulo Freire and Tulio Maranhão as examples of writers whose views of dialogue are nonteleological. See Tulio Maranhão, ed., *Interpretation of Dialogue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). Michel Foucault makes the the same distinction that Burbules makes between *parole* and *langue.* See Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge & the Discourse on Language*, trans A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972).

[30] Burbules, *Dialogue in Teaching*, 7.

[31] Charles Bingham, "A Dangerous Benefit: Dialogue, Discourse and Michel Foucault's Critique of Representation," *Interchange*, 33 no. 4 (2002): 351-369.

This is a view that differs in a fundamental way from that of Plato's theory of forms. In contrast to the normative expectation that stems from the ancient philosopher's theory, for Foucault, words do not merely represent things that pre-exist in the realm of ideas. Instead, words have the power to actively create the objects they represent.[32] Within a discourse, the definitions assigned to objects, persons and phenomena are not static. Discourse creates and also recreates meaning; it is also able to redefine who we are and how we are valued in a social space. This is perhaps the reason why much hope is invested in nonteleological dialogue. It represents the possibility for social change because it is able to recreate meaning and reevaluate how we value persons.

Still, the open-ended dialogue is not a neutral means of engaging with each other. Citing Foucault's critique of representation, Bingham points out that our discursive practice "manipulates as well as serves, the social order."[33] Discursive practices re-create, again and again, the valuing system in society. And unless it is interrupted, this course of dialogue perpetuates itself. The way we talk about a person, for example, influences how that person is viewed and she tends to become what is said about her. Furthermore, in as much as she responds and acts in accordance with how she is defined, she is complicit in bringing about (again) the very discourse that made her who she is. She recreates herself in the image of the discourse that

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[32] Foucault's critique goes beyond the relationship between words and things. It is instead: "A task that consists of not--of no longer--treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak." See Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 49.

[33] Bingham, "A Dangerous Benefit," 357.

created her in the first place. This is why, if we accept the creative function of representation, we need to be careful about labeling students, since children can become the label that we attach to them. We need to be aware of the value we ascribe to things and people. We also need to be careful of the meaning we give events as we make them the objects of our dialogues in the classroom and other public spaces, lest we merely re-create a pattern of valuing rather than aim for *something better* that is truly nonteleological and predetermined.

For Paolo Freire, the *something better* involves the liberation of oppressor and oppressed in a society from the "limit situations" that keep them from expressing the fullness of their humanity. Otherwise, he points out, the oppressed merely becomes another oppressor, and the cycle repeats itself.[34] And following the lead of John Dewey, Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon suggests that education should aim to teach people to live democratically. Haroutunian-Gordon suggests that schools should be places where students can learn to form shared purposes. This is necessary for the "conjoined living" that Dewey says characterizes life in a democracy.[35] Dewey points out that in a democratic society, our joint interests are not determined before hand, nor are they defined by an external authority. Rather, our common interests emerge out of the experience of associating with each other.[36] Yet how can people with conflicting points of view and interests share the experience of living together?

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[34] See, Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* 99-100.
[35] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1916/1944), 87: Cited in Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon, "Listening-In a Democratic Society," in *Philosophy of Education 2003* (Urbana, Illinois: Philosophy of Education Society, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; 2004), 1.
[36] See Dewey, *Democracy and Education.* See also Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Collier Books, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1963).

Haroutunian-Gordon uses some of the key aspects of the Socratic dialogue to address this concern. I am interested in her work because she uses Socrates' questioning method as an educational resource without necessarily agreeing with the metaphysics behind it.[37] A directive question may take on the function of a metaphorical mirror, something we hold up to each other, just as Velasquez held one up to his patron. Such a pointed question may at times be needed to refute the action of the gaze and invite the countergaze into the engagement between persons.

In the work of Haroutunian-Gordon, the Socratic dialogue, instead of being used to uncover truth, is applied towards exposing prejudices. Directed by the teacher's questions, students are obliged to reconsider their unjustified beliefs regarding other people. This is a necessary exercise in a culturally diverse society. Haroutunian-Gordon suggests that this questioning method may be instrumental in "shifting one's view so that the nature of situations may be seen and contemplated."[38] When two parties in dialogue shift from their original position, they could then be open to what Haroutunian-Gordon refers to as a "third way" of understanding a matter at hand.[39] Rather than a resolution that requires one party to assimilate another's dominant perspective, this third way is seen to be a co-created product of a dialogical relationship. It does not promise to lead us to a predetermined conclusion to dialogue.

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[37] Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon, *Turning the Soul: Teaching through Conversation in the High School* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1991), 1.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Haroutunian-Gordon, "Listening," 3.

But does the direction of dialogue really change with the creation of this alternative? To come up with the shared understanding—the third way—Haroutunian-Gordon agrees with Burbules[40] that one needs to exhibit the communicative virtues "such as patience, a willingness to listen carefully, and a tolerance for alternative points of view."[41] For Burbules, the rules of participation, commitment and reciprocity supported by the virtues, are meant to preserve the communicative relationship between parties. Otherwise, according to him, the "dialogue ceases to be an intersubjective exploration of a problem or question, and instead becomes a struggle over whose voice and perspective will be the dominant one."[42] Indeed, maintaining our relationships with each other is a worthwhile aim. And yet this too troubles me because I also see that the valued way of relating with each other also maintains the status quo. In this sense, communicative virtues serve a conservative function.

So what does it take to change the direction of our conversations instead of continuing to engage in discourse in the same way we always have? Perhaps we should take a closer look at what it takes to come to a resolution that is supposedly negotiated. The parties engage in this dialogue to preserve a certain type of social life in a democratic society where, ideally, no one point of view would take precedence over another. In coming up with the third-way, there is an expectation that participants in a dialogue would likely change

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[40] Haroutinan-Gordon suggests that we develop in students the ability to listen, so that they develop the capacity for tolerance. See Haroutunian-Gordon, "Listening," 3-5.
[41] Burbules, *Dialogue in Teaching,* 69.
[42] Ibid., 145.

their minds when they are confronted with errors in their thinking. In this way, they are able to reach a consensus.

The resolution that involves a third way reminds me of Hans-Georg Gadamer's well-known metaphor, the "fusion of horizons."[43] The image of merging horizons certainly fits the idea that a new outlook may prevent us from automatically adopting one existing point of view over another. But unlike the dialogic exchange suggested by Haroutunian-Gordon, the agreement suggested in Gadamer's work does not require persons in dialogue to change their minds about an issue. This is because dialogue, in Gadamer's view, is not an intersubjective engagement. For him, it is possible to comprehend the perspective of someone from another culture, not by understanding her point of view per se, but by getting an understanding of the historical and situational consciousness that exerts its effects on that person. When parties in dialogue do this, then they are able to come up with a common understanding of a situational or historical context. Differences resolved by appealing to this common understanding allow both sides to refer to a common ground without necessarily requiring anyone to change their minds regarding a subject or issue.

This way of coming to terms with difference has been adapted into discourses that deal with issues of equity that arise in multicultural societies. Charles Taylor, for example, applies the idea of the fusion of horizons in

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[43] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, revised 2nd ed, Translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 2003).

"Politics of Recognition," an oft-quoted essay aimed at addressing conflicting interests between diverse sectors in a multicultural society.[44]

In another of Taylor's work, "Understanding and Ethnocentricity," [45] we find a more detailed example of how a common ground is cultivated to act as a bridge between two or more otherwise incommensurable cultures. Taylor suggests that participants in dialogue use a "language of perspicuous contrasts" as a way to fuse horizons and to reconcile very different points of view. Having this tool of communication prevents us from falling into two unproductive reactions when our traditional values are challenged: ethnocentrism that makes us refuse to budge from our position, or resignation that our views are too disparate to reconcile and giving up even trying to relate to each other. Thus, having the "language of perspicuous contrasts" to refer to avoids our having to choose between assimilation and segregation as a way of living with difference in a multicultural society.[46] With the "language of perspicuous contrasts" as a common reference, there is hope that we can negotiate a compromise or consensus, and at the same time retain our deeply held albeit conflicting cultural practices and religious beliefs. In this way, Taylor has found Gadamer's notion of the fusion of horizons applicable to the dilemmas we face as we grapple with what it means to live together in our increasingly diverse societies. I likewise find Gadamer's ideas pertinent to my investigation of dialogue.

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[44] Charles Taylor, "Politics of Recognition" in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Education*, ed. Amy Gutman (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 67.
[45] Charles Taylor, "Understanding and Ethnocentricity" in *Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 116-133.
[46] Ibid.

In the next part of this chapter, I consider how Gadamer's notion of horizons leads to an understanding of our social space. Extending one's horizon and eliciting the countergaze could be considered ways of bringing about a moment of insight. They both bring out the type of insight that tells us something about the social context that surrounds us. The former is associated with making a historical consciousness apparent, while the latter aims to make us aware of how the action of the gaze arranges social space. The understanding they draw out is different from the type that we can achieve in the dialectic exchange described by Haroutunian-Gordon. As she points out, the Socratic dialogue aims to point out errors in our thinking and is meant to expose personal prejudices and other unexamined beliefs held by individuals.[47] On the other hand, the moments of insight attained by expanding one's horizon of understanding and by eliciting the countergaze are located in shared social spaces—not in individual subjectivity or rationality per se. They tell us something about the dialogue that we enter simply because we are social beings.

In the next section of this chapter, I start with an exploration of this notion of dialogue—the dialogue that surrounds us. I explore this notion of dialogue—the hermeneutic dialogue--as one that acts on persons through the mediation of the symbolic realm. I then relate this to another aspect of dialogue that is just as present in the dialogue we enter—the gaze.

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[47] See Haroutunian-Gordon, "Listening—in a Democratic Society."

Entering dialogue

The initial entry into this inescapable dialogue occurs at birth. Dialogue is something that surrounds and engages the child. Dialogue engages the child, but the child likewise engages with it as she responds and interacts in a myriad of ways with her world.

To illustrate: When a child is born into the sterile environment of a hospital, she immediately participates in a set of practices. She, for example, becomes a participant in medical science through her method of birth. This child also comes in contact with the stories of craft and industry through the clothing in which she is wrapped and the instruments and surfaces of the delivery room. As well, she is initiated into the traditions of child rearing passed on through the generations. Even the meaning of future experiences with nature is being framed at the moment of birth. In what we call developed countries, babies do not usually come in contact with bare dirt. The antiseptic rooms and conditions communicate the degree to which we as a society separate civilization from what we call the natural world. In one sense, the child begins her life already *in* dialogue, just by being born.

Beyond the entry point of birth, the dialogue with the rest of civilization continues. When a child picks up a brush, dips its tip in paint and makes sweeping marks on a big sheet on an easel, the encounter with paper and pigment connects him with the inventors of paper and synthetic based paints as well as artists (past and contemporary). When a child learns to count, she is in some way expressing the ideas of those who first conceived of symbols for numbers. A child learning a sport is initiated into the etiquette of the sport as

well as a form of competition. By being born into a civilization, a child is *in* dialogue because it is her point of entry into a symbolic world that draws her into engagement with other persons.

According to this conception of dialogue, the contact with other persons and with the rest of the community, takes place through symbols, concepts, ideas and tangible objects. There are philosophers who suggest that it is through this mediated contact that individuals become conscious of their existence and become part of their cultural and natural environment, being constituted by it and also able to participate, interact and act towards the continuation of the way of life they were initiated in. This is the hermeneutic dialogue as described by Richard Kearney as he finds the common thread in the philosophies of Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur.

> Gadamer and Ricoeur point out that human consciousness can never know itself in terms of an intuitive immediacy (as Descartes and Husserl believed): consciousness must undergo a hermeneutic detour in which it comes to know itself through the mediation of signs, symbols and texts. In other words, consciousness cannot *intuit* (*anschauen*) its meaning in and from itself, but must *interpret* (*hermeneuein*) itself by entering into dialogue with the texts of a historical community or common tradition to which it belongs (*zuhören*).[48]

We communicate and respond to each other and as we do, we give various types of information and messages in the social spaces we enter and/or inhabit: at a home, the neighborhood grocery, the movie theatre during a matinee showing, the internet, a phone call, the art studio, a museum hallway with one other lone visitor, the trail in the woods shared with

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[48] Richard Kearney, *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage* (Manchester, UK; Dover, N.H., USA: Manchester University Press. 1984),128.

mountain bikers, a national boundary, the local school, one's regular bus, the coffee shop after the lunch rush. As Kearney puts it, as persons in dialogue, our consciousness interprets itself through the signs and symbols found in text and objects found in social spaces--or in Gadamer's terms, through the traditions, text and art in historically effected consciousness.[49]

Gadamer discusses engagement with historical consciousness using the notion of play as something that takes hold of a player rather than the other way around. As he puts it, "all playing is being played."[50] In other words, it is dialogue that draws us in as we engage with it (in that order). Specifically, he uses the concept of play to free art from "the subjective meaning...that dominates the whole of modern aesthetics and philosophy of man."[51] He elaborates:

> When we speak of play in reference to the experience of art, this means neither the orientation nor even the state of mind of the creator or of those enjoying the work of art nor the freedom of a subjectivity engaged in play, but the mode of being of the work of art itself.[52]

Gadamer therefore also challenges the subject-centred view of the relationship between the object and the person. We create and experience art objects as if the nature of the experience resides in individual subjectivity; we employ the skills associated with civility in negotiation as if we are the key participants in dialogue. Yet it is the dialogue itself that engages us as we engage with each other through this dialogue. There are influences on dialogue that direct its trajectory. For Gadamer it is the spirit of play itself

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[49] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 347-362.
[50] Ibid., 101.
[51] Ibid., 101.
[52] Ibid., 101.

that is just waiting for presentation through players; "The players are not the subjects of play; instead play merely reaches presentation (Darstellung) through the players."[53] A historical consciousness already fixes meaning into the text, tradition, art and play that waits to be presented through the player's engagement. This is why Gadamer suggests that text and tradition, and for that matter, art, can speak for themselves. These are just waiting for us to ask the right questions—so that we can listen to what they say.[54]

The communicative virtues that are central to Burbules' discussion, work for the purpose of presenting play. In his book on dialogue in teaching, Burbules demonstrates how these virtues maintain the open-ended quality of intersubjective dialogue. However, if we consider that this engagement takes place in a dialogue where the play precedes the players, we can say that the spirit of play directs the aims of our endeavors, and (pre) determines what would be considered communicative virtues. Play requires persons to posses certain qualities that allow for its presentation.

The gaze is an aspect of dialogue that likewise has an effect on objects, symbols, signs, and persons--the gaze directs objects, ideas and persons to their place in social space. Like the spirit of play or historical consciousness, this aspect of dialogue also directs persons in a way that predetermines their condition—at least initially.

A person is born, already with the action of the gaze upon her. The gaze puts us in our place through the value it imparts to symbols and signs and on

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[53] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 103.
[54] Haroutunian-Gordon expands on Gadamer's use of questions to develop the thesis of her article. She shifts the focus of dialogue from the act of stating an idea to listening. See Haroutunian-Gordon, *Listening*, 3.

our person. The awareness of our existence is therefore, in part, a sense of place in a hierarchy. Initially, it is not of our own volition that we find ourselves in a particular social position. The child is put in her place as the gaze arranges and maintains the pattern of hierarchical social space.

Indeed, we experience and view a social terrain from locations in the crest and in the trough. And so I wonder, when we come to peaceful resolutions, such as in coming up with the third way or through a fusion of horizons, what lies underneath the surface calm? What are the undercurrents and hidden layers that lend their influences on our person? Subtle aspects of dialogue, such as discursive practices and the action of the gaze, layer social space into hierarchies that, when exposed to the surface, are blips in an otherwise seamless new horizon.

In social space, play can follow its predestined course. The insight gathered from expanding one's horizon serves to perpetuate on-going play. The countergaze on the other hand aims to interrupt. It aims to stop the action of the gaze so that it can look back at itself and perhaps wonder: "What am I doing *here*?" *Here* in our position in social space, we are put in our place. We enter dialogue and then we engage in dialogue from positions in society that are arbitrarily assigned to us—initially.

Gift of place

Looking back on that eye opening summer workshop I took long ago, I realize that what our teacher CB Garrucho had asked us to consider was what it meant to be in dialogue from our place in our society. As I mentioned in the story in my introductory chapter, she and the other teachers in the summer

drama workshop made us aware of the class structure in Manila. The other participants of the workshop and I were born on the side of a literal and symbolic fence where lawns are green and watered. This is the place from where we started life in dialogue. To a large extent, it was through education that we maintained our spot in social space.

My parents were professionals and had the means to send their children to schools that would give them many advantages in the social life in our country. What I realize now is that my siblings and I were able to go to schools that gave us a knowledge package that some would consider to be "global" rather than narrowly "local." Indeed, there was a discrepancy between the education my brothers, our peers and I received and those the majority in the Philippines had access to. We were fluent not only in English, but also in Western art and culture. Those who lived on the side of the fence where the grass was green were more likely to have access to this type of education.

The "global" education I received is more accurately Canadian and American. Having taught at international schools in the Philippines, traveled around Asia and Europe, and lived in Canada, I observe that many people in the world aspire to having a Western education. It has worth because it develops in students the qualities that allow them to succeed in the Western playing field. Many people have limited access to this in Manila.

I do not think it is farfetched to implicate the education system in the United States and Canada in the widening gap between social and economic classes in countries such as the Philippines. As we in North America define

what it entails to be an educated person, we do not define it only for our students, but also for those who aspire to give their children a chance to engage in a "global" dialogue. The ability to understand the arts and culture of Western European origin (on which the North American curriculum draws) is valued because the conversation between the world of former colonizers and those of former colonies still progresses in the same way it did in the past, even if most former colonies are now "independent" nations. The nature of the dialogue between these worlds has not been fundamentally changed.

CB and our other teachers in the summer drama workshop in Manila made my co-participants and me aware of our society's social terrain. Staying in Mexico City as an exchange student through a North American Mobility Program[55] provided me with the opportunity to see a more global picture of the dialogue that includes us all--inescapably. I chose this city over locations in the United States because in many ways, Mexico has a history similar to the Philippines as both were former colonies of Spain. Aside from this common connection to Spain, both nations also have significant political and economic links to the United States—Mexico by virtue of its geographic location, and the Philippines because it was under American rule for 40 years at the turn of the previous century.

I stayed in Mexico City for the whole month of October in 2003, the same year I went back to the Philippines for the first time since I emigrated a decade earlier. The timing of both trips gave me an opportunity to give new

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[55] Between 1996-2004, there were several student exchange programs between Mexico, the United States and Canada through the North American Consortium for Educational Restructuring (NACER) and the North American Mobility Program.

meaning to my place in social space. I consider what it means to be from the side of the fence where the grass in greener, whether I am in Manila or in North America. Aware of this gift of place, I entered dialogue in Mexico City.

Back to Mexico City

The ties to and continued high regard for European art traditions is evident in the murals found in the metro station near the apartment where I stayed in Mexico City. Above the Metro Copilco platform, panels of artwork by Michaelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and other Renaissance masters are incorporated into the compositions of Mexican artists (see Plate 3 below).

Plate 3: *Metro Copilco*, 2003

In this public space where replicas of classical art are displayed, we who take the public transportation are exposed to a particular practice, that of referring to work of past masters in current creative acts. As a tourist, I

noticed the importance given to revolutionary icons in much of the art in Mexico. Yet at the same time, there is an unapologetic appropriation of the colonizer's art and culture. It is this complex layered dialogue that one enters and engages as a student of art, artisan, artist, tourist, citizen and foreigner in Mexico City.

This blend of the Mexican and European in art and other cultural artifacts is the backdrop for another dialogue that goes on in the city. Everyone in the streets spoke the universal language of commerce. Flanking the turnstiles to get to the trains at the Copilco station, merchants sell their wares. My roommates and I passed by this underground passage often to get to the internet place and some reasonably priced restaurants on the other side of the road. Even late at night, we could count on being able to buy copies of music CDs, food, silver accessories and an assortment of goods. This scene is not unique. I found it replicated in other parts of Mexico City. In many ways I was even reminded of the streets of Manila.

Soon though, the crowd around Copilco Station did not remain anonymous and faceless to me. One day on our way to have supper, my roommates and I stopped to look at some rather fetching jewelry. Fashionable and current, the designs also stood apart as being unique. These were designed, crafted and sold by a couple I came to appreciate. As I looked at their body of work, I could not help but wonder whether, if this designer couple were born and were plying their wares in a place such as New York or San Francisco, their talent as craftspeople might have been noticed.

Their accident of birth puts this possibility out of reach since their place in their own society makes them nameless and invisible. They could only set up shop in a corner of an underground alley in Mexico City, and all they had to showcase their artistry was a blanket laid out on the ground.

Initially, we defined each other by the roles we played in the to and fro of our commercial transactions. I suppose they knew we were exchange students since the station was close to a university. And as foreigners, my roommates and I would likely have been seen as good customers (which we were). It is possible, however, that we were all actively figuring out how to "place" each other in spite of those assigned roles. I decided to ask them who they were. They are Raul Banda and Lucia Salazar, designers and artisans.

I was on my way back to the apartment the day after I bought a necklace from the couple. Spotting me, they called out and presented me with earrings to match my previous purchase. Raul and Lucia recognized that I was particularly appreciative of their design and craftsmanship. In response, they presented me with a gift—they would not accept payment for the pair of earrings. Some may read their gesture as merely good business practice--so that goodwill is created between them and me. On the other hand (and this is how *I* read the situation) it is possible that for these merchants, I had become more than just a good customer. And to me, they have became more than just merchants. Perhaps our places in social space are not really etched in stone. Then maybe we can change the configuration of social space.

Chapter Four

PLACE

Put in our place, we dialogue

The gaze puts as in our place. As persons interacting with each other in a cultural milieu we share an understanding of how to address and respond to each other from the various positions we occupy in a hierarchical social structure. As participants in a way of life, somehow we know our places—then we play out parts assigned to us. In addition, it seems that we not only know what is expected of us, we also have an understanding of what is expected of others. We therefore have a sense when someone is out of line or inappropriate.

The ways of dialogue are common knowledge in a particular society, such as when and to whom does one use the respectful tense when conversing, who looks away first, who asks the questions, how to answer questions, who can join certain kinds of conversations and when. Participants in a cultural milieu share an understanding of how to address and respond to each other from the various positions persons occupy in a hierarchical social structure. We share an understanding of how we are put in our place based on the way our race, gender, and class are respected in social space.

This valuing order is expressed symbolically, for example, when certain persons are favoured to enter, sit or stand in places of honour, importance, or comfort. Such was the case in the American South during the era of segregation. This was when, by law, there were specific public places designated for its black and white residents.

I am aware that in this example, the sense of place communicated to individuals is not subtle. There were literal places assigned to black people in the segregated society. The message of where one is positioned socially was explicit--it was law, not a hint that could be misunderstood. Yet, even when the pattern in hierarchical social space is obvious, there are still ways in which the action of gaze remains obscure.

On December 1st 1955, the pattern in hierarchical social space in the South was challenged in a bus in Montgomery Alabama. It was the day that Rosa Parks resisted being put in her place as a black woman. Asked to stand and give her seat to a white passenger, she refused. There are those who say she was just too tired to stand. But she has refuted this explanation:

> People always say that I didn't give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn't true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being old then. I was forty-two. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in.[1]

The rest of Mrs. Park's story is, of course, well documented. Her subsequent arrest triggered the Montgomery bus boycott, an important event in the civil rights movement. The momentum started by one woman's act of civil disobedience culminated eleven months later with the Supreme Court

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[1] Rosa Parks with Jim Haskins, *Rosa Parks: My Story* (New York:Dial Books, 1992), 116.

ruling that segregation is unconstitutional. The leader who led the challenge was Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whose assassination in 1968 was another pivotal point in race relations in the United States.

The violence against Rev. King caused many in that nation to examine their society. This included an elementary school teacher from Riceville, Iowa. The very next day after Rev. King's assassination, Jane Elliot implemented a lesson—the now famous brown-eyes/blue-eyes role-play—to address racism in her own classroom. She had been planning this for quite some time and with the assassination of the civil rights leader, she felt that the time was ripe to present the lesson to her students. Jane Elliot wanted her third grade students to understand the experiences black people go through everyday. The purpose of the lesson was to give the students a chance to feel what it is like to be subjected to the treatment black people received in American society. Elliot hoped that by developing an understanding of someone else's experience, her students would reconsider the way they valued people.

Ms. Elliot divided her class into two groups. The blue-eyed children were made to wear a collar and were told that brown-eyed people were superior. She told the class that the blue-eyed children were "lazy, stupid and not to be trusted." This group of students was also instructed not to drink from the same water fountain used by the brown-eyed kids nor could they have second helpings at lunch. The brown-eyed children, on the other hand, were allowed the many privileges denied the blue-eyed group. In this way, the teacher had made her classroom a model of a segregated society.

The result of the experiment was surprising and disturbing: "Elliot was horrified when she saw how quickly *her students became what she told them they were*"[2] (italics added). The brown-eyed children began to treat their blue -eyed classmates as if they really believed that people with brown eyes were superior. The blue-eyed third graders, on the other hand began to be withdrawn as a result of how they were treated by their classmates. The next day, they reversed their roles.

It is interesting to see how the children conformed to the teacher's rules for the blue-eyed and the brown-eyed members of the class. I see this as evidence of the enormous influence that speech and non-verbal communication have on the relational dynamics in the room. The way the teacher talked and acted towards members of the class directed the way students treated each other and affected the way they saw themselves. Ms. Elliot defined the roles in the make believe society of the classroom, and in so doing, arranged a hierarchical social space with her words.

But what if this was not make-believe, and the third graders did grow up in such a world where having blue or brown eyes really did matter? Do *we* start to believe the messages of value *in spite of ourselves*? And when we spend a lifetime believing what is said about blue-eyes and brown-eyes, can we somehow still define for ourselves our own place? When I think of the way messages of where one is positioned in social space become imbedded in our consciousness, I am more convinced of how exceptional it was for Rosa Parks

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[2] Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, "Profile: Jane Elliot," CBC http://www.cbc.ca/passionateeye/indecentlyexposed/profile.html.

to sit in her place in the bus. To do so meant going against the momentum of discourse and the action of the gaze.

Earlier I mentioned that I am interested in the more inconspicuous action of the gaze. It was not the law alone that put people in their segregated areas in social space, nor was it just the obvious looks and stares that made one walk towards one drinking fountain rather than the other--there was something else. This more inconspicuous action of the gaze is our own gaze on our own person. More often than not, this gaze we direct on ourselves is in agreement with the collectively sanctioned gaze that predestines the places where we find ourselves in a social hierarchy. Hence we help perpetuate the cycle that keeps us in our place.

Our place in society, however, is not an inescapable fate. We can refuse to be put in predetermined places. But before this can happen, we first need to see our own complicity in how patterns in social space are perpetuated. We need to know how we effect ongoing dialogue as we play along with it.

I suggest that one could gain some form of understanding about social conditions from two learning positions. The brown-eyes/blue-eyes role-play may be approached as a lesson in empathy. Role-playing may be used to help students understand what it is like to "stand in someone else's shoes." [3] But I argue that what students learn at this stage of the lesson is merely the appropriate way to play an assigned part. Caught up in the spirit of the game,

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[3] In the interview in PBS/Frontline, Jane Elliot refers to a Native American saying that one cannot judge another person unless she or he has walked in that person's moccasins. See William Peters, "One Friday in April, 1968" in PBS/Frontline, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/divided/etc/friday.html.

how could the students in Ms. Elliot's class help but play their roles as individuals with brown or blue eyes?

Megan Boler similarly critiques using empathy as a means of addressing diversity issues. In her article entitled "The Risk of Empathy: Interrogating Multiculturalism's Gaze,"[4] she suggests that rather than directing students to feel for or empathize with the characters in a story, students could instead be directed to practice what she calls "testimonial reading." In testimonial reading, one reads to be able to "recognize oneself as implicated in the social forces that create the climate of obstacles the other must confront."[5] From what I gather, in testimonial reading, the reader does not aim to understand the other person. Instead, the reader aims to gain insight into how she stands in relation to others in her social space. I agree with Boler that empathy on its own is insufficient to bring about action that leads to social change. This is because to merely *feel for* another does not require a person to see how she herself is implicated in how the other experiences her situation. It is merely a good first step. A lesson on compassion based only on learning what it felt like to be black in Montgomery Alabama in the 1950s would have been insufficient because it would have not necessarily required the students to see themselves implicated in the game called racism.

Instead of asking students to stand in another person's shoes, a more productive metaphor for addressing social justice issues is to have students

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[4] Megan Boler, "The Risk of Empathy: Interrogating Multiculturalism's Gaze," in Cultural Studies, 11(2) 1997: 253-273.
[5] Ibid., 263.

stand in front of a metaphorical mirror. In this way, they learn about discrimination by seeing a picture of themselves as complicit players in a mean-spirited game. I suggest that what Jane Elliot really did in her classroom was hold up a mirror to her students, so that they could—if they cared to look--see themselves in action.

Perhaps we should not be *too* surprised that Jane Elliot's students got into the spirit of the role-play; that they became what their teacher told them they were. Teachers are in the position to direct the action of the gaze. Ms. Elliot directed the actions of players by giving the parameters of the roles blue-eyed and brown-eyed characters were to play out in the make believe society that they created in their classroom. And her students played the game well! It was only during the debriefing when the game ended, and the students were able to step out of the frame (so to speak) that they were able to reflect on the experience. That was when they would have been able to see themselves at play.

When teachers hold up a mirror, in many ways they assume a role similar to that of a coach training athletes. In sports, it is the role of coaches to give feedback to the players. Traditionally, coaches help improve the performances of athletes so that they can achieve unprecedented levels of excellence. When this is the purpose of the coach's feedback, then it is reasonable to expect immediate responses from players—even if they have not yet achieved peak performance, they are still able to progress towards the direction of envisioned excellence. But this expectation is not reasonable

when the teacher takes on a role that counters the spirit of play—as is usually the case when a teacher is working towards social transformation.

Jane Elliot did get a chance to find out if the lesson had a long-term effect on her students. In 1970, she conducted the blue-eyes/brown-eyes role-play with another group of third graders. This was videotaped for a documentary called "The Eye of the Storm."[6] This group of students requested a class reunion fourteen years later. Together with their former teacher, they viewed themselves as children going through the blue-eyes/brown-eyes experience, then they spent time reflecting on how this changed them. This follow-up was part of another documentary called "A Class Divided."[7]

Even after fourteen years had passed, the former students could vividly describe what it felt like to have blue or brown eyes in a social milieu where it mattered. While immersed in the role-play, the children experienced the rejection and the dilemmas as real. One young man, for example, recalled his distress when he had to choose between being friends with someone he liked but had a different eye colour or acting according to the rules. He followed the teacher's regulations.

According to Elliot, it took just a day for her students to change from caring young people into vicious and prejudiced individuals. The impact of the exercise was so profound that on the day they played the part of inferior members of the class, the children's performance on timed tasks suffered. Because of the seriousness of how the lessons affected the children, Elliot

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[6] Eye of the Storm, VHS, produced and written by William Peters (USA: ABC News Productions, 1970/2002).
[7] PBS/Frontline, "A Class Divided," PBS, 1985, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/divided/.

cautions that teachers should be trained before going through this lesson with their students. After going through the role-play, there always needs to be a debriefing session. The discussion that follows is not only vital for the well being of the children, it is also a necessary step so that the empathy that the children then felt could be processed. In this way, the teacher could facilitate drawing out insight from students based on the experience they just had.

What should be encouraging is evidence that for many of Elliot's former third graders, insight had spurred them to act in ways counter to the norms in their milieu. In a video segment of the reunion, one young woman recounted an incident when she was criticized for giving a black person a hug. She did not let the disapproving looks of people around her dictate how she engaged with individuals of a different race.

I would argue though, that the agency to act contrary to norms stems from more than an empathetic understanding of what it is like to be discriminated against. I doubt that knowing what it may have been like to be black in America would have been enough to spur the students to act compassionately. Elliot's students were not only made to stand in a discriminated person's shoes through the role-play, but in the course of the debriefing, they were also made to stand in the teacher's shoes.

The whiteness Elliot shared with her students made her someone they could identify with. The students saw someone like themselves acting differently from most of the other white citizens of their town. In this sense, during the debriefing, the students were actually made to stand in the shoes of their teacher who they could identify with rather than the shoes of someone

different from themselves. Elliot held up to her students a picture of the compassionate and inclusive people they could be, in spite of living in a society that condoned the mean-spirited game of racism. The teacher gave her students the opportunity to see that they could respond to the ongoing dialogue in ways that would challenge the spirit of the game.

Jane Elliot responded to racism with a sense of urgency and as a result, she came up with a dynamic and dramatic lesson for her students. Rosa Parks responded to the same ongoing dialogue that surrounded black and white citizens from a different place in social space. Although her answer to the ongoing dialogue was characterized more by restraint, make no mistake that Mrs. Parks was just as active in endeavoring to change the social space around her.

Both these women interrupted the action of the gaze--the gaze that maintains the hierarchy that puts us in our place. In so doing, they held a mirror to society. If we only care to see, we are reflected...

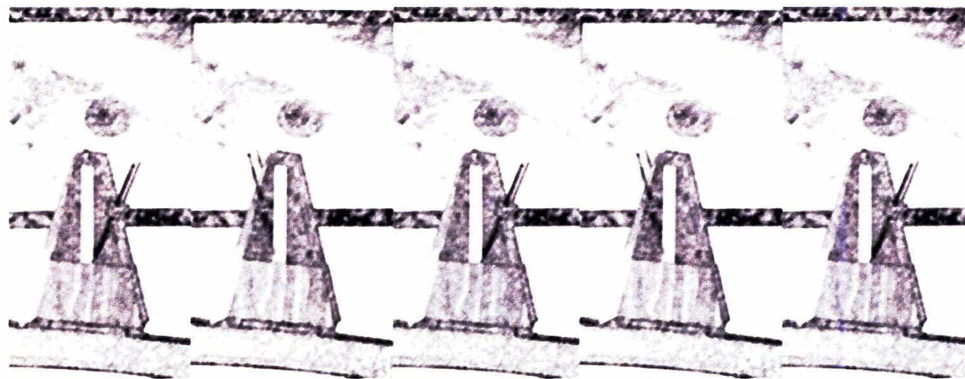

Plate 4: *Endurance*, 2006

Mirrors

Somehow we know where we stand in a hierarchy, and we know what is required of us as we engage with each other from locations in social space. Not to do what is expected is a challenge that elicits looks of disapproval or at the very least, surprise and puzzlement. This is one kind of mirror. It reflects to us how we are doing as participants in an ongoing dialogue (akin to the way coaches give feedback to players).

The mirror has another function, one that reflects a wide view of social space so that it includes a picture of all of us in a snapshot. Paradoxically, it is this wide view that draws out insight on how we are individually implicated in the relational dynamics in society. By creating a replica of society's valuing system in her classroom, Jane Elliot helped her students realize that their individual actions do matter in either maintaining or changing their social environment.

As the story of the blue-eyes/brown-eyes experiment is told and shown, Jane Elliot's lesson on discrimination continues to be a mirror. Since she first presented the activity to her third grade class, Elliot has conducted the lesson with adult participants in a variety of settings such as corporations and prisons. She has also been invited to conduct workshops in other countries where she adapts the lesson to address specific expressions of prejudice.

Discrimination has a dialect peculiar to a context. What we see in the mirror is not a generic picture but a tableau that has a history. In Canada, persons of First Nations backgrounds are arguably ones who are more often subjected to oppression in society. It was therefore fitting that Elliot

addressed this social issue in a program aired on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) entitled "Indecently Exposed."[8]

As part of the documentary, Elliot videotaped a session where she reversed the expected social roles of First Nations and more dominant groups in society. In this experiment, she spoke to a group of blue-eyed people in the manner in which individuals of First Nations background are normally addressed. Somewhat bordering on rudeness, she directed participants in the blue-eyed group to sit, stand, and move around the room at her whim.

Arbitrarily, she asked questions in an authoritarian manner. At one point she noted how a man with blue eyes deflected her questions. His indirect response led her to retort; "you did not answer the question." This man and Jane Elliot then engaged in an exchange that challenged each other's authority; he resisted and she insisted that he comply.

This CBC documentary highlights the ways messages of one's place in society are communicated. In the discussion that followed the role-play, Elliot recalls the test of wills she had with the participant who would not respond "appropriately" to her queries. She points out that the refusal to directly answer a question is a taken for granted privilege of someone in a position of some power. ("I don't have to answer *that*!") Subordinates on the other hand are expected to supply an answer with little or no resistance on their part.

When a social worker, for example, asks how one is doing, clients usually cannot just change the subject to avoid disclosing something about themselves. Certain people have the power to change the course of the

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[8] *Indecently Exposed,* Documentary produced by Trevor Grant, (Canada: CBC News: The Passionate Eye, January 2005).

conversation, and to choose what to respond to and when to volunteer personal information. For those in subordinate positions, this option is not always available.

In every session where the blue-eyed participants were subjected to disrespectful treatment, they fought back. In the debriefings that routinely followed the role-play, this group would describe feelings of being trapped and pushed to the point that they began to feel anger. Some note that they now know what it feels like to not be given choices, voice, the benefit of the doubt and respect. But the defiant man's response to Elliot was not that of someone who had spent a lifetime learning to answer questions with little resistance.

When the man was engaged in a test of wills with Elliot, he looked to his peers for feedback. From them he was able to find support and approval for his defiant response to the workshop leader. This to me shows that he did not experience conflict with Elliot in the same way that a First Nations man would have. During the role-play, it was the other members of the blue-eyed group, not the First Nations observers nor Elliot, who functioned as his mirror. It was only during the debriefing sessions that Elliot was able to get him to reflect on his privileged position in society, one that made their interaction in the role-play foreign to him. She offered a mirror with a wide view—one where the participants with blue eyes would be able to see themselves creating an uneven social terrain. Looking at their reflection, however, is a choice they need to make themselves.

The documentary as a mirror also invites viewers to glance and see themselves. I find that this put me in my place.

Location unknown

The notion of place as it refers to learning positions is of interest to me. Place not only refers to where we find ourselves when we enter dialogue, or the place from where we engage with each other.

I also want to investigate the notion of place as a position we may take so that we can come to understand our relational dynamics. I interrogate the two pedagogical positions that aim to inform us about the quality of our interpersonal relationships in society. I have so far questioned whether an empathetic stance towards another--such as when we attempt to stand in the shoes of a First Nations or black person--really elicits the kind of insight that will lead to a change in behaviour. I suggest that this learning position does not necessarily make us take a look at ourselves. Placing the student in this position does not necessarily encourage her to look at how she affects others through her actions.

Instead of inviting students to understand another person, I suggest that we pose a different challenge. As teachers who hold up mirrors, we may invite our students to ask themselves: How do my actions potentially perpetuate the oppression of certain groups of people? When I thought about the documentary with this question in mind, I found to my surprise, that I identified with the unflattering role Jane Elliot played. I may not directly discriminate against First Nations people, but I caught myself in a variation of a scene from the documentary.

In my volunteer work at a youth shelter, I sit at the reception desk, buzzing people into the building. Youth come in from the street. As they ask

for food, clothing, leave messages or ask if there is a bed free for the night, I ask for their name. We keep track of services we render each young person and keep a record of when they drop in. Most of the young people cooperate with this system. Once in a while, there is hesitation and I suspect that they give me a pseudonym. Just because it was unusual, I remember a young person who preferred to just give a first name and countered, "I don't give out my last name." Why didn't he just give a pseudonym? At that moment, I did not pursue the issue. I was impressed by this young person's confidence and refusal to be put in his place. This young person stayed on to talk, to engage in some conversation.

Walking out of the shelter that evening, I remembered Jane Elliott's workshop. I then reflected on why I was surprised by the unusual response of the youth. Well, it was precisely because it was unexpected. He redirected dialogue, something a client in the social service system usually cannot do. He challenged where I placed him in social space. He also presented me with a question: "Who do you think I am?"

A certain dynamic is played out in procedures and conventions, and in everyday conversations. Somehow we need to rely on the familiar social patterns that connect us to each other in dialogue; we need to know the rules of play to be part of the social life in our community. Yet if we are to believe that our place—or may we say—identity—is not fixed and unchangeable, then we need to see that interpersonal encounters need not be predictable. It is a paradox that we can be familiar with the general features and landmarks of our social terrain, but we cannot truly know the person in front of us. In one

sense, we understand how to address a person placed in a certain position, and in another sense, we do not really know what position the respondent to our address will take, and this is a surprise to us.

Elizabeth Ellsworth explains this paradox by drawing on a concept from film studies: "Mode of address is an analytical concept that's been around for years in film and media studies. Film scholars use it to pose this question: Who does this film think you are?"[9] Ellsworth applies this to the educational setting by describing an expectation teachers seem to have for themselves: Teachers attempt to address students according to who it is they think they are teaching. According to Ellsworth, by taking this on as one of their tasks, teachers set themselves up for a goal that is impossible to reach. As she puts it:

> The point here is not that pedagogical modes of address miss their students and that teachers should try to correct this. The point is that *all* modes of address misfire one way or another. I never "am" the "who" that a pedagogical address thinks I am. But then again, I never am the who that *I* think I am either.[10]

Teachers attempt an impossible task, not because they cannot see the target clearly, but because the target moves. Yet even by just attempting this impossible task, teachers are already actively affecting the relational dynamics in their classroom. I think that the real danger when teachers try to be accurate in their mode of address is that they make teaching into a conservative enterprise—one that maintains patterns in social space. At the same time that this view of pedagogy maintains an on-going dialogue, teaching

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[9] Elizabeth Ellsworth, *Teaching Positions: Difference, Pedagogy, and the Power of Address* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997), 1.
[10] Ibid., 8.

to the target is also a creative endeavor in the sense that our address as teachers directs students towards an identity. We engage with students in ways that put them in predetermined places.

Even Jane Elliot, in her workshop, predetermined where she placed participants. When she addressed the blue-eyed participant disrespectfully, she meant for him to experience what it was like to be in the shoes of a First Nations man. Instead, the blue-eyed man resisted being put in a subservient place--as a blue-eyed man *naturally* would. The lesson as a lesson in empathy missed its mark. As I previously discussed, I find that putting students in this learning position is relatively unproductive if the lesson does not also include a debriefing session that also allows participants/students to stand in front of a metaphorical mirror.

The conversation between the blue-eyed man and Elliot started as an expression of a familiar type of relationship—one that is adversarial. Elliot and the blue-eyed man were caught up in the mean spirited conversation where parties took on dominant and subservient roles. The role-play between Elliot and the blue-eyed man, however, culminated in a debriefing where they had a chance to reflect on how they engaged in dialogue. Perhaps this is what it takes to free those referred to by Paulo Freire as oppressor and oppressed from "limit situations."[11] Both the oppressed and the oppressor need to be liberated lest the oppressed merely steps into the place of the oppressor, and hence also perpetuates the spirit of an unjust dialogue.

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[11] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 99-100.

While my conversation with the youth and the conversation between Elliot and the man with blue eyes shared a similar script, that same script had a different meaning in the context of the interactions at the youth shelter. In the centre where I volunteered, unless certain details are relevant to a situation, services are not withheld when the clients decline to give information about themselves. Still, most of the youth who go through the shelter's doors comply or at least act as if they are complying with requests for disclosure.

It is in this context that the response of the young man--the one who did not give his last name--stood out. It was a small gesture, but it was enough to give me pause. The young man held up a mirror that made me see a wider view—a view of my practices as a volunteer (and teacher) and a wide angle of the relationship the institution I was working for had with its clients.

Rules are put in place in institutions such as schools and youth shelters so that we can somehow maintain our hold on an enterprise. We ask for information from a young person and expect an answer because the centre itself would not exist without procedures, conventions and predictable patterns of interaction. Social life would not exist without these relational structures that bind us to each other. But if we, as teachers and youth workers, are able to see a reflection of ourselves interacting in our institutions, perhaps we would be more thoughtful in the way we deal with our students and clients, even when we are constrained by procedures and conventions. Then perhaps we would be less apt to put young people into fixed places in social space.

As I see it, a centre such as the Covenant House, the shelter for youth where I volunteered from December 2003 to May 2005, is a space of respite for its clients not only in a literal sense; it is an oasis in a social terrain where the young people are able to move out of their disadvantaged place in the larger social space that surrounds the shelter. Paradoxically, the shelter, while it is a place of respite, is also a site where the youth learn the rules of play in the society. In this safe place, they learn and practice new moves in the social game they have to reenter—and thus give new meaning to their position in the larger social space. The young person who did not give his last name held a mirror up to a social service institution, and his gesture was accepted as a legitimate way of engaging in dialogue in a space of respite.

What makes this moment of suspended play possible? Is it an attitude or disposition? Is it another dialogue? Martin Buber describes a particular type of encounter in his poetic portrayal of dialogue in, *I and Thou.*[12] In this work, the author suggests a quality of exceptional dialogue characterized by a *genuine meeting* of persons. In this particular type of encounter, the person encountered in the context of the *I-Thou* dialogue, is emptied of characteristics. This is how Buber explains this idea:

> --What then do we experience of Thou?
> --Just nothing. For we do not experience it.
> --What, then, do we know of Thou?
> --Just everything. For we know nothing isolated about it any more.[13]

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[12] Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, 2nd ed., trans Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).
[13] Ibid., 11.

As one regards another person in this manner, one suspends the propensity to predefine her, and instead regards her as *Thou.* Buber's idea of genuine meeting as a "suspension of anticipation," intersects Ellsworth's thesis regarding the indeterminacy of interpersonal encounters. Charles Bingham notes this facet of Buber's conception of dialogue.[14] His discussion presents us with a reading of the philosopher's writings that, like Ellsworth's work, values the fact that we "miss" reading each other accurately, and that we cannot really know for sure who it is we encounter in our personal interactions. Citing Maurice Friedman's reading of Buber, Bingham has this to say about the difficulty of definitively capturing identity:

> Identity, instead of being limited to steadfast representation of *who I am*, needs to be established by the surprise of *who I turn out to be.* Buber's 'centre of all surprise' refutes such deterministic notions as *Folk*, and it questions the predefined hierarchies embodied in such notions...Buber's 'centre of surprise' is suspicious of the ways group identification can go murderously awry.[15]

Who I turn out to be,[16] is then, not a function of social patterns of interaction. It is instead produced by the interruption of the hermeneutic dialogue that had thus far put persons in their place through the symbolic. *Who I turn out to be* is the surprise that emerges when we recruit Buber's notion of the I-Thou dialogue. It inhabits the creative potential of the gap that occurs when we "miss" each other in our address. The surprise of *who I turn out to be* emerges when the ongoing hermeneutic dialogue is suspended so that: "...No system of ideas, no foreknowledge, no fancy intervene between I

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[14] Charles Bingham. *Schools of Recognition: Identity Politics and Classroom Practices.* (Maryland, USA: Rowman &Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2001).
[15] Maurice Friedman, Martin Buber's Life and Work, The Middle Years 1923-1945 (New York: Dutton, 1983), 192: Cited in Bingham, *Schools of Recognition*, 65.
[16] Bingham, *Schools of Recognition*, 65.

and Thou...No aim, no lust and no anticipation intervene between I and Thou."[17] In this space of suspended dialogue, what emerges is Buber's "centre of all surprise." In this space, it is possible for the small exceptional gestures of the merchants in Mexico City and the young person in Vancouver to be received with a different type of hope. This space is a respite from a system where raced, classed and gendered persons, plus their ideas and their actions, are assessed for their value as objects—things--in hierarchical social space.

This space of respite, however, collapses in an instant. It has to, because society still needs to exist as a coherent dialogic space. As Buber reminds us, "Every Thou in the world is by its nature fated to become a thing, or continually to re-enter into the condition of things."[18] In Mexico City, Raul Banda and Lucia Salazar and I are still merchants and tourist who encountered each other at the Metro Copilco. In Vancouver, the exceptional youth still has to negotiate his place in society.

Yet in the realm of the mediated dialogue that we return to and cannot escape, we can wait for that exceptional moment. It is a moment when we can allow ourselves to be surprised by the answer of someone who turns out to be someone else, someone we would fortunately "miss" in our attempt to put them in their place.

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[17] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* 11.
[18] Ibid., 17.

Plate 5: *Location Unknown 1*, 2005.

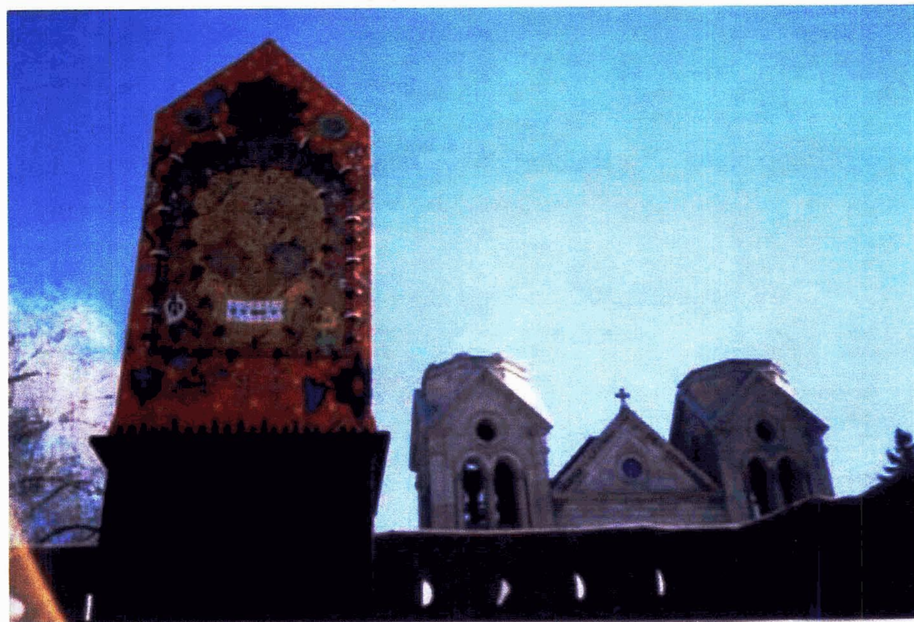

Plate 6: *Location Unknown 2,* 2006

Plate 7: *Location Unknown 3*, 2003

Chapter Five

GAZE and COUNTERGAZE

Gaze in dialogue, dialogue in the gaze

The gaze is primarily a relational term. It is part of a relational dynamic that goes beyond the scope of interpersonal relationships. It is in this sense part of the hermeneutic dialogue in which consciousness and existence happen. As an aspect of the inescapable dialogue that we enter, the gaze is already always present. We play with the gaze and it plays us into becoming players presenting play that *IS* (for an elaboration of this, please see Plates 11, 12 and 13 on pages 87, 88 and 92). This dynamic more often than not goes on unarticulated. It takes place under the radar of our explicit awareness.

Just as we can engage in discourse and not be aware of the power of *parole*[1] to define and redefine objects and persons, more often than not, we are not aware of the power we hold as we gaze. We are unaware of our gaze and how it affects our shared social spaces. Chances are, we also are only vaguely aware of how we ourselves are put in our place by the gaze and its action.

The gaze is powerful when its presence is obscured, when we vaguely are aware of it. And yet it is always present and exerting itself. Following

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[1] See p. 28.

Sarte, one can say that the gaze is located in what one senses when one is being seen.[2] Once the gaze and its action become visible, the gaze loses much of its power. This is why I make a case for making the countergaze an aim of education. I aim for the moment of insight when the gaze and its action are exposed. This means that in the art classroom, the gallery and other places where art education takes place, we can find ways to search for and find traces of the valuing system that the gaze creates.

We can find ways to locate the gaze within and around the boundaries of the art object. We might even find that it is located in us as viewers. Perhaps, by understanding how we have a part to play in the workings of a collective gaze in our social spaces, we may be able to take action towards a more just society. Towards this end, I investigate accounts of the gaze that have something specific to say about the makeup of our relationships in social space.

Engaging with theories of the gaze

In an attempt to understand the power of the gaze, I primarily draw on and explore the works of three theorists. John Berger's, Laura Mulvey's and Michel Foucault's accounts of the gaze all suggest an unequal relationship between the gazer and receiver of the gaze. One could say that their various explanations of the unequal relationships in society expose different facets of the gaze and its way of enacting its power in a particular social space.

John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* is arranged as a series of both written pieces (with pictorial references) and purely visual essays. This book is based

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[2] See Sartre, *Being and Nothingness.*

on a production of the same title aired by the British Broadcasting Corporation. Elaborating on the ideas found in Walter Benjamin's essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,"[3] Berger points out that our technical ability to reproduce original works of art has opened up new ways for us to redefine its meaning and value.

The ability to mass-produce images enlarges the scope of the viewing audience. This in itself makes the original precious in a different way. Aside from the meaning its creator intended it to have, originals have a unique place as being precisely that--the original from which copies are made. (Today, there are original pieces that command large amounts of money as a commodity in the art market.) There is another important way that the capacity to easily manufacture multiple copies of art has transformed the original artwork's value. The capacity to copy also multiplies the possibilities of how a picture may be used. The original becomes more valuable not only as a commodity but as a point of reference.

To illustrate, Berger, in one of his essays, presents his reader with a portrait of a young woman.[4] As one views this image, it is easy to forget that the face originally graced an allegorical scene in a classical work; it is a detail from a Botticelli. As a cropped and framed detail, it can be transported to other social spaces. Whether its new location is a wall in a room or a page in a textbook or the cover of a blank book that serves as a thirteen-year-old girl's journal, the portrait of the young girl has value as a detail of a Botticelli. It is

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[3] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," In Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans Harry Zohn, 217-251 (New York: Schocken Books, 1988).
[4] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 25.

able to lend a certain value to its new setting, especially to those who understand its original context. As the source of a detail for commercial or personal uses, the Botticelli takes on new meaning; it is the source of a visual quotation.

Visual quotes are all around us. By some special coincidence, I entered the room that I was to occupy for a month in Mexico City, and was greeted by a framed reproduction of Velasquez's *Las Meninas*. Because I was already interested in making this work central to my current project, this image had a personal meaning for me.

What they have on the walls of the *Metro Copilco* platform, is another example of the practice of referring to important works of art when designing space. The regard held for the original is transported to the new context in ways that retains some of its original meaning and value. In Mexico City, using images of Leonardo da Vinci's frescos communicates that the local culture has ties to the more global history of Western art. I wonder though: Why do works of certain artists carry more prestige when they are quoted? Just as citing certain authors in an academic work lends the work some standing in a field, borrowed images lend some credibility to the site where they are exhibited or shown. But which images? And by whom? Berger points out that certain people and institutions are in a better position to manipulate an image's meaning and its effect on an audience. In his various essays, he illustrates that it is a combination of available technologies and the opinion of those with influence that determines which art and whose art will be prized. Once again, I am reminded of the couple who design and sell jewelry by the

turnstiles of the *Metro Copilco* in Mexico City. They are not among those with the influence to set trends.

In various ways, Berger demonstrates that the value of an art piece is not internally determined by artists or by the inherent properties of a medium. He specifically illustrates how the development of oil painting in the European tradition is linked to what a privileged class in society fancies.[5] Berger shows how technique, subject matter and composition often serve to display the material wealth and status of those who commission the paintings. The patrons as a group, to a large extent, directed the development of oil painting as an art form.

What does this say about our valuing system? Why do we give attention and space to certain images and reproductive techniques? Why do some people have such influence in the development of a practice? Are they aware of their gaze? These are questions that Berger's work provokes as he leads us to an understanding of relationships in the social space that surrounds art.

Laura Mulvey, for her part, expands on ideas from psychoanalytic literature to explain the dynamics when one gazes and another receives this gaze. In her seminal article "Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema,"[6] she refers to the work of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan to explain how the gaze has the power to define its object. She points out that for Freud, the

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[5] See the fifth essay of Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 83-112.
[6] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema" in *Visual and Other Pleasures*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 14-26. The article was written in 1973 and originally published in *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975), 6-18. This essay is often included in collections of essays in the fields of Visual Culture Studies and Literary Theory. See for example: *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Inc., 1998); and *Visual Culture: The Reader*, eds. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1999).

pleasure of looking is an objectifying act.[7] She mainly uses Lacan's work, however, to build her explanation of how visual pleasure is utilized in cinema. Specifically, she employs Lacan's conception of the *mirror stage*[8] to elaborate on the development of subjectivity and fantasy. Mulvey explains:

> The mirror phase occurs at a time when children's physical ambitions outstrip their motor capacity, with the result that their recognition of themselves is joyous in that they imagine their mirror image to be more complete, more perfect than they experience in their own body.[9]

A toddler encounters himself in the mirror. Yet even if this appears to be a personal encounter with his image, this moment of gazing at himself does not occur in a vacuum. This image of a more accomplished self originates from images shared with other persons. As Mulvey puts it, this stage "prepares the way for identification with others in the future."[10] The encounter with himself in the mirror prepares the child to be *petit object a* to himself and to others. [11]

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[7] Mulvey, "Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema," 16.
[8] See Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage" in *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans Allan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 1-7.
[9] Mulvey, "Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema," 17.
[10] Ibid.
[11] See Jacques Lacan, "The Gaze as *Object Petit a*," in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psyho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans Alan Sheridan (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1981), 63-119. According to his translator, Lacan prefers that the understanding of the concept *object petit a* emerge as it is used. The *petit a* derived from the idea of object in Freud's theory, is differentiated from the term *Autre* or *grand Autre*. Lacan also insists that the terms remain untranslated from the French. See Alan Sheridan, "Translator's Notes." In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psyho-Analysis*, 282.

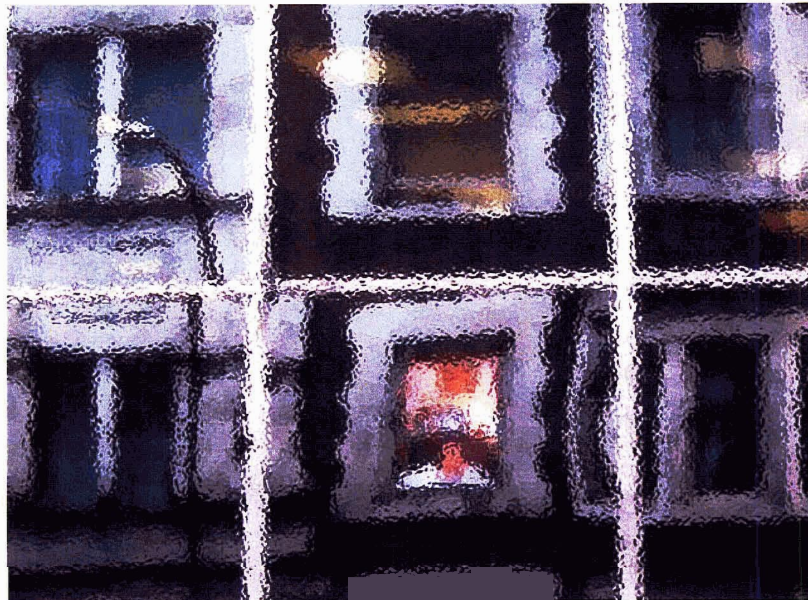

Plate 8: *autre 1*, 2006

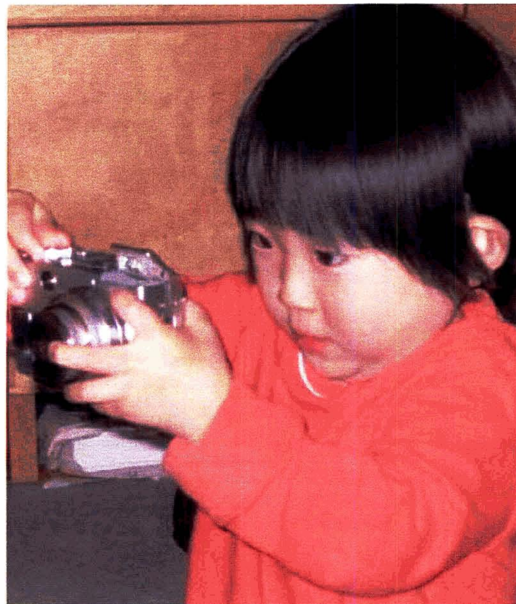

Plate 9: *autre 2*, 2006

In her work, Mulvey elaborates on the association Lacan makes between the image of the more complete self and the future development of fantasy and desire as the child becomes part of the symbolic order. By addressing the dynamic of desire, the filmmaker is able to manufacture images for the viewing pleasure of the spectator. The filmmaker may be able to convince the spectator that the film is made for him. According to the early work of Mulvey, this ideal spectator is a man.

In the 1970s Mulvey and Berger separately came up with the term "male gaze" in their writings on film studies and art theory respectively. As they refer to the gendered gaze, they highlight the unequal relationship between men and women. Mulvey explains that in life and in cinema, the man is the "bearer of the look;"[12] which means that he is the one who can gaze and the one whose fantasy is addressed by images.

> In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact.[13]

John Berger echoes Mulvey when he points out that "men act and women appear."[14] He elaborates:

> The essential way of seeing women, the essential use to which their image are put, has not changed. Women are depicted in a quite different way from men -- not because the feminine is different from the masculine -- but the 'ideal' spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of the woman is designed to flatter him.[15]

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[12] Mulvey, "Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema," 19.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 47
[15] Ibid., 64.

To support this claim, Berger demonstrates how the depiction of the nude throughout its history remains fundamentally the same. The woman on display remains the object of the male gaze. Berger illustrates the unchanged quality of this relationship by referring to Manet's painting of a known prostitute. Berger discusses this nude in relation to that of Titian's, painted three centuries earlier: "If one compares his Olympia with Titian's original, one sees a woman, cast in the traditional role, beginning to question that role, somewhat defiantly"[16]. He points out that Manet's *Olympia* faces the presumed spectator with a direct unwavering look. In contrast, Titian's *Venus of Urbino* averts her glance. *Olympia* may have questioned the day's requirement for modesty, but she retains her role as the object of the male gaze.

Berger contends that by the mid twentieth century, the woman still finds herself in this receptive position. Part 2 of the BBC documentary series on which the book, *Ways of Seeing*, is based, shows Berger in the middle of a conversation with women, sitting around a coffee table. One of the participants captures the plight of women of her generation as she describes ways women communicate their availability and passivity. She describes how a proper woman comports herself: "I stay in seven nights a week...and wait for him to call..."[17] Perhaps women today have taken a more active role. But perhaps the gaze still IS...

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[16] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 63.
[17] *Ways of Seeing*, VHS, British Broadcasting Corporation, 1972.

Plate 10: *The gaze IS*, 2006

I ended what has not yet begun
Even before a premonition formed possibilities
In the morning after, before the candle was lit
Dressed before getting naked
I slip past the body that isn't in the unmade bed
That rustles in the silence I impose
In superposition of regret and relief
The cat is dead and not
In between space, time, lives
In the end before the not yet
I begin the cycle of IS

Plate 11: *Cycle of IS*, 2005

The gaze is puzzling. Why are we unaware of its action? Why are we unaware of our own gaze as it acts in social space? Berger provides a possible explanation. He presents a rather interesting twist to how the bearer of the gaze is able to direct relationships in social space. He points out instances when those who traditionally possess power tend to exhibit a degree of disinterest. As a case in point, Berger compares the disinterested stance of male models with the more invested attitude of women in advertisements printed around the time his book and Mulvey's article were published in the 1970s.

Berger explains how certain persons create for themselves an image of success. Influential patrons require that oil paintings around them and about them call attention to their status. Likewise, the more contemporary publicity shots are meant to illicit envy. In this sense, the person who is able to gaze calls attention to himself. This is how Berger describes this dynamic:

> You are observed with interest but you do not observe with interest-- if you do, you will become less enviable...It is this which explains the absent, unfocused look of so many glamour images. They look out over the looks of envy which sustain them.[18]

For one to successfully draw looks of envy upon oneself, one must rely on an envying audience/public/kingdom to confirm one's image. Berger notes that the unevenness in the exchange is not only between the male and female but also between the colonized and the colonizer and between social classes. Regardless of who are involved, the interaction Berger describes is a one-sided transaction. One cannot expect the attentiveness to be reciprocal because the one who can gaze can afford to be disinterested as far as others are concerned.

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[18] Berger, Ways of Seeing, 133.

Yet, while he or she exhibits disinterest, the one who can gaze actually needs others to remain interested in him or her. We could say then that the one who can gaze needs mirrors: If one is a celebrity, this mirror could be one's public (fans perhaps); and if one is a king one's subjects could be mirrors. Mirrors in a nonreciprocal exchange comply to meet the celebrity's or king's image of their more complete selves.

Initially, Mulvey also describes the relationship between the bearer of the look and the object as one directional. Her early work suggests that it is inherent in the nature of men to gaze and women to accept this action on their person. She later revises this idea and acknowledges that the relationship between the viewer and viewed is not set in stone; it is subject to redefinition. In a follow up to "Visual Pleasures," Mulvey considers how a female spectator exercises her gaze when she takes on the position of subject. In the article, "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema' Inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)," she explores how the female, not just the male, may be one who also searches and acts on her fantasy.[19] As such, the female view can also be the bearer of the gaze.

I wonder though, if this is not just a case where roles are switched? In Mulvey's and Berger's discussions, persons seem to be fixed in their dialogical positions throughout their interactions. In his essays and in the BBC documentary, Berger largely deals with the one directional flow of power as he

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[19]15. Laura Mulvey, "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasures and Narrative Cinema' Inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)" in *Visual and Other Pleasures*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 29-37.

illustrates how the man directs his gaze at the woman, the colonizer towards the colonized, and the king towards his subjects.

But as I see it, it is actually possible for participants in dialogue to be both bearers and receivers of the gaze *at the same time.* The exchange of gazes has the potential to be more dynamic and it can even be reciprocal. However, for this to happen, the parties involved need to challenge the ongoing to and fro of dialogue that is already taking place. I am interested in the potential challenge to the play of power that apparently takes place in social space. This possibility is to me, something worth hoping for.

How can this ability to question the gaze be encouraged? During Lacan's mirror stage, the dynamic of the ongoing to and fro of dialogue is already being established as the child recognizes itself as itself and also as other (or as *object petit a* or the gaze). In this phase, the child is acquiring an understanding of its relationship to the gaze. At this stage, the child is developing the desire for the more complete image it sees as it gazes at itself in the mirror.

During the mirror stage, the child is also learning to use others as its mirror. And it is learning to see itself as other (*autre*). It is in this sense that the child internalizes the gaze. And at the same time, the child internalizes the ongoing dialogue—the to and fro that is already taking place.

The child not only puts others in their place, the child is already putting himself or herself in his or her place in social space. It is from this place in society that he or she engages and perhaps even resists the gaze.

What does it mean to resist an internalized gaze?

Waiting my turn to speak
"Keep going to the limit of endurance,"[20] Man Ray says

Then out of turn I say what is forbidden
You still gaze, postmodern Pygmalion.

And find myself in a spiral outside spiral
You put me in my place

I Paint *myself* gone
I put you in your place

Plate 12: *Enduring the gaze as IS*, 2006 March 31

[20] Man Ray, "Object of Destruction," *This Quarter 5*, no. 1, special Surrealist issue (September 1932), 55.

The gaze acts to maintain order in social space. It is most effective when it does its work inconspicuously, and when it acts as an internalized mechanism of control.

This is one of the aspects of the gaze that Michel Foucault investigates in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* In this work, Foucault discusses methods of surveillance used by different types of governing bodies. Throughout his book, he describes institutions of power, each with its own particular mechanisms for maintaining order in a specific type of society. This quote from Foucault gives an overview of what he sees to be the different ways these economies[21] control their populace:

> We have, then, the sovereign and his force, the social body and the administrative apparatus; mark, sign, trace; ceremony, representation, exercise; the vanquished enemy, the juridical subject in process of requalification, the individual subjected to immediate coercion; the tortured body, the soul with its manipulated representations, the body subjected to training. We have here three series of elements that characterize the three mechanisms that face one another... They are modalities according to which the power to punish is exercised: three technologies of power. [22]

To illustrate the manner by which the power of a sovereign is maintained, Foucault's book starts with an account of public torture and execution. The narrative opens with a scene that shows a prisoner being dismembered by horses pulling at his extremities. It is an event that takes place in the town square. As the "vanquished enemy" is tortured and executed, this spectacle leaves its mark, not only on the body of the prisoner, but also on a witnessing crowd. As the spectacle becomes imbedded in

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[21] Foucault uses the term "economies" to roughly stand for structures of power.
[22] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 131.

memory, the man at the centre of the event becomes an example. The public display of torture had the purpose of preventing future transgressions against the monarchy.

I find it interesting that instead of letting an action build in intensity, Foucault starts with the high point of a story. He puts the account of torture, the culminating consequence of a deed, at the beginning rather than the end. As I read on, I find that by starting with a rather gruesome display of power, the writer is able to show the transformation of the gaze from a glaringly obvious occurrence in social life to something that fades to the point where it becomes only a presence. In succeeding sections of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault presents the reader with progressively more subtle displays of the regulating forces in social space. He proceeds to compare the spectacle of torture to increasingly more inconspicuous methods of keeping a society in order.

Foucault portrays a second economy of power as a "gentler" system of control, one that involves the observation and discipline of the body, mind, and "the soul." Unlike the spectacle, the force that forms "docile bodies" is less direct in its action. It leaves a mark on the body, not necessarily by breaking skin. Discipline leaves its mark in invisible places. It, for example, leaves the body with the ability to sit still, to work hard, and even to deprive itself. The exercise of disciplinary practices is exemplified in such enterprises as the training of the soldier, life in a seminary or monastery, and in the "rehabilitation of the soul" through other such institutions (even a school).

Foucault discusses a third type of economy of power. It is one that leaves its mark with even greater finesse. This structure of control is fashioned after Jeremy Bentham's *Panopticon*, an architectural model for a prison.[23] The panoptic gaze is even more subtle in the way it maintains a societal structure.

Unlike the methods of surveillance previously discussed, this particular gaze acts in an impersonal manner. The force of the monarchy was directed brutally towards the body. The training of docile subjects on the other hand is aimed also at a person's mind and soul. What both mechanisms have in common is that they are directed at individual persons.

In the system of control based on the panopticon, there is a shift. In this shift, the enactment of power, instead of being directed towards individuals is instead diffused within a social unit. In this way, the mechanisms that maintain the social order permeate the economy as a whole. For this reason, the panopticon is lauded for providing an efficient mechanism for meting out punishment and eliciting compliance. This shift, as we shall see, is considered by Foucault to be significant:

> Shift the object and change the scale. Define new tactics in order to reach a target that is now more subtle but also more widely spread in the social body. Find new techniques for adjusting punishment to it and for adapting its effects. Lay down new principles for regularizing, refining, universalizing the art of punishing. Homogenize its application. Reduce its economic and political cost by increasing its effectiveness and by multiplying its circuits. In short, constitute a new economy and a new technology of power to punish.[24]

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[23] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 200.
[24] Ibid., 89.

In the design of the panopticon, all prison cells openly face inward towards a tower at the very centre. In these cells, lights never go off day or night. This makes each prisoner always fully visible to anyone watching from the central location. While the inhabitants of each cell are always fully exposed, those who observe them from the tower are invisible to the occupants of the cells. Ironically, backlighting in the watchtower reduces the visibility of its interior. Hence one cannot even know for sure if and when there is a warden on duty.

After some time, it would no longer even matter whether there is actually someone occupying that space in the tower. Eventually the physical presence of a guard or warden may not even be necessary. The prisoners can simply assume that someone is always watching them and monitoring their movements. Whether they are being observed or not, they would simply act as if there is always someone assessing their behaviour. There is no need for individual searches or interrogations. Such is the efficiency of the panoptic gaze.

The shift from the personal application of power to one that is more diffused and "disindividualized"[25] is significant because at one point, another shift takes place--the inhabitant of each cell in the panopticon becomes responsible for watching himself or herself. Inmates learn to regulate their own actions in the panopticon. They, in other words, have internalized the gaze. And in this way, the gaze hides even deeper. The gaze is in us. We are

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[25] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 202.

not always aware of its action—even when we vaguely feel its presence. The gaze in us directs our actions inconspicuously.

Foucault suggests that the shift from external control towards bodies and persons in earlier economies to the internalized control of the panopticon is a significant break in the social order. True, some mechanisms are better suited to maintain order in particular economies, but as I see it, always, there is a part of us that compels us to be part of an ongoing dialogue and leads us to adopt a panoptic gaze.

I think that this internalized gaze always has been a profoundly influential force in every social space in history. As Berger points out, throughout history, there always has been that aspiration called prestige and it has always been accompanied by an emotion called envy. These did not emerge only in this era or in the last century. We find evidence of these in the artwork produced for nobility and the new bourgeoisie class that later emerged.

The image of a "better" self has always been a source of desire. In a democratic society that diffuses power to its citizenry, the internalized gaze has only burrowed deeper as we are fed with more images to want, desire and strive for. In a society where there is a semblance of equality, we lead ourselves to believe that it is possible to achieve what subjects of kings could not attain--to reach that place where one could conjure a more spectacular gaze. Ultimately, I believe it is the desire for human connection and possibly the fear of its loss that imbeds the gaze inside us.

But perhaps there was one moment of freedom before an individual's incarceration in the panopticon. Perhaps there was this moment in front of Lacan's mirror, when the child sees herself and recognizes herself without the conditions attached to and imposed on her by the gaze.

> Unable as yet to walk, or even to stand up, and held tightly as he is by some support, human or artificial...he nevertheless overcomes, in a flutter of jubilant activity, the obstructions of his support, and fixing his attitude in a slightly leaning-forward position, in order to hold it in his gaze, brings back an instantaneous aspect of the image.[26]

This reaction of surprise, the joyous recognition of the child that it is his image in the mirror, could only be for an instant. But perhaps this instant of surprise is worth recovering. But not because of some romantic notion about childhood innocence; before desire and fantasy overwhelmed our relationship with others and ourselves as other. Following Lacan, perhaps this is the instant when the symbolic world that mediates our consciousness from the time of birth, finally calls the child to engage actively in and with it.[27] The child is just at the threshold of a new form of engagement.

But then, in a second the child crosses, and thereafter, the gaze relocates itself so that it is internalized. I'd like to capture that moment in the threshold—the instant before the child steps over to become an active objectifying player in the social order. In that moment, the action of the gaze is suspended.

The gaze predefines us; it positions us socially; and it is what keeps us fixed in these definitions and places in social space. Can we suspend its action

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[26] Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," 1-2.
[27] For Lacan, the mirror stage is presymbolic.

again? Can we allow for that moment of surprise when we meet each other without the expectations of the gaze? If we can suspend the action of the gaze yet again, then I believe we can really play with the possibility of a dialogue without a predetermined end. Perhaps this can happen for some fleeting moment in a space of respite. This hope is worth exploring.

Chapter Six

A SPACE

"...it did not take me long, in that first grade class, to know who was strong and who was weak and, except in dreams, I didn't side with the unloved."[1]

Gaze in the space of respite*

The space of respite can be a sanctuary from the panoptic gaze. In this space we can suspend our propensity to predefine persons and things.
I continue to explore this theme in this chapter of my thesis.

The space of respite is a hopeful place. It is where we allow persons we meet to surprise us by *who they turn out to be.*[2] Ordinarily, we tend to make others and ourselves conform to a preformed vision of what we should be. The moment of surprise, when the action of the gaze is interrupted, becomes a possibility when we enter another type of engagement. In his writings, Martin Buber envisions a genuine meeting between human beings, one characterized by mutuality.[3] Central to Buber's philosophy of dialogue is the distinction he makes between the twofold attitude persons assume when relating to persons

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[1] Vivian Gussin Paley, *You Can't Say You Can't Play* (Cambridge, MA and London England: Harvard University Press, 1992), 11.
* Written in memory of Rock Destromp.
[2] Bingham, *Schools of Recognition*, 65. This is also cited on page 70 of this thesis.
[3] See Donald Berry, *Mutuality: Martin Buber's Vision* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985).

and things; either as I-Thou or I-It. These relationships can be designated as one between subject-subject and subject-object, respectively.

In the space of dialogue where we engage with each other in the manner of I-It, we are objectified just as we objectify others. As I see it, we can equate this to the social space where an ongoing dialogue is already taking place, and where the action of the gaze actively ascribes value to things and persons. This is where we somehow feel the need to know how we are defined and where we are situated socially in relation to others. To have to live in the I-It world is, according to Buber, an inescapable condition. As he puts it; "without the objectifying work of the I-It standpoint, we could not live."[4]

Buber points out that this is not the only condition of our existence. Even in this world of object-object engagements, it is necessary to see beyond the instrumental value of others. According to Buber-- even if without *It* man cannot live, "he who lives with It alone is not a man."[5] As social beings, without the objectifying work of the I-It standpoint, we cannot exist. However, to have a fully human life, we also should aim to engage in dialogue as I-Thou.

There are moments when we must free ourselves; we must suspend the pressure of expectations imposed by the gaze that resides in and around us. Unlike our engagement in the ongoing dialogue where the action of the gaze is given free rein to put persons in their place, a genuine meeting between persons reins in the gaze and frees persons from its action.

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[4] Buber, *I and Thou.* 34.
[5] Ibid., Please also note that following the conventions of his time, Buber uses "man" to equally refer to men and women.

To relate as I-Thou means stepping out of the sphere that ordinarily defines our existence. Through our mediated existence in the symbolic world of I-It, we connect to each other. Even if we step out of this social space, it will have to be only in fleeting moments. These moments are as transitory as the instant in the threshold when the child sees himself as Thou, in that first instant of recognition in front of the mirror.[6] Thereafter, it will need to define itself as it defines others--in an object-object relationship.

But at that moment before entry into the symbolic, and in the fleeting escapes from this order, one gets to meet another as Thou. When meeting as I-Thou, persons suspend the propensity to predefine and put the other in their place. The other person is stripped for a while, of the burden of description. The person met as *Thou* is emptied of characteristics—but only for a moment. Being in dialogue as I-Thou is necessarily a fleeting event. We may move into it and then we must go back to the ongoing dialogue where we engage with each other as I-It. This is how Buber describes the tension when one commits to engaging in the manner of I-Thou:

> I can take out from him the colour of his hair, or of his speech or of his goodness. I must continually do this. But each time I do it he ceases to be Thou[7]

The idea of a genuine meeting between persons allows a suspension of our anticipated responses. This moment, however, is fugitive and can only be held on to for in an instant, for as Buber reminds us, "Every Thou in the world

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[6] This is a reference to Lacan's "Mirror Stage,"in *Ecrits*. See page 97 of this thesis.
[7] Buber, *I and Thou,* 8.

is by its nature fated to become a thing, or continually to re-enter into the condition of things."[8]

In the I-It, the gaze conserves the status of things as is. So as we re-enter the condition of things, there is always a semblance of the familiar. The gaze tends to keep us within the scope of the conventional, stretching its limits only to a point. It acts to preserve the configuration of the social space—a hierarchical structure where we are put in our place.

When Foucault, Mulvey and Berger present us with their accounts of the gaze, they hold up mirrors so that we get to see a wide view of our social space. Sometimes, in the mirror, we also may be able to see ourselves as we act as instruments of the gaze—and engage with each other in conventional ways. While life is necessarily made up of the common and mundane, there must still be something in us that desires something more than what the I-It can offer.

Buber suggests that we yearn for more than mere status to put us in a better place in a hierarchical structure. Perhaps our desire for more than just a more prestigious position in social space stems from what he calls an "instinct for communion."[9] This could arguably motivate us to keep going back to the I-Thou. It could keep us working through the tension of moving between these two states of dialogue—of continually conjuring the I-Thou as we lapse continually into relating as the familiar I-It.

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[8] Buber, *I and Thou*, 17.
[9] Martin Buber, "Education" in *Between Man and Man* (New York: Macmillian, 1965), 88: Cited in Berry, *Mutuality*, x.

Time and again, we are reminded that there is more to dialogue than what we currently live. Even John Berger, who gives us some tools to study the gaze and the positionality of persons in conventional exchanges, calls attention to the possibility that there could be *more* to our human relationships. He also alludes to some unbounded exceptional moment when we give way to genuine meeting. This is where his analytical path intersects Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue. They both recognize that the exceptional finds meaning only in reference to the usual and the conventional in the world of objects. To illustrate, Berger explores the traditional relationship of the male as spectator and the female as object using an important distinction between the terms naked and nude.

> To be naked is to be oneself.
> To be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not recognized for oneself.
> A naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude. (The sight of it as an object stimulates the use of it as an object.)
> Nakedness reveals itself.
> Nudity is placed on display.[10]

To be seen as an object is to be seen in the manner of I-It. What then does it mean to be naked and "oneself?"

Conventions of the traditional nude frame Titian's *Venus of Urbino.* As well, Manet's *Olympia* is defined as a break in the tradition of the submissive reclining nude. In contrast, nakedness is not easy to characterize. Berger describes the way artists portray the women they love as unique. He contrasts the depiction of a nude with that of the naked subject. He notes that:

> There are a few exceptional nudes in the European tradition...Indeed they are no longer nudes--they break the

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[10] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 54.

> norms of the art-form; they are paintings of loved women, more or less naked...In each case the painter's personal vision of the particular women he is painting is so strong that it makes no allowance for the spectator.[11]

I agree with Berger that nakedness makes no allowance for the spectator. But I propose that what is captured on the canvas involves more than a personal vision of the painter. The lover-painter actually gives the naked subject a greater say in who she is. Loved women are allowed to surprise and go beyond the fantasy of the one who loves her. W*hat she turns out to be* transcends expectations of her painter-lover. To be herself means that the subject is able to suspend being predefined by the gaze.

In the space of respite, one takes refuge from the gaze. In this sanctuary, one is freed for a fleeting moment from the fate of the nude who is clothed in convention, description and the weight of one's place in social space. The naked loved one is stripped of that burden.

Nakedness, as Berger describes it, is akin to being Thou in the space of respite, where the *surprise of what one turns out to be*[12] is welcomed.

Once again, dialogue in social space

Berger characterizes the nude as passive and receptive. In contrast, there is something alive about the loved subject. Perhaps this is because she plays a role in redirecting the gaze. She is an active subject that counters the action of the gaze.

Entering the space of respite permits persons to continually redefine what it means to be a native person, black, Asian, Mexican, man and woman--

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[11] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 57.
[12] Bingham, *Schools of Recognition*, 65. See also p. 70 of this thesis.

what it means to be *me*--the me that can continually surprise because I am not fixed as an object of the gaze. The action for social change does not only have to rest with the bearer of the gaze. As Paolo Freire puts it, it is not only the oppressor who denies the other the right to engage in the act of defining or naming. Injustice is likewise perpetuated when the oppressed fail to claim their right to define their world. According to him:

> Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Hence dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming—between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them. Those who have been denied the primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression.[13]

Thus, while the nude and her painter are bound by the conventions that define their roles, the beloved may take on the role of instigating the revolutionary move from the dialogic structures that make our roles in social space rigid and fixed. It needs a step back from dialogue for one to gain the insight on how one is formed, and predefined as one engages in it.

The ongoing dialogue may be inescapable. But in the space of respite, it is possible to find sanctuary from the prison of its conventions. The beloved may in effect say "I am not who you say I am--I refuse your definition of me, I resist being put in my place...my love." And with this, she may invite others to join her in suspending the ongoing dialogue in social space.

Perhaps Freire's definition of love is another expression of the mutuality Buber describes when we meet as I-Thou. Indeed, love is vital in the

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[13] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 88.

pedagogy of Freire. For him, love is associated with allowing each other to define a shared world. As he puts it:

> The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. It is thus necessarily the task of responsible Subjects and cannot exist in a relation of domination. Domination reveals the pathology of love: sadism in the dominator and masochism in the dominated.[14]

Domination persists because it can ride the inertia of an ongoing dialogue—a dialogue that does not always allow persons to exercise their "primordial right to speak their word." In schools, this silence may be exemplified in curriculum that presents the histories of people in a way that confirms and enables the existing social structure to go on as usual. Racism, classism and other forms of oppression continue to be part of the human experience because we ourselves are complicit in maintaining an ongoing dialogue.

Freire suggests that both the oppressed and perpetrators of injustice are held in the same cycle of what he calls limit situations.[15] The oppressor needs the oppressed to be in a subordinate position for the former to maintain his or her place in social space. For example, as I pointed out earlier, Berger demonstrates that the bearers of the gaze--the ones who hold power—rely on the envy of others to maintain their status.[16]

Persons aim for prestige and positions of influence. On one level, this is an issue of survival. What is at stake here is not only the possession of

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[14] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 89.
[15] Ibid., 99-100.
[16] See Berger, *Ways of Seeing,* 133. See also pages 89-90 of this thesis.

material resources and wealth. Just as relevant to the quality of our lives is our access to and participation in knowledge and cultural production. Hence, recognition of persons as contributors to this cultural milieu may be explored as another area where questions of justice may arise. Theories have emerged to explain how we may consider the distribution of wealth in society and address the need for cultural recognition for all people.[17]

Persons are put in their places not only in our face-to-face interactions but also and perhaps more so in the texts and the official narratives that define people as members of dominant or minority groups. These places are inculcated, not only with a corresponding set of expectations regarding the appropriate ways to speak, act and respond--these places are impressed with a version of a story. Sometimes the recognition of one's story has to be claimed.

Unless the oppressed claim their right to tell their story in their own voice, the status quo will go unchallenged. Susan Dion Fletcher illustrates this point as she relates this story:

> While standing in line at the grocery store, I heard a voice behind me say, did you leave your horse back home on the reserve? Jolted by the comment, I looked over my shoulder and realized that the remark was directed at the cashier in the next aisle. It was the day before Halloween and all the cashiers were wearing costumes. The young woman to whom the comment was made was a young white woman dressed as an "Indian Princess." In response to this unsettling event, I retrieved a copy of Jan Elliot's 1991 article "America to Indians: Stay in the Nineteenth Century"[18] from my car and gave it to the young woman. I

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[17] See for example, Nancy Fraser, "From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age," in ed. C. Willett, *Theorizing multiculturalism: A guide to the current debate* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1998).
[18] Jan Elliot, "America to Indians: Stay in the Nineteenth Century" in : Cited in Susan Dion Fletcher, "Molded Images; First Nations People, Representation and the Ontario School Curriculum," in *Weaving Connections: Educating for Peace, Social and Environmental Justice*," eds. Tara Goldstein and David Selby (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2000).

> suggested that reading the article might help her understand why I, a First Nations woman, found her attire offensive. The woman, who appeared to be in her late teens responded apologetically, *I didn't know...*[19]

The cashier and her conversation partner shared an image of an "Indian Princess"[20] and a taken-for-granted-as-true account of First Nations history. It is unlikely that they intended any harm towards the group of people they referred to. In fact, the young woman was respectful and responsive to Fletcher when the latter objected to how her cultural group was being portrayed. The effect of fixing the identity of a people to a romantic past is not benign. Fletcher elaborates on this point. She explains why she took the pains to correct the cashier's portrayal of a First Nations woman as an "Indian Princess:"

> In the article I gave to the cashier, Jan Elliot maintains that white people love Indians as long as they're riding horse back across the grassy plains, wearing beads and feathers and living in picturesque tipi villages.[21] Native people are tolerated, even admired, as long as they stay within established borders. Those borders are built and maintained by and for non-native people in their everyday lives. Native people appear as the mythical and inferior other in school textbooks, in movies, on television and in all sorts of advertisements. The representation both reflects and perpetuates an understanding of history that justifies Canada's lack of response to our land claims, social issues and demand for self-government. When "real Indians" are the mythical people of the past, First Nations people advocating for the restoration of their rights become marginalized, written-off as militants and labeled as a threat to law and order. [22]

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[19] Susan Dion Fletcher, "Molded Images; First Nations People, Representation and the Ontario School Curriculum," 342.
[20] In her notes, Fletcher points out that she is "describing a change in understanding from the negative stereotpe of the 'Indian' through the multicultural 'Native' to the respectful recognition of First nations." Ibid., 362.
[21] Jan Elliot, "America to Indians," : Cited in Fletcher, "Molded Images." 343.
[22] Fletcher, "Molded Images," 343.

While the one to one encounter between the cashier and the author may have affected change in a person, Fletcher suggests that for social change to occur, action has to be taken at a more systemic level. Just as it took the civil rights movement to change the day-to-day life experiences of black people in the American South, it takes a good edit of the official narrative to transform the dynamics between a mainstream public and the First Nations of Canada and the United States. At the very least, official history needs to be reconsidered.

The young woman in the grocery did not realize she was being disrespectful when she used the stereotypical image of an “Indian Princess” as inspiration for her costume. She simply “didn’t know” that it was an offense to a cultural group. Still, in her ignorance, she was complicit in perpetuating an ongoing dialogue. What does it take to change oppressive narratives?

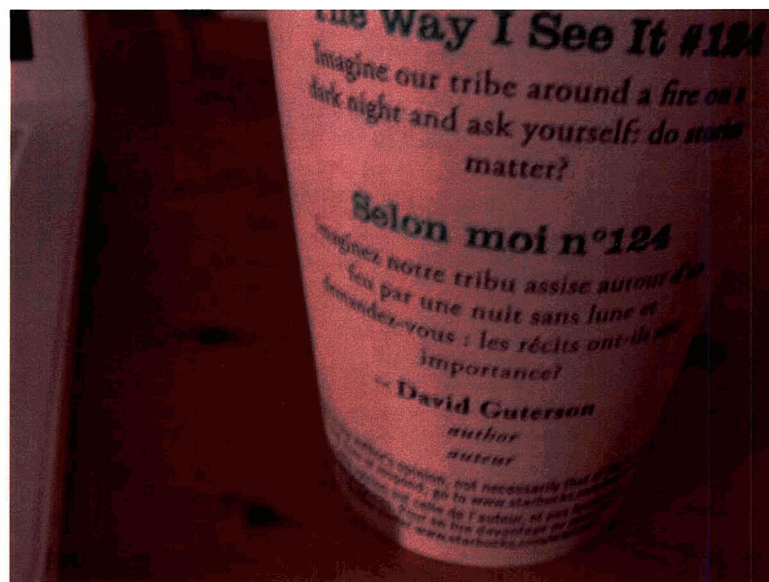

Plate 13: In public space, an invitation, 2006

Recently, I discovered that quotes from a variety of sources are printed on cups that hold my morning coffee. One day, as I absently turned one of these paper containers in my hands, a question caught my attention. Someone asks: Do stories matter?[23]

The complete quote on this particular cup strikes me as a reflection of this society's values. It pictures us sitting around a common circle and part of a mutual and reciprocal exchange. I see this picture in my university, where we often arrange our chairs into circles rather than the traditional rows that many of us grew up with. Even in the after school daycare where I worked when I first arrived in Canada, the children sat around in a circle when we had our sharing time.

In a commercial space such as a common coffee cup, one can be controversial only to a limited degree. The sentiment expressed in this site is publicly endorsed. At the very least, the message on this particular Starbucks cup lets us know that it is acceptable to tell our stories. But is the picture of society as a circle a fair reflection of who we are to each other? Can we be assured that all stories will get a fair hearing?

Fletcher's article reminds us that storytellers and their stories are not valued equally. To a large extent, the picture of us sitting in a circle as we share, is misleading. The way I see it, the more faithful picture is one that portrays us standing on metaphorical platforms as we give an account of our histories and our lives. From positions in society, we speak. As we do so, we must keep in mind that social space does not have a level plane. Since there is

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[23] David Guterson, a quote on a Starbucks coffee cup.

still inequality between groups in society, it is pertinent to ask: Whose story gets recognized? Which version of a story is deemed most credible?

Stuart Hall contends that "Power & ideology attempt to fix the meaning of images and language."[24] In his videotaped lectures on *Representation and the Media* for the Open University in the United Kingdom, he points out that an event starts to mean *something*, only at the moment it is talked about and presented—such as when it is talked about and presented as news in print media and television. According to Hall, the same event, such as the unrest in Northern Ireland, can be made to mean different things according to how it is portrayed and represented.[25] Especially when there are conflicting interests, news stories will be reported differently and will mean differently to those on opposite sides of a conflict.

In the same vein, the landing of European explorers in the Americas may be called an invasion or a conquest, depending on whose version of history is being considered. Fletcher is specifically concerned with the effect the dominant account of history has had on policy and ultimately on the lives of First Nations people. Some stories have the force to form a public perception of individuals and their culture. The cashier in Fletcher's story acted in accordance with the flow of this aspect of the ongoing dialogue that we all share in social space.

Once a version of a story becomes the official narrative and finds its way into books and lectures that are read and presented in the classroom, it

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[24] Stuart Hall, *Representation and the Media* (DVD), produced by Sut Jhally (North Hampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 2002).
[25] Ibid.

takes on the cloak of an authoritative text. It then becomes harder to refute. This official narrative becomes especially entrenched when the teacher is seen primarily as someone who "deposits" knowledge into his or her students in what Freire calls the banking method of education.[26] He finds this approach to teaching and learning to be contrary to his conceptions of mutual dialogue and love. In other words, education that sees the teacher-student relationship as a conduit to merely pass on knowledge draws people into a relationship of domination--whether they intend for this injustice to be perpetuated or not. It is conservative not only because it preserves official narratives but also because it perpetuates a certain type of exchange. This ties us to a relationship where the oppressor and oppressed are both not free.

Walter Wink, in his book*, When The Powers Fall: Reconciliation in the Healing of Nations*, describes the "system of domination" as "a social system characterized by hierarchical power relations, economic inequality, oppressive politics, patriarchy, ranking, aristocracy, taxation, standing armies and war."[27] Wink links the origin of this system, historically, to the establishment of kings.[28] He then traces how domination still exists in our era of democracies.

In oppressive regimes, more often than not, victims are not given the opportunity to tell their stories. In many of these administrations, bodily harm or the threat of it are used to silence its subjects. The telling of stories plays a part in the process of reconciliation between victims and the

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[26] See Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppessed*,
[27] Walter Wink, When the Powers Fall: Reconcilation and the Healing of Nations (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press,1997), 4.
[28] Wink writes from a Biblical point of view. He considers the period before the establishment of the first king of Israel, to be a more democratic order.

perpetuators of injustice, because the right to free speech and expression is one of the major ways that power is displayed.

The telling of stories is vital to the process of attaining a degree of freedom from domination. Towards this end, Wink has taken on the project of writing a series of "nation-specific case studies from Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and Central America."[29] Through the case studies, those who have suffered injustice are given the chance to tell their own accounts of events. To elaborate on the role the telling of stories has in the struggle of victims to be heard, Wink quotes Robert J. Schreiter:

> Victims of violence and suffering must tell their story over and over again in order to escape the narrative of the lie. As they recount their own narrative, little by little they begin a new narrative of truth that can include the experiences of suffering and violence without allowing these experiences to overwhelm it.[30]

In effect, the telling and retelling of stories restores to the victim the ability to determine how she is defined just as the artist opens a space for the loved subject to have a say in how she is portrayed. The subject can also do this for herself. She becomes able to redirect the action of the gaze in social space, as she gives a version of events as they *mean* to her. Breaking the hold of the internalized gaze that functions to keep herself in check, she is able to see herself as *Thou* and not just object to the one who can gaze. In dialogue, she then says; "I am not who you say I am--I refuse your definition of me, I resist being put in my place." She can direct this statement to the bearers of

[29] Wink, *When the Powers Fall*, vii.
[30] Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation* (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992) 71: Quoted in Walter Wink, *When the Powers Fall*, 21.

the gaze. This includes, not only the artist who portrays her, but also herself as she portrays herself to the artist.

While I agree with Fletcher that change must take place at the systemic level if we are to address social justice issues, I suggest that individuals may nevertheless step into the space of respite and refuse to be predefined and put in their place according to their race, gender and cultural background. Rosa Parks for one had done this, and her resistance to the rules and norms of her day became the catalyst for constitutional change.

If I am to interpret what Freire means by the oppressed loving the oppressors enough to free them, then refusing to be fixed in a predetermined place is a loving act. Rosa Park's act of resistance was a loving response to the gaze—for in a sense, we are all oppressed by a system that insists on an official narrative that puts persons in their places. In the apartheid system of South Africa, playwright Athol Fugard, was considered subversive even if he could have identified as white.

Even those with relative privilege are not free. The oppressed and oppressor are bound by the same limit situation. Both must therefore be willing to pay a price for freedom if we are to escape the silencing force of the system of domination.

Dialogue in the space of respite

In January-Febuary 2000, Vancouver based Pacific Theatre staged a production of *Master Harold...and the Boys* by Fugard.[31] I watched the play after hearing a good review about it from my professor, Sharon Bailin. When I read a line in the program, I understood why she recommended it. In his notes, director Morris Ertman identifies grace as the theme of the play. Grace, according to him, "breaks the repeating pattern of human responses."[32] Defined in this way, I could see grace as a force that could possibly interrupt the action of the gaze and change the direction of an ongoing dialogue. Grace seems to be a "soft" word beside more weighty terms such as morality, ethics and even the word love. The play illustrates that grace can also have an *edge.*

As in many movements for political and social transformation, in South Africa, artists and writers have had a role in instigating change. *Master Harold* was written in 1982 in the midst of apartheid. Like many of Fugard's works, this play explores the effect the political system has had on the psychological and interpersonal dimensions of life in his society. Even if the rest of the world recognizes the blatant injustices of apartheid, I argue that when one is living under this system, it is not easy to see its underlying prejudices. These therefore need to be brought to light. Novelist Nadine Gordimer shares Fugard's interest in exposing her fellow citizens' complicity

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[31] The play "was first performed at the Yale Repertory Theatre, New Haven, on 12 March 1982, directed by the author." The edition and notes I use is from: Athol Fugard, "Master Harold...and the boys," in *Athol Fugard: Selected Plays* (Oxford and Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1987).
[32] Morris Ertman's "Director's Notes" for Athol Fugard's *Master Harold...and the Boys* staged at the Pacific Theatre in Vancouver in February 2000.

with apartheid. She makes the claim that, "every white South African needs to be born twice: the second time into an awareness of racialism."[33]

In varying degrees, many people react with remorse when they realize that they are participants in a racist way of life. Fugard was among those who were deeply disturbed by the realization that he had contributed to injustice. Dennis Walder, who wrote the introduction to the collection of Fugard's plays, notes that the playwright's work is characterized by a "painful, guilt-ridden intensity."[34]

Master Harold is a loosely autobiographical play.[35] In it, Fugard explores the relationship between a black servant and Hally. The latter is a character that the author modeled after himself,[36] and the black servant in the play is someone who had worked for his family from the time Fugard was a child. This man is immortalized in *Master Harold and the Boys* as the character Sam.

Sam Samela is indeed an important figure in Fugard's life. Walder cites numerous sources that trace a dialogue between the characters Sam and Hally, to an actual incident in the playwright's young adulthood. Speaking of that incident, Fugard remorsefully recalls: "I spat in a black man's face. I cannot talk about it to this day."[37]

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[33] Dennis Walder quotes Gordimer in, "Introduction," In *Athol Fugard: Selected Plays* (Oxford and Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1987), xviii.
[34] Walder, "Introduction," xviii.
[35] Ibid.
[36] His full name is Harold Athol Lannigan Fugard; See Walder, "Introduction," In *Athol Fugard: Selected Plays*, xi, xviii.
[37] This incident is in Colin Smith, "White Man on a Tightrope" (interview), in *Observer*, 6 January 1974; and the "Programme Note" in, *Dimetos*, at the Edinburgh International Festival, 1975: Cited in Walder, "Introduction," xix.

This is an intensely pivotal point in both the play and the life of the young man. To understand why this is so, one has to consider that a system that obligates the segregation of races in public spaces, confuses interpersonal dynamics in the private realm. The domestic structure of a household puts people who are supposed to be segregated in public social spaces in intimate contact with each other.

On a personal level, in the play and in life, the black servant—Sam—filled a void left by an absent father in Hally's life. In his memoirs, Athold Fugard writes that Sam Samela was: "the most significant—the only—friend of my boyhood years."[38] In one poignant scene in the play, Sam flies a kite with Hally. After a pleasant time jointly engaging in this activity, the interaction between parental figure and child ends abruptly. At the end of the afternoon, they part. Years later, Master Harold and Sam would reminisce about that day:

> HALLY: Strange isn't it.
> SAM: What?
> HALLY: Me and you.
> SAM: What's strange about it?
> HALLY: Little white boy in short trousers and a black man old enough to be his father flying a kite. It's not everyday you see that.
> SAM: But why strange? Because the one is white and the other black?
> HALLY: I don't know. Would have been just as strange I suppose, if it had been me and my Dad...cripple man and a little boy! Nope! There's no chance of me flying a kite without it being strange.[39]

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[38] Taken from *Athol Fugard: Notebooks 1960-1977*, ed. Mary Benson (Faber, 1983), 25-27: Cited in Walder, "Introduction," xix.
[39] Fugard, "Master Harold," 25.

In the play, the character Hally did not fully see the relevance of that scene in the park. This was what the young man remembered of that day: "The way it ended with us was too straightforward...me on the bench and you going back to work. There's no drama in that."[40]

The character Hally had not noticed that in the park, there were benches with signs that were labeled for "black only" and for "white only." In the social spaces of South Africa during apartheid, black and white folk were required to stay in their specified places in the park. Flying the kite was an excuse to ignore such an obligation to the system.

As the kite flew in the air, the child experienced a reprieve from his loneliness. As a child, Hally did not notice the constraints the apartheid system imposed on him and on Sam. Sam on the other hand, could not have been as oblivious to the social conditions that surrounded them. He knew his place. Hence, he did not join Hally on the bench labeled "white only." Despite his compassion for Hally, the servant could meet the young boy's need for companionship only in part. The kite could not stay up in the air. It had to come down—and Hally and Sam had to sit on different benches in the park in apartheid South Africa. They could escape the ongoing dialogue around race and place only for a moment.

While the kite flew in the sky, the barrier of race did not exist. While the kite flew in the sky, the white child did not have to think about the system of apartheid. Sam, on the other hand, flew the kite in spite of his awareness of the policy of segregation. He suspended his compliance to segregation for the

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[40] Fugard, "Master Harold," 25.

sake of a lonely young boy who needed the nurturing presence of a parent or a parent figure.

In the play, the events in the park happened as a flashback. The character Hally first appears on stage as a man on the verge of adulthood. At this stage in his life, he was still unresolved and still lonely. Addressing the grown-up Hally, Sam attempted to *fly the kite*—so to speak—in the spirit of friendship. He uttered words of understanding to help the young man come to terms with his feelings of anger towards his ineffectual father. But to Hally, this gesture from Sam no longer meant the same as it did when he was a boy. The young adult read Sam's gesture of compassion as the action of a servant who takes liberties beyond his place in the household. In response to the servant's kindness...

...Hally spat at Sam.

The ensuing dialogue put the servant in his place.

Hally and Sam could not escape the narrative of apartheid for too long. In the following conversation, a third person, Willie, joins them:

> SAM: [*Taking out a handkerchief and wiping his face.*] It's all right, Willie.
> [*To Hally.*]
> *Ja,* well you've done it...Master Harold. Yes, I'll start calling you that from now on. It won't be difficult anymore. You've hurt yourself, Master Harold, I saw it coming. I warned you, but you wouldn't listen. You've hurt yourself *bad.* And you're a coward, Master Harold. The face you should be spitting in is your father's...but you used mine, because you think you're safe inside your fair skin...and this time I don't mean just or decent [*Pause, then moving violently towards Hally.*] Should I hit him, Willie?
> WILLE: [*Stopping Sam.*] No, *Boet* Sam.
> SAM: [*Violently.*] Why not?
> WILLIE: It won't help, *Boet* Sam.

SAM: I don't want to help! I want to hurt him.
WILLIE: Then you hurt yourself.
SAM: And if he had done it to you, Willie?
WILLIE: Me? Spit at me like I was a dog? [*A thought that had not occurred to him before. He looks at Hally.*] *Ja.* Then I want to hit him. I want to hit him hard!
[*A dangerous few seconds as the men stand staring at the boy. Willie turns away, shaking his head*].
But maybe all I do is go cry at the back. He's a little boy, *Boet* Sam. Little *white* boy. Long trousers now, but he's still a little boy. [41]

Later, rather than break his relationship with Hally, Sam approaches the young man and utters these reconciliatory words: "I've no right to tell you what being a man means if I don't behave like one myself, and I'm not doing so well at that this afternoon. Should we try again, Hally?"[42] Regardless of where apartheid society may have placed him, Sam chose a gracious response.

In his book, *What's so Amazing About Grace*,[43] Philip Yancey cites many uses of the word grace: There is the idea of the grace period where penalties are suspended when one is late returning a book or a DVD; grace issues are free issues of a magazine; and nobility is addressed as *Your Grace* as a sign of respect. Grace connotes a reprieve from what one can usually expect—a punishment, a fine or a fee. It is also an exceptional honour that sets the noble apart from the common. Yancey also points out that grace is the root for the word grateful--an attitude opposite of having a sense of entitlement. Instead of the right to speak, it claims relationship. Grace is therefore...well...gracious. Just as the response of Sam to Hally was gracious.

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[41] Fugard, "Master Harold," 45-46.
[42] Ibid., 47.
[43] Philip D. Yancey, *What's so amazing about grace?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997).

Sam flies a kite with Hally, although it was not his job to do this for the child. As a young man, Hally initially fails to acknowledge this kindness. He instead insists that Sam learn to stay in his place in the household. He reminds the older man that he is merely a servant. He insults Sam. Sam in turn, could have retaliated by hitting back. And if he had chosen to hold a grudge, it would also have been understandable. But entering the space of respite, Sam *flies a kite* again.

Grace has an edge. Sam chose the response of grace as an affront, not to Hally, but to the narrative of apartheid that encourages a pattern of responses. One such response is to confirm one's subjection to the master. Another response that keeps to the pattern of the ongoing dialogue involves a power struggle. Sam could have, from then on, called the young man "Master Harold;" or, Sam could have hit Hally. He chose neither of these.

Sam refrained from engaging in the dialogue of domination and subjugation. He instead offered Hally an invitation to engage in a dialogue of mutuality, just as they did when they flew their kite in the South African sky. In their dialogue in the space of respite, the exchange was not between *Master Harold and the Boys* but between Hally and his friend Sam. With Sam's response of grace, the action of the gaze in social space is subverted.

Each time *Master Harold...and the Boys* is performed in various venues in the world, the grace of Sam is immortalized. Hally made sure of that.

Art, education and the countergaze

The countergaze is the moment of insight when we become aware of our gaze as it puts us in our places in social space. The realization that grace had been extended is likewise a significant moment—a surprise. Maybe grace will be reciprocated by grace—a mutual exchange.

But more often than not, students and teachers like everyone else in society are not engaged in mutual exchanges. In social space, we exist in instrumental relationship to each other. In the necessity of the I-It world we interact and live. As we interact with each other in this world, the ongoing dialogue proceeds as usual; we keep the dialogue around us going. Through the relative predictability of our patterned responses, we put each other in our places. We put ourselves in our place through the action of an internalized gaze.

As an aspect of dialogue, the gaze is present in social spaces such as the office, the government building, the home, streets and sidewalks, the movie theatre, the museum and the school. It is either returned uncontested or, it is reciprocated in ways that present a challenge. In life and in the play, Sam undermined the gaze that kept apartheid going. He used the force of an uncommon response to interrupt the ongoing dialogue that surrounded him.

An unexpected gesture causes us to take pause. It brings us, so to speak, out of our situation. Metaphorically, it means stepping outside the stage to survey a tableau, or outside the frame to survey a picture. In the brief period that we step outside the ongoing dialogue—there is potential for the countergaze.

The countergaze is that moment when we see ourselves in social space, acting and interacting with others—being put in our place as we put others and ourselves in places in a hierarchy. The countergaze is the insight that can potentially change the direction of dialogue, of the gaze, and the composition of social space. It is the insight we need so that we are made aware of the part we play in perpetuating unjust ways of regarding others. Hopefully we would choose to subvert aspects of dialogue that perpetuate the devaluing of persons.

Works of art such as a play, a piece of literature, a motion picture and a painting may likewise lead us to take pause. Playwrights, poets, short story writers, novelists, movie directors and painters represent their social spaces. *Master Harold...and the Boys*, for example, is a representation of the social space of South Africa at a particular time in its history.

Art promises to elicit the moment of insight because within its frame, the gaze is frozen for scrutiny. Even then, the meaning of what is depicted in the scene we survey is not fixed. The art object is likewise subject to the valuing system of the social order from which it emerged. The play created by Fugard was, in the context of apartheid, subversive whereas in theatres in North America, it is highly regarded. Morris Ertman, the director of the Vancouver production of *Master Harold,* saw grace as its central theme. In the context of my dissertation, I consider the play for its potential to elicit the countergaze. As an instrument for drawing out this moment of insight, the play and other art forms have a place in a curriculum that aims for a more democratic society.

As an object that has a place in an ongoing dialogue, *Las Meninas* has something to teach us about the nature of the engagement between the artist, his king (who is the bearer of the gaze in this case) and their relationship with the dialogue that "catches" them in its cycle. It is also an example of how we may address the gaze at work in the institutions that govern our lives today.

Chapter Seven

LAS MENINAS

More often than not, the student and the teacher, like the artist and his patron are not engaged in a mutual exchange. In our schools we engage with each other in an ongoing dialogue that we can escape only for moments at a time. For moments at a time, it is possible to be free from the constraints that keep dialogue from being mutual and reciprocal. In the classroom, it is possible for the student and the teacher to enter the space of respite where they can suspend the action of the gaze.

The teacher may hope that the student would not merely give back deposited knowledge. In reality, as a general rule, the school system requires her to evaluate and fill-out a report card on the student. Likewise, the student more often than not is compelled to meet certain expectations. She or he must make the grade. The student meets the teacher's regulating gaze and aims to satisfy what is expected, not necessarily because she is coerced, but because that regulating gaze acts on both the teacher and student.

When I bring Velasquez's *Las Meninas* into an educational conversation, I do so for the understanding it can give us about the action of the gaze. The gaze is put on pause within the frame of the painting—as if a snapshot was taken of King Philip IV's court in the seventeenth century. It is

not, however, a candid picture of life in the household of the king. It is a composed piece, with figures arranged by an artist in a way that describes the social space from his point of view. The painting is a representation and a response. And as a created piece, the painting also becomes an object subjected to the action of the gaze and a part of dialogue.

Las Meninas is one artist's representation of the social space of Philip IV's household. But its value as a commentary on social life extends beyond the time period in which it was created. The painting frames one artist's account of the relational dynamics in a monarchy. However, its relevance extends to other systems of governance.

This artwork has become part of the dialogue that surrounds us today. It remains relevant as a piece that considers the relational dynamics that the gaze creates in our social institutions. These institutions—such as governments and schools—bestow on persons the right to be bearers of an authoritative gaze, the gaze that leaders in a group possess. On the other hand, an internalized gaze somehow makes the rest of us comply with the play of dialogue in social space.

As an object that has a place in an ongoing dialogue, *Las Meninas* has something to teach us about the nature of the engagement between the artist, his king (who is the bearer of the gaze in this case) and their relationship with the dialogue that "catches" them in its cycle. It is also an example of how we may address the gaze at work in the institutions that govern our lives today.

Plate 14: An encounter in Mexico...*Las Meninas,* 2003

> *I entered my rented room. I looked around and my eyes rested on a framed picture—Las Meninas was there in Mexico City. My bed and the reproduction of the painting were positioned in such a way that it was the last scene I would see before I turned off my lamp each night. The streetlight filtered in. As I dozed off each night, I saw the shadows of the figures—the ladies in waiting, the princess, the painter and the rest. They accompanied me in my temporary home.*

The original painting hangs at the Museo del Prado in Madrid where it keeps on encountering and countering the gaze of the contemporary viewer. And because it is widely reproduced and written about, it engages even those of us who have no opportunity to see Velasquez's original.

As educators who aim for change towards a more democratic social environment, we can take our cue from how Velasquez engaged the gaze, and set the stage for the countergaze. We can learn from the way the artist interrupted the action of the gaze of authority as well as the internalized gaze that binds both the king and his subjects in dialogue. Imbedded in Velasquez's work are several suggestions for responding to the gaze of the king. But while the institutionally bestowed gaze may be more apparent, the gaze that somehow compels us to agree with its direction is less so. We may be under the illusion that our actions are always completely autonomous. But they are not. Out of our fundamental connection to each other we are compelled by the action of the shared gaze. The artist's work also suggests how we could deal with this more obscure internalized gaze. As such Velasquez carefully composed his masterpiece in a way that encounters the presence of this gaze as much as it meets the institutional gaze of the king.

The visual composition of *Las Meninas* shows the artist in a room in the palace of King Philip IV. It is a scene that includes the princess, her companions and the artist at work. A key element in this piece is the mirror painted as its focal point. The mirror is significant because it is the artist's device for extending the two dimensional space of the canvas so that the social space in front of it becomes part of the painting. With the use of the mirror, the spectator becomes part of the scene.

Because of where it is positioned in the composition, the mirror gives us a clue to the artist's intended audience. Velasquez paints the reflected image of the king and his queen as if to say to them; "here you are, surveying us as

we present ourselves to you." *Las Meninas* is the artist's response to that gaze. Hence we can say that the painting is addressed to the bearers of the gaze in the monarchy.

The action of the gaze does not just originate from the head of state. As I previously discussed in chapter five of my thesis, in *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault explains how different economies of power— "the sovereign and his force, the social body, and the administrative apparatus"[1] —use the mechanisms of surveillance to maintain order. According to him the panoptic gaze is most efficient because it exerts its influence by making each person his or her own overseer.[2] This system of surveillance works in a society where; "there is no need for arms, physical violence, material constrains."[3] Instead of physical force, this society needs only the internalized gaze to keep things in order. Foucault elaborates on what it takes to maintain this economy:

> Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorization to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself.[4]

I earlier suggested that the gaze of institutionally bestowed authority and the internalized gaze are simultaneously present in the different systems of power; they do not replace each other.[5] *Las Meninas* interrogates these different gazes in a monarchy.

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[1] Michel Foucalt, *Discipline and Punish*, 131.
[2] Ibid., 195-228.
[3] Foucault, M. 'The Eye of Power' in C. Gordon. ed. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. C. Gordon (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980), 146-65.
[4] Ibid.
[5] See page 97 of this thesis.

Like official narratives that function to preserve the status quo, official portraits are commissioned for the purpose of establishing and maintaining the king's position as head of state. Protocols, conventions and customs also serve to uphold the social structure of a kingdom. Within the hold of obligation, convention and desire, persons are drawn to each other in dialogue. The court painter works in this world of protocol and official duties.

In a sense he works as a type of mirror to the king and his family. This is place of great potential. The way I see it, the closer one is to the bearer of the authoritative gaze, the more that the internalized gaze hides itself. In court life there are certainly protocols to follow. There are, however, also unarticulated expectations on people surrounding kings and bosses, landowners, the great grand mother of a clan, and teachers. We somehow just know that some things are proper and right. We just somehow know that one person or another should be accorded respect. Certainly, there are many instances when that honour has been well earned. What is at issue is that the internalized gaze may take this privilege for granted, such as when certain concessions to privilege are unreflectively claimed and bestowed by virtue of a person's race, gender and class.

Yet in the event that the more subtle gaze is exposed, it is the very closeness to power that positions persons such as the artist Velasquez to subvert its action using the very same conventions and traditions that rely on the action of the gaze.

Following art conventions and court customs of their time, painters tend to return the gaze of the monarch in a largely uncontested manner. Most

of the time, Velasquez painted an impressive King Philip IV. As a portraitist, Velasquez serves as the type of mirror that confirms that the king is one who is able to look and see and gaze at those who pledge allegiance to him. During Velasquez's day, the common person seldom had the privilege of having such a mirror. The common person's wishes—her fantasies—are usually not addressed since this was a privilege bestowed on heads of state, not the common man and woman.

Heads of state, kings and queens, had their portraits painted in an expected manner—in a manner that mirrors their regal position. In a formal and grand sense, the king has the position of being able to gaze and obtain a response from such a mirror. Most people will tell him what he wants, such as with a painting that says "yes, you are king."

"Your majesty, how do you like to dress?"

"Your majesty, should I draw you a bit taller?"

"A bit more foreboding?"

The king and his people are locked in this exchange. What is the king? Is the king really such an extraordinary man that he can gaze at a kingdom of people? The privileged position of the gazer is a king's birthright. Conferred by the state, lineage, a fluke of family, an ordinary human being becomes one who can gaze. Being overseer or gazer is bestowed. This position is bestowed institutionally, textually and discursively by a regime. The king can claim his place by virtue or fluke of his birth. It is nothing personal. Philip can gaze because he is King of Spain--the king of the land, the king of the people, and specifically, the king of court painters.

Most kings of Philip's time claimed this bestowed position of being able to gaze and being able to have *faithful* mirrors that reflect back the kingly image of fantasy, not just in the person of their portraitists, but in all who say yes to reflecting back, uncontested, the expected and demanded image of the sovereign. Sovereigns could have many such mirrors. Sovereigns could claim many mirrors faithful to the accepted image of *King*.

The claim to gaze can be made by invoking an institutional mandate, a textual affirmation or by performance. One can claim that one is born to a position, or one has earned it with a degree or because one has passed the bar or completed several semesters of teacher practicum. One can claim the place to gaze because it is taken for granted: such as men gaze at women--we take that for granted; or we observe children and evaluate—we take that for granted too and we give a grade of B+ to a student. This act of gazing may or may not bother a teacher. One can claim the place to gaze by acting the part of king or teacher. The *taking things for granted* is the barrier to reciprocal exchange. When one takes things for granted, one will not question the image or fantasy one expects of the object of one's gaze. One will not question one's part in perpetuating an ongoing dialogue.

The gaze is ultimately enacted towards persons—persons that are gendered, raced, classed. The gaze is ultimately enacted towards individuals and yet it is impersonal. The king's gaze is directed towards the people of the land as generic subjects—a sea of faces that are nevertheless faceless. In spite of claims that appeal to one's position as king or teacher or rich and powerful—in person to person interactions, one cannot sit in place as gazer

unless there is agreement with the one who receives the gaze. The one who receives the gaze does so because that is what is expected of him or her in the ongoing dialogue.

If we as teachers stand still long enough, our students can become such mirrors, the portraitists of our bestowed and claimed position as gazers. If we do not challenge our collective image of the model student, we will be looking to students to reflect our expectations—our fantasies--of them. This demanding gaze is met by the student and artist either with passivity—as a return of the gaze unchallenged—or challenged by another sort of mirror.

Possibly, at the heart of the gaze that is not passively returned, is an expressed hope that there is an undefined person behind the gaze, behind the position that is institutionally, culturally and traditionally bestowed. There is someone one can respond to that is likewise *human*—a gendered, raced, classed person who nevertheless redefines what these descriptions mean in relation to her or him. But first, this person must recognize the constraints that keep this moment of freedom from occurring.

Velasquez's *Las Meninas* is an example of a different sort of mirror. To elicit the moment of insight about the monarch's social condition, the artist put the reflected image of the king and his queen—a painting of a framed reflection—within the context of a wide view of a social space. The painting includes other members of the household and Velasquez himself. The artist has made himself visible, not only as a submissive mirror, but as someone who has redefined the role of an artist in this particular king's court.

Earlier, I suggested that the closer one gets to the bearer of the institutionally bestowed gaze, the harder it is to notice the workings of the gaze that has been internalized. Caught up in dialogue, such closely engaged persons would need to step away from their social space to see themselves in interaction with each other. Art can be a portrayal of such dialogue. And as such, it invites the countergaze.

When painting the formal portraits of royalty, Velasquez returned the gaze of the king, keeping with the conventions of the time. There are times when the artist did not always return a completely uncontested image of Philip IV; he was not always an entirely faithful mirror to the king.

In claiming agency as an artist who is more than just a faithful mirror, Velasquez puts on canvas what he sees and not just what he thinks the king wants to see. In doing so, he asserts his own definition of his role in the sovereign's court. He is more than a mere instrument that mirrors a powerful image associated with kingliness. The portraitist redefines his role in relation to the king when he paints beyond what the sovereign wants mirrored back to him. As such, Velasquez claims a place for himself as an artist who sees the king beyond how he is defined by his place in the kingdom. As an artist, Velasquez responds as one who invites the sovereign to see him as more than just someone who has a function in maintaining the niceties of court life.

As he paints *Las Meninas*, he challenges the gaze and redirects it. He enters into the space of respite and frees even the king from the constraint of being put in his place by the obligation to bear the authoritative gaze. In a literal sense, the artist puts himself into the same picture as the king so that

he put himself, as a court painter, on a more mutual footing with the sovereign. This is in itself an exceptional move in dialogue because the convention of the day prohibits the personal images of commoners from sharing canvas space with the king.[6] One could say, however, that in this particular painting, the artist did not really break convention, because technically, he painted an image of a reflection of Philip IV and not Philip IV himself.

Perhaps the surprise and wit of this aspect of *Las Meninas* is what causes one to pause and reconsider what one sees in the frame. As an uncommon variation in the ongoing dialogue, this painting invites the countergaze. In the process of composing the elements of the painting, making the preliminary sketch, planning where each figure will face and who will be included in the piece, Velasquez affirms the practices in art during his time. He draws on the very conventions that he nevertheless subverts as he exposes the gaze. He uses mystery, knowledge of perspective, and yes, the mirror, to make us take pause and consider...

Much has been written about what the painting *means.* There are conjectures about what is in the canvas that has its back to us. Is it an unfinished portrait of the king and queen? Or is it that of Philip and Maria Anna's daughter, the Infanta Margarita? The title, *Las Meninas,* means *Ladies in Waiting.* And yet the visual centre of the painting is the princess's head—perspective lines formed by the architectural detail converge on this point,

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[6] Ana Martín Moreno comments on how Velasquez went against convention when he painted himself in the same canvas as the king. See Moreno, *Las Meninas.* Trans. by Nigel Williams (Madrid: Aldeasa, 2003), 26.

naturally pulling the eye to the young girl's face. And one can also say that the viewer's eye naturally rests on the mirror painted on the back wall near the princess's head. In that mirror is the image of the king and the queen, Maria Anna. But the title refers to the ladies around the central figure. These are not anonymous women, by the way. And in fact, historians identify the people depicted in this painting.[7] This gives us a clue that the address of the piece is in one sense specific to the context of the artist. And yet much has also been said about its relevance to the contemporary viewer.

One could stand in front of the life-sized painting at the Prado today and find oneself situated in the imaginary place where the king and queen were supposed to have viewed the masterpiece. But as we do so, we must take care lest we think we can stand in another person's shoes and understand their life in the context of their space.

The painting is relevant to us when we consider the metaphor of the mirror. The mirror is only part of a composition, even if it is certainly central to the piece.

Empty the room but leave the mirror. Or bring the mirror into the back of a classroom or a home, or a homeless shelter, or an office space. Put it on the vanishing point of that particular social space. Put the mirror on a far end and stand in the theatrical fourth wall opposite one's reflection. Stepping outside the frame but facing the mirror, one may see oneself in dialogue and complying with the gaze. We survey our own scene as bearers of the gaze bestowed by the monarchy, the university, a teacher training college--or by an

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[7] Moreno, *Las Meninas*, 12.

invisible social system where being male or from a family of means makes one a bearer of the gaze.

In his painting, Velasquez positions the bearer of the gaze so that king can see himself in the mirror. He can see himself as part of the action in social space. In *Las Meninas*, the king and queen can see themselves orchestrating the tableau by standing outside and inside the frame. Likewise, the teacher may step outside the frame so that she can see her reflected image as part of a social space—her classroom.

And what about curriculum? I suggest that it could likewise be modeled after *Las Meninas*. Lessons in history, art, art making, literature, and other forms of knowledge may be presented as part of a social system. The student may be made aware of how she is able to give meaning to what she learns. She may be made aware of how such knowledge puts persons, cultures, information, and other objects in their place in social space. Perhaps if we see curriculum as another social space, we can set the mirror in the vanishing point so that the reader/viewer is always implicated in the making of meaning—in the making and maintaining of dialogue.

Plate 15: (En)countering the gaze 1, 2006

Plate 16: (En)countering the gaze 2, 2006

Chapter Eight

AN EDUCATION

In Vancouver

I was away from the Philippines for exactly a decade before I went back in June 2003 for a month's visit. I had to take a deep breath as I stood at the threshold of the airport to keep from being overwhelmed. Small gestures on the part of people around me contributed to my feeling of disorientation.

I looked around to see that my mother and I were the only ones not carrying anything. Our bags were carried for us as we were ushered out of the airport to the waiting car. Weaving through the congested roads of Manila, I found the sight of so many people both strange and familiar.

We entered my aunt's house and were greeted by a household that I had not seen in a decade. And again, the house full of people I knew felt foreign to me but familiar. My mother had been back almost every other year, so I was the one who drew a bit more curiosity.

Then finally, we were led to the dinner table. In anticipation of my mother's and my arrival, it was already set with some of our favorites. At that moment, I did not mind feeling a bit disoriented—I realized that I would not have to cook a single meal or wash a single plate in the month I was to stay in the Philippines. Suddenly, I was back in a lifestyle that I had taken for granted

until I immigrated to Canada. My month in the Philippines was a full-fledged vacation from my routine in Vancouver.

When I found myself in Manila in June 2003, it became clearer to me that in Vancouver, I tend to define myself differently. In the decade or so that I have been in my current city of residence (actually North Burnaby, a suburb of Vancouver), I have had *an education*.

When I came to Canada as an immigrant, I somehow had to frame my life in Manila in a way that would make sense in my new surroundings. Likewise, during my short visit back to my childhood home a decade later, I in turn saw my life in Vancouver from a different perspective. As I travel from one to the other—from Vancouver to Manila to Vancouver—I find myself reflecting on how these social spaces have formed and continue to form me. I am also able to reconsider how I in turn affect social space. I am able to reconsider how I engage in the dialogues in Manila and in Vancouver when I stand back and survey my social space from a distance, and yet see myself as part of it.

I realize, however, that I do not have to travel very far geographically to experience these shifts in social location. To a lesser degree, I experience a bit of the Philippines where I now live. In a city with a large population of Filipino immigrants and with my siblings and parent living close by, it is easy to find pockets of *Filipiniana* in Vancouver.

When I'm in the company of other people from the Philippines, sometimes we converse in that particular way immigrants do—we go back and forth between our memories of the Philippines and our current lives in

Vancouver. We tell each other stories, and in doing so, we are able to frame our lives as if they were a painting for our contemplation. The telling of each other's stories is more than a casual activity, even if it occurs in a casual setting. On one such occasion, another Filipino woman and I had a chance to look back at our lives in Manila. This is a story about our first hour of meeting each other.

I recently bumped into a former student, Peter,[1] in a Japanese restaurant in my neighborhood. It was towards the end of his dinner with his fiancée when I happened to pass by their table, on my way to order take home sushi. They asked me to join them, so I decided to sit and chat.

I was introduced to Anna,[2] and as we said our hellos, she recognized my accent. It turns out that she and I are both originally from Manila. Over dessert of green tea ice cream, Peter listened as Anna and I recounted common remembrances about our childhoods in the Philippines. He had heard some of these stories before. But now, he seemed intrigued at how much we knew of each other even if we had just met.

One of the experiences we shared had to do with our rather sheltered upbringing. As a result of our type of childhood, we grew up to be adult women who were unsure of ourselves when we engaged in athletic and outdoor activities. We both had to overcome the idea instilled in us as girls—that we should avoid falling, getting muddy and getting big muscles. Peter listened and then came to a moment of realization—facing Anna he exclaims; "that explains why you were unsteady on the bike!"

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[1] Not his real name.
[2] Not her real name.

I could relate to Anna's experience on the bike. When Rock—one of my first friends in Vancouver--and I first biked from the Waterfront station to Stanley Park, he was puzzled at how terrified I was to ride down a short span of public road. His patience tested but still trying to be encouraging, he commented; "but the cars are not moving!" The parked cars were no threat to my safety. But the idea of being on the regular road intimidated me. So I walked my bike until I reached a designated path. I did not have the confidence in my ability to balance because I had a fear of falling.

To overcome my fear of falling, I had taken a mountain biking course run by women for women. Even at the level one beginner course, I noticed that most of the women in the course were far ahead of me—they somehow knew how to keep themselves on the bike. They went down a small hill without fear, and when the ground got a bit uneven or when we had to go over a not so large log on the trail, they somehow kept themselves from being thrown to the thorny blackberry bushes that lined many of the trails in British Columbia. They even managed to keep their wheels turning through the sticky mud on the way to Crystal Falls in one the Coquitlam trails (in a suburb of Vancouver).

In my first round of mountain biking classes, I miserably failed to overcome my fear of falling. But the second time I took the beginner course, I finally heard the words that made me feel more like someone who grew up in Canada. As our instructor spotted each one of us going down a drop in the trails, she commented on my technique: "Good job! Perfect downhill position."

In Vancouver, I had to learn to fall.

Learning to Fall
Fall 2001

We were not allowed to fall as children. I'm going out of my way to learn to fall. It is a new understanding in a foreign terrain. My horizon had ended where it was safe. My boundaries ended where the skin cannot be broken.

As a young woman, ingrained into me is a fear of falling. The nanny did not allow her wards to fall lest she fall out of grace in a land where skin is not broken. We were defined by skin.

There are those with whom I share a fear of falling. In conversations at thanksgiving dinner, family and friends gather. We were all immigrants from the land of safe women--of safe privileged women. We were defined by skin.

We smelled of Johnson's baby cologne as we were chauffeured around in our city of origin. We covered sweat with a whiff of delicate privilege. But then again, we didn't sweat in our privileged tropics. We sweat in the temperate climate of egalitarian Vancouver. Here I wear a different skin. It is broken.

Now I define my body differently. The wounds from the trails heal my inner being. I learn to fall. From my mountain bike I traverse foreign terrain and learn to fall.

I balance in my indecision. Unsure of my balance, I got off my bike. I decided that I'm not going to risk falling today—because the trail was too steep. Also, I'm feeling shaky and not in control of my bike and body going down hill. Not today. Today I am not willing to risk another rendezvous with the earth. That's okay too. It is part of learning how to fall.

Plate 17: Learning to Fall, 2006

The mountain biking course, like a motion picture, a play and a painting, was like a frame through which I viewed an aspect of my childhood. In my childhood I learned to devalue risk taking. I did not consider acquiring physical agility important partly because, in my generation, girls just weren't encouraged to develop such skills. On the other hand, most of the other women in my mountain biking class had grown up in a setting where there was a different value placed on women taking risks and acquiring physical strength. I also think that the confidence to be in control of one's body in space is acquired early in life. This was not something emphasized in our upbringing.

When I first arrived from the Philippines, I worked in an after school daycare. Of all the tasks I was asked to do, the one I dreaded was monitoring the afternoon playtime at the grounds near our centre. I watched with trepidation as the children climbed and jumped from what I then considered pretty high places. The other workers did not seem to think anything was unusual, so I took my cue from them and tried not to cringe at the stunts of the children.

One day though, as I watched a particularly gutsy child, I mustered the courage to ask if it was okay to let her take such risks. The new supervisor explained that it was part of childhood to sometimes fall. I suppose she did not find my question so strange since she herself was a first generation immigrant. I wonder if she too knew what it is like to have to redefine one's person in a different social space.

This got me thinking: The nanny in the Philippines does not have the same place of equality that a daycare worker has in Canada. Is this why the nanny is overly anxious not to let us fall and get hurt? People who care for children play a part in forming a child's sense of physicality. The nanny, the childcare worker and teachers, as bearers of an institutional gaze, play their parts in the developing child's sense of physicality, aesthetics, ethical sense and self worth.

Plate 18: (En)countering the gaze 3, 2006

I suppose this is what we refer to as the hidden curriculum. We subtly create an atmosphere where children develop certain attitudes and dispositions. In the classroom, we pass on messages of worth and value to our students. We do so in both obvious and in more hidden ways. Through the stories we tell them about other places, people, books, history and art, we teach them how to regard and value the persons, things and ideas that make up their social space—we also teach them how to value themselves.

Our students learn to internalize the gaze and then be bearers of the gaze at some place and time in their lives. The countergaze is therefore for them as well as for us-—their teachers, daycare workers, nannies. We need the insight that makes us aware of the action of the gaze in us, through us and around us.

One invites possibilities for the countergaze when one puts an ongoing exchange of gaze and gaze on pause—when one interrupts the dialogue that is taking place. This gives each of us a chance to step out of the frame, then look back and see our reflection in Velasquez's mirror. Each one of us can look and survey the scene that each of us has partly created as bearers of the gaze, and as instruments of the internalized gaze.

In the classroom, how do we put a dialogue on pause? The class I taught the last two summers is called *Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice*. Many of the students who took the course did so after coming out of a semester's practicum experience. Many were in their final semester of courses and were looking forward to the coming school year as teachers in

their own classroom—not as someone else's assistant, or as a student teacher still trying to pass the program.

Hence one of the questions they asked in class was along the lines of: What will I teach this coming September? I understand this concern. For the most part, I believe the concern stems from the desire to take their responsibilities as teachers seriously.

As much as it is important to move on with the task of teaching, I suggest that the periods of pause are just as crucial. In my classes these past two summers, I invited the students to reflect on how they affect their social space—they were invited to reflect on the practicum they just completed as well as their other interactions with the school-aged children whom they deal with on a daily basis.

It may seem counter-intuitive and a waste of time to pause when the day to day business of teaching requires us to be on top of planning what to teach—the topic, the materials, the pedagogy. When I look back to the time I myself was poised to teach my first class, I am reminded of why I asked the same sort of question: *What* am I going to teach? I must admit that on a day-to-day basis, I do not particularly care to face unpredictable situations. As much as I value the exceptional fare, I acknowledge—and also appreciate—the fact that the bread and butter of life is the predictable, defined and continuous.

The first time I taught the curriculum course at the university, I remember going over the course outlines of the professors and instructors who have taught it before me. Their syllabi gave me a starting point for developing my own for the coming semester. In part, I think this is what we

need to be doing. We need to draw from what is already available for us to use. We need some continuity because we are social beings connected to each other through this ongoing dialogue. This connection is what we need for ourselves, and it is also what our students need if they are to be citizens of a society.

But the pauses are just as crucial as the continuity of dialogue because dialogue does not necessarily have to have a predetermined end. These pauses allow us to assess where we have been, and then consider a change in the direction of our learning if we so choose. Just as my fellow biker Anna and I will attest, it was not too late to learn to fall.

Biking is and is not the same thing for the other mountain bikers in my course, for Anna, and for me. Framed by the blackberry bushes that line the cross-country trails, Anna and I not only learned to define ourselves differently, we also redefined biking, hiking, mud, muscles...falling.

In 2003, my visit to Manila in June was followed by a month's stay in Mexico City in October. Because I had a chance to live in three different countries, that year, I became more aware that an encompassing dialogue links us all in a global social space. Yet in different parts of the world there are common and nuanced understandings of various ideas and activities, such as biking, and childhood, friendship and commitment, driving, safety, what one considers a crowd...what one defines as art.

Education in art...it is and it is not, *that certain way*

The public library in my North Burnaby neighborhood has a large glass face that provides a view of the mountains. This feature makes this one of the places I head to when I want to spend some time writing.

In the building are two adjacent walls set aside to show artwork from the community: the drawings, paintings, prints, woven pieces, collages and other creations made by residents of the city. For a few weeks last summer, drawings of a group of children were on display. The biographical note on their teacher describes her as a graduate of the National Academy of Arts in Taipei, with a major in Western Painting. Two of her oil paintings—a still life and a scene with boats--are on the wall that is adjacent to the one where the grouping of her students' works is hanging. The paintings are rendered in a recognizably Western style but are signed with the Chinese characters of her name. She has been teaching children "in the fine arts" for ten years.

In one sense, the teacher's pedagogical intent for her students is transparent. She is passing on what she has learned about Western Art. The teacher displays her students' growing proficiency in drawing in that certain way. *That certain way.* It is the same crosshatching or shading with graphite or charcoal that is part of many draftspersons' repertoire of techniques. The drawings of the children conjure a picture of the students, with sketchpads on their lap, practicing techniques of drawing from their spot around a plaster model of a head, or fruit, or other collection of still life objects—not an uncommon type of scene.

As the works of the children are displayed, I notice that there is something familiar about the work of the students. I recognize *that certain way* of drawing. Even without direct person-to-person exchanges between us, the students, the teacher, and I are in dialogue. We are encompassed and part of the influences in the world that make possible a simultaneous sense of

familiarity at the same time that there are areas of doubt. There is something familiar about the drawings made by the students, even if there is something unknown about the works on display.

That certain way of drawing is found in other places in the world, such as the copy of Leonardo da Vinci's drawing of a man's head (thought to be his self portrait) at the Metro Copilco in Mexico City. The students' work at the public library may not be as expressive nor are they as finely executed as the work of the master, but there is still something in their drawings that alludes to the legacy of the Renaissance.

Only the resemblance to *that certain way* of drawing does not mean exactly the same thing in every era or in the context of different places in the world. When the art teacher brings *that certain way* of drawing into the classroom, either as a technique students can use or through works of the masters, she brings together with *that certain way* of drawing, a curriculum.

In the summer of 2003, the Vancouver Art Gallery had several simultaneous exhibits on drawing, collectively entitled, *Drawing the World: From Masters to Hipsters.* My guess is that for many of the visitors to the gallery, the exhibit, *Italian Drawings from the National Gallery of Canada*, is a comfortable entry point to explore conceptions of drawing. The group of art pieces in this space presents a familiar notion of what excellent examples of drawing look like. Daina Augaitis, curator of a concurrent exhibit, writes about the significance of drawing during the Renaissance. She suggests that during this period in art history, drawing was seen as an art form in itself, a finished expression.

> In the Western art world, drawing rose to unparalleled heights of acclaim and sophistication during the Italian Renaissance, when the practice was deeply rooted in ideas and theories of its time and was seen as the highest order of art.[3]

She then describes the fluctuating importance and function drawing takes on in the order of art in the twentieth century.

> While drawing's place as a medium in the hierarchy of art swayed back and forth, its essential function at the very foundation of all visual arts has remained constant and it has continued to be the hard-working handmaiden of more spectacular forms. It has been perceived first and foremost as serving in a significant, but subsidiary, role for working out ideas or preparing a work of art, for being an action rather than a finished work, a means toward an end.[4]

The exhibit spaces beyond the collection of Italian drawings of the sixteenth to eighteenth century challenge what we have come to recognize as drawing. As the curator of the exhibit, *For the Record: Drawing Contemporary Life*, Augaitis, makes the concept of drawing an ambiguous one. The examples selected for this exhibit make us question what we have come to expect when we are told; "this is a drawing." For instance, the work of Natasha Mc Hardy called *Weed* is composed of connected plastic drinking straws, connected and disconnected thread, connected and disconnected string, connected and disconnected candy wrappers, connected and disconnected electrical wire, and connected and disconnected pieces of other objects we usually throw away. In the exhibit space at the Vancouver Art Gallery, the work of Natasha Mc Hardy is considered a drawing. And yet the

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[3] Daina Augaitis, *For the Record: Drawing Contemporary Life* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2003), 11-12.
[4] Ibid., 13.

artist does not mark the walls in a conventional sense. She does not use pencil or pen or even paint. Instead, she lays the materials on the walls and floor of a small room at the gallery.

The exhibit of contemporary drawings also includes an example of *Anime*. The work by Chiho Aoshima is called *A Contented Skull*. It covers a large wall in the gallery from floor to ceiling, and looks more like something we would call a painting. It has expanses and bits of space covered with flat liquid colour: There is an expanse of blue for the sky, and there is a stylized girl who walks in the landscape of a stylized cherry blossom tree emerging from a stylized skull. This is drawing? The exhibit at the VAG blurs the boundaries between painting, sculpture, drawing and installation.

The exhibit makes a significant statement about itself in its announcement posters: *For the Record: Drawing Contemporary Life* "focuses on representational images from today's perspective."[5] Yet, even if it is supposedly their world that is being represented in the art in this space, there is much in the exhibit that is unfamiliar to the contemporary visitor. This, to me, is a paradox that is worth investigating.

Collectively, the artists, whether they are "Masters or Hipsters," represent aspects of their visible world in ways that can also be visibly comprehended. They draw their world. As a collection of representational images, the exhibits find a common thread with each other--the drawings chosen for all the exhibits are figurative rather than purely abstract work. Figurative artists depict more than the material world around them; they seek

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[5] Vancouver Art Gallery, "Drawing the World: Masters to Hipsters," http://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/exhibitions_drawingTheWorld.cfm

to incorporate other aspects of their reality. In the case of the Italian masters, they make visible to the viewer of their art, the pervading *spirit* of their era. The spirituality that permeates the social fabric of Europe in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries is evident in the ecstasies and the virtues that are captured in the figures put on paper by the artists. On a weekend, visitors are drawn into the space occupied by these works of the Italian masters.

Somehow, even if the spiritual quality of the Renaissance may be just a distant reference from the point of view of the contemporary visitors, there is still a comfortable familiarity associated with the drawings of that past era. And somehow there is also a certain ease by which the works of South Asian masters are appreciated, even if they can be considered paintings rather than drawings, in an exhibit about drawing. The depictions of power, desire and love by the South Asian masters are likewise familiar--a man and a woman in a garden, a ruler surrounded by subjects, and so on. The narrative style and images apparently cross cultural and historical lines. Perhaps this is why it escapes notice that the works of these masters are likewise a challenge to our conception of drawing. What these present to the viewer are aspects of art and reality that most people recognize.

In contrast, the contemporary exhibit presents ideas that many of today's visitors may not be comfortable with. This exhibit is a provocative one, not only because it challenges readily accepted conceptions of drawing and not only because it has works that have uncommon or disturbing subject matter. A more significant way it provokes is that it invites us to investigate the ambiguous nature of representation itself. It makes us reconsider the

ongoing dialogue from different perspectives, locating Velazquez's mirror in many places within the frame.

Not quite America

Towards the end of the school year in 1992, a group of high school students headed for the Mountain Province north of Manila. The young people stood out because they were from different nationalities, and were daughters and sons of diplomats and senior officials of multinational banks and companies. They traveled in an air-conditioned bus, accompanied by their chaperones and armed bodyguards. As their art teacher, I was one of their chaperones.

Our destination for this extended fieldtrip sits in the middle of pine forests. In a country known more for its white sand beaches and the extensive coastline that traces 7,100 islands, Baguio City is a pocket of temperate geography, and a setting for Colonial Americana. This is the only place in the Philippines that I know of, where having a fireplace makes sense. In houses and buildings nestled among evergreens, visitors from the lowlands could wear fall and spring clothes year round. When one is in Baguio city, it is easy to pretend to be somewhere other than the tropics.

Baguio city is a legacy of the American occupation in the earlier half of the twentieth century. It was created to support Camp John Hay, the R&R base for US soldiers stationed in the Asia-Southeast Asian vicinity. Baguio would be inaccessible if not for the winding and treacherous Kennon Road that was built during that time. This colonial era (there was a previous one with Spain) left the Philippines with an infrastructure of roads, schools and

recreational facilities, as well as a tourist economy in the city in the mountains. As a result, the highway to Baguio opened the "summer capital," not only to military personnel and other foreigners from the United States, but also to the rest of the Philippines. Because of this, centuries that allowed the indigenous groups of the Cordillera Mountain Range to remain culturally separate, ended. The Igorot people of Baguio, nevertheless continue to make their distinct way of life felt even as the terrain of their ancestral lands and of their society is being transformed by outsiders. This is partly due to the appreciation and patronage of their weaving and carving traditions by outsiders, and also because they retained their notions of spirituality that differ from the rest of the Philippines. The rest of the country is predominantly Catholic.

Perhaps it is this pervading influence of the mountain peoples' spirituality and worldview that makes the city interesting--that is--aside from the climate, the scenery and the allusions to America or "the Continent." The bed and breakfast where our group from the International School stayed reflected these allusions. It was a large stone house surrounded by a well-kept English style garden. Its many rooms were decorated with floral patterned quilts and lace, and it had a gourmet kitchen that served homemade jams and breads, coffee and tea, stews and roasts, marinated mushrooms and garden salads. And of course, it had a fireplace. This was our home base as we participated in an event in Baguio that was part art exhibit and part rock concert. The conversation around and about art at the event had definite strands of Western contemporary ideas. Some of the terms that floated

around the space were: installation, performance art, ritual, rock concert and folk art—folk in relation to mainstream Philippine Art which is arguably *global*. Influences of the indigenous culture made its way into the art created by Filipinos engaged in the discourses of Western Art in Baguio City.

When I brought my students to Baguio City, they met artists who were for the most part originally from other regions of the Philippines. As a group, they organized an art festival that reflected some of their reasons for being in the land of the Igorots. Even today, many artists choose Baguio as their base, not only for its mountain setting, but also for the indigenous spirituality that still pervades the social space. The Cordilleras we visited was earthy, spiritual and folk. The artists in the exhibit space drew from whatever the Cordillera Mountain Ranges offered in terms of its social and physical topography. But as they drew inspiration from their surroundings, they also influenced the terrain—literally—as the city grows to accommodate foreigners and people from the low lands. We entered the space of the indigenous people of the Philippine.

The high schools students from International School Manila and I entered a new social space in Baguio City. However, we did not necessarily take pause and consider the effect of our presence in that part of the country. Almost seamlessly, we joined the ongoing dialogue that lowlanders had imported into the mountains. The mountains had been colonized by a foreign symbolic system and we were complicit in letting this dialogue run its course. The art festival framed indigenous sensibilities within the framework of western art discourse.

Looking back, I think this fact was lost on us. Caught up in the thrill of rock concerts and the exotic, I failed to hold up a mirror to my students the way my teachers in the summer workshop of my youth did for me.

We called her CB in our drama class. Like myself, the other participants in the youth summer workshop were children of professional people. We were leading the rather ordinary lives of students on a break from school when CB and the other teachers of the Philippine Educational Theatre Association shook us out of our complacency.

As children of relative privilege, as bearers of the gaze in our society, we could have entered the slum areas that surrounded our gated communities with a thought to help and fix people's lives. We could have taken in the scene and surveyed the lives of other people as if they were characters in a distant story, play or painting. We instead were made to see ourselves as part of the narrative, the tableau, the scene that made up the social terrain of the Philippines. We took the space outside our gated communities into our consciousness and we encountered our own gaze.

Stunned into silence, into the necessary pause in the ongoing dialogue, we hear and see... *Thou.*

It is a moment of insight. A Countergaze.

Plate 19: Untitled, 2006

South of Simon Fraser University, in Burnaby Mountain, sometimes I find a steep trail that leads to a group of totem poles hidden in the woods. Maybe I must respect its silence as it hides from the gaze. I let it be and wait for it to define itself to me.

Chapter Nine

CONCLUSION: A COUNTERGAZE

My world is painted rage
Or maybe it is a coat over sad
In cycle of IS I know
Beyond is maybe painted none
I am spiral in a spiral in a spiral painted now

Rotini into mush.

My world is painted in resigned
In tense of past it is passed
Released it IS…or IS it not
Then paint it hope
Beyond is maybe painted unknown
Period. Period. Period. It is HOPE. It goes on.

Released in full stop.
I one day begin the end of the cycle of IS
When I do not know

Plate 20: *When I set us free*, 2006 July 25

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