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DEAN'S FOREWORD

This fourth issue of the *Journal of Education and Humanities* (*JEH*) continues to fulfill its commitment to lecturers in the Faculty of Education and Humanities, University of Guyana, to assist them in developing their research profiles and output in a refereed journal, and to provide findings from invaluable critical literary analyses and research studies in Education. These peer-reviewed articles inform future improvements in key subject areas of Education and expand the body of critical literary works. In addition, it extends the same opportunity to lecturers in another area of academic study offered by the Faculty: the Fine Arts. These findings analyses and recommendations could stimulate further research in Guyana, the Caribbean, and internationally.

Such findings and analyses are included in two research papers on English and Mathematics, the two compulsory subjects in our regional Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC), two analyses of literary works, as well as the statement and display of works of Michael Khan, one of the long-serving lecturers in the Creative Arts Division who won the first prize in the Fine Craft category for one of his pieces at the 2017 *Guyana Visual Arts Competition and Exhibition*. Khan shares a statement of himself as an artist, allowing us the opportunity to view samples of his work from his perspectives and in support of his claim that his creative compositions capture and manipulate simple art forms as he conveys his ideas.

An outstanding feature of this issue is the attention paid to Mathematics and English by two active researchers in Education. Mohandatt Goolsarran focuses attention on all the stakeholders involved in the teaching of Mathematics in secondary schools in Guyana. His paper provides well-examined data to suggest future decisions at the regional, national and school levels while highlighting the need to synchronise changing curricula demands with technology. Pamela Rose addresses the gender disparity that affects male and female students' preferences for writing instructions in classrooms in a Creole-speaking context, an area in which research is sparse. Her findings not only point to the need to equip secondary school English teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to create meaningful metalinguistic tasks to distinguish Creole and Standard English codes, but also to change the existing monolingual language policy and the development of learners' self-efficacy in writing.

Another outstanding and unique feature of this issue is a comparative approach to analysis in the next two papers. As a discipline, comparative literature emerged in the

early nineties, but these two papers have the distinction of applying the methodology to different genres – fine arts and literature, and literature and film.

On the one hand, Akima McPherson juxtaposes the imprinting of a sexualized and racialized denigration of the black female body (portrayed as a modified Classical Greek/Western nude while bearing undertones of West-African aesthetics), in an earlier painting and an ode, with the more recent Caribbean sculpture of the liberated and proud black female body (a national monument in Jamaica), imbued with clear and defined attributes of West African figuration, a juxtaposition that leads to the acceptable conclusion that this latter work embodies freedom from the shackles of white patriarchy. On the other hand, Andrew Kendall takes us on a well-informed international 'journey' in the comparison of a West German novella and film, written and produced in the 1970s. Both focus on the Cold War. In this paper, a careful and intriguing critique is made of how the writers of both genres responded to the paranoia caused in society by the Cold War, as well as how they portrayed the uncertainty of truth and meaning in the social climate during that era in their use of language. As readers, we are left to decide whether we agree with the writer's claim that the dual value of these contemporaneous explorations are key factors in presenting such concerns.

Once again, heartfelt thanks and congratulations are extended to the members of the Editorial Board: Alim Hosein, Charmaine Bissessar, Tamirand Nnena De Lisser and Nequesha Dalrymple, who have successfully preserved the high standards established by the *JEH.*

Roslin A. Khan, Ph.D.

The Sable Venus and *Redemption Song*

Akima McPherson

Abstract

This paper argues that the Africa-descended female/nude within Laura Facey's *Redemption Song* is a rewriting of racialised hetero-masculinist patriarchal visualisations exemplified in works by Isaac Teale and Thomas Stothard. It asserts that the female within *Redemption* is a modified nude of the Western Classical tradition with undertones of Africanity. The paper begins by exploring Teale's poem *The Sable Venus. An Ode* then Stothard's lithograph *The Voyage of the Sable Venus from Angola to the West Indies* as early instances of the African/Africa-descended female within the Caribbean appearing in Western art as a nude. An exploration of *Redemption* follows, showing that its nude shares some characteristics with Western Classicism while intersecting with West African aesthetics. Thus, it is advanced that *Redemption*'s nude is a reimagining of the black female body within the Caribbean and a gesture of public re-coding of that body.
Keywords: Sable Venus, Redemption Song

Introduction

While a Classical nude akin to that of Greek antiquity is rare in visual art emergent of the Caribbean, some of her characteristics are significantly present in the female figure of Laura Facey's (b. 1954) monument *Redemption Song*. *The Sable Venus* and *Redemption Song* explores European racialised hetero-masculinist patriarchal imprints on the African/Africa-descended/black-skinned female of the Caribbean through comparison of *The Sable Venus. An Ode* (1765) by Isaac Teale (d. 1764) and *The Voyage of the Sable Venus from Angola to the West Indies* (1793) by Thomas Stothard (1755-1834), and a rewriting of these imprints in *Redemption Song* (2003) by Facey. This paper, therefore, suggests a substantial pathway for Caribbean art history while building on that which was established by Veerle Poupeye in

Caribbean Art (1998). Poupeye's text remains a significant text on art in the Caribbean in being multinational and delving into various linguistic and cultural expressions. Organised thematically, the text has chapters exploring 'Modernism and Cultural Nationalism' and 'Revolution, Anti-Imperialism and Race Consciousness'. The gendered history proposed in this paper is not approached in Poupeye's text or any other substantial text on art of the Caribbean since the former's publication. Therefore, a brief case is made for a gendered discourse to be included in the unfolding art history of the region. Nonetheless, the central premise of this paper is that while Teale and Stothard used Western Classicism to imprint upon the African/Africa-descended/black-skinned female of the Caribbean (specifically Jamaica) a legacy of perverse sexualised racialised denigration, Facey locates this figure in *Redemption* within a modified version of that tradition, while simultaneously imbuing her with aspects of West African figuration.

The paper begins by exploring two early instances of the African female body in the Western repertoire. It explores the poem *The Sable Venus. An Ode* (Fig. 1, extract) along with the engraving *The Voyage of the Sable Venus from Angola to the West Indies* (Fig. 2). Through these works a juxtaposition between the black-skinned Venuses of literature and visual art and the white-skinned Venuses of Greek antiquity is possible. It is shown how the dual celebration and opacity of African female beauty in Teale's Ode was translated in Stothard's visual response as a denigrated and perversely sexualised female body. Thereafter, *Redemption Song* is introduced and the paper follows with a focus on its female figure, arguing that it is a modified Classical Greek/Western nude. It is also shown how the female figure/*Redemption's* nude has undertones of West African aesthetics. The paper concludes by advocating that *Redemption's* nude is free of white-skinned racialised, hetero-masculinist patriarchal world-views and consequently embodies aspirations of the Caribbean black female to be freed of damaging imprints placed on her body to serve white patriarchy. The paper also advances the perspective that *Redemption's* nude be looked at through lens that are more varied to enrich the ongoing discourse regarding its suitability as part of a monument commemorating Emancipation.

The African Female Clothed by Western Art

The nude as an icon of Western art was typically a white body. However, as Europeans came into contact with different people from other parts of the world, this standard expanded to include non-white bodies. Hence, in the eighteenth century, African and Africa-descended female bodies were included as nudes in paintings and engravings as well as the literature of the West. However, they were encoded by white male artists and writers with cues emergent of white European racialised ideologies regarding the Black, as well as notions emergent of hetero-masculinist patriarchy. Consequently, as the African and Africa-descended female's body was brought into physical and cultural spaces deemed civilised, it was clothed in fabric of racialised patriarchy woven by white men whose false ideologies determined how the body would be encoded and regarded for generations, to its detriment.

The Sable Venus. An Ode

Through the enslaving ships and Western art, the black-skinned female body was 'rescued' from the supposed incivility of Africa and submerged in the assumed civility of the West. Unfortunately, her inclusion in the physical space of the West as well as the venerable Western art tradition was accomplished with immeasurable erasure of her dignity. The lyric poem *The Sable Venus. An Ode* and its subsequent illustration by Stothard as *The Voyage of the Sable Venus from Angola to the West Indies* are significant instances of encoding on the black-skin female within Western arts. As Allen (2011, p. 667) argues, they share three tenets of the Black Venus trope:

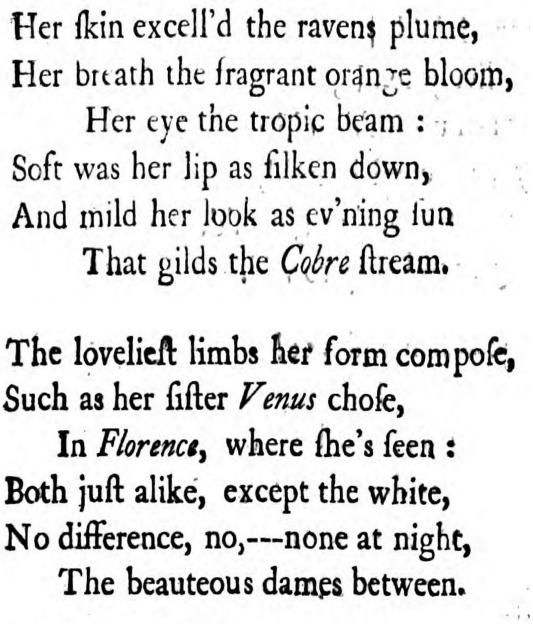
> […] the invocation of black beauty ultimately is employed to show the beauty and superiority of whiteness, the Black Venus remains a sexually desirable figure despite her representation as aesthetically inadequate, and this attraction to the inferior undermines the very pretenses of white supremacy that the figure was created to uphold.

Therefore, the poem and the print propose that whatever beauty they possess, black women's value lay in white men's desiring them sexually, although this challenges notions of white supremacy. After all, how could the female of the white male, the

superior male, be lacking in *any* physical and sexual allure so as to not solely captivate his interests? How could the inferior female, inferior because of her gender and 'race', captivate the libidinal interests of the superior white male? The author of the *Ode* is Reverend Isaac Teale, an Anglican clergyman and teacher of the future English politician and enslaver Bryan Edwards (1743-1800) while both sojourned in Jamaica. Edwards first published the *Ode* a year after Teale's death and would later re-publish it in 1792 with an original final stanza omitted in his *History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies.* This last stanza implicated Edwards as the patron of the poem. (Allen, 2011, p. 678)

The *Ode* opens by positioning the Sable queen of love as a superior woman to Erato, the Greek muse of lyric and erotic poetry. It follows its initial praise of Sable with a lavish description of the voyage from Angola to Jamaica and gives account of her ability to incite desire in all whom she encounters, from the "prating" French to the "sullen" English, and of the excitement when she reaches Jamaica's shores. The *Ode* concludes by listing the Sable queen's shape-shifting manifestations in various women from Phibba to Auba. Thus, throughout the *Ode*, Teale interweaves articulations of the allure of the dark-complexioned Venus. However, Teale articulates praise of the Sable Venus's beauty in the fourteenth and fifteenth stanzas, without giving details about her physical particulars. (See fig. 1.)

Consequent to the absence of a detailed description of the Sable Venus's beauty, the *Ode* has been deemed as both complimentary and denigrating of black women as "any comparison of an African woman to a European ideal has the dual potential to compliment and to disparage her" (Allen, 2011, p. 669). Teale's intention is unclear. However, what is clear is that he intended to make pellucid that the Sable Venus is both preferred and complicit in the enjoyment of her body by European men because she is inviting and welcoming of them. Thus, Teale augments the existing encoding on black female sexuality as boundless by the norms of Christian and European codes of restraint, and this perspective emanating from a man of the cloth carried authority and truth.



Her ſkin excell'd the ravens plume,
Her breath the fragrant orange bloom,
Her eye the tropic beam :
Soft was her lip as ſilken down,
And mild her look as ev'ning ſun
That gilds the *Cobre* ſtream.

The lovelieſt limbs her form compoſe,
Such as her ſiſter *Venus* choſe,
In *Florence*, where ſhe's ſeen :
Both juſt alike, except the white,
No difference, no,---none at night,
The beauteous dames between.

Her skin excelled the raven's plume,
Her breath the fragrant orange bloom,
Her eye the tropic beam:
Soft was her lip as silken down,
And mild her look as evening sun
That gilds the *Cobre* stream

The loveliest limbs her form compose,
Such as her sister *Venus* chose,
In *Florence,* where she's seen:
Both just alike, except the white,
No difference, no,—none at night,
The beauteous dames between.

Figure 1. Isaac Teale, *The Sable Venus*. An Ode (extract). 1765, British Library

The Voyage of the Sable Venus from Angola to the West Indies

Many years following the *Ode's* first publication, Edwards commissioned an illustration of it from Stothard. Unfortunately, the opacity of the poem encouraged a deflection in Stothard's *The Voyage of the Sable Venus from Angola to the West Indies* as the image of the Sable Venus conflicts with a dark-skinned version of the Florentine originals. Placed alongside Botticelli's Venus (fig. 3) and the *Medici Venus* (fig. 4) upon which Allen (2011, pp. 681-682) suggests it is based, the discrepancies between Stothard's *Sable Venus* and the Florentine Venuses are discernible. According to Allen (2011, pp. 682-683) she is Africanised: "[the] painter ultimately deviated from the poem by emphasising attributes that would signify blackness to his audience, rather than those that would suggest classical beauty". As a consequence, "the Florentine Venus has small facial features, while the African Venus has a wider nose and lips" (Allen, 2011, p. 683). Additionally, Stothard's Sable Venus is muscular and robust with low-cut hair, while the Florentine Venuses are lithe with long hair cascading over the body or fashioned in a bun. Therefore, while the Sable Venus may be a beauty, she is no classic beauty of Western classicism, a tradition for which the *Medici Venus* is foundational and to which Botticelli and Stothard refer.

Figure 2. Thomas Stothard, *The Voyage of the Sable Venus from Angola to the West Indies.* Etching with engraving, c. 1793/1800. 20.3 x 16.4 cm, National Maritime Museum, London.

Note. The original print dates to 1793 and that above to 1800.

Figure 3. Sandro Botticelli, *Birth of Venus*. Tempera on canvas, c. 1485. 172.5 x 278.5 cm, Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence.

Figure 4. Cleomenes, *Medici Venus.* Marble, 2nd-1st c BC. 153 cm, Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence.

Further comparison reveals that both the Medici and Botticelli Venuses deport themselves with measurable modesty. Despite their state of undress, each attempts concealment - the Medici with her hands while the Botticelli employs her flowing hair. Botticelli's Venus looks out of the picture plane but does not engage the viewer. Meanwhile, the *Medici Venus* couples the gesture of modesty conveyed by her hands with an anxious look over her left shoulder away from her viewer in front of her. On the other hand, Stothard's *Sable Venus* displays her body. Her arms are wide apart exposing aspects they could conceal. In each hand she holds a portion of the reigns that are also held in the hands of a cherub and an adult male in the sea ahead of her; they occupy the lower left and right respectively of the composition. She does not look out of the picture plane; her gaze is focused on the reigns in her raised hand. These reigns are provocative, leading the eye in a downward curve across her exposed breasts as they draw attention to the curve of her hips. The actual line of the reigns and the implied line over her hips intersect in her lowered hand. Futhermore, the latter line is made prominent through the partial overlap of a slim measure of white cloth which covers her waist. Through this coverage a modicum of modesty is attempted. However,

she fails to save her body from appearing as a sexual offering. Thus, Stothard's *Sable Venus* is to be consumed with sexual abandon while the Medici and Botticelli Venuses can only be savoured with care and consideration, if at all.

Whereas the *Ode* praises the Sable Venus, Allen (2011, p. 685) notes that Stothard's engraving racialises her and diverges from the classical virtues of sexual modesty and decorum. Allen (2011, p. 668) writes,

> […] the Sable Venus poem and painting attempt to rationalize white men's attraction to black women by situating it in the realm of base desires instead of idealized beauty and by insisting that that [sic] these immoral urges originate in the African woman.

Hence, the desires of white men to sexually consume black-skin flesh were entirely the fault of the possessor of said skin and this was not attributable to any physical beauty she may exhibit. Their desire was attributable to an innate wantonness and inviting libidinous nature on her part. Therefore, the sexual degradation of black women on the slave-ships and plantations was possible because of qualities innate in them which overwhelmed the moral innocence of the would-be rapist.

Consequently, if "Venuses […] are all the more alluring when mutilated" (Squire, 2011 p. 84), then the allure of the flesh-and-blood human figures the *Sable Venus* stands for is evident. Indeed, these bodies were mutilated. They were branded; bonded and whipped; denied food, freedom, agency, and leisure; and were subjected to gendered abuse. They were raped - raped for punishment and for perverse pleasure. Resistance could result in intensified physical hardship including death while compliance could offer some measure of protection and continued expectation of complicity in one's violation. These actions all characterised the forced migratory journey. As a consequence, prior to arriving in the Americas and the Caribbean, "African women were labeled promiscuous and lacking in morals by the very men who had raped them" (Farrington, 2004, p. 16). These imprints persisted centuries later. Farrington (2004, p.16) notes that once on the plantations, enslaved women were "subjected to further punishment if they did not submit passively to the sexual advances of their owners. Their victimisation was thus indefinitely perpetuated […]". Stothard's presentation of the Sable Venus belies these horrors. Visually associating

her with the Classical Venuses allows her some redemption and disassociation from the realities of the real-world Sable women.

Redemption Song

Figure 5. Laura Facey. *Redemption Song*. Bronze, 2003. Emancipation Park, Kingston, Jamaica

Unveiled on July 31, 2003 - just over two-hundred years after Stothard's image - Laura Facey's *Redemption Song* comprises a pair of monumental figures whose forms attempt to reverse extant racialised imprints on Africa-descended (Jamaican) bodies. Sited in Emancipation Park, Kingston, Jamaica, the duo towers over visitors; the male stands at 11 feet while the female stands at 10 feet. Together they are a pair of modified Classical Western nudes. Neither assumes a normative classical gendered stance; he is not heroic and she is neither sensual nor sexual. Instead, *Redemption's* figures stand upright within a pool of water, are visible from their thighs upward, have their arms rigid to their sides and their heads tilted backward. They gaze up to the sky with serene countenances unaware of their and their companion's state of undress. They stand in dutiful obedience, submission and anticipation of something not of the earthly realm.

Following the unveiling, *Redemption* was met with protests and it initiated a national debate over its appropriateness as a public monument marking Emancipation (Poupeye, 2004; Younge, 2003; Brown-Glaude, 2006; Poupeye, 2018; Jamaica Observer, 2018). Unfolding in newspapers, on radio shows and the internet, as well as in the vicinity of the monument and other spaces, the debate was contributed to notably by the Christian community, musicians, scholars and the general public. One aspect of the discourse concerned the white/very light-skinned and middle-class identity of the sculptor (Poupeye, 2004, p. 39-40; Brown-Glaude, 2006, p. 39). More common to the debates was the obvious absence of clothing on the two well-endowed figures, the absence of heteronormative interplay, and *Redemption's* suitability as a marker of emancipation from enslavement. As Brown-Glaude (2006, p. 51) points out, "[t]he nakedness of the bodies, particularly the male, presented the figures as vulnerable and docile in the minds of many Jamaicans". Indeed, situated within a site meant to commemorate black agency and defiance against enslavement, *Redemption's* male and female do not commemorate the dynamism of individual or collective action. Instead, these figures stand as a testament to freedom from earth-bound scripts, leaving the past and the concomitant earthly plane as they look towards a future that is heaven-bound. Thus, as Brown-Glaude (2006, p. 52) rightly makes clear, "[t]he debates reveal […] that Facey-Cooper's representation does not capture the collective remembering of emancipation as black agency and defiance".

Many also felt that *Redemption's* figures fed into racist tropes of hypersexual black bodies (Brown-Glaude, 2006, p. 39). *Redemption*, however, offers oppositional narratives to notions of black hyper-masculinity bound up in strength, action and virility and hyper-femininity bound up in a sexualised body, gestures and awareness. Facey's figures do not embody these tropes although she makes no effort to conceal their bodies through simulation of clothing, tools or other accoutrements. Instead, and as a consequence of the absence of adornment, the figures lack markers of temporality. This absence serves to free them from a specific historical situation. As a result, the figures are liberated from scripts of denigration; although reproductively well-endowed, the male is not the young buck purposed for siring *massa* more children to augment the enslaved population, and although suggesting health and vitality, the female is not the libidinous ready-to-be-sexually-consumed progenitor of *massa's* increase. Indeed, while this exploitation is hinted at because of the bodies' nakedness

coupled with physiognomic association with African-ness, apparent reproductive health, and their siting in Emancipation Park, such exploitation is not explicitly invoked.

Overlooked in the public debates is *Redemption's* hint at African theological worldviews. While the site of the work and the artist's widely-circulated intentions position the work at the cessation of slavery, the work does recall the arrival of the thousands of African men, women and children in the 'New World' after being trafficked across the Atlantic Ocean. One senses some of their loss and resolve to survive in the unfamiliar world before them after enduring the horrors of their journey. *Redemption's* figures turn their gaze skyward, perhaps to Onyame or Nyame - Akan for God (Majeed, 2014), Chukwu – the Igbo Supreme God (Metuh, 1973), Olodumare – the Yoruba Supreme God, or another/other supreme beings consistent with their ethno-cultural world views. Facey's erasure of the indignity and horrors of the journey reminds us that individuals with spiritual worldviews were forced upon 'New World' shores, and that these worldviews were a source of strength for both survival and subversive action to insist on the recognition of their humanity.

Focusing on the female figure in *Redemption,* as is the remit of this paper, it is evident that despite her thematic origins, she is a modified Western Classical nude. While the nude is atypical within the public art of the Caribbean, she is often sensual and sexual when presented; public sculptures by Alvin Marriott (1902-1992) bear witness. While intended for domestic use, the few nudes in paintings from artists Boscoe Holder (1921-2007), Barrington Watson (1931-2016) and Albert Huie (1920-2010) are additional testimony to her sexualisation. On the other hand, *Redemption's* nude is foremost a formidable female, curiously lacking coverage, yet oblivious to her nakedness. Her material treatment visually belies the fierce rigidity of the bronze. She appears firm yet supple to touch. Hence, hers is not a hardened muscular body despite the implied history of intense work. Hers is a feminine body sufficiently fleshy to allow imaginative yielding of flesh to touch, like the Florentine and Medici Venuses. However, unlike the Boticelli and Medici Venuses, she does not perform her sexual self or offer encouragement to leering eyes.

While the nakedness of *Redemption's* nude is immediately evident, this African/Africa-descended nude *is* clothed. Unlike the Greco-Roman Aphrodite-Venus, *Redemption's* nude is clearly not a goddess born of her male companion's genitals; Aphrodite was born of the foam created when the severed genitals of Uranus were thrown into the sea. In fact, *Redemption's* nude has no visible or implied relationship with her companion's genitals which are fully intact. Consequently, her association with Venus is further eroded. However, as Lyon-Caen (n.d, para. 1) points out in relation to fourth to twelfth-century Egypt, Aphrodite-Venus was "adopted and adapted by the Christian world, and came to symbolize the purified soul emerging from the baptismal waters". Indeed, *Redemption's* nude emerging from the water with her head turned skyward evokes this aspect of Venus's legacy. Thus, the associations made through the water with the Middle Passage and European Christian theology by the disapproving Jamaican public negates an ancient Christian African or other African theological orientation concerning water and transcendence,. In other words, Africa's early history with Christianity is ignored as is African theological beliefs in transcendence and return to the African home through water. Hence, through her failure to perform her normative gendered role, *Redemption's* nude opens a space (along with her companion) for discussion about early Christianity and African spirituality.

Additionally, in failing to perform normative sex and gender constructions through her gestures in relation to her male companion, *Redemption's* nude is a visual counterpoint to the explicit hypersexualisation of the African/Africa-descended/black-skinned female in images such as Stothard's. She reverses these visual articulations. Oblivious to her naked condition with a heavenward/skyward gaze, she asserts other dimensions of herself not bound up in her sex or gender; she asserts her spiritual intellectual self. Furthermore, *Redemption's* nude counters a narrative which has persisted and is forcefully reiterated in the popular Jamaican cultural form, dancehall-reggae. In contemporary dancehall-reggae culture and videos the female body, typically an Africa-descended/black-skinned body, is framed in sexual availability, navigating the world on this basis. Thus, *Redemption's* nude, in exhibiting this absence, is a radical visualisation of Africa-descended/black-skinned womanhood within the Jamaican public space.

Turning to the formal character of *Redemption*, immediately evident in Facey's nude is her naturalistically proportioned and articulated form. This naturalism positions her within the Greek Classical tradition and in opposition to that of West Africa. In West African figuration, the head-to-body proportion does not mimic the human form and there is much variation possible with the internal ratios (Curnow, 2018, para. 18). Curnow (2018, para. 17) writes of African art:

> […] One of the most notable proportional distortions is that of the head to the body: that is, the head is often significantly oversized in African sculpture and can sometimes be undersized – but it is extremely rare for the head-to-body relationship to be represented naturalistically.

Redemption does not subscribe to such anti-naturalistic treatment. Consequently, as the nude of *Redemption* increases in its Western Classicism, it subsumes the already-identified thematic aspects of Africanity by not pairing these with a complimentary aesthetic. This departure is further accentuated by the naturalistic modelling of the internal parts of the body and the facial features.

The nude is not uncommon in the traditional visual art of West Africa. Thus, a nude marking an occasion for African and African-descended peoples is not illegitimate. *Redemption's* nude is consistent with West African nudes in exhibiting an absence of self-awareness of nakedness, sexuality or sensuality that is evident in the Classical Western nudes. As Curnow, (2018, para. 5) points out, consistent with West African figuration is frontality and a head-spine alignment; *Redemption's* nude is frontal with the head and spine aligned in a straight line, although the head tilts upward assuming an anomalous gesture. This head-spine alignment allows for rigid frontality devoid of sensual gesture; this characteristic is not evident in Classical Western nudes.

Redemption's nude further positions herself as Classically Western and traditionally African through abstraction evident in 'generic physiognomy':

> When a traditional African artist creates a face, his training tends to ensure that face is consistent with other faces he makes. That is,

> learning how to make an eye, fashion a nose, or abstract an ear becomes habitual, and artists develop a "type" that they tend to reproduce instead of individualizing each face. Producing faces that resemble specific individuals is extremely rare; rather, generic physiognomy is the rule (Curnow, 2018, para. 13).

Similarly, it was not until Western Classicism was supplanted by Hellenism and Roman integration of Greek techniques that the Greco-Roman tradition embraced the specificity which now defines Western portraiture. Thus, Western Classicism and traditional African art share a common approach; artists of the two cultural spaces abstracted the face, making it a naturalistic likeness without specificity and individualism. *Redemption's* nude evidences this characteristic; it lacks physiognomic individuality.

Final to an appraisal of its dual character, *Redemption's* nude embodies stillness which like West African human figurative sculpture stems from "[a]n emphasis on dignity and permanence […]. Stillness underlines the innate qualities of an elevated being" (Curnow, 2018, para. 8). Stillness in *Redemption's* nude is present in her body's gestures and in her face. Her countenance is serene, recalling Classical Greek precursors for which emotional expressiveness in the face is absent, although the figure's gestures or contexts may speak of more emotionally-charged experiences. *Redemption's* nude, therefore, is simultaneously the enslaved woman, the formerly enslaved and her female descendant, but her facial expression does not communicate any of the pain and heartache, desperate longing and dissolved dreams that colour(ed) the lives of these women. Instead, she stands with imperceptible cues to these psychic states either in her countenance or her body. The absence of such cues, further reinforced by her mask of serenity, positions her as a modified Western Classical figure as well as African:

> With very few exceptions, traditional African art does not display human emotions. This is a reflection of desirable public display (a ruler at a festival, an initiation girl when presented to the public, a politician posing for a formal photograph). The ideal "face" is that

> of serene self-composure, unrocked by moods and reactions to others. This same ideal applies to artistic imagery. Figures normally have a restrained, dignified expression on their faces, without scowls or smiles" (Curnow, 2018, para. 9).

Thus, in the neutrality of facial expression, *Redemption's* statuesque nude further asserts herself as a nude of the Classical Greek and West African traditions.

Conclusion

While the white Venuses of Florence are sexual objects for the hetero-masculine gaze, they are also beautiful self-contained bodies. Teale's words make clear that the *Sable Venus*'s beauty compares with these Florentine Venuses. However, she surpasses them in her overwhelming and boundless sexual presence and capacity to delight the white male. Stothard's visualisation, on the other hand, is categorically that of an inferior beauty whose lecherous sexuality must be restrained and conquered as she is unable to contain it herself. *Redemption's* nude rejects the white-skinned racialised hetero-masculinist patriarchy embodied in Stothard's image and scripts the African/Africa-descended/black-skinned woman as a being of beauty and spiritual presence and transcendence. Facey has divested this body from the colonial imprints of hypersexuality, promiscuity, and sexual availability and re-inscribed an ancestral African character on the Africa-descended/black-skinned female body of Jamaica and the Caribbean.

Redemption Song is an individual rather than collective imagining of Emancipation. Facey's visual language is ostensibly that of the Western Classical tradition with undertones of Africanity. This is evident in the choice of the nude, naturalism of the head-to-body ratio and the treatment of the internal parts, 'generic physiognomy', and the form's embodiment of stillness. However, despite the works hybridity (befitting the character of Caribbean people), this is not an efficacious visual language for a maker of African and Africa-descended people's liberation from European subjugation. Indeed, Facey has imposed on the commemoration of a transformative moment in African and Africa-descended peoples experience in the

'New World' a predominantly European aesthetic. In failing to make more visible a West African aesthetic, Facey has erred. This error is akin to European claims of emancipating the enslaved while negating the collective and individual actions of large numbers of the enslaved that made their enslavement untenable.

Nonetheless, as the debates rage on, Facey's *Redemption Song* should be considered as a revision of historic and extant Western visualisations of African/Africa -descended female bodies of the Caribbean. In place of a body coded with, and burdened by, white male hetero-masculinist racialised visualisations, *Redemption's* nude is released from these imprints and invested with high values of her culture of origin as well as that which was forced upon her. *Redemption's* female is not naked as many have articulated in their objections, she is a nude dressed to reflect negotiation of her new identity as a Caribbean, a hybrid being.

In closing, despite the potency of the arguments on either side of the debates in relation to *Redemption's* nude's suitability in a civic monument commemorating Emancipation, the discourse would not only be well-served to consider her cultural duality, but also what she proposes about Africa-descended women's ownership of their bodies in complex Western public spaces. For instance, female nudity has historically been embraced in West African contexts; it has a place in forms of protest. This needs investigation in relation to *Redemption*. Additionally, it may be fruitful to evaluate the extent to which extant sexual anxieties of the European colonisers and the associated repressions has informed the debates. How has middle-class morality impinged on the discourse and how has the reception varied across class divides? Indeed, *Redemption's* nude needs to be considered in more complex terms.

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Image credits:

Fig. 1: *The Sable Venus. An Ode.* British Library Digital Collections

Fig. 2: *The Voyage of the Sable Venus from Angola to the West Indies*. National Maritime Museum, London. https://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/ objects/254621.html

Fig. 3: *Birth of Venus*. Le Gallerie degli Uffizi https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/birth-of-venus

Fig. 4: *Medici Venus*. Le Gallerie degli Uffizi https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/medici-venus

Fig. 5: *Redemption Song.* Emancipation Park, Jamaica. nhttp://www.emancipationpark.org.jm/about-us/facey-sings.php

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Challenges Facing Mathematics Teaching in Secondary School in Guyana: Stakeholders' Perspectives

Mohandatt Goolsarran

Abstract

The organization and delivery of mathematics education in secondary schools in Guyana is of great concern to stakeholders in education. Education administrative and managerial structures are perceived to be lacking in cohesiveness, resulting in what can be described as a dysfunctional system particularly as it relates to mathematics education. To bring some level of improvement would necessitate greater involvement of stakeholders in the area of policy and strategy adaptations. The major focus suggested for the reform of secondary school mathematics instruction is the following: (1) A paradigm shift in current mathematics teacher education; (2) Radical reform of the mathematics curriculum to meet the needs of all students; (3) Restructuring of the management and supervision of mathematics instruction in schools; (4) Formal integration of technology into the mathematics classroom; (5) Continuous teacher-education training courses for mathematics teachers to keep them synchronized with changing curricula demands.

Keywords: mathematics performance, mathematics education, quality

1 Introduction

On the global scale, achievement in mathematics among secondary-school-age children is a focus of concern, and here in Guyana it is no different. The 2019 *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS)* report and the 2018 *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)* report underscore the challenges countries face in dealing with the underachievement in Mathematics. Buddo (2017) reported on the range of activities undertaken by Jamaica to address the poor performance of Jamaican students in secondary schools. Over the last generation, the

performance of Guyanese students at the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate examination revealed fluctuating fortunes as shown in Table 1 and Figure 1. In the history of the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) as the Caribbean's examination body since 1979, Guyana has been unable to achieve 50% passes at Grades 1 – 3 or even to equal or surpass the Caribbean average of Grades 1 – 3 passes in Mathematics.

Table 1

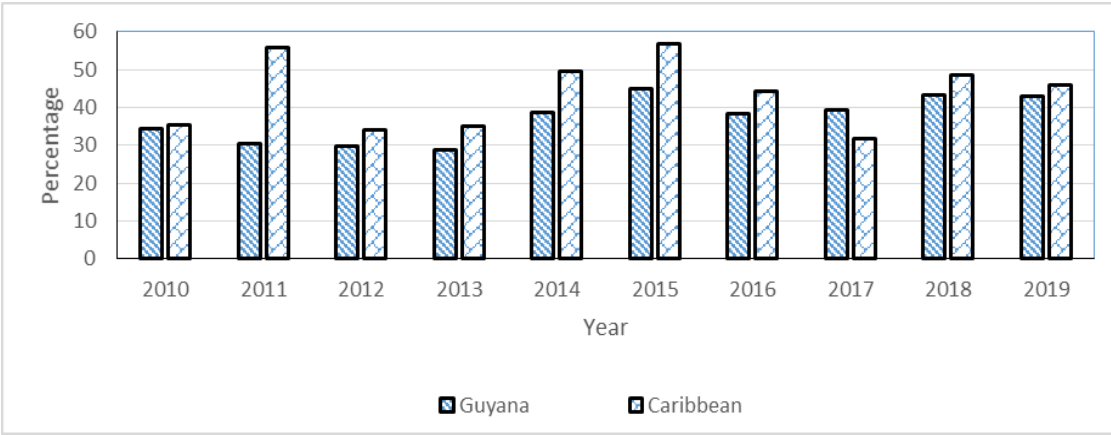
CSEC Mathematics Percentage Passes at Grades 1 – 3 for Guyana and the Caribbean

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Guyana	34.5	30.4	29.7	28.92	38.7	45.07	38.4	39.23	43.4	43.0
Caribbe-an	35.5	56.0	34.0	35.11	49.7	56.9	44.3	31.9	48.7	46.0

Note. Ministry of Education, Guyana and CXC Annual Reports for 2011 – 2019

Figure 1

Guyana and the Caribbean CSEC Mathematics Percentage Passes Grades 1-3, 2010-2019



However, in the Ministry of Education's Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025 data from the outcomes of the Strategic Plan 2014 – 2018 show that when Mathematics is combined with English and the Sciences, there is consistent growth. However, when Mathematics is disaggregated and examined on its own, the reality is that achievement

in Mathematics is below 50%. It must be noted that English and Mathematics are compulsory subjects while the science subjects are optional with significantly fewer numbers of students writing them and with significantly higher pass rates. The combined pass rates in Mathematics, English 'A' and the Sciences are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Percentage of Grades 1 to 3 Passes in Mathematics, English and Sciences in Public Secondary Schools

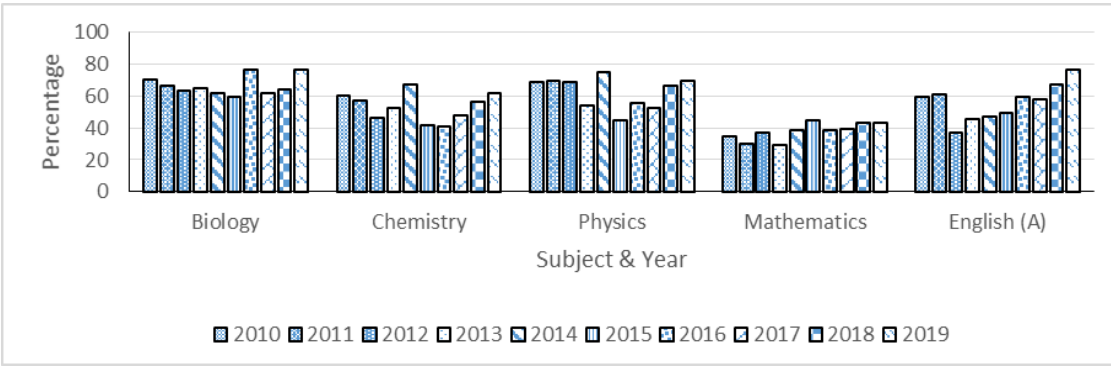
Baseline Year 2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
51	53	55	57	60	65

Note. Ministry of Education Sector Plan 2021 – 2025, p 23

Figure 2 shows CSEC results from 2015 to 2019 for Mathematics, the sciences and English 'A', where it is observed that Mathematics consistently recorded the poorest results for the period under consideration.

Figure 2

CSEC Percentage Passes Grades 1 - 3 for Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics and English (A) for the Period 2010 - 2019



Planning with data that distort reality can result in creating intervention programmes that may not produce desired results. This paper seeks to present the

stakeholders' perspectives on the issue. The data collected span a period of five years, using focus group discussions, interviews with school administrators, and students, and classroom observations.

2 Objective

The objective of this paper is to examine the challenges faced by mathematics teachers in secondary schools during the last five years, 2015 – 2020 with the aim of opening academic discourse on pointing a way forward for mathematics education in secondary schools in Guyana.

3 Methodology

A cross-sectional survey design was used in which the participants during the period of data collection represent categories of functionaries. For the focus-group discussion, participants voluntarily participated and were drawn from all grades of secondary schools across the country. The size of the groups averaged five persons and discussions lasted for approximately 90 minutes for each session. The discussion with mathematics teachers - trained, untrained, graduates and non-graduates - was on the "Challenges Teachers Faced in Teaching Mathematics" and with the students, it was on "The Challenges Students Faced in Learning Mathematics". The discussion topic involving school administrators - head teachers, heads of mathematics departments and line supervisors - was on "The Challenges School Administrators Faced in Managing Mathematics Instruction". The discussions were led by the researcher in an open-interaction setting using probing questions to obtain greater clarity on the issue at hand. Copious notes were taken and subsequently analyzed for common threads or themes in the various perspectives.

Participants were advised that the information obtained from them would not disclose their identities and as such were encouraged to be very open and frank during the discourse.

Sample

A purposive sample of secondary schools, school administrators, mathematics teachers and students was utilized during the period of data collection as shown in the Table 3.

Table 3

Sample Frame

Categories of Respondents	Number
Schools	12
School Administrators	18
Mathematics Teachers	45
Students	36
Secondary Schools Observed	8

Data collected were grouped under the following heads and sub-heads:

1) Classroom mathematics teachers' perspectives

a) Curriculum structure and design

b) Depth of knowledge

c) Teacher competency and qualification

d) Utilization of mathematics resource materials

e) Teaching time-table

f) Assessment methodology across grades and schools

g) Students' attitude to learning in general and mathematics in particular

h) Back to basics in mathematics

2) School Administration Perspective

a) Quality of supervision at the departmental level

b) Transfer of training into the classroom

c) Utilization of mathematics resources

d) Superstructure supporting mathematics instruction

e) Monitoring and supervision by school administration

f) Professional development activities within the mathematics department

3) Students' Perspectives

a) Perception of mathematics

b) Marking of students' written work

c) Utility of learning mathematics

d) Teachers' competence

e) Teaching style versus learning style

f) Adequacy of time-table for mathematics

4) School Observation Perspectives

a) School ethos and the learning environment in the mathematics classroom

b) Discipline in the mathematics classroom

c) Structured feedback to students

4 Findings

Curriculum Structure and Design

The instructional programme for mathematics is guided by the curriculum provided by the Ministry of Education for Grades 7 – 9 and is considered to be of a reasonable standard. It was revised in 2002 and is structured under the following heads: Topic, Objectives, Content, Activities/Materials/Strategies, Evaluation, and Areas of Integration. The topics covered are: Number Theory, Computation, Measurement, Algebra, Consumer Arithmetic, Geometry, Relations and Functions, Statistics, and Trigonometry. The objectives are sub-categorised under the areas of Skills, Knowledge, Understanding and Attitude. No curriculum guide has been designed for

Grades 10 and 11 since the CSEC mathematics syllabus is considered detailed enough to provide guidance to teachers.

The objectives-based model of the curriculum design provides the mathematics teachers with the scope of work to be covered under each topic. However, the depth of coverage can be very wide and expansive, but several teachers seem content to teach at the minimum level of the attainment target of a specific objective. The gap between the official curriculum and the enacted curriculum is very wide. For example, under the topic trigonometry, students are required to identify sine ratio, use the sine tables, and apply the sine ratio to find the lengths of sides of a right-angled triangle given two pieces of information. What is seen in classroom teaching is peripheral treatment of the content. In addition to the objective presented, a revised curriculum for mathematics could include, among other things, suggested evaluation questions on the content. This would provide teachers with deeper insights into the attainment standard to be met.

The standards derived from the curriculum guide are projected for the "average" student as judged from a national perspective. However, at the school level, classes contain students of differing abilities. Teachers believe that the curriculum guide as presented can be modified to meet the needs of the students under their care, but school administrations are usually not supportive of this because of issues connected with accountability to higher authorities for coverage of the official curriculum that could lead to sanctions. This is compounded by the requirements of the Department of Education for schools to follow a week-by-week scheme of work, causing teachers to forge ahead to synchronously align with other schools. In this situation, the students' cognitive deficits keep expanding to a point of total failure.

A modular approach to curriculum design would allow for a higher level of proficiency in mathematics attainment since the modules, when designed, would provide for both conceptual understanding of the content presented while at the same time afford students extensive exercises aimed at enhancing the procedural skills embedded in the content. The focus would be on understanding mathematics – the whys and hows of doing mathematics. For example, teaching Pythagoras' theorem for the right-angled triangle by telling students that the square described on the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of squares described on the other two sides would not have real

meaning unless they are afforded the opportunity to construct the squares and dissect the two smaller squares to fit onto the largest square. The students may ask if the theorem holds true for semi-circles and equilateral triangles. Here is where real Mathematics will engage them.

Depth of Knowledge in Mathematics

The weekly plan for instruction does not allow for teaching a topic in Mathematics to a reasonable level of mastery. Teachers tend to provide the content at a very superficial level and are unable to penetrate greater depth in the topic at hand. Getting students to construct knowledge requires time and patience if learning is to be meaningful to them. For example, teachers teaching numeric fractions using models rarely transfer models to algebraic fractions. The teachers work in their comfort zone with procedural knowledge and rarely tread into conceptual knowledge which is truly the basis for building procedural knowledge. For, example, explaining that to factorize the algebraic expression $x^2 – y^2$ to give $(x – y)(x + y)$ would have greater meaning to the student if a square of side x units is presented and the student is asked to cut out a smaller square of side y units. The remaining portion of the large square can be converted to a rectangle of length $(x + y)$ units and width, $(x – y)$ units. The area of the rectangle is equal to the area of what remains from the big square (area = x^2) when the smaller square is cut out (area = y^2). Experimentally, the student will discover that $x^2 – y^2 = (x – y)(x + y)$.

The curriculum for Mathematics in its present form is presented in a linear fashion in which the content is segmented weekly and all students at a particular grade level must follow the progression regardless of ability levels. A restructured curriculum where the content is modularized and assessed at the completion of each module would be more helpful in advancing mastery. This approach is likely to facilitate depth of mathematics learning and consequently address the concerns in the call to go ‘back to basics’.

Teachers are of the view that if they are provided with opportunities for professional growth through structured workshops and seminars, a positive impact on the teaching of mathematics would be realized. Areas in the mathematics curriculum that are identified as posing challenge to teachers at Grades 10 and 11 are:

Plane geometry

Transformation geometry

Vector geometry

Probability

Trigonometry

Strategies for solving non-routine problems

Getting students to develop higher-order thinking skills and to articulate those skills.

The recently-launched Guyana Education Sector Improvement Project (GESIP 2018) – *Re-engineering Success in Education through National Curriculum Reform* establishes as a priority, the reform of the secondary school mathematics curriculum. This will see the creation of new curriculum guides with attendant support materials, the provisions of mathematics resources and laboratories, expanding and reforming teacher education, integrating technology as part of the delivery of mathematics education, and reforming national assessment in mathematics, among others. The challenge is to ensure that the reform initiative is translated into classroom practice.

Teacher Competency and Qualifications

The requirement to teach Mathematics at the secondary level is a university degree in Mathematics. There is a paucity of such persons teaching Mathematics in secondary schools in Guyana as can be gleaned from national examination results – the National Grade Nine Assessment and the CSEC for Guyana. Team-teaching in which teachers who are strong in one area in Mathematics can be invited to teach that area at other grades of the school is not common in mathematics departments. Teachers reported that very little emphasis is being placed on the professional development of mathematics teachers. The view was expressed that there is greater need to build the mathematics content of teachers before focusing on the development of their pedagogical skills. In the project evaluation report of the Secondary School Reform Project, Wolff (2004), in addressing the issue of reforming the training of secondary school teachers, recommended that "… in the long run all secondary school teachers

should receive a full BA in their subject specialty, followed by a year of pedagogical training" (pp 25 – 26). This assessment is supported by Dr. Dennis Gill as recorded in the minutes of Faculty of Education and Humanities meeting held on January 21, 2021 "He stated that he was concerned about the competencies/preparedness of teachers enrolled in the Secondary programme. As a part of the committee for CAPE he has a sense of the levels competency in the schools and was concerned about the Region's dependence on the students graduating from the B Ed. programme." It is estimated that there are less than five teachers in the public secondary schools with a full BA or BSc in Mathematics.

The major institutions supplying mathematics teachers for the secondary schools are the University of Guyana and the Cyril Potter College of Education. The outputs from these institutions cannot meet the current needs of the schools. The outputs from these two training institutions are provided in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4

Year	Faculty of Natural Sciences, University of Guyana			Cyril Potter College of Education		
	No. of BSc Math.	No. of BSc Grads.	% of Math. Grads.	No. of Associate Degree Math.	No. of ADE Grads.	% of Math. Grads.
2015	9	94	9.6	36	206	17.5
2016	8	79	10.1	47	166	28.3
2017	9	67	13.4	30	178	16.9
2018	1	76	1.3	82	227	36.1
2019	2	74	2.7	35	170	20.6

Mathematics Graduates from Faculty of Natural Sciences, University of Guyana and Cyril Potter College of Education 2015 – 2019

Table 5

Mathematics Graduates from Faculty of Education and Humanities, University of Guyana 2015 – 2019

Year	Faculty of Education and Humanities, University of Guyana			University of Guyana		
	No. of B.Ed. Maths	No. of Grads.	% of B.Ed. Maths Grads.	Total No. of BSc and B.Ed. Maths Grads.	Total No. of B.Sc. and B.Ed. Grads.	% of B.Sc. and B.Ed. Maths Grads.
2015	16	144	11.1	25	238	10.5
2016	7	268	2.6	15	347	4.3
2017	10	262	3.8	19	329	5.8
2018	9	219	4.1	10	295	3.4
2019	10	229	4.4	12	303	4.0

These institutions depend on the secondary schools to provide potential trainees by selecting the students who are best-qualified in Mathematics at least at the CSEC level. The percentage of secondary school students obtaining Grade 1 in Mathematics is very low, averaging 5% of the cohort, which is about 500 students.

The pool of qualified students to supply the training institutions is very small in comparison to what is needed. The institutions, for the sake of their viability and survival, resort to also accepting the not-very-best-qualified for entry. Training of teachers should be designed to meet the demands or needs of the school system and should be guided by data obtained from a manpower survey. Such an approach would allow for strategic training decisions to be made for the country's long-term educational needs, and to avoid the glut of trained teachers in some areas of curriculum delivery.

The curriculum of Cyril Potter College of Education, which provides initial training of mathematics teachers, should be revised to reflect deeper and wider coverage of both content and pedagogy. This will ensure that the graduate can function effectively as secondary school mathematics teachers. This is more so since the certificate granted is of Associate Degree status, thus allowing students a two-year exemption for those who wish to pursue a B. Ed. programme in Mathematics at the University of Guyana.

Utilization of Mathematics Resource Materials

Schools are supplied with mathematics textbooks for students, and as the teacher teaches, reference is made to specific sections of a textbook. Students are directed to work a few examples. But rarely is a student's work marked by the teacher. Students exchange their exercise books and mark them as the teacher calls out the answer. The students do not work systematically through the textbook and as such lack a comprehensive grasp of the content depth. Feedback to students is given occasionally.

The Mathematics Kit procured and distributed to schools is a good initiative. The kit consists of materials that can be used to teach almost all topics in secondary school Mathematics. Persons were selected to train the mathematics teachers in how to use the kit in teaching Mathematics. However, these persons faced severe challenges when questioned by teachers for deeper explanations. Very few of the secondary schools have operationalized the use of the kits. One teacher reported: "I heard about a Mathematics Kit that is in my school, but it was never being used. It is locked away to ensure that the school inventory is intact."

Teaching Time-Table

The time-table allocation of teaching periods for mathematics is reasonable but the allocated time is not utilized maximally by teachers. Consequently, the planned work is left incomplete, resulting in a cumulative deficit of content that would be prerequisite for more advanced work in Mathematics. The view was expressed that teachers should be given some level of flexibility in setting mathematics time-tables. The core areas of the whole curriculum should be heavily weighted and within the core

areas, Mathematics should be given the greatest weight. This should apply to the first two years of the secondary school programme to allow for the basic mathematics skills to be firmly grasped by students for the more advanced Mathematics at the upper grades in the secondary school.

Under The World Bank-funded Secondary School Reform Project (1996 – 2004), this approach was successfully used in the 12 secondary pilot schools but at the end of the project, it was not rolled out to the other secondary schools. A similar structural approach will allow teachers to concentrate on grounding students in the fundamentals of Mathematics. The time-table for the upper grades can remain without any major adjustments. The issue of advancing sustainability of successful initiatives is a challenge for policy makers.

Assessment Methodology across Grades and Schools

The issue of using a common assessment for students of significantly varying abilities was raised as a concern, and it was felt that assessments of specific content areas in Mathematics should be undertaken to provide a basis for structured intervention by the school administration. Assessment in Mathematics is too general to allow teachers to plan strategic interventions. In the whole scheme of mathematics assessment, the diagnostic aspect is missing. This should be addressed if significant improvements in Mathematics are to be attained. It is felt that for each strand in Mathematics for each grade, a national diagnostic instrument should be professionally created and made accessible to mathematics teachers. Mathematics teachers would then be able to focus their intervention to address students' weaknesses.

The Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate syllabus for Mathematics provides a robust approach to Mathematics evaluation by providing for cognitive profiling of students' attainment. The profiles for the overall assessment are Knowledge, Comprehension and Reasoning and are weighted in the ratio 3:4:3 respectively. Teachers are requesting guidance to help them develop skills to write test items for each category of the cognitive profile, which they feel will empower them to provide quality mathematics education at the secondary level.

Further, with the introduction of School-Based Assessment (SBA) for Mathematics, teachers believe that little or no guidance is provided to help them to design, construct and evaluate SBAs. Students need professional guidance to allow them to be engaged in authentic mathematical experiences. The current weighting of mathematics SBAs is 20%.

In 2020 when CXC released the CSEC and CAPE results, there were protests from both teachers and students regarding the grades obtained. Consequently, CXC undertook a review and it was revealed that the SBA component of the assessment contributed in a large measure to low grades obtained by several students.

Here in Guyana, the Ministry of Education is moving to have teachers take responsibility for SBAs and to be held accountable for them. The SBA component was introduced in the assessment of Mathematics in 2016 and teachers were provided with some basic training in managing the process. However, over time the process was compromised, resulting in students looking beyond the school for help. Many turned to purchasing SBAs from the "commercial suppliers" which, in turn, runs contrary to the goals of education. One mathematics head of department remarked, "If teachers are actively part of the process of developing the SBAs along with marking rubrics and are provided with tips on supervision of them, then the commercialization of SBAs would be greatly reduced if not eliminated."

Students' Attitudes towards Learning Mathematics

Positive attitudes of students to education, in general and Mathematics, in particular, go a far way in aiding their quest for knowledge and skills. However, an overwhelming number of students display attitudes that are not wholesome to learning Mathematics. There is a pervasive belief among the students, as well as adults, that Mathematics is hard, difficult and boring, and that only persons endowed with special talents can succeed in doing Mathematics. Students experience boredom attending classes where Mathematics is presented in non-friendly and non-interactive ways to them. The presentation style of many teachers are as follows:

Providing brief explanations of a concept or skill

Working a few elementary examples

Giving a few examples for students to work

Students exchange books

Teacher announces the answers

Students mark the correct answers

Books are returned.

This approach to teaching Mathematics encourages 'intellectual laziness' among students since they are not afforded the opportunity to be challenged. Students are not given the opportunity to recreate or rediscover mathematical principles and laws through which ownership of knowledge can be achieved.

The issue of equity in the distribution of resources for the teaching and learning of Mathematics was raised as a concern among students who surmise that better-qualified teachers are not provided to them. Reference was made to the poor quality of teaching at the perceived low-performing schools. Teaching resources provided to the schools are rarely utilized in the teaching process.

A variety of resources are available to students on the internet, especially on YouTube. Students need to be taught how to navigate the internet to access available resources that, in most cases, are presented in video format. Teachers need to be familiar with the resources so as to provide informed guidance to students.

Back to Basics in Mathematics

There is a clarion call from stakeholders for teachers to teach students the basic skills in Mathematics in order for them to make meaningful progress in learning the subject. Students arriving at secondary schools very often do not know their multiplication and addition tables. Mathematics topics requiring elementary computations end up with time being spent on re-teaching basic computations. This generally results in the main topic being treated at a more-or-less superficial level. At the basic level, the focus of the teaching should be on understanding mathematical concepts rather than on computational accuracy. If conceptual understanding is achieved, then students would see meaning in answers resulting from mathematical

computational operations. Conceptual understanding should precede the steps involved in a computational procedure.

Mathematics is a prime subject in the school curriculum that provides opportunity for students to develop reasoning skills. Students are required to learn the rules and apply them to solve problems and to justify their answers based on the application of the rules. Very often students are not asked to verbalize their mental processes so that the teachers can understand their thinking processes and take corrective actions where necessary. The formal teaching of 'Mental Computation' is not given prominence in teaching. The routine use of 'Mental' in every topic of the mathematics curriculum delivery will enhance students' ability to expand their mathematical thinking beyond the peripheral content of the topic.

Some readily-available technological tools already in the hands of students are not used to generate the maximum learning that can be derived from them. Examples of such elementary tools are the 30 cm ruler, the geometry set and the calculator. Asked to use three pieces of sticks of lengths 15 cm, 5 cm and 6 cm to form a triangle, students are usually unable to explain why it is not possible to make such a triangle. Working with the instruments in the geometry set will lead them to discover that in any triangle, the sum of the lengths of any two sides is greater than the length of the third side. Teachers are challenged in using these basic technological tools.

Quality of Supervision at the Departmental Level

A mathematics department is established in every secondary school and is managed by the most senior mathematics teacher who is designated as the head of department with responsibility for effectively managing it. For effectively managing the department, there are usually regular meetings to discuss challenges and opportunities, as well as to organize professional development activities. The head is expected to routinely monitor classroom instruction and to provide guidance to those under his/her supervision. From reports and observations, the heads fall short of expectations and in many instances are left unsupervised by the school administration. In a few instances, mathematics resource persons outside of the school are invited to interact with members of the department with a view of improving pedagogical skills for teaching Mathematics. A cadre of mathematics professionals should be centrally

located in the Ministry of Education to provide real professional support to mathematics departments to enable them to teach Mathematics effectively.

The head of a mathematics department is usually the most senior mathematics teacher in the school. Seniority is determined by years of service and not by any structured programme of training. The result is that the *status quo* is maintained, thus sustaining a bureaucracy that sits on poor mathematics outputs from secondary schools. A structured management programme for heads of department will ensure that there will not be a repeat of the 2020 fiasco with CXC examination results.

Transfer of Training into the Classroom

During their formal training for certification, mathematics teachers receive a wide range of pedagogical skills, and during their practicum usually perform well. How much of that training is transferred to the regular mathematics classroom is cause for concern. Mathematics teachers generally fall back to their old practices, in which preparation to teach a class is minimal. Rote learning is the dominant feature in their classroom practices. Some mathematics teachers expend personal financial and other resources to create hands-on materials to communicate abstract mathematical concepts, but as they claim, financial resources are not inexhaustible. Materials and training can be afforded to teachers for the creations of such learning materials using adapted templates for same.

Superstructure Supporting Mathematics Instruction

The Ministry of Education always has a focus on Mathematics and Science education. It has established a Mathematics/Science unit to oversee the development of curricula and training of teachers for these areas. The unit has had many transformations over the years, but sadly, its visibility in secondary schools is not recognizable. Depending on the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) through its varied training programmes to address the teaching deficiencies in secondary schools is expecting too much. CPCE provides initial training and the National Centre for Educational Resource Development has the responsibility for continuous professional development of teachers, working in collaboration with other training institutions, such as the University of Guyana. To bring about synergies among training institutions to

address mathematics education in secondary schools, an advisory council on mathematics education should be established with leadership from the University of Guyana. Through this council, standards can be established to guide the practitioners involved in mathematics education at all levels of the education system. For secondary school mathematics, well-designed summer camps for mathematics teachers can be organized. In its infancy, the Faculty of Education, University of Guyana, undertook such a role under the leadership of Professor Barry Hammond. The University of Guyana can once again rise to the challenge.

5 Conclusion

The Ministry of Education has, over the years, embarked on a number of reform initiatives to address the unacceptable outcomes from secondary school mathematics programmes. However, from the perspectives of teachers, school administrators, students and other stakeholders, the outcomes remain relatively the same. Short-term funded projects under United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank were initiated and achieved some measure of success, but at the end of the project cycles, there were no structural plans for continuity to ensure sustainability of the achievements. Locally-funded projects suffered a similar fate. Education planning should not run on a five-year cycle pendulum but probably on a 25-year cycle. Sustainability of good innovations is a challenge for education planners and policy makers who should have long-term vision for education growth.

Macro education plans for the improvement of education are laudable but they must be informed by micro-specific issues. Years of planning at the macro level resulted in neglect of the micro issues which, if addressed, would result in improved macro-level achievement indicators. Specific issues identified for focused attention for inclusion in a developmental plan for education with respect to secondary school Mathematics, though not exhaustive, are given below:

- A new design for the mathematics curriculum for secondary schools and teacher-training programmes;

- Development of an implementation plan for the new mathematics curriculum for secondary schools;
- Development of a robust mathematics training plan for pre-service and in-service teachers;
- Establishment of a Mathematics Council under the leadership of the University of Guyana to provide guidance for mathematics teaching at all levels of the education system;
- Creation of a management and supervision manual for mathematics instruction in secondary schools;
- Establishment of a dedicated ICT unit to support the integration of technology in education in general, and more particularly, in mathematics education; and
- Development of an audit inventory of trained and qualified mathematics teachers for every secondary school and within the professional arm of the Ministry of Education

Mathematics, like English, is a compulsory subject in secondary schools. Of the approximately 18, 000 student cohort, only approximately 11, 000 wrote the CSEC Mathematics in 2019 representing 61% of the cohort. Of these, only 43% obtained passes at Grades 1 – 3 in Mathematics. The corresponding passes in English stand at 77%. This disparity is too wide for comfort. A long-term plan for mathematics education with specific benchmarks can go a far way in addressing, in a systemic and a systematic manner, improvement of outcomes in secondary school mathematics.

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Ruminations

Michael Khan

Art is universal and it may convey different meanings at different times to different people. The universal nature of art is closely related to the culture, traditions, customs, myths and legends of many nations. Walter Kaufmann's book *Religions in Four Dimensions* (1976) said that art offers what religion promises. This religious interest is not rooted in theology but rather aesthetics. When we look at the development of art from the Neolithic times to modern day, Renaissance and many other art periods helped to fuel this conception and laid the ground work for a clearer understanding of religion and the past histories of all civilizations. E.H. Gombrich (1967) in *The Story of Art* mentioned that "Most people like to see in pictures what they would also like to see in reality". This is the premise that artists have adopted for centuries, and they have been offering a glimpse of nature and reality to their viewers through their compositions. In poverty or wealth, in sickness or health, in good times or bad, the artists have remained faithful to the task of interpreting nature and reality for the rest of the world. A notable artist that should be mentioned for sharing his vision of Cubism is Pablo Picasso who said "The purpose of art is washing away the dust of daily life off our souls". Artists, on the other hand, deal with specific issues within the universal spectrum.

As an artist, I deal with the three-dimensional aspect of nature and how it stimulates the senses by exploring the beauty of nature with it breathtaking scenes, the texture of its elements and the changing colour scheme affected by light and dark. As an adolescent, I was intrigued in the solidity of the form of shapes in nature. Clay was the medium I started with, and my ceramics teacher was Ms. Marks who was a circuit arts and craft teacher servicing four schools on the West Bank of the Demerara River. The schools were: Malgre Tout Primary, St Swithens Primary, Crane Primary and West Demerara Secondary which I was attending. Her main lesson to me was "Play with the clay, conceptualize the image and then relate to its form". This became the driving force in all my creations and still is after fifty years. Author Harriet Shorr (1990), in

The Artist's Eye, shared the same principle as Ms. Marks: that the artist must first perceptualize the vision then conceptualize its birth. Shorr proclaim this as pure perception in the creation of art. Digging and kneading the clay helped me to perceive and then conceive the creations. The secondary interests were style, subject and meaning, which was the least of my concerns.

Another person who nurtured me along the artistic path was Ms. Agnes Jones, Administrator of the E.R. Burrowes School of Art (1987 to 1994). She recognized my ability to share my knowledge and encouraged me to study Art Education. I took her advice and graduated with distinction in Art Education. A third person who helped to fashioned my artistic career was Professor Doris Rogers of the University of Guyana, who declared that I was gifted. She encouraged me to follow my dream and to always remain faithful to it. In 1992, I graduated with a Bachelor in Art and started working as a lecturer in art at the Cyril Potter College of Education. In 1988, I started the August Vacation Art Workshop at the National Library for children aged six years to sixteen years. This continued at the Burrowes School of Art for ten years along with Saturday art classes for the same-aged children. The classes offered drawing, painting, ceramics, textiles and sculpture. It was during this time that my interest in natural fibers and found objects was further developed. In 1994, I joined the Georgetown International Academy as an Art teacher. This school served the international communities who showed an interest in Guyana's nature. Many arts and craft workshops were organized using found objects taken from the environments across the three counties of Guyana. This gave me greater insight into materials suitable for art making, fine craft, crafts, assemblages, tie dyes, and weavings. In 2000, I obtained a Masters in International Education from Framingham State College. After seventeen years at GIA, I took up an appointment at the University of Guyana as a lecturer in the Division of Creative Arts where I am currently.

My creative compositions are based on the capturing and manipulation of simple forms while conveying my ideas, emotions and love to the viewing audience. In my work I use a variety of various art media but my predominant media are textile fabrics, yarns, dyes and various organic materials extracted from nature. All my compositions reflect the culture of the Guyanese Amerindians, Africans, East Indians and all other ethnic groups.

What also helps in my creations is my collection of historical artifacts that tell of the reality of the history of our ancestors. I have participated in several art exhibitions, and won the First Prize in the Fine Craft category of the 2017 Guyana Visual Arts Competition and Exhibition. The weavings I create take many man hours to complete, but at the end of each I am satisfied in my work as an artist.

Figure 1. *Rumination I* . Mixed Media. 2018. 84” x 72”.

RUMINATION I begins with the rich fertile earth and the water which covers the seas. It is the first people, the Amerindians with their seeds, shells, petroglyphs, and the cassava plant. Upon the sea came the ships of the Europeans, which led to the enslavement and the journey of Africans, and the beginning of plantation life. Sugar was a king that offered great wealth to the invaders. The germinating seed in the national colours depicts the birth of our nation and the importance of sugar and rice to the economy.

Figure 2. *Rumination II.* Mixed Media. 2018. 96" x 84"

RUMINATION II features the pristine jungle, waterfalls and savannahs of Guyana.

Figure 3. *Rumination III.* Mixed Media. 2018. 96” x 84”

RUMINATION III depicts the conflict between traditions and industrialization. On one side, the simple traditional life of our indigenous community is portrayed, while the other side shows the destruction of the rainforest due to the gold mining industry.

Figure 4. Bacoo. Mixed Media. 2012. 24”

Figure 5. *Children's Monument*. Terrazzo, cement and clay bricks. 2000. 50’ x 50’

Figure 6. *Moongazer.* Mixed Media. 2012. 36”

Figure 7. *Wisdom Journey*. Mixed Media. 2016. 13’ x 16”

Michael Khan is an artist and performer. He has a great interest in taking art and culture to the people, and helping children discover art. He is known for his personification of the Guyanese folklore character Ol’ Man Papie, which he uses in performances to help keep Guyana’s art, history and creole culture alive.

Gender and ninth-grade learners' preferences in writing classrooms

Pamela Rose

Abstract

Gender disparity in the achievement of males and females in schools continues to be an area of concern in developed countries. However, this area of research has not received much focus in the Caribbean literature even though results in national and regional assessments show females outperforming males in English Language, a subject necessary to advance in academic and professional careers. The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate male and female learners' preferences for writing instruction in ninth-grade classrooms. Through questionnaires and a theoretical framework informed by cognitive, linguistic and sociocultural theories, this study investigated gender preferences in a Creole-speaking context. The results of the study revealed more similarities than differences in gender preferences for writing instruction with differences in the strength of their preferences. Implications of the findings for writing instruction are discussed.

Keywords: gender, writing instruction, preferences, Creole-speaking

1 Introduction

As the gap between males and females continues to widen in the areas of academic performance and career choices, increasing attention is being given to gender-based achievement and self-efficacy in STEM subjects (Breda, 2018; Chen et al., 2020) in light of perceived negative consequences for academic and career prospects in a 21st century environment. However, despite this consistent focus on gender gaps elsewhere, the paucity of published Caribbean literature (Ellis & Thomas, 2018; Jackman & Morrain-Webb, 2019) on gender achievement in schools suggests limited focus on gender-based gaps in academic achievement in Caribbean schools.

Over the last years – 2017, 2018, 2019 – successive annual reports from the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) have revealed a continuing trend where females consistently outperform males by obtaining higher percentages of pass grades

(1-3) while males obtain higher percentages of fail grades (4-5) in the subject English 'A'. Since the subject English Language (English 'A') is an important predictor of school success, career readiness and development (Rose, 2019), it is necessary to focus on gender-based gaps in performance in this subject. This study adds to the limited body of existing literature (Ellis &Thomas, 2019; Jackman & Morrain- Webb, 2019; Robinson, 2020) on gender achievement in secondary school settings. It investigated male and female ninth-grade learners' preferences for writing instruction in secondary classrooms in a Creole-speaking context.

2 Theoretical Framework

The postpositivist paradigm (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019) and cognitive, sociocultural and linguistic perspectives on writing instruction provide the framework for this study. Cognitive theories (Hayes, 1996) regard writing as an individual activity involving individual planning, drafting, revising and rewriting. Sociocultural theories (Kostouli, 2009; Schultz & Fecho, 2000) focus on collaborative activities in instruction. The linguistic theory (Hudson, 2004) emphasizes the written product, the text and the linguistic variables that determine writers' rhetorical choices.

Gender

Gender is defined as male or female from the social constructionist perspective which uses the context of social and cultural norms rather than biological ones (Schneider, Gruman & Coutts, 2005).

Preferences

Preference refers to learners' tendency along a scale to like, like very much, dislike or dislike very much the writing instruction that their teachers use**,** acknowledging emotional reactions, and negative or positive attitudes (Mc Groarty, 1996) in the social setting of the classroom.

Writing instruction

Writing instruction refers to teachers' use of a combination of methods which focus on individual as well as collaborative work and processes and the production of texts (Graham & Perin, 2007).

2.1 Literature Review

Gender and writing in English Language classrooms have been examined from multiple perspectives but with inconsistent results. Cognitive and physiological perspectives illustrate the view that girls' reading skills mature at a much faster rate than boys', and so girls are more positive about writing than boys are (Husband, 2012; Pennington et al., 2021), and they produce more fluent, coherent and better-organised texts (Maleki & Jewell, 2003). Linguistic perspectives correlated text length and lexical variety with performance and promoted girls as better writers (Howell, 2008). However, Jones and Myhill (2007) disputed these findings by reporting linguistic similarities in the writing of both high-achieving boys and girls from their sample of 700 teenage writers. The texts of more boys than girls reflected high-performing writers' patterns.

Sociocultural and psychological accounts challenge cognitive views (Husband, 2012; Pennington et al., 2021) suggesting that boys' issues in the classroom are connected to construction of masculinities and the struggle to define self and conceptions of literacy success (Alloway, 2007; Wood & Blanton, 2009), preferred learning styles and motivation (Kehler & Martino, 2007; Snyder, 2008). Trist (2006) suggested that boys who are socialized to suppress and ignore emotions are uncomfortable with activities which require reading and writing about emotions. For some boys, being accepted and approved by other males is important, and if these activities are not included in the male peer culture, a negative attitude might develop towards them (Robinson, 2020). Figueroa (2000) from a stereotypical perspective, noted that in the Caribbean, girls' socialization prepares them for expectations of high levels of discipline, conformity and involvement in repetitive tasks that seemingly characterize Caribbean classrooms. He added that in contrast, boys' socialization is seen to be tough and 'hard', which creates resistance to aspects of schooling considered girlish such as the use of the Standard English instead of Creole. Ellis and Thomas (2018) contended that boys in the Caribbean find learning English to be burdensome because they are not prepared to dedicate time to reading. Thus, there is a significant reading gap between males and females in the Caribbean, and this gap affects performance in writing (Jackman & Morrain-Webb, 2019).

Although studies (Breda et al., 2018; Pennington et al., 2021) have shown that several factors might account for differences in gender performance in activities related

to writing in the school subject English Language, the phenomenon of Caribbean boys' underachievement in writing remains a complex issue, yet to be fully understood and explored. Investigating male and female preferences for writing instruction in Creole-speaking classrooms could potentially provide more insight into this complex phenomenon.

Students' Preferences in Writing Classrooms

Research conducted on students' preferences for communicative versus non-communicative activities in English Language classrooms have shown that students' preferences are integrated into a complex web of social (Carrington, 1988; Schultz & Fecho, 2000) and psychological factors (Garrett & Shortall, 2002). Rose (2019) investigated Grades 9 students' activity preferences in an English as an Official Language context in a secondary school in Guyana and identified more positive attitudes to traditional teacher-centered instruction in a context where knowledge transmission was found to be the dominant mode of instruction. Preferences for non-communicative activities could also relate to performance anxiety induced in situations where students are required to speak and are forced to produce structures that they had not yet acquired (Horwitz, 2001).

However, other studies submit that students' preference for teacher-centered instruction might be linked to their proficiency levels (Garrett & Shortall, 2002). Their study of Brazilian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students who were at three different language proficiency levels found students at the beginner levels to prefer more teacher-centered activities while those at the intermediate levels preferred student -centered activities. As was revealed in Garrett and Shortall's study (2002), it appeared that as students approach more advanced levels, they become less-dependent on teachers.

Research on preference for feedback yielded controversial findings (Ellis, 2009). Where students associated good writing with error-free writing, they preferred teachers to provide written corrections in their work and one-to-one personal feedback (Laryea, 2013; Voerman et al., 2014). Lee's (2005) study of L2 secondary school students' perceptions, beliefs and attitude to error correction in their writing classroom in Hong Kong found that most students believed that error correction was primarily the teachers' responsibility. Hajian et al. (2014) provided similar results from students in

an EFL context in Iran. However, Rose (2019) found that ninth-grade learners in a Creole-speaking context in Guyana disliked teachers' written feedback.

The findings on feedback through peer review have also proved to be contradictory (Chang, 2016; Lee, 2015). Students at the tertiary level responded positively to this type of feedback when it complemented teacher feedback but preferred teachers' input over peer feedback if given a choice (Chang, 2016). Lee's (2015) study also found that junior secondary school students in Hong Kong rated teachers' comments more positively than peer feedback. They showed a preference for both types but preferred peer reviews over self-evaluation. However, while there is robust literature elsewhere (Chang, 2016; Laryea, 2013) on students' preferences for specific types of instruction, there is scant literature (Rose, 2019) on the preferences of secondary school students in Creole-speaking contexts.

Writing Instruction in Secondary Classrooms in Creole-Speaking Contexts

In terms of writing instruction in secondary classrooms, the theoretical principles of Craig, (1999, 2006) and Bryan (2010) serve as recommendations. These principles reflect efforts to deal with challenges encountered by Creole-speaking learners who are attempting to acquire both reading and writing literacy in the official Standard English and who have difficulties distinguishing Creole structures from the Standard English structures. Craig's (1999) programme, *Teaching English to Speakers of a Related Variety* (TESORV), recommended that teachers contrast structures of both Creole and Standard English and engage learners in both receptive and productive grammar and vocabulary tasks. Bryan (2010) in reformulating Craig's (1999) theoretical principles, proposed *Teaching English in a Creole-speaking Environment* (TECSE), using the four modes of language and oral work to support thinking, probing and problem-solving in metalinguistic language awareness tasks. These tasks require learners to notice the codes in both languages to master the discourse strategies of the written Standard English structures required in their classrooms. This study draws on the work of Craig (1999) and Bryan (2010) to provide a better understanding of male and female preferences for writing instruction in a Creole-speaking context. It is guided by the following research questions:

1. What types of writing instruction do male and female ninth-grade learners prefer
2. How are the preferences of male and female ninth-grade learners similar or different?

3 Methodology

Design

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to identify trends in male and female students' preferences regarding writing instruction.

Population

The population comprised 450 ninth-grade learners who were all doing English Language (English 'A') as a compulsory subject in six public secondary schools in the Lower, Central and Upper Corentyne areas in Berbice. In these schools, males were underperforming in CSEC English 'A' examinations (Department of Education, Region 6, CSEC Results Summary). In these classrooms, teachers used the grade nine curriculum guides distributed by the Ministry of Education, thus, their teaching was likely to be less-affected by the high-stakes CSEC examination. The language of learning and teaching in the schools was expected to be Standard English, the school's target language and the official language of the country. The learners' home language is *Guyanese*, a Creole language native to Guyana.

Sample

One hundred and twenty-five learners from six secondary schools constituted the sample. Sixty-two were females and 63 were males. Their ages ranged from 14-17. This group represented a random stratified sample as 21 questionnaires were collected from learners in five schools and 20 from one school.

Instrument

Data were collected through the use of a structured questionnaire adapted from previous research by Samperio (2017). Learners filled in demographic data as well as answered 24 closed items distributed across language skills (1-10), feedback (11-15), vocabulary (16-19) and grammar (20-24). Learners indicated their preferences as *like*, *like very much*, *dislike* or *dislike very much*, or *no experience* in relation to the instruction that their teachers used**.**

Procedure

The Ministry of Education granted permission for the schools to participate. Learners and teachers' consent was sought through their head teachers. The

questionnaires were piloted on a group that was not involved in the study after which the language in a few of the items was simplified, and the reliability of the instrument was established. The Cronbach alpha score was 0.7. Revised questionnaires were administered to learners by their respective class teachers who were not teaching English Language. It was believed that learners would have been more comfortable with their class teachers.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using simple descriptive statistics in the SPSS statistical package version 21. In order to distinguish negative and positive preferences more clearly, the percentages for *like* and *like very much* were combined to produce a positive preference percentage, and those for *dislike* and *dislike very much* were combined to form a negative preference percentage. To answer the first research question, simple descriptive statistics were applied and percentages calculated. To answer the second research question means and standard deviations were calculated.

4 Results and Discussion

Tables 1-4 present the results for research question on reading, writing, speaking and listening. The results for feedback, vocabulary and grammar are presented in Tables 5-7.

Table 1 reveals that males and females differed slightly in how they rated their preference for *reading*. Over three quarters of the males (82.5 %) and females (83.8%) reported more positive preference for group reading, *reading textbooks aloud in groups for information to write about a topic* (item 1).

Table 2 shows that both males and females reported more positive preference for individual work than group work. Over three-quarters of the females (80.7%) and just under three-quarters of the males (71.4%) rated writing on a topic by myself (item 5) more favourably than group or peer work. Group writing received the least favourable responses from males (55.6%) and females (53.2%).

Table 1

Percentage of learners' response to instruction related to reading

	Reading	**Like**		**Dislike**		**No Experience**		**Total**
	Items	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	125
1	Reading text-books aloud in groups for in-formation to write about a topic (group work)	52 (82.5)	52 (83.8)	11 (17.5)	9(14.5)	0	1 (1.6)	125
2	Reading text-books silently in class for in-formation to write about a topic (individual work)	45 (71.4)	50 (80.7)	17 (26.9)	11 (17.7)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	125

Note. M—Males; F—Females

Table 2

Percentage of learners' response to instruction related to writing

	Writing	Like		Dislike		No Experience		Total
	Items	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	125
3	Writing on a top-ic with a class-mate (peer work)	38 (60.3)	44 (70.9)	24 (38.1)	17 (27.4)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	125
4	Writing on a top-ic with more than one classmate (group work)	35 (55.6)	33 (53.2)	25 (39.7)	29 (46.8)	3 (4.8)	0	125
5	Writing on a top-ic by myself (individual work)	45 (71.4)	50 (80.7)	18 (28.5)	11 (17.8)	0	1 (1.6)	125

Note. M—Males; F—Females

Table 3

Percentage of learners' response to instruction related to speaking

Speaking		Like		Dislike		No Experience		Total
	Items	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	125
6	Telling the entire class about my writing (individual work)	22 (34.9)	25 (40.3)	41 (65.1)	32 (51.6)	0	5 (8.1)	125
7	Telling a class-mate about my writing (peer work)	30 (47.6)	28 (45.2)	27 (42.9)	32 (51.6)	6 (9.5)	2 (3.2)	125
8	Telling more than one classmate about my writing (group work)	30 (47.6)	23 (37.1)	30 (47.6)	35 (56.5)	3 (4.8)	4 (6.5)	125

Note. M—Males; F—Females

As shown in Table 3, the results for speaking were negative responses from both males and females but with differences in the items. Over half of the males (65.1%) reported disliking speaking individually to the class, *telling the entire class about my writing* (item 6). In contrast, over half of the females reported disliking speaking about their writing in any of the given situations (items 6, 7 & 8).

Table 4

Percentage of learners' responses to instruction related to listening

Listening		Like		Dislike		No Experience		Total
	Items	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	125
9	Listening to my teacher giving instruction and explanations for writing	48 (75)	53 (85.5)	16 (25)	8(12.9)	0	1 (1.6)	125
10	Listening to my classmates giving instruction and explanations for writing (group work)	27 (42.7)	25 (40.3)	31 (49.2)	35 (56.5)	5 (7.9)	2 (3.2)	125

Note. M—Males; F—Females

Table 4 indicates that both males and females reported stronger preferences for teacher-led instruction. Over three-quarters of the females (85.5%) and exactly three-quarters of the males (75%) reported that they preferred listening to teachers' oral instruction (item 9).

Feedback, vocabulary and grammar

Tables 5-7 display writing instruction related to feedback, vocabulary and grammar.

Table 5

Percentage of learners' response to feedback

Feedback		Like		Dislike		No Experience		Total
	Items	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	125
11	Having my teacher tell me about mistakes in my writing	36 (57.1)	44 (70.9)	25 (39.7)	16 (25.8)	2 (3.2)	2 (3.2)	125
12	Having my teacher write comments about mistakes in my writing	27 (42.9)	27 (43.6)	35 (55.6)	32 (51.6)	1 (1.6)	3 (4.8)	125
13	Having a classmate tell me about mistakes in my writing (peer work)	13 (20.6)	25 (40.3)	48 (76.2)	36 (58.1)	2 (3.2)	1 (1.6)	125
14	Having my classmates write comments about mistakes in my writing (group work)	19 (30.2)	13 (20.9)	41 (65.1)	41 (66.1)	3 (4.8)	8(12.9)	125
15	Finding mistakes in my own writing (individual work)	34 (53.9)	41 (66.1)	26 (41.3)	17 (27.4)	3 (4.8)	4 (6.5)	125

Note. M—Males; F—Females

Table 5 reveals that generally both males and females had a similar negative preference for nearly all types of feedback excluding *oral feedback from teacher* (item 11) and *self -assessment* (item 15). Almost three-quarters of the females (70.97%) and just over half of the males (57.1%) reported liking *oral feedback from teachers* (item 11). Similarly, *self-assessment* (item 15) was reported as being liked by more than half of the females

(66.1%) and fewer males (53.9%).

Table 6

Percentage of learners' response to vocabulary

Vocabulary		Like		Dislike		No Experience		Total
	Items	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	125
16	Learning new words and discussing their meanings with my teacher	49 (77.8)	57 (91.9)	413 (20.7)	4 (6.5)	1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	125
17	Learning new words and discussing their meanings with my classmates (group work)	45 (71.4)	51 (82.3)	15 (23.8)	9(14.5)	3 (4.8)	2 (3.2)	125
18	Learning new words and trying to work out their meanings by myself (individual)	55 (87.3)	52 (83.9)	8(12.7)	7(11.3)	0	3 (4.8)	125
19	Learning new words and discussing their meanings with one of my classmates (peer work)	48 (76.2)	40 (64.5)	14 (22.2)	13 (20.6)	1 (1.6)	9(14.3)	125

Note. M—Males; F—Females

As seen in Table 6, both males and females reported very positive preferences for all areas of vocabulary instruction. The majority of the males (87.3%) reported preferring *independent vocabulary activities* (item 18) followed by 77.8% who preferred *teacher led vocabulary activities* (item 16). The reverse was noted for the females. A higher percentage (91.3%) of females reported liking *teacher led vocabulary activities* (item 16), followed by 83.9% who preferred *independent vocabulary activities* (item 18).

Table 7

Percentage of learners' responses to grammar

Grammar		Like		Dislike		No Experience		Total
	Items	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	M (n=63)	F (n=62)	125
20	Doing Standard English grammar exercises with my teacher	46 (73.1)	46 (74.2)	17 (26.9)	10 (17.2)	0	6 (9.7)	125
21	Doing Creole grammar exercises with my teacher	24 (38.1)	22 (35.5)	33 (52.4)	16 (25.8)	6 (9.5)	24 (38.7)	125
22	Working with my classmates to learn rules about grammar (group work)	40 (63.5)	46 (74.2)	21 (33.3)	11 (17.7)	2 (3.2)	5 (8.1)	125
23	Learning grammar by myself	40 (63.5)	46 (73)	21 (33.3)	12 (19.1)	2 (3.2)	4 (6.4)	125
24	Listening to my teacher explain rules about grammar	48 (76.2)	54 (87.1)	14 (22.2)	6 (9.7)	1 (1.6)	2 (3.2)	125

Note. M—Males; F—Females

Table 7 shows both males and females reporting positively for all areas of grammar excluding *Creole grammar activities* (item 21). Teacher-led grammar instruction where students *listened to teachers' oral instruction in grammar* (item 24) was reported as liked by over three-quarters of the males (76.2%) and even more females (87.1%). In contrast, more than half of the males (52.4%) reported disliking *teacher led Creole grammar instruction* (item 21) while more of the females (64.5%) gave a negative view with 25.8% reporting dislike and 38.7% reporting *no experience*.

RQ 2: In what ways are the preferences of male and female ninth-grade learners similar or different?

Table 8 displays the descriptive statistics for males and female preferences.

Table 8

Descriptive statistics for male and female preferences

ITEM	Male		Female	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. Reading textbooks aloud in groups for information to write on a topic (group work)	3.16	.787	3.24	.900
2. Reading textbooks silently in class for information to write on a topic (individual work)	2.92	.989	3.11	.925
3. Writing on a topic with a classmate (pair work)	2.76	.962	2.79	1.010
4. Writing on topic with more than one classmate (group work)	2.56	1.118	2.60	.877
5. Writing on a topic by myself (individual work)	2.83	.908	3.34	.957
6. Telling the entire class about my writing (individual work)	2.17	1.009	2.13	1.274
7. Telling a classmate about my writing (pair work)	2.24	1.118	2.35	.943
8. Telling more than one classmate about my writing (group work)	2.38	1.113	2.15	1.199
9. Listening to my teacher giving explanations and instruction for writing	3.10	.911	3.42	.950
10. Listening to my classmates giving instruction and explanation for writing (group work)	2.39	1.092	2.27	1.058
11. Having my teacher tell me about mistakes in my writing	2.65	1.050	2.90	1.003
12. Having my teacher write comments about the mistakes in my writing	2.44	.876	2.29	1.092
13. Having a classmate tell me about mistakes in my writing (pair work)	1.98	.833	2.23	1.047
14. Having my classmates write comments on the mistakes in my writing (group work)	2.05	.991	1.65	1.057
15. Finding mistakes in my own writing (individual work)	2.67	1.047	2.85	1.199
16. Learning new words and discussing their meanings with my teacher	3.08	.972	3.50	.805
17. Learning new words and discussing their meanings with my classmates (group work)	2.87	1.085	3.11	.960
18. Learning new words and trying to work out their meanings by myself (individual work)	3.19	.644	3.19	1.022

Table 8 (continued)

ITEM	Male		Female	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
19. Discussing the use of new words with one of my classmates (pair work)	2.92	.829	2.58	1.313
20. Doing Standard English grammar exercises with my teacher	2.86	.800	2.90	1.315
21. Doing Creole grammar exercises with my teacher	2.17	1.071	1.65	1.569
22. Working with my classmates to learn rules about grammar (group work)	2.62	.958	2.73	1.148
23. Learning grammatical rules by myself (individual work)	2.65	.845	2.87	1.166
24. Listening to my teacher explain rules about grammar	2.89	.845	3.27	.961

Notes. SCALE: No experience=0 - 0.4, Dislike very much=.5 -1.4, Dislike=1.5 - 2.4, Like=2.5 - 3.4, Like very much= 3.5 - 4

Table 8 shows that the overall means of the variables across gender reveal more similarities than differences in terms of preferences for specific types of instruction. The mean for the male learners ranged from 1.98 to 3.19 while it ranged from 1.65 to 3.50 for the females. These ranges reveal that the preferences of both genders varied along negative and positive degrees with slight variations evident in the degree to which they were positive or negative. The variations in the standard deviations for gender responses to item 18 revealed a mean of 3.19 for both genders. Both genders liked *learning new words and trying to work out their meanings by myself (individual work).* The lowest means for males (1.98) and females (1.65) were associated with a negative preference for feedback with males indicating a stronger dislike for oral feedback from a peer and females a stronger dislike for written feedback from groups.

5 Discussion

This study investigated differences in gender preferences for writing instruction. Overall, results revealed no major difference between male and female preferences for specific types of writing instruction but variations within the strength of their

preferences. Discussion follows for each research question.

What Types of Writing Instruction do Male and Female Ninth-grade Learners Prefer? The Four Language Skills

The results for the four language skills do not suggest a differential approach to writing instruction for either gender. Overall, ninth-grade learners indicate a positive preference for writing instruction which engaged a mix of modes and skills. They preferred teacher-centered instruction in the form of oral explanations for writing, collaborative activities such as group reading prior to writing, and independent writing over group writing. They disliked speaking about their writing. This finding provides more evidence of the tendency of the learners to display more positive preference for traditional teacher-centered than learner-centered communicative activities. The findings might be related to instruction, especially teachers' widespread use of transmission modes of instruction as was found by Ellis and Thomas (2018) and Rose (2019). Preference for group reading could relate to low levels of reading abilities (Husband, 2012). In addition, with respect to collaborative writing situations, it might appear that collaborative writing groups were not familiar to learners since studies (Ellis & Thomas, 2018; Jackman & Morrain-Webb, 2019) have reported teachers in Caribbean secondary schools seldom using activities that accommodate different learning styles because of large class sizes.

The findings of dislike for speaking activities might be explained by psychological factors such as performance anxiety induced in situations where learners are required to speak and are forced to produce structures that they have not yet acquired (Horwitz, 2001). Another explanation is related to sociocultural factors where the socially-grounded attitudes and values of society members are communicated in classroom interactions, practices and behaviors (Lee, 2013; Pennington, et al., 2021), particularly in light of there being a common attitude of ascribing a negative status to Creole (Carrington, 1988). Thus, if teachers in this Creole-speaking context focus on the production of accurate structures in the target language when learners are speaking, this action could be a possible explanation for learners disliking speaking activities.

Feedback, Vocabulary and Grammar

Again, the results of this section do not suggest a differential approach to

writing instruction for either gender; however, they suggest the importance of considering how written feedback is provided and how a context-sensitive approach to writing instruction could be created. That both male and female learners like vocabulary instruction is a positive finding for this study. Vocabulary instruction is deemed critical in a Creole-speaking context (Craig, 2006; Bryan, 2010). Teachers can exploit this type of instruction in their classroom.

With regard to feedback, the findings are controversial. They are inconsistent in part with the findings for learners in English as a Foreign Language contexts where students prefer teachers to provide written feedback on their work (Hajian et al., 2014). However, the findings are consistent with those for learners in the English as a Second Language context, where students preferred oral feedback and conferencing with teachers (Hu, 2019). Explanations for the inconsistency might be related to psychological factors, their perception of their language proficiency level, especially whether they perceive themselves sufficiently proficient to discuss their errors and their perception of the responsibility of the teacher (Lee, 2005). The fact that they liked self-assessment would seem to suggest that they believe that they are sufficiently proficient to identify errors in their work. Other possible explanations might include the timing and type of written correction. Voerman et al. (2014) noted that if teachers' written feedback is provided on first drafts and is mostly negative, learners are likely to resent written feedback. Research has also shown that students like oral conferencing because it is easier to understand (Hu, 2019).

In addition, finding both males and females disliking Creole grammar exercises or having no experience with this type of work is not surprising given the sociocultural context in which Creole is generally ascribed a negative status in society (Carrington, 1988). Probably, teachers have limited experience with language awareness activities or they do not attach much significance to the role of Creole in the classroom.

How are the preferences of male and female ninth-grade learners similar or different?

Males indicating a stronger dislike for oral feedback from a peer and females a stronger dislike for written feedback from groups is a finding of interest. Three possible explanations which draw on the sociocultural (Alloway, 2002) and the psychological (Snyder, 2008) perspectives might be offered for shaping the males' dislike for oral peer feedback in this context. First, males might not be comfortable

orally presenting information on subjective topics (Trist, 2006). Second, males might not consider discussing their writing with a peer as part of their male peer culture (Robinson, 2020), and if they are required to discuss their writing using Standard English, they might consider that girlish (Figueroa, 2000). Third, males might feel that they lack communicative competence and confidence in using the target language to communicate (Horwitz, 2001). Another finding of interest is males expressing a stronger preference for independent vocabulary activities and females a stronger preference for teacher led vocabulary activities. This finding may relate to Figueroa's (2000) perspective on boys' personal preferences where they prefer to have more freedom of choice over what they do and how, in contrast to girls who are socialized to conform.

Limitations

This quantitative study is restricted to learners in rural schools where the performance in English Language (English 'A') at the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) level was unsatisfactory. Schools that performed well were not included, and thus there is no possibility of generalizing the findings of this study to all secondary schools in Berbice**.** Next, this study is limited to questionnaire data which was useful to survey several schools and describe the trends in preferences but offers no explanations from the learners for their preferences. Qualitative studies, mixed-methods studies and other quantitative studies that use regression models could build on this exploratory study to provide much deeper insights into gender preferences. Nevertheless, this study provides a snapshot of the challenges in writing instruction and a foundation for more in-depth research into several other issues connected to writing instruction.

Pedagogical Implications

On the whole, though limited to a small number of schools and not revealing major differences in gender preferences for writing instruction, the findings in this study indicate new avenues for further study. First, they highlight challenges that might emerge with the use of oral work to support thinking, probing and problem-solving when teaching Creole-speaking learners to acquire competence in writing. Educators must be aware that even though oral work is useful, using it in classrooms where

learners are not fluent speakers of the target language and where negative attitudes to the home language exists, can result in challenges for learners. Second, the findings indicate that training teachers to become effective providers of feedback should be a valuable component of teacher-education programmes. While this study highlights learners' psycho-affective reaction to feedback, their preferences for specific types might not necessarily be more effective just because they are preferred. Third, as learners reported disliking Creole grammar instruction and having no experience with this kind of instruction, teachers should be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to create metalinguistic tasks where learners are provided with the opportunity to distinguish the codes in Creole and Standard English.

Future research should consider teachers' views about the types of feedback and their effectiveness in developing learners' self-efficacy in writing. As learners are conducting studies in English 'A' in a Creole-speaking context in which a monolingual language policy exists, further research is needed to determine both teachers and learners' attitude to, and preference for, Creole use in both urban and rural classrooms in which writing is taught.

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Seeing through Visuals; Deciphering the Textual: A Tale of Two *Katharina Blums*

Andrew Kendall

Abstract

When Heinrich Böll conceived *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum* he was writing in a time of political controversy in West Germany and responding to the issues of sensationalism and failures of the press in the 1970s in the Federal Republic of Germany. The novella's first-personal plural perspective explicated the uncertainty of truth and meaning in language and became Böll's central tool in representing and critiquing the social climate of his era. Before the book was completed, husband-wife duo Wolker Schlöndorff and Margarethe von Trotta had already begun developing the story of the novella for their debut feature film, a confirmation of an artistic interest in exploring the issues of the story. This essay traces the way that both versions of *Blum* responded to the paranoia and uncertainty of the Cold War in Germany, considering the ways that the two pieces differ in constructing, deconstructing and manifesting the atmosphere of the era. Both versions of *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum* warn and confront audiences with the blurring of truth and reality. This paper considers how the diverging interpretations of the story function as crucial contemporaneous presentations of the sceptical ambivalence of Cold War culture.

Keywords Cold War Culture; film adaptations; Voker Schlöndorff and Margarethe von Trotta; Heinrich Böll; language

Introduction: Cultural unease in 1970s West Germany

German writer Heinrich Böll's novella, *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum* (1974) was his first published work after winning the Nobel Prize for Literature two years earlier where the prize committee praised his writing for "its combination of a broad perspective on his time and […it's contributions] to a renewal of German literature". Böll, one of Germany's essential post-war writers, gained significance and literary impact both for his narrative preoccupation with societal calamities as well his formal and stylistic nuances. His *Katharina Blum* used the tragedy of its titled character to examine the sensationalist tabloid and political climate in 1970s West Germany. As

is typical of Böll's work, the novella explored the personal plight of a domestic figure struggling for survival against more public forces. The story is narrated through the guise of a first-personal plural perspective, collating sources to investigate how Katharina Blum (an unassuming housekeeper) is driven to murder a tabloid journalist. The murder is established as a matter of fact early in the novella. With its subtitle, "How Violence Develops and where it can lead", the novella functions as an indictment of the culture of an era; the answer to the "how" of the subtitle is that it arises from that very culture of unease – the culture that would mark the Cold War for West Germany, and much of Europe during that decade.

Böll's novella is a specific polemic on the contemporaneous German tabloid *Bild-Zeitung*, critiquing the sensationalism of tabloid media and its debilitating effect on the political climate. It harbours an overt argument, a repudiation of the nefarious complicity of the news media in supporting government and the police in contributing to that culture of unease. Despite this somewhat didactic aspect, considering the novella only though its overt messaging elides Heinrich Böll's complexity in performing this critique. The novella is narrated by an unknown to us (but not "unreal") narrator. This narrator exists within the diegesis of the text, and is not a mere stand-in for a narrative voice. But who is it? We are never sure. The narrative decision immediately encourages reader engagement – simultaneously confounding and confrontational – hinging on the echoes of uneasiness both in the novella's subject and its form. In the novella, Böll invites us to be on the lookout for dissemblance, compelling us to experience the psychic unsettlement of the novella – grounded in a recurrent timbre of paranoiac fear – which becomes critical to the exploration of national mood which the novella excavates.

This undertone of uncertainty reflects larger swathes of Cold War writing from in and out of Germany. Tobin Siebers (1993, p. 29) in examining the era's artistic output symptomized the mentality of the era as a constant state of being "forever watchful and on our guard. Our fear contributes an essential part of the cold war mentality. It determines the distrust, suspicion, paranoia and scepticism that have always characterised the cold war." In unpacking that culture of paranoia and distrust which Seibers describes, I wish to examine how Böll's work constructs and then deconstructs, as it implicitly critiques, that culture of paranoia and distrust, and its

effect in West Germany. His writing situates the narrative on the boundaries of a kind of formal rupture, drawing attention to its fictionality while feigning the form of nonfiction. The reader is encouraged to become a participant in this search to find "how find develops and where it leads". This reader engagement is not invoked to *solve* a crime; it is solved in the first chapter. Instead, rather than instigating amateur sleuthing, Böll disrupts the reader's psychic distance from the text, placing them at the centre of Cold War paranoia. The novella's (partially) postmodern attributes function as staunch reminders of what was at stake for the readers of the era. For Böll, the explicit critique of his day was urgent. In fact, the contours of that urgency were so emphatic that husband-wife duo Wolker Schlöndorff and Margarethe von Trotta (part of an artistic circle that included Böll) had already begun considering the story for their debut film, also titled *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum* (1975), before its publication. The swiftness of the adaptation reflected the artistic climate of West Germany in the 1970s where explorations of the uncertainty of discerning truth from meaning become critical tools of critiquing the political climate.

When one examines the Cold War "culture" throughout Europe, moving beyond the ostensible "main" players of the USSR and the USA, echoes of distinct uneasiness emerge as the pervading mood. This uneasiness would have been paramount in Germany, not just because of its strategic place as the divisional country between communism and democracy but also as it emerged from its, then, recent debilitating role in the most destructive "hot" war of the century. If, as Seibers argues, the Cold War era was one of paranoia, then Germany was in the eye of the storm. It is this sense of distrust, falsehood and paranoia which I propose to read Böll's novella and Schlöndorff and von Trotta's film against while examining the social function of the story's formal preoccupations. What do those engaging with the paranoia of the story do with that unease? Where does it go? With Böll's text as the centre, I intend to distil Seiber's perceptive observation of the Cold War as an "era of suspicion par excellence" (p. 5) by exploring these two *Blums* in relation to each other. What the two *Blums* offer is an instructive contrasting distillation of that Cold War unease.

Daniel Cordle diagnosis the trend, recognising "the overwhelming sense of paranoia apparent in much postmodern fiction, along with the frequent deferral of closure and a concentration on the fraught relations between language and

reality" (2006: 63). Although writing primarily about American Cold War fiction, the preoccupation as global rather than national is integral and his observations of the anxiety as symbolic of a world experience are analogous with the elliptical gaps which affect the narrative enquiry into Katharina Blum's fate, marked by a withholding and dissemblance of knowledge. In exploring how the story is informed by this culture, I intend to analyse how the literary form and the film form as genres of political inquiry might diverge in the tools used in manifesting that atmosphere of scepticism. For, when the Cold War era is marked by distrust, by paranoia and by textual falsehood, how does a creator most effectively reflect that sensation? Through classical narrative forms or through postmodernist ones? Or, through the textual medium or the filmic? And what happens when oppositional mediums, forms and styles confront a similar story?

A novella's search for truth

The issues that would lead to the writing and subsequent publication of *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum* date back to the 1960s (Conrad, 1992). Incidents of police brutality, foiled protests against political malfeasance, and increasingly careless journalistic practices dominated German society under the rule of the Grand Coalition, with the ex-Nazi Kurt Kiesinger in power as Federal Chancellor. The semblance of cultural conformity of the country was challenged throughout the decade and by 1968, a series of explicit challenges to the conformity and a demand for a rebuilding of a more expansive society would be launched by factions of the Left (Brown, 2013). The student protests and clashes between the extreme Left and government increased into the 1970s. A more explicit precursor, for Böll however, was the publication of a letter, "Does Ulrike Want Mercy or Safe Conduct?" by Böll in a January 1972 edition of *Der Spiegel* (an important weekly journal in West Germany). The essay was a strong criticism of the Springer Press, publishers of *Bild-Zeitung*, Europe's largest selling tabloid (Simon Green, 2013). *Bild-Zeitung* had, one month earlier, published an inciteful headline in the wake of bank robbery where a police officer was shot. The headline read, "Baader-Meinhof Band Continues to Murder. Bank Robbery: Policeman Killed" and would go out to its millions of readers implicating the far-left militant group in the crime, at a time when no information on it had been released. Böll was alarmed by the incident and felt, "this intentional misreporting and distortion of

information had gone further than any before it in creating a public mood of fear" (Conrad, p. 116).

As Conrad explains, Böll's article – and the months-long discourse that would follow – provides vital evidence of his passion for fairness and empathy in public communication. Moreover, though, it serves as critical historical record of the social mood of the time, the fragile sense of calm barely hiding an encroaching mood of unease that threatened to spill over. Böll would later claim that the genesis of *Katharina Blum* began long before this incident, but it does serve as a critical prelude to the evisceration of media practices that would come just a couple of years later. And that intentional empathy in Böll's approach to considering those who might be perceived as undeserving of fairness dominates the approach to truth and dissemblance in the novella.

Böll's thrust as a writer emerges from his desire to "see through and describe reality in a human and honest way against the opportunistic mentality of a forgetful society" (Haak, 2006, p 64). Haak's discussion of that "reality" continues with a quote from Böll, arguing that "in order to be able to recognise the actual out of the present, we have to free our imaginative powers, which enable us to draw a picture". This conflation of freeing one's imagination with the manifestation of true reality becomes crucial in assessing Böll's deployment of his themes in *Katharina Blum*. If the Cold War era is marked by paranoia and dissemblance then the only "true" representation of that era in a literary form would be a truth marked by untruth, or at the very least one obsessed with the dichotomy of dissemblance *vs* assemblage. Or, what Siebers astutely diagnoses as a "scepticism about scepticism" (1993, p. 5). The truth/illusion binary, then, becomes juxtaposed with the alternative crisis between a desire for truth amidst an atmosphere of obfuscation. Within this oppositional framework, the opening sections of the novella become essential, evoking scepticism, and then creating skepticism:

> For the following account there are a few minor sources and three major ones; these will be named here at the beginning and not referred to again. Major sources are: the transcripts of the police interrogation; Hubert Blorna (attorney); and Peter Hach (public prosecutor, also high-

> school and university classmate of Hubert Blorna). […] The minor sources, some of greater and some of lesser significance, need not be mentioned here, since their respective implication, involvement, relevancy, bias, bewilderment, and testimony will all emerge from this report. (p. 7-8)

With 80 words, this extract from the opening chapter of the novella immediately reinforces the anxious mood of the Cold War, immediately presenting the text as one rooted in the psychic undercurrents of the era. Böll's writing is marked both by the narrator's notable defensiveness as much as by his parsimoniously ostensible (but not *just* ostensible) attention to detail. The illusory nature of words and their effect on us means that oftentimes once something is invoked in our consciousness, we cannot unthink it. This is, undoubtedly, part of Böll's narrative framework which works as a manifestation of Hammond's observation that "the manipulation of language and imagery in the public sphere was a major cause of the scepticism that many view as a defining feature of Cold War culture" (2006, p.6). Had the novella *not* opened with a direct point of defending its veracity, the reader may not have been necessarily inclined to discredit its truth. But it has. And now, with the spectre of a potential eclipsing of the truth of its introduction, the rest of the novella falls under that atmosphere of doubt that has been conjured. The lining up of sources mimics the confessional/procedural aspect of the investigation into Katharina. Additionally, it reinforces the nature of distrust in the era. When a culture is marked by paranoia, citizens respond to that distrust with a defensiveness marked by always feeling a compulsion to show proof. This insistence on showing proof (or the insistence on showing the perception of proof) is emblematic of the ongoing search for truth in such an uncertain era, but it is also a sign that this is a world where truth does not exist as a given. Nothing here can be trusted implicitly. Wiener and Schrire explore this concern recognising how a

> […] search for truth is itself a product of the meta-philosophical world which grew out of the Enlightenment's faith in the application of reason to human affairs, in order to cure the persistent social ills of poverty, pestilence and war. [… In the Cold War, then,] the search for

> truth preoccupied thought both within the discipline and in the real world of superpower rivalry. (2009, p. 18)

"The search for truth", incidentally, could be a legitimate subtitle for *Blum* which, by opening with the murder of the reporter by our "heroine" begins a 120-page search for the truth behind the reasoning. It is imperative to consider the implications of the novella's dissonance that knowing Katharina has murdered a journalist at the novella's beginning does not occur as a moment of "truth" but only launches us into a search of a story behind the story. For Böll, each new event reflexes backwards on to something in the past. This act of searching/uncovering is supplemented by the film's opening which covers a cameraman literally spying (searching) for details of truth, which I detail later in the next section. In the novella, Böll chooses to never reveal who his narrator is. His language does not operate to subsume the narrator within the story but instead calls attention to itself, advertising his "human-ness" and inviting us to respond to interjections and rhetorical questions. The novella's awareness of its textuality creates a self-reflexive centre in the novella as it comments on itself throughout, again invoking the idea of labyrinth interconnectedness. This self-reflexive interconnectedness in literature of (or about) the era is acknowledged by Stephen Belletto who explores the trend:

> In the Cold War frame, chance became a complex, elastic concept whose self-reflexive use by fiction writers and other cultural producers generated questions about freedom, control and narrative's fundamental ability to represent or otherwise engage objective reality. (2012, p. 78)

And what would an objective reality even begin to look like? Rather than presenting clarity, the reflexiveness of the textual narrative becomes a structural tell, drawing the reader's attention to details to investigate and explore. If everything reflexes on to each other, then each new fact becomes cause for suspicion. Nothing can exist as independent. In a later section, the narrator demurs, "if this report should at times be felt to be *fluid*, we beg the reader's forgiveness." But the plea feels mocking or at least insincere. By this point, Böll has invoked his reader's own

paranoia, demanding that we read through that fluidity to find the text behind the text.

The Cold War: A textual fabulation

By emphasising the ways that hearsay, speculation and falsified information about an individual can easily spread, Böll discloses an interest in the way language and communication can break down and become manipulated. The tabloids are nominally on trial, but Böll is really excavating the nebulousness of communication and language. In that way, its self-reflexive nature is a result of a narrative structure which reflexes (and reflects) upon itself. Since the novella exists as a confessional piece which confronts the possibilities and limits of (written) language, the work functions as a critique of itself. This creates an essential distancing of the reader from the text where instead of reading it uninhibitedly, Böll forces us to respond to it critically and to read beyond it. He is constructing a society in the novella intended to reflect the society that readers of his era would recognise. Readers who are temporally removed might not recognise the contours of that paranoia as familiar but they will recognise the construction and then the critique of that atmosphere. In this way, Böll's work is fulfilling literary and historical purposes not just in the narrative constructed but encouraging readers to participate in a kind of reading experience that reflects a relationship with language that is historically significant. Paradoxically, the distancing that occurs with the novella's announcement of its textuality also serves to draw us into the mood of the novella's society and the one Böll exists in. The seeds of distrust are planted from the introduction and its reflexive nature forces the reader to consider the text not as simply a narrative to be believed but as a mystery to be worked out. This "need" to work it out immediately precipitates an active response in readers. That call to action in reading is not unusual. More significant, though, is how that call to action also specifically encourages us to be suspicious of the text, placing us right within the paranoia of the Cold War era. We are both inside and outside this world.

In his use of an actual text to confront the limits of words Böll reveals the power and the allure of the textual within the Cold War. This power goes beyond books as a symbol of knowledge, which is an essential aspect of the Cold War and its quest to hoard that knowledge that Derrida recognises as a reality where "terrifying forces of destruction are being stockpiled and capitalised everywhere" (1984 p. 23). It

points to the arbitrariness of words, a concept I find essential to Cold War ideology. Unlike images, which visually show the thing they represent, the word as signifier is often unrelated to that which it signifies. Further, man's ability to use language is noticeable for its ability to prevaricate. It is this equivocation which Cold War tensions of ideology are built on. It is not so much that words are good for dissemblance but we are trained to think images are less likely to be features of dissemblance. Image shows, words tell. And contemporary western ideology is built on the notion of seeing being essential for belief – the proof is in that which is seen rather than that which is relayed through hearsay. By being a Cold War, the "fight" of the era was not predicated on brawn but on modes of communication as subterfuge – including the linguistic, textual and conceptual. Except, even that conceptualisation as the Cold War as nonviolent is an ahistorical conjuration dependent on the very nature of linguistic dissemblance – the very name Cold (as in not "hot") war. Hammond identifies the erroneous titling of the Cold War (2006, p. 1), introducing how the very nature of language to circumvent is central not just to the experience of the era but the remembrance of it. The Cold War is textual inside and outside.

If Böll's contextualising of Cold War fear in the novella depends on invocation of the overtly textual, then the film faces the immediate crisis of contextualising that Cold War fear through another medium. Thus, we return to the initial question posed. If the Cold War is marked by distrust, then how best to externalise and represent that culture? What is immediately challenging about *Blum* the film, especially in its juxtaposition with *Blum* the text, is the way it represents the real. In a literary context, to *be* real, or to represent realness, is not necessarily to be realist. Böll's *Blum* is not a realist text, but in its postmodern detachment Böll attempts (and succeeds) in creating the aura of a real-world paranoia. The German couple Volker Schlöndorff and Margarethe von Trotta directed their debut feature (1975) in the adaptation of the novella. In it, they utilise actual cinematic realism (albeit social realism) with elements of melodrama to represent their "reality". To represent the reality of this story, then, the film fills in the gaps of the text. To read *Blum* is to get second-hand information about things which occurred, to watch *Blum* is to see an unfettered, even voyeuristic view of things which occurred. The distinction is clear. The written *Blum* subverts knowledge and prevaricates, the filmed *Blum* shows and reveals. But how do these textual fabulations fare in the (perceived) transparency of film?

Filmic realities

This insistence on showing and revelation is not incidental but is an essential aspect of Schlöndorff and von Trotta's intentions. The film does not open with any indication of Katharina or her existence (we do not hear of her or see her until seven minutes into the 90-minute film) but with a camera following a man. Whereas Böll invokes the textual by making us aware of the text, our directors reveal the filmic reality by making us aware that we are watching something as the film's diegetic cameramen becomes a substitute for the book's intra-textual narrator. But we are not meant to be made aware of our voyeurism in an effort to destabilise the legitimacy of the camera. Instead, we are being made aware of our voyeurism in an effort to recognise the things that camera reveals to us. Whereas Böll's privileging of his sources at the beginning reinforces a nagging sense of distrust in the reader, Schlöndorff and von Trotta ask us immediately to give ourselves over to the truth of the cinema. What we are seeing here is truthful.

This establishes a key difference between the two texts as mediums of their era. Both texts, with their focus on a woman destroyed by institutions of society (the alliance between the news and the police), aim to stir us to the same realisation: the media, and all of us, are culpable in creating a state of fear and tension which results in the destruction of innocence and a cycle of violence and malaise. But the way it reaches that goal – and what it makes us think afterwards – becomes instructive in revealing how the Cold War era culture (and the art of its time) depends on converging and diverging effects. The visual *Blum* confronts us with a tale of a regular woman, living her mundane life, who is wronged. To read the written *Blum* is to be confronted with a normal woman living a mundane life but filtered through a style that immediately feels unnerving. The threat is already explicit when we begin the novella. So pervasive is the threat this reach presents, the very medium which educates on this unease becomes potentially complicit since it is a text itself with issues of objectivity. This sort of unease invokes a destabilisation of traditional media as well as a destabilisation of traditional tools and concepts – the thing we are reading (a series of words) is the very thing which can be so destructive. This is the way the literary postmodern works and the way Böll succeeds in invoking uncertainty in readers.

Hammond offers a helpful explanation of the concept:

> The idea that literary postmodernism may well be a specifically Cold War discourse is suggested by the fact that so many of its aesthetic features reflected the political and experiential intricacies of the East-West conflict. Most obviously its dual emphasis on the fictional nature of reality and the conjunction of language and power, something which is unsurprising in a geopolitical era defined by rhetorical obfuscation, ideological truth telling and propagandistic verbal constructs. (2013, p. 146)

The argument, then, is that the written *Blum* is aggressively suited to the Cold War era in a way that the style of the visual *Blum* is not (or does not care to be). Böll's novella builds on these stylistic conceits which are inextricably linked with the Cold War. Moreover, the novella is preoccupied with the written word so it lends an additional metatextual allure to the entire text which the film, in making things transparent, does not seek to challenge. I am inclined to agree that Böll's textual postmodernism is a better *fit* for the ideology of the Cold War, but it is essential to note that although Schlöndorff and von Trotta do not invoke either postmodernism or the textual, the social realism of the filmed *Blum* becomes a key to the way it navigates itself through the ways that the mundanities and innocence of a life can be twisted to seem lurid. The duo would set off a wave of New German cinema with the filmed *Blum* which became an international success, and the surrounding evidence of the film suggests that the film is intentionally explicit where the novella favours the elliptical.

Whereas Böll uses the Cold War's textual pull to become a literal manifestation of cold war duplicity, the film does not. However, the fact that the film does not fulfil this Cold War duplicity is not because it is incapable of prevarication but because the directors are not interested in that style. The filmed depends on the certainty of its image. This accounts for its reconstruction of the nonlinear text into a linear narrative. The audience is never in the dark but always aware, omnisciently, of all that occurs. It never seems necessary for us to question whether there is an issue of truth because Schlöndorff and von Trotta make a pact from the beginning. Whereas Böll's opening puts us on awareness as it implies potential equivocations, Schlöndorff and von

Trotta's opening indicate to us their transparency.

After a brief prelude, the substantive opening introduces us to a character being trailed by a (presumably) undercover police officer. This is Ludwig Götten, who will soon charm the impressionable Katharina at a party, and who – we will learn – is a suspected terrorist. The cameraman will soon be revealed as a policeman. The policeman uses a 16mm camera to take multiple pictures of his prey. As the film's camera is from the vantage point of the police, we are literally looking through the movie camera onward through the police camera within the film to Gotten. Here, and this is critical, we become the cameraman looking through the lens and now the images shift from colour to black-and-white. This idea of looking *through* is central to the filmed *Blum*. Moreover, though, as an evocative opening indicative of what to come, this sets the tone for what the filmed *Blum* depends on – the revelation (not the obfuscation) of things; or the perceived revelations of the aforementioned voyeuristic nature of the era. In that opening, Schlöndorff and von Trotta introduce us to the language of *Blum* on film where the coloured photography represents the narrative of the film and the black-and-white images represent the police surveillance. The visual contrast is set up from the beginning and the rest of the film moves between the two.

The significance here is that in its own way this voyeuristic trend informs the Cold War culture of the era. Schlöndorff and von Trotta address the paranoia of the era not by making us feel paranoid the way the obfuscating textual work of Böll does but by showing us what paranoia leads to – an overreliance on surveillance. This informs a key difference between the way Böll wants us to feel against the way Schlöndorff and von Trotta want us to feel. Böll wants us to feel like the victimised in the paranoid world, so we leave the textual Blum confused, and mistrustful and worried. Schlöndorff and von Trotta, though, with their realistic, visual piece make us feel like the privileged in society. In a later scene, we are privy to a private conversation between Katharina and Götten – an earnest assurance of lovers' fidelity. As we watch the pair, in their respective spaces on their respective phones, the camera moves across the phone lines keying us into the auditory surveillance at work.

As Bell notes, "the audience becomes an extension of the camera and the police, and thus the authorised power behind the medium. The distance afforded to the printed word – a reader can always put the text down – dissolves when watching the

events on the big screen" (2015, p. 78). More importantly, though, I would argue that this lack of "distance" means that the audience is no longer spurred to investigate. We are presented with the fact, and so Bell is accurate when he notes that "horror is invoked" in our watching. We are not driven to neurotic searching for truth, but presented with the truth and then repelled. Schlöndorff and von Trotta provide us with the information so that our knowledge is privileged, and the visualisation of Katharina's subjugation is emotionally arresting. This privileging of knowledge for the audience becomes an essential part of the film's dependence on dramatic irony. We are never part of the story and its uncertainty but find ourselves watching on, full of knowledge – and helpless in our inaction. Just as Nadel will recognise in his assessment of Didion's *Democracy* that "characters can no longer achieve the appropriate distance, nor can they erect the appropriate borders between their personal lives and their national narratives" we recognise that blurring of the personal with the public here. Katharina has no private life. It is all subsumed into the public concerns of the potential terrorist she may be aiding. And we also become part of that blurring because we watch it all. Even as the black-and-white and colour distinguish perspectives of that reality, the film stitches them together so they are part of one narrative. Divisions are only feigned.

Postmodern contours of irony

If Böll's detached narrative style recalls verbal irony with hints of postmodern irony, then Schlöndorff and von Trotta depend on the dramatic irony. We are often, if not always, one step ahead of the characters. We know, for example, the Sheik in the bathroom is an undercover police officer before those around him. We know how (and why) Gotten arrives at the café en route to the party. Notes of melodrama become a tool within this filmed *Blum*. This recalls the way "melodrama is inherent in heroism – as the last refuge of the hero in the post-heroic era" (Dobrenko, 2007, p. 67). Certainly, Katharina Blum does not exist as a traditional hero(ine) within the fabric of either *Blums* but with its ironically detached investigative slant, Böll's Blum is more interested in Katharina as part of a puzzle than as the essential object we orbit and follow. It is different in the film which uses dramatic irony as we watch Katharine navigate through a hostile society.

On film, the mode of dramatic irony creates crisis for the audience who is aware of the dangers facing Katharina, the insidious system she is up against, but can only observe her helplessly. This creates potent dramatic tension as we are encouraged to root for her in her quest for control, and without predetermined knowledge of where this will go, like the nonlinear novella, we root for her. This informs the linearity of this Blum because unlike the deliberate fragmentation of information and narrative of the text (which depends on a literal manifestation of creating the fragmented Germany of the era) the film depends on the gradual building of tension and suspense in a steady way.

The focus on showing in the filmed *Blum* creates a dramatic crisis where we are encouraged to identify and then empathise with Katharina. This stems from the decision to make the nonlinear story linear. By privileging our first meeting of Katharina not as the murderess but as a deferential innocent girl, we identify her as familiar and effete, qualities which are not traditionally heroic in the masculine but are heroic in the melodramatic sense of being traits to root for. A key scene which places us in Katharina's psychological corner occurs when she views her neighbours testifying against her. Like Katharina we are blindsided by their appearance and as the camera follows her walk of solitude through the corners of the prison the camera encourages us to identify with her. It is the visual act of showing which supports this identification. So that later when leaving the jail, the camera visualises the reality of the assault on her, the audience is horrified. The horror unfolds differently from the way the postmodern ironic stance of the novella reveals while simultaneously obscuring. Our horror is both for *what* happens as it is for *how* it happens. The distancing of the content serves to cue us into the debilitating issues of the relationship between our emotions and the style.

This same kind of horrified observations occur when we watch Katharina's allies turn on her (or struggle to defend her) to the police. In the novel, the ironic scepticism is encouraged. In chapter 28, Böll writes about Katharina's godmother Else Woltersheim,

> Before testifying about the affair itself she gave her opinion, in an "unemotional, dry-as-dust tone of voice, which lent more strength to her indignation than if she had shouted or screamed abuse" on the treatment

> of Katharina Blum by the News as well as on the fact that details from the interrogation were evidently being leaked to that kind of publication. (p.63).

Here, like elsewhere in the novel, we are jarred by the introduction of the quotations with the absence of a source. Our trust for what we read is ruptured and we begin to comb through evidence measuring the veracity of what is presented with our own estimation of the potential sources. This kind of linguistic reading through is more difficult on film, which prevents the possibilities of this kind of prevaricated relationship with language.

The audience of the film always knows more than the reader of the text, which creates valuable dramatic irony and instigates our anger at being presented with the terrible facts, but it does not recreate the conspiratorial culture or demand as much engagement. However, I remain unconvinced of their effectiveness in challenging the society and its audience for their complicit role in creating the welter of mistrust and paranoia. Comparing which work is better is pointless, but their value as political documents is instructive. The voyeuristic nature of the filmed *Blum*, while creating knowledge and transparency in bounds, also allows its audience to be less active as the images provide it all for us. We do not have to work to figure it out. It is delivered to us. Zipes (1977) comments that the film "fills in the gaps" (p. 77), and it is this filling of the gaps, admittedly essential for Schlöndorff and von Trotta, which stymies active audience engagement.

Oddly, many critics seem too willing to privilege the idea of the narrator as completely trustworthy, if not actually omniscient. Regardless of whether the narrator is accidentally or deliberately untrustworthy, the novella is too explicit about the dangers of conversations and reportage for the inconsistencies in the narrator's "fairness" to be simply mistakes. I disagree, for example, with Ziples who sees a narrator that is scrupulous in assembling facts, reports, data, etc. Instead, I see Böll's presentation of a narrator who only *seems* to do so – and might even think he does this – but does not entirely succeed. First, there is his savvy circumvention of culpability by not naming his "minor" sources. He defends this by claiming certainty that we can figure it out on our own. Then, there are more subtle, but no less essential, aspects of his descriptive tact. "We have something reasonably cheerful to report" he says of

Katharina's ultimate confession, bordering on morbidity; "buried with disproportionate pomp and ceremony" he says of Totges funeral, perhaps correct on an ethical level but much too leading if one is to view him as objective. In fact, the last few chapters descend into minutiae-like gossiping of the city affairs.

Certainly, there may be an intuitive response on the part of readers to react positively to the narrator since he exists as our avatar. Who else can we depend on? Moreover, despite his inconsistencies he appears *generally* interested in truth – unlike the unambiguously nefarious press and police, disbelief in his word might be unfair. However, careful examination of Böll's strategy insists on denying such simplistic readings. Böll insists on rejecting homogeneous perspectives, even "good" ones as ideal. These hints may only be subtle but *Blum* is a deceptively short novella and no aspect is incidental. Böll engages in a literal (and literary) destabilisation of his own narrative in symbolic incarnation of the world he is critiquing. Böll's narrator is not Böll. A readiness to equate the narrator's perspective with Böll's ideology is a problematic enterprise especially since this destabilisation of Böll fits in with the elements of postmodernism in his work.

Hutcheon (1991), while discussing types of postmodern irony, examines how irony can sometimes serve to distance, undermine, unmask, relativise, destabilise (p.30). This concept feels applicable to Böll's work here as he seeks to destablise our trust in the word as a way of critiquing that very word, or words in general. As he adopts the equivocation that the text itself critiques on a larger scale, he performs a kind of a laceration (to invoke Hutcheon) that is central to the irony. And it is this technique which necessitates a more active audience that effectively works in tipping the written *Blum* into such an essential political text both for its time and across temporal and geographic limitations.

Bridging the generic divide – watchman or spy?

Critiquing the visual *Blum* for losing that political bite is not an incidental point since the novella and the film both intrinsically depend on their critique of their society and to consider their roles as art of the period is to consider their purpose in creation. Schlöndorff and von Trotta, friends of Böll, were interested in cutting through the insidious paranoid culture of Germany in Cold War Europe and their plan to adapt the

film (which was gestating even before the novella was completed) came with specific political purposes. The adaptation of this text, opening it to a wider audience than Böll's text, was significant. It was a way to send this message wider. Even if critics like Zipes note that the narrative technique is an important part of the novella's political depth, he demurs to argue that this loss of irony does not hurt the film since "what is more significant at present…is the different ways in which Böll and Schlondorff appropriate and explore the political dimensions of reality" (p. 82). I am disinclined to agree with this argument especially since context is always essential. If the Germany of both *Blums* is the Germany of the era, then both texts exist with a stringent determination to be a wakeup call. A *Blum* which encourages passivity, albeit passivity which unnerves, fails in that political thrust when viewed against one which stirs the reader to activity while solving its mystery.

It is imperative that one accepts that the potential for passivity provided by von Trotta and Schlondorff within the text is not an intrinsic nature of visual images in dealing with Cold War culture but a specific choice for their manifestation of the crisis. It is this choice, however, to choose a visual style marked by transparency that bears consideration. Incidentally, images' ability to be so easily manoeuvred and explicate Cold War paranoia has been discussed before in a thoughtful critique of the era's culture

Around this same time, the artist Jasper Johns framed this matter of visual scrutiny in explicitly conspiratorial terms. In a sketchbook musing from 1964 (quoted in Kozloff, 1969, p.45), Jasper Johns made notes on a piece (*The Watchman*) by differentiating between the watchman and the spy. The latter was one who watches and interprets what he or she sees, the former was one who merely looks passively. If the watchman "leaves his job and takes away no information", then the spy, simply put, must make determinations based on a contextual history of visual clues and experience. Furthermore, unlike the watchman, the spy "must remember and must remember himself and his remembering".

Although the case of the two *Blums* gives us a scenario where it is the textual and not the visual which more compellingly invokes the conspiratorial, scrutinising trends of the era, Curley's notes provide the last bit of essential argument in arguing why the disconcerting nature of Böll's text is so effective in presenting the Cold War

paranoia that Seibers' subscribes to. Böll is interested in conspiratorial language, not conspiratorial images, but it adheres to the trend of forcing the reader to become a spy who must watch and then interpret what occurs to draw their own conclusion. The transparency of images in the visual *Blum*, though, presents the audience as a watchman presented with information that is filtered through their filmic style which presents its audience with an unnerving spectacle but not one which overtly challenges us to acknowledge complicity as much as the text does. There is no one way of manifesting a Cold War aesthetic, but considering Germany's role at the centre of unease echoing through Europe, the country's awareness of the guardedness required to live through the era feels critical. Even as the written Blum's spying diverges from the film's watching, it is instructive to consider how both configure the ways we look through the characters in this world to recognise a society built on distrust. Whether we are on the outside looking, or on the inside working it out for ourselves, both *Blums* engage in negotiations of meanings that present concerns of the era. And it is here their dual value as contemporaneous explorations of West Germany are key. Böll and Schlöndorff and von Trotta were exploring these themes in the centre of this era. That temporal (and spatial) proximity to the scepticism, paranoia and uncertainty they explore informs the relationship that readers of their time would have with their writing. Read now, against the backdrop of almost half a century of writing from and about cultures of the Cold War situates both works within a larger framework of artistic output that provides direct linkages to historical contexts of the era, not just in their narrative preoccupations but in their formal approaches to mining the gaps, the dissemblance and the unease.

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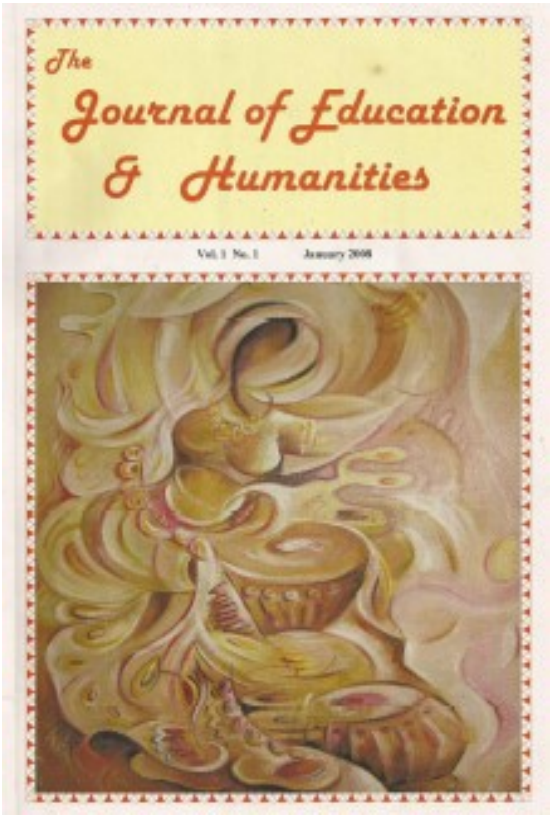
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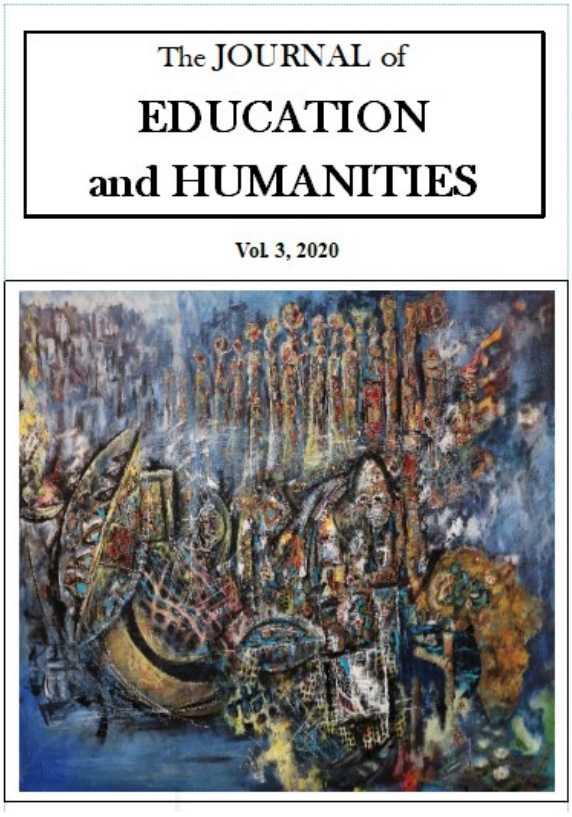
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