A Ceaseless Becoming: Narratives of Adolescence Across Media

by

Neal A. Grigsby

B.A. Film Studies
University of California at Berkeley, 1998

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE MEDIA STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN COMPARATIVE MEDIA STUDIES
AT THE
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

JUNE 2007

Signature of Author: _____
Program in Comparative Media Studies
May 11, 2007

Certified By: _____
Henry Jenkins
Peter de Florez Professor of Humanities
Professor of Comparative Media Studies and Literature
Co-Director, Comparative Media Studies
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted By: _____
Henry Jenkins
Peter de Florez Professor of Humanities
Professor of Comparative Media Studies and Literature
Co-Director, Comparative Media Studies

A Ceaseless Becoming: Narratives of Adolescence Across Media

by

Neal A. Grigsby

Submitted to the Department of Comparative Media Studies
on May 11, 2007 in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in
Comparative Media Studies

Abstract

Thesis explores the broad appeal of narratives with adolescent protagonists across a variety of media, including literature, film, and video games. An analysis of key texts within their historical contexts reveals affinities between disparate genres and strong connections between fiction and the discourse of adolescence in psychology, anthropology, and sociology. Adolescence narratives illuminate both the transgressive boundaries of a given culture and the normative center, and make explicit what is usually considered natural or implicit.

To discover the roots of contemporary adolescence narratives, prototypes for the picaresque novel, the school story, and the Bildungsroman are examined, and each are shown to contain narrative conventions that survive in recent works. A contemporary case study looks at the trilogy of female coming of age films by Sofia Coppola to show how they embody the ambiguities and contradictions of third wave feminism. Finally, the author explores the affinity between video games and adolescence, the implications of translating literary genres into an interactive medium, and uses examples from both science fiction literature and recent games to theorize how games might better address the themes of adolescence in both story and play mechanics.

Thesis Committee Chariman: Henry Jenkins
Title: Professor, Co-Director Comparative Media Studies

Thesis Committee:

Signature of Reader: _____

Alice J. Robison

Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Comparative Media Studies

Thesis Reader

Acknowledgments

For being an enthusiastic accomplice to hundreds of hours of screenings, a sincere and generous conversationalist, a complicit victim of early draft readings, and a loving partner, my deepest gratitude goes to Rebecca Bird Grigsby.

Special thanks to my thesis committee, supervisor Henry Jenkins III and advisor Alice J. Robison, for brilliant feedback and an honest concern for the outcome of the project, and to William Uricchio, for his effortless resourcefulness and positivity.

Thanks also to my unofficial thesis sub-committee in the sub-basement—Ivan Askwith and Amanda Finkelberg—and my Comparative Media Studies compatriots who always responded to ideas with patience and insight, including Karen Verschooren, Huma Yusuf, Deborah Lui, Kristina Drzaic, and Sam Ford.

And, of course, eternal gratitude to the Buffy Brunchers: Keren Abala, Jessica Hutchison, Brian Provenzale, Jef Samp, and Joseph Stanko.

Table of Contents

Introduction

At the Buffy Brunch you could find homemade Oreo-style sandwich cookies in the shapes of hearts and wooden stakes. There was normal food, too: bagels, chips, dips, sandwiches, pizza. Anything to help fuel eight or nine straight hours of television. When Season One came out on DVD in the United Kingdom, a full year before its US release, I installed a risky hack to my computer's DVD drive to allow us to play the imported discs. Like a lot of the fans of the show, we hadn't started watching *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* until about half-way through the second season. That first season remained an elusive mystery, and the delay of the DVDs an intolerable slight.

I know how it must sound, but these were not the actions of a bunch of teenagers. We were already several years out of college. We had jobs, partners, cars, and apartments with furniture we had picked out. We baked (hence the cookies). As for myself, I had earned my undergraduate degree in film studies, at a program that favored a psychoanalytic approach to film analysis. And like psychiatrists we were taught, implicitly at least, that our understanding of a film would be imperiled if we got too close. We should keep a critical distance from our subject. But when it came to this particular subject (a melodramatic TV show, of all things, not even a proper film), I wasn't keeping my distance. Others were struggling with this, as I learned when anthology after anthology of essays about the show came out, with titles like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Philosophy* and *Reading the Vampire Slayer*, followed by an online publication which touted itself as the journal of "Buffy studies."

OK, so it was a really good show, and, moreover, bait for academics. Still, I partially resisted its pull, feeling vaguely guilty for enjoying it so much. Shouldn't I be putting away "childish things?" Why did the teenagers on the show still feel like my peers, rather than the "honey, I'm home" husbands of the sitcom? Was it just nostalgia setting in?

Buffy went off the air in the Spring of 2003, and the following Summer *The O.C.* debuted on Fox. I missed the cultural Zeitgeist that made the show a huge hit for its first season (I would come around later), but a friend of mine, one of the Buffy Brunch attendees, mentioned that he was watching it, that it filled the space left when *Buffy* ended. This intrigued me: that there was a "space" for teen drama that needed to be filled in our lives. I did a quick personal audit and realized that my own tastes did suggest a preference for stories about adolescents. *Buffy* wasn't just an anomaly.

But what makes narratives about adolescence attractive to even adult audiences? Why are coming of age stories still relevant even after one has ostensibly "come of age"? Or is it just me?

There are some good reasons to believe that it is not just me. The Harry Potter series surpassed 300 million copies sold in 2005, with the final chapter in the heptalogy yet to be released (BBC). Perhaps due to the popularity of J.K. Rowling's series, Young Adult fiction has enjoyed a minor Renaissance in the last several years, with high profile authors such as Michael Chabon, Joyce Carol Oates, Neil Gaiman, Clive Barker, Carl Hiassen, Francine Prose, and Walter Mosely all releasing novels aimed at teens (and the people who love reading about them). Many of the top Hollywood money makers of the last several years have been stories with adolescent protagonists—the *Spider-Man* series, the *Star Wars* prequels, *Titanic,* of course the Harry Potter adaptations. And a few classic franchises have been "rebooted" to show the becoming story of their heroes—*Batman Begins*, James Bond in *Casino Royale* (not literally an adolescent, but not yet the Bond familiar from the previous films).

There are many complicated explanations for these trends, and I don't want to simplify the issue. But at the very least I think we can say that stories of adolescence have a wider appeal than just teenagers, and that some of the most successful media properties have gained traction by appealing to both adult and teenage audiences. Still, I sensed there was more to this than good marketing sense, that there's something about adolescence narratives that speak powerfully for the culture.

Yet many share my conflicted feelings about these works. Within the framework of the classical canon, those Great Works of Literature, the adolescent protagonist clings to a privileged, respectable position. Shakespeare, Goethe, Austen, Dickens, Twain, Joyce, James: all wrote concerning the youth experience. In other contexts, "adolescent" can be a pejorative, denoting a class of media—sometimes genres, sometimes entire media modes—that are perennially in poor taste. The reader likely needs no prompting to identify these forms. The negative associations with adolescence has supporters of these works attempting to massage their image, to reframe public perception. So now we have "Graphic Novels" instead of comic books, "Speculative Fiction" instead of sci-fi, "Interactive Media" instead of video games.

In the meantime, many bemoan the influence that teenagers, with their significant buying power and copious spare time, do have over the products of pop culture. The PG-13 rating is

coveted among film distributors, which, it is said, influences filmmakers to shy away from "adult" material. The bodies of unrealistically toned and proportioned teenagers are held up by the fashion industry as the ideal clothes hangers. While most educators praise the Harry Potter series for making reading cool for a new generation, others maintain that it has dumbed down the literary scene.

On an episode of the radio show *This American Life*, host Ira Glass talked about his own love of prime-time teen soap *The O.C.* "Every week *The O.C.* comes on and my wife Anaheed and I sit on the couch, and when the theme comes on, 'California,' we sing along with it, in full voice. You know what I mean? Think of what that takes. I'm 47 years old. I'm a grown-ass man, you know... singing the theme to a Fox show!" Justifications inevitably follow when adults admit to enjoying stories about teenagers. But Glass's confessional words are delivered with what sounds like a hint of righteous pride, a refusal to feel guilty about his affection for a series that makes over-the-top melodrama out of the lives of a clique of spoiled rich kids. I want to add my own voice to his proclamation. I contend that it was not a coincidence that this show was about teens and that it inspired such passion in its adult audience.

So I sought to understand what makes these narratives so powerful to both adult and teenage viewers. But there are at least four ways one could approach the subject, four ways to define an "adolescence narrative." The first would be to look at what media adolescents are actually viewing, to dig through demographic data showing the behavior of teen media consumers, or to do an ethnography of some real teens. The second would be a political economy approach, to look at the creation and marketing of cultural products to adolescents, the works that are designed explicitly for an adolescent audience and the systems that govern their circulation. The third approach would look at teen media makers, the works produced by adolescents which would seem to embody the authentic voices of youth and give direct insight into their psychology. But my own approach is less empirical by design. I'm concerned with adolescence as a symbolic category and its interaction with the real, the lies that we tell about adolescence as well as the truths. So my focus is on narratives in which the protagonist is an adolescent, and my primary tool in evaluating these narratives will be textual analysis with an eye to the historical context.

Television scholar Jason Mittell outlines a poststructuralist theory of genre that locates genre categories in dynamic cultural contexts rather than as static conventions within the texts themselves.

"Even though texts certainly bear marks that are typical of genres, these textual conventions are not what define the genre. Genres exist only through the creation, circulation, and reception of texts within cultural contexts" (43). It is important to note that, though I may speak of "narratives of adolescence" as a category, this category is, by both this poststructural and the classic definitions (concerned with form and convention), emphatically not a genre. The texts in question are so temporally and spatially discrete that only in the most extreme contexts of reception and circulation could one consider the opposite poles on the spectrum I am about to delineate related on the level of genus. Though I clearly believe that the category I've outlined is useful and meaningful, I don't claim it to be a typical mode of interpreting these texts, nor will I attempt to describe a set of norms that all adolescence narratives must follow. Rather, I hope to describe a rich network of intertextual associations, shared thematic trends, and recurring social functions for these works.

The discourse around Young Adult fiction may offer an instructive contrast. Here is a category that serves both as a genre in and of itself, and as a container of other genres. Using Mittell's model, YA fiction is a genre because that designation works as an organizing category in the production and reception of texts. Book publishers have well-established processes for the selection, publication, and marketing of young adult books. Parent consumers and librarians have refined expectations for the texts they purchase and circulate as teenager-appropriate, and teens themselves may participate in the discourse by gravitating to the YA section of the bookstore or library. Academics wishing to publish on the subject may find any number of peer-reviewed journals ready to accept papers about this or that facet of the genre. These writers, editors, advertisers, parents, librarians, academics, and teenagers are all, in a sense, negotiating the construction of an implicit model of the adolescent reader. This is a highly motivated and tightly focused discourse, and offers a rich and fascinating axis along which to organize a study of the social construction of youth.

However, this approach to scholarship can engender rigid and artificial boundaries between genres and academic disciplines. Genre is one axis of meaning, but not the only axis. The medium is a message, but not the only message. Rare is the film historian who will include an analysis of literary Bildungsroman in her paper on cinematic coming-of-age movies. My own scholarship takes a different tack, comparing textual representations of adolescence from works in highly disparate genres, across different media channels, and for different intended audiences. The advantage of this

approach is the ability to trace the operation of the concept of adolescence across discourses, and to see how the constraints of those contexts, and the affordances of different media, have transformed the concept, and have, in turn, been transformed.

Why Narratives Matter: Three Ms

There are several mechanisms by which we can theorize the effect that narratives and representations have on the "real world" of ideology, politics, and cultural practice. Three in particular have informed this study, which I employ with varying levels of explicitness throughout. I call attention to them here to prompt the reader to some of the assumptions that are underlying my work.

Meme – In his influential book on evolutionary biology, *The Selfish Gene*, Richard Dawkins devotes a chapter to a theory of information transmission that pulls on his expertise in genetics. His approach draws an analogy between the smallest units of biological information exchange, genes, and the basic units of cultural exchange, which he calls "memes." He describes how successful memes, in a sense, colonize the minds they encounter, they "propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation" (192). We hear the echoes of meme theory whenever somebody talks about how a concept has "evolved" or how an idea seems to spread "like a virus."

For my purposes, narratives can be said to be sources of memes, or to benefit from mem-like propagation. Adolescence narratives, in particular, have been instrumental in spreading teenager slang (or some semblance of teen slang) to the mainstream. Ideas and judgements about adolescents can also be memes, such as when Homeland Security research leader Jay Cohen publicly remarked that the United States is in an educational crisis because of the attitudes of the "Playstation Generation" (Thibodeau). That characterization of adolescents has propagated well outside of its original context. The Internet has been an ideal medium for the spread of memes in the form of text and images. In the second chapter, I will talk about how sensational images of young female celebrities have thrived in a culture where anxiety over adolescent girls has reached a point of saturation. One might even describe adolescence itself as a meme, or a set of related memes (meme-complex in Dawkins's language), a cultural adaptation to the stresses of the modern

era.

While it may be a helpful exercise to think about cultural change from the "perspective" of an idea, meme theory is rather imprecise and can be misleading. Of course, humans are the cultural actors in an information exchange, not ideas. Dawkins himself was quick to point out that memes, as well as genes, don't have intrinsic intelligence, they only appear to behave in intelligent ways. And meme theory may be just one way of describing the codependence of humans and culture. For example, environmental journalist Michael Pollen has, in his writing, reversed the conventional way of thinking about the relationship between humans and agriculture. In his history of plant species, *The Botany of Desire*, rather than ascribe agency to humans in the propagation of the plants, he tells the story from the perspective of the plant species, showing how they have, in a sense, domesticated us. This forced change in perspective helps provide new insights into human behavior. It is in this playful spirit that I reference meme theory.

Model – Educational theorist and linguist James P. Gee advocates for a concept of "cultural models," the cognitive short hand that we use to make sense of experiences and to function in everyday life, a bit like heuristics. Cultural models are the "images, story lines, principles, or metaphors that capture what a particular group finds 'normal' or 'typical' in regard to a given phenomenon" (143). These can be self-conscious beliefs and values, but are usually implicit and taken-for-granted. Stories and works of art, though, can make certain cultural models explicit, and hold them up for challenge.

Narratives have been the source of some of the most tenacious cultural model about adolescence and generational identity, implicit and explicit. Take, for example, the novel *The Catcher in the Rye*. J.D. Salinger's portrait of adolescent Holden Caulfield quickly became an iconic representation of teenage psychology—teen as self-righteous cynic. The idea of adult "phoniness" was no doubt influential on the generation of youth who would come to make a slogan out of the maxim "don't trust anyone over 30." Douglas Coupland's novel *Generation X* characterized that cohort as disaffected and unfeeling, a cultural model that many real kids in that generation would work hard to shake over the years. I'll utilize Gee's theory of cultural models more extensively in my discussion of video games.

Metaphor – Linguist George Lakoff uses a theory of metaphor to describe how humans make sense of the world in a fundamental, and often unconscious, way. Most famously, Lakoff has studied how politicians use metaphors to frame issues in a way that will automatically give them the upper hand in a debate. By referring to tax cuts as "tax relief," one already establishes taxation as an burden on the public. Once the opposing party accepts the metaphor, it becomes nearly impossible to argue the dissenting opinion, until he or she "reframes" the debate with a new metaphor.

The most famous metaphor for adolescence is perhaps G. Stanley Hall's contention that it is a period of psychological "storm and stress." Lakoff argues that often these conceptual metaphors become an insidious facet of our "worldview," they partially structure the very way we see the world, the evidence we select from the pool of available stimuli in order to build a model of reality. So accepting that being a teenager is like being in a storm colors our interpretation of adolescent behavior and becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Narratives can be said to evoke or subvert these metaphors.

Adolescence Narratives: Literary Rebels to Video Game Heroes

The following chapters are designed to give a modest insight into the past, present, and future of adolescence narratives.

In Chapter One, "A History of Adolescence Narratives," I look at several important nodes in the development of adolescence narratives, specifically at the literary genre of the Bildungsroman. I argue that this genre, which has often been characterized as the prototype for contemporary coming-of-age stories, was actually an accretive rather than wholly original development, and that the genres that preceded its development, the picaresque and the school story, have been just as influential on subsequent adolescence narratives, and on the concept of adolescence itself.

Chapter Two, "Ophelia, Spoiled Brat, Queen Bee: The Films of Sofia Coppola," examines Coppola's life and work, including her trilogy of films about female adolescence. I make a connection between recent alarmist psychology books about teen girls, the discourse of third wave and post-feminism, and how Coppola's films have responded to, and been implicated in, these discourses.

Finally, Chapter Three, "Video Games and Adolescence," looks at the implications of translating adolescence narratives into a medium that forges a different kind of relationship between

the reader, the author, and the work. I argue that video games and adolescents have a natural affinity, and that adolescence narratives, with their ethos of pedagogy and youth empowerment, are potential sources of inspiration for discovering innovations in game design.

1   A History of Adolescent Narratives

Tracing a history of adolescence through representation, it must be noted, requires a certain amount of creative interpretation, a reading of concepts into texts that vastly predate the familiar categories of human development espoused by contemporary psychologists. "Adolescence" itself is a moving target. It is an oft-repeated nugget of social wisdom that the use of the term to refer to the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood only coalesced around the turn on the 20th Century, in particular following the 1904 publication of psychologist G. Stanley Hall's seminal text on youth titled, fittingly, *Adolescence*. The use of the word "teenager"—which is not a perfect synonym for adolescence, but for which there is certainly significant overlap—comes even later, with the mobilization of market forces to define and solicit a powerful new subset of American consumers who emerged following World War II with unprecedented quantities of time and discretionary income. There were certainly teenagers before this time, in the sense of individuals aged between 13 and 19, but nobody would have referred to them as such.

Reinterpreting stories from the past through the lens of the present should then be done with extreme caution, a caution which tended to elude early theorists of human development, who would frequently cite characters from the classical canon as proof that their categories and stage theories were not only clinically useful but also culturally universal and transcendent of historical epochs. Freud gives us the first and best example with his appropriation of Sophocles as a mnemonic for his framework of psychosexual development: the Oedipus complex. In his 1900 volume *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he evokes a second cultural touchstone, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, as another case study towards this thesis. Because if it's in Shakespeare, it has to be true.

In 1959, concurrent to the great post-war boom of cultural production around the "problem" of the teenager, Norman Kiell published *The Adolescent Through Fiction*, which must be the ultimate expression of such a post-hoc analytical methodology. Faced with growing public fervor over youth anxiety and juvenile delinquency, but armed with fewer clinical case studies of real adolescent patients than one would prefer, Kiell trained his analytical faculties on characters from fiction, convinced that the incisive minds of past literary greats had illuminated patterns of behavior that the scientists of the time had yet to discover. He figuratively put teenage characters from fiction on the leather couch, treating their inner monologues as therapeutic confession. Not

surprisingly, Kiell's selective quotations from novels as diverse as *The Catcher in the Rye* and D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* perfectly fit the model of human development that he and many of his contemporaries endorsed. More recently, but with a more modest scope, Aaron H. Esman provided a thorough cataloging of adolescent characters in Shakespeare, including king-in-training Prince Hal from *Henry IV* and Miranda from *The Tempest*. He claims of the latter that the arrival of the Prospero's enemies to their secluded island can be read as "a magnificent metaphor for the adolescent awakening of sexuality and the emergence from the enclosed world of the family to the wider world beyond it" (1). Though Esman's short essay is more a playful reading than a serious argument, the basic conceit of Kiell's approach is still at work: Shakespeare's teens were just like our own.

However, nearly 30 years before Kiell's book, a voice of dissent had posed a significant challenge to Hall's articulation of adolescence as essentially a period of "storm and stress." Anthropologist Margaret Meade's 1928 study *Coming of Age in Samoa* tested the claim to universality of the concept of adolescence, and found many reasons for doubt. Her period spent among teenage girls in a tribal culture very isolated from Anglo-American traditions yielded observations inconsistent with Hall's conclusions about American teens. Her subjects did not experience the emotional turmoil characteristic of adolescents in the United States, did not feel an "awakened religious sense, a flowering of idealism, a great desire for assertion of self against authority" (136). Cultural context, it seems, has an enormous impact on the experience of maturation.

The shifting interpretation of Hall's own work provides ironic evidence for the social construction, rather than the biological universality, of adolescence. A hint of the way psychology has canonized Hall's work differently from its historical context rests in that quote from Meade. For her purposes, the "awakened religious sense" seems the most relevant axis of comparison across cultures, whereas a more recent reconsideration of Hall's foundational tome reasserts the primacy of youth anxiety, which manifests in three major ways: conflict with parents, mood disruptions, and risk behavior (Arnett, 319). Meade's emphasis on religion and idealism gives credence to a narrative of the development of the psychological discourse as a response to the vital role of youth as converts and proselytizers in the Second Great Awakening. Hall himself may have experienced an adolescent conversion ritual, and "so many of the writers on adolescence between 1890 and 1905 came into the field not by way of social reform and the juvenile courts, as the later history of the

concept might suggest, but from religious psychology" (Kett, 291).

Though we cannot take localized observations of adolescent experience as the "big T" truth of all human development, it can still be very useful to examine teen-aged and young adult characters from historical narratives in light of a contemporary understanding of adolescence for several reasons. The first is very simple: contemporary adolescence narratives, and perhaps the idea of adolescence itself, are partially derived from these narratives. Though the vocabulary for describing the adolescent stage, and the qualities attributable to that stage, may be ever-shifting, the genealogy of representations of adolescence extends unbroken from, for example, the latest high school movie to the most seminal novel of education. Early coming-of-age novels may not have used the word "adolescent" to describe their heroes, but many contemporary adolescence narratives explicitly evoke the conventions of the Bildungsroman. We understand the contemporary narratives better through an understanding of their precedents. And yes, the fields of developmental psychology and educational theory also participate in the same flow of ideas as these narratives. Hall's concept of adolescent "storm and stress," for example, is a reference, simply translated, to the "Sturm und Drang" movement in German literature and music. But it is more than a mere reference, and more than an appeal to the self-evident psychological truth of great literature. The turn of the century idea of tumultuous adolescence and the celebration of emotion in German Romanticism seem genetically related; they're both children of a historical epoch characterized by the tensions between the individual and the social, and between reason and emotion. Adolescence and the Modern era go hand in glove.

Second, if we define adolescence as the transitional state preceding full maturity, narratives with adolescent protagonists can serve to powerfully illuminate the cultures in which they were generated. While all creative works reveal something about the individuals, discourses, values, and social constraints that comprise a culture, these narratives are more explicit about the usually implicit norms of identity and belonging. In many of these works, the protagonists begin in a state of becoming, a subject position of latent potential, and are enlightened or educated, by means of lessons imparted by wise characters or life-altering events (all manufactured by the author, of course), to the ways of the world and the means of social integration. A creator of such a work must articulate a model of biological and social reality that will resonate with a reader's understanding, if not "elevate" a reader to adopting that understanding. Adolescence narratives

have consistently reflected and reinscribed boundaries of nationality, gender, ethnicity, and even, in the case of fantasy and science-fiction, the human. The teen protagonist is alternately scapegoat and ideologically uncompromising hero, victim and criminal, outsider and everyman. The school in film, television, and literature about teens is sometimes a protected learning environment, and sometimes a microcosm of society reflecting the kind of biological, social, and economic stratification narratives about adults all too often ignore. Adolescence narratives are and have been a compendium of theories, speculations, and philosophies regarding nothing less than the meaning of life.

The final reason to engage in this exercise is more circuitous, and perhaps more controversial. Though the concept of adolescence changes across boundaries of culture and time, its meaning is neither arbitrary nor inert. Metaphors of adolescence are a structuring influence on social organizations, on educational principles, and on individual consciousnesses. One cannot say that, because adolescence is in part a social construction, and lacks an immutable Platonic essence, that adolescence is therefore an illusion, a mere social hallucination. How we define adolescence, and the representations we generate about teens and young adults, have real and lasting consequences. The development of a discourse around adolescence was not inevitable but it was arguably a positive adaptation. At the very least, adolescence has been a very tenacious and powerful idea. At the most, it has been a kind of beneficial cultural technology. Narratives of adolescence, both those that came well before the common use of the word and those that have since responded to the formal psychological discourse, have helped structure and scaffold understandings of human development and behavior. Understanding the history of representations of adolescence, the formative metaphors and topoi that still inform the development of these stories, can reveal profound insights into our contemporary culture.

What follows are analyses of some of the seminal works, characters, and genres that have generated representations of adolescence (and subsequently cultural models and metaphors of adolescence), in rough chronological order of their appearance, up through the development of the genre that many acknowledge to be the direct descendant of much contemporary adolescent fiction: the Bildungsroman. I hope to have collected at least a few of the primary nodes in the development of this discourse, examples that show the major historical shifts in representational strategies for depicting teenage and young adult characters. It is by no means an exhaustive encyclopedia of

relevant works. In each case, I have attempted to include examples of how these representational strategies, however archaic in origin, have perpetuated, though greatly transformed, to the contemporary period.

Pre-Modern Adolescents: The Case of Joan of Arc

Just as adolescence was "invented" in the 20th Century, evidence for a well-developed discourse around childhood itself is lacking for the period previous to the invention of the printing press. Though I find the "tiny adults" theory of Medieval child-rearing—that people did not consider children significantly different from adults—a non-intuitive if not completely ridiculous one, that historical period does pose many challenges to the scholar interested in representations of adolescence. Certainly, in an time and place where the average life expectancy at birth was between 25 and 30 (Livi-Bacci, 61), the teenage years, whatever the biological effects of puberty, must have been experienced in a radically different way than they are today. Obviously there exists a link between affluence and theories of childhood; a minimal level of public health is required to allow any social group the "luxury" of a childhood or, especially, an adolescence. This level was simply not available to most humans in the historical context of Medieval Europe.

However, examples of teenage characters from this period have had a lasting relevance to contemporary representations of adolescence, none more so than Joan of Arc. Of course Joan was an historical figure, but one so encrusted with layers of folklore and legend that the few primary sources which survive about her life are almost footnotes to the rich lore that grew out of it (in addition, no first hand visual representations of Joan exist, allowing an artist free reign to mold her image to the needs of his or her time). Again, it is unlikely that Joan's contemporaries would have considered her youth a salient axis of identity, but in later epochs her image has been appropriated as a kind of prototypical teenage heroine. Passionate, idealistic, and strong, she refuses to equivocate her beliefs to the religious authorities and becomes, like Romeo and Juliet, a martyr to a corrupt adult society. The Joan of Arc legend has and continues to inform representations of powerful teenage females including Joss Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), *La Femme Nikita* (1990), and ABC's Christian family-oriented TV show *Joan of Arcadia* (2003-2005).

Joan of Arc as Girl Punk: One of the historical figures "collected" by the stoner heroes of the sci-fi teen comedy *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* (1989), Joan of Arc is here played by Jane Wiedlin, guitarist for all-girl punk rock band The Go-Gos.

The other facet of the Joan of Arc legend that has endured most persistently is her spiritual calling: the visions or hallucinations that inspired her heroic military deeds. The quasi-supernatural aspect of her character has been inextricably bound up in her gender, and has played in to representations of female adolescence as a kind of witchcraft. As Joan of Arc scholars have argued, her visions operated as both a blessing and a curse; claims of spiritual calling were one of the few avenues to power a woman in Joan's time would have be afforded (Barstow), but the same claims were her own undoing in the trial. This shifting interpretation of female spiritual power as alternately sacred and profane has had equally dubious consequences for women over the centuries. Not long after Joan was burned at the stake for heresy came the publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, or the Witch Hammer. The book, originally printed in 1487, was a manual for the identification and torture of women who failed to conform to rigid norms of feminine behavior. The European witch hunts did not target adolescent females exclusively, and were but one particularly gruesome instance of a long tradition of pathologizing feminine resistance, but the association of pubescent femininity or adolescent behavior with sorcery has informed a truly staggering number of pop culture texts. The trope was perhaps most literally realized in Stephen King's *Carrie* (1974), in which the onset of menstruation in the title character parallels her development of telekinetic powers and foreshadows her murderous, and ultimately suicidal, transformation of the high school prom into a blood bath. Arthur Miller made an explicit, though anti-supernatural, link between teenage girls and historical "witches" in his dramatization of the Salem Witch Trials. The villains of the *The Crucible* (1952) resemble a clique of "mean girls" run

amok, remorseless teenagers whose idle gossip dooms 20 innocent adults to execution.

        The most generative recent application of the "teen witch" symbol has been its appropriation as harmless fantasy or even pro-feminist iconography. Though the residue of the occult in otherwise family-friendly works like TV's *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch* (1996-2003) and the Harry Potter series has encouraged some vocal religious fundamentalists to declare that secularism has led Christian America astray, the success of these narratives perhaps indicates that the unambiguous association of evil with female spiritual power is on the wane. Other significant examples of progressive witches in pop culture about adolescents include Willow in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the young adult coven of TV's *Charmed* (1998-2006), Hermione in the Harry Potter series, and the matriarchal clan of long-living witches in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* saga (1995-2000). A slightly lesser-known but cheekily self-conscious example is the 2005 Marvel Comics mini-series *Spellbinders*, in which writer Mike Carey returns to the scene of the crime, as it were, by setting his tale of empowered adolescent witches in a fictional high school in Salem, Massachusetts. In the comic, the teenagers gifted with magical powers must defend themselves from the jealous non-magical students (the "blanks"), as well as save the world from sure destruction.
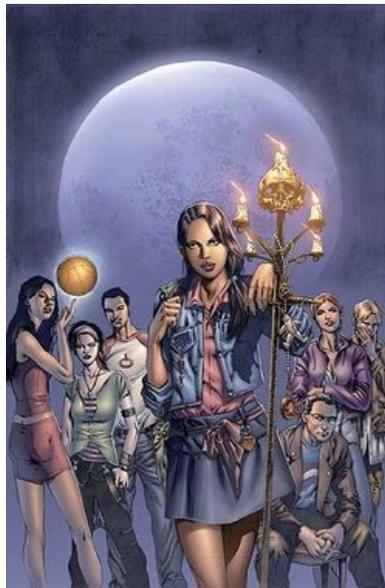
Spellbinders (2005) Art by Mike Perkins

The Picaresque

In searching for the roots of the coming-of-age narrative, many scholars begin with Goethe and his novel *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, published in 1795 and widely judged by literary critics to be the first work in the genre Bildungsroman. But nearly 250 years previous, in 1554, an anonymous Spanish author created the novella *The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes*, the foundational work in the picaresque genre, which has important structural similarities to the Bildungsroman. In *Lazarillo*, a youth rises from poverty through the echelons of high society by means of an apprenticeship to a succession of masters. The hero begins his story as an 8 year-old child and concludes as a mature adult, though the text does not make any special demarcation of his teenage years. Nonetheless, the novella gives its protagonist the kind of moments of self-realization and enlightenment so prevalent in even contemporary adolescence narratives, such as when Lazaro is taught a valuable lesson in observation and self-reliance from his first master, a wily blind beggar: "It seemed to me that in that instant I awoke from the naivete in which as a child I had slumbered. I said to myself: 'This fellow speaks the truth in that it falls to me to keep an eye out, forewarned to take things at their face value, as I am alone'" (9). The picaresque hero goes through his own "bildung" or "coming of age," but he comes of age by gaming society, by manipulating or breaking its rules, rather than mastering and internalizing them.

The tone of the work, and the others that have been said to comprise the genre, is satirical, and angered the Crown with its mocking descriptions of social injustice in 16th Century Spain. The hero of the story, being low born, a thief, and generally a rascal, was considered by many contemporaries an inappropriate subject for artistic representation. But the picaresque hero, or anti-hero as the case may be, had a profound impact on the history of the novel, not only those in the high Spanish *picaresco*, but later English works including Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749), Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, and William Makepeace Thackeray's *The Luck of Barry Lyndon* (1844). In America, the picaresque adolescent hero Huckleberry Finn is considered particularly emblematic of the nation's rebellious character.

Several psychologists and cultural anthropologists have attempted to understand the social function of the picaresque hero in the context of the trickster archetype. Derived from American Indian folk legend, and appropriated in the theories of C.F. Jung, Joseph Campbell, and others, the trickster is a hero or god of chaos, who frequently employs deception and thievery in pursuit of his

animalistic desires. He brings disorder into the world through his constant violation of physical laws, and upsets tradition with his disregard for social hierarchies and moral standards of behavior. He is frequently a shape-shifter, simultaneously clever and foolish, and a gender chameleon. In the American Indian tradition, he is known by some tribes as Coyote, by others as Raven. In the European tradition, some have suggested that Mercury, the Norse god Loki, and Satan all partially fit the motif. The relationship between trickster and picaresque has been suggested by, among others, Karl Kerenyi, who believes the two forms share the same cultural function, that is, "to add disorder to order and so make a whole, to render possible, within the fixed bounds of what is permitted, an experience of what is not permitted" (185).

In many contemporary adolescence narratives, the hero can be productively compared to the picaro/trickster. Perhaps the most memorable recent manifestation has been the title character of the 1986 John Hughes film *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. Like Lazaro, Ferris uses his boldness and wit to propel himself harmlessly through a satirical world of hypocritical adult authority figures. He masquerades as "The Sausage King of Chicago" to crash one of the fanciest restaurants in the city, somehow commandeers a float in the German Day Parade to lip-sync a performance of "Twist and Shout" (which inspires onlookers to spontaneously break out in choreographed dance routines), and convinces the local media that he's dying of kidney failure. But Ferris is hardly a low-caste upstart; rather he represents John Hughes's favorite flavor of adolescent protagonist: the white Chicago suburbanite. In one of his many asides to the camera (breaking the fourth wall is a hallmark of the cinematic trickster, just as the picaro often narrates his own story), he reveals that he is distinctly aware of his inevitable accommodation to middle-class society once he becomes an adult, so transgresses while he still has the chance. In a sense he intuits how adolescence, being a liminal or "threshold" stage, grants him the temporary ability to manipulate social norms. His otherness gives him powers of observation and manipulation that his conformist peers lack. But can Ferris Bueller really be middle class and a picaresque hero at the same time? Elizabeth Traube has argued that Ferris represents a postmodern rogue who, unlike the controversial anti-heroes of the picaresque, or Mark Twain's devious adolescents, fail to offer a true alternative to the prevailing social order.

> "Since the antebellum period, ambitious rogues who succeeded through cunning, duplicity, and the artful manipulation of images have steadily proliferated and eclipsed their more industrious, puritanical cousins as instantiations of the self-made man. But

whereas the antebellum trickster contested with a still powerful traditional morality of work and reward, his descendants have been incorporated into the bureaucratic and consumption ethics that legitimize late capitalist society." (375-76)

But does the picaresque hero really challenge social institutions or, in harmlessly playing out fantasies of rebellion, help inure the reader to those very institutions? Is the rebel really all that subversive? Picaresque scholar Peter N. Dunn argues against a typical evaluation of the genre that ascribes to them an anti-social function: "If we bear in mind the claim that has frequently been made, that picaresque novels present a critique of social institutions or of social structures, it is instructive to note how little and how conventional is the implied criticism they contain" (294). Similarly, of trickster mythology, Kerenyi claims, "nothing demonstrates the meaning of the all-controlling social order more impressively than the religious recognition of that which evades this order" (185).

Ferris Bueller's Day Off (1986)

Few contemporary adolescence narratives fail to grasp this paradox. Asked what he is rebelling against, the outlaw protagonist of *The Wild One* (1953) answers, "what have you got?" In *The 400 Blows* (1959), Antoine Doinel runs from the world of authoritarian adult institutions, only to find himself at the edge of the sea, captured in a freeze-frame of eternal rebellion and eternal control. As Kerenyi suggests, watching a charismatic subversive violate the boundaries of propriety brings us transgressive pleasure, but also serves as a reminder of where those boundaries are. The freedom enjoyed by the picaro, or the teen rebel, provides a vicarious thrill, but in many picaresque fictions he is also educated and socialized by his adventures, and forms an uneasy truce with the world. Recall the ambiguous ending of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, with the title character secure in the bosom of his Aunt Sally's guardianship, but chomping at the bit to "light out for the

Territory." If he does start another series of adventures, they won't be recorded, as Huck has tired from his narrative: "if I'd a knowed what a trouble it was to make a book I wouldn't a tackled it, and ain't a-going to no more" (114). The revolution will not be novelized, but the picaresque narrative allows us to have our rebellion and eat it too.

There is another way that the picaresque novel pioneered aspects of later adolescence narratives: gender inequality. If, as myself and many others have claimed, these narratives were meant to be partially instructive to the reader, to allow the reader a glimpse of social constraints through the actions of one who acts at the margins of society, one might predict that the genre would also include works about female protagonists which limn the boundaries of women's experiences. Indeed, not long after *Lazarillo de Tormes* came *La picara Justina (*1605), attributed to López de Ubeda, and *La hija de Celestina* (1612), by Jerónimo de Salas Barbadillo. In the English picaresque tradition, Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) is often cited as a member of the genre, and even John Cleland's *Fanny Hill* (1748). In his analysis of the female picaresque, however, Julio Rodriguez-Luis shows how even in this genre designed to show transgressive characters, the early female picaras lacked the depth of their male counterparts. The picaro is driven by his base hungers —for money, for station, for sex—to propel himself up the social hierarchy by whatever means available. Rodriguez-Luis surmises that this task gains meaning with verisimilitude, that is, the drama only works if the picaro's actions are remotely feasible. But in 17th Century Europe, no degree of disguise and chicanery could realistically allow a woman economic mobility, which deprived these novels of their representational force, leaving "works with empty characters, or at most with caricatures of the picaro, until the time in history when it becomes possible for a woman of low birth to move up in society with a certain degree of freedom" (43). According to Rodriguiez-Luis, the later picaras like *Moll Flanders* were truer to the genre's original inception.

So the picaresque, in a sense, thrives on the tension between social inequality and opportunity. It is an ideal genre for characters who are on the margins but, in some way, can "pass" for their social betters. The picaros and picaras were the original embodiment of the more recent aphorism: "fake it until you make it." It can hardly be said, though, that stories of female transgression flourished after Defoe. Even as picaresque behaviors became a more compartmentalized part of adolescent development, recast as "natural" to the process of growing up, an American right of passage, adolescent women would not share equally in these freedoms.

Daniel Defoe may describe a heroine who spends time as a con artist, a prostitute, and a thief, as long as she repents at the end. A work like *Fanny Hill*, however, with its unrepentant prostitute, has been repeatedly banned in Europe and America. It should also be noted that all of these early female picaresque novels were written by men who could not, therefore, be accused of writing autobiography. Following the feminist movements of the 60s and 70s, however, the picaresque was a favored narrative mode for stories of female resistance such as Tom Robbins' *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues,* the film *Thelma and Louise* (1991), and Erica Jong's *Fanny* (1980), which retold *Fanny Hill* through the voice of the "real" woman whose story Cleland had bowdlerized. Even so, in terms of adolescent narratives, stories of rebellious girls continue to resist the mark of approval enjoyed by the Huck Finns and Ferris Buellers of the world.

School Stories

In many adolescence narratives, just as important as the psychological character of the hero has been the role of a formal education in molding and socializing her. Not surprisingly, modern educational theory and children's literature, as each presumed that children needed to be treated differently from adults, developed along roughly parallel lines. In 1693, one year after the Salem Witch Trials in America, English philosopher John Locke applied his Enlightenment philosophy to the treatise *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, which offered guidelines for developing in the child the capacity for reason and self-discipline, and a critique of the use of corporal punishment towards educational goals. Some 70 years later, Jean Jacques Rousseau would respond with his semi-fictional account of an ideal education in *Émile: or, On Education* (1762), but not before Locke's educational theories made their way into what would become the first children's novel, as well as the first novel in the genre sometimes referred to as the "school story." With such a pedigree, one would expect the author of *The Governess; or, the Little Female Academy* to be more well known, but Sarah Fielding is still overshadowed by the literary fame of her brother Henry. Published in 1749, *The Governess* follows the instruction of nine pupils at a female boarding school under the beneficent tutelage of Mrs. Teachum. Reflecting the "push and pull between reason and passion in eighteenth-century culture," the novel shows the development of each girl pupil by their efforts to "regulate their feelings" and "subordinate them to reason" (Ward, 32).

At the beginning of the story, Fielding introduces each of the pupils at the Academy with

very minimal description. Though we will get to know all of the girls in subsequent chapters, the introduction provides just this hint of distinction for the child named Jenny Peace: "The eldest of these was fourteen Years old, and none of the rest had yet attained their twelfth Year" (51). Again, I want to be careful not to read too much into this designation of Jenny as a teenager, but Fielding does more than acknowledge the age difference, she provides a special function for the character. Jenny serves as arbiter between Mrs. Teachum and the pupils, and is more often than not the one to provide direct instruction, as well as an example of proper behavior. Her status is somewhere between a child and an adult; she belongs to neither world wholly. As a more recent teenage role model would bemoan: not a girl, not yet a woman. The novel itself is structured around an awareness of Jenny's difference. Though each chapter provides a micro-narrative about one of the children's educational and moral challenges, the macro-narrative is built around Jenny's story: it ends when she leaves the school to return home. At the story's climax, Jenny can be said to have figuratively "grown out" of the novel. She transitions successfully from one state to the next, a transition not afforded the other characters, however much they may have learned. For though the younger children receive the adult wisdom, Jenny's enlightenment does not follow from the simple transmission of lessons, even in such a moralistic manual for female propriety as *The Governess*. Instead, Jenny learns to oscillate her subject position between the younger children and Mrs. Teachum, to identify with both of their viewpoints in turn, and this skill becomes the meta-lesson that brings her distinction. Her education is not in the knowledge but in the teaching: the creation of workable models of other minds, the development of rhetorical metaphors, the deployment of a well-timed guilt-trip. As an adolescent, someone on the border between childhood and adulthood, she is well-placed to negotiate a bridge between the two worlds. And by identifying with this adolescent, the reader ostensibly learns the same skill.

This double educational target—protagonist and reader—is the defining characteristic of the Bildungsroman according to the person credited with coining the term, Karl Morgenstern. He canonized *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* as the paradigm for a kind of novel that "portrays the *Bildung* of the hero in its beginnings and growth to a certain stage of completeness; and also...furthers the reader's *Bildung* to a much greater extent than any other." (qtd. in Swales, 12). Much later, Roberta Seelinger Trites would modify Morgenstern's definition to describe contemporary Young Adult fiction, which she shows are often "dedicated to teaching the intended

reader that her or his subject position is inherently flawed and will continue to be so until s/he becomes an adult" (481). Having established the reader's deficiency, the YA novel then aims to "propel the reader out of her or his own subject position." Arguably, *The Governess* represents a similar literary experiment almost 50 years prior to Goethe's, with all of the accompanying problems inherent in that pedagogical approach: the tension between an authentic address of the audience—a desire to speak directly to the girls who are reading the story, and to represent their personal dramas faithfully—and patronizing attempts to enlighten them through pedantic discourse, to make them "grow up." But *The Governess* affords a certain respect to its adolescent character, certainly provides her with levels of autonomy and responsibility far greater than most contemporary American schools would grant a 14 year old girl, evidence that Fielding recognized the power of that in-between stage of life. Also, one should not assume that the didacticism of children's literature and the school story has gone unchallenged in the centuries since its invention, despite the endurance of the "after school special" paradigm. Surreal and chaotic, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is but one major example of a reaction against the kind of pedantic fiction for children that endured through the Victorian age. If anything, fiction for children and adolescents has always negotiated, often uncertainly, the inherent conflict of interest represented by adults producing works for youthful readers.

Of course, there wouldn't be school stories without schools, and the evolving function of schools in these narratives has been another rich avenue for tracking attitudes about education, socialization, and adolescence. As succinctly summarized in Pat Pinsent's examination of school story as genre: "The school in school stories functions both as a microcosm of the world and as an alternative to it; as a place of socialization and of subversion, and as an educational establishment in which the lessons learned generally take place outside the classroom" (8). As educational institutions have changed, so have the stories—from the private, gender-segregated boarding school setting of *The Governess* and Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), to the co-educational public day schools that background most "issues-driven" school fiction since the 1970s. With each change has come a reorientation of the function of the school according to the different poles outlined by Pinsent. As a protected sanctuary for aristocratic values, the boarding school is a setting distinctly separate from the real world, bearing the potential for the creation of a utopian community of child equals and the illusion of a classless society. The separateness of the school in

these novels is frequently made literal by a physical journey that opens the books—what Bakhtin would call a chronotope—such as "a train journey during which new girls are introduced and friendships between old pupils are renewed. The journey marks the boundary between home and school territory" (12). Even in this relatively minor detail one can trace the social change: from trains to school buses to private automobiles.

We can perhaps gain some additional understanding of the school in these earlier stories, and the idea of institutional schooling itself, by considering the concepts of liminality and communitas as described by anthropologist Victor Turner. Turner's *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* adapted the term "liminal" to describe the special status of individuals in tribal cultures during initiation rituals, including coming-of-age rituals. Liminal people, or "threshold people," are "neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention" (95). Because of their very classlessness, these figures can transcend social hierarchies and the positions to which they are normally constrained. The liminal figure may share some superficial similarities with the trickster—often appearing sexually ambiguous, in dress naked or masked, and willing to violate class distinctions, but even though liminality offers a kind of freedom, the behavior of these entities in fact suggests an even stronger censorship of the self. In the tribal cultures Turner examined, the removal of rank and privilege creates strong subservience of all liminal people to the ceremonial authorities, who expect quiet, obedience, and humility. Turner sensed the ultimate function of this process for the individuals involved: "it is as though they are being reduced or ground down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers to enable them to cope with their new station in life" (95). The feeling of being "ground down to a uniform condition" may be quite familiar to those educated in even our "microcosmic" modern schools.

Turner describes further how the temporary suspension of class distinctions in the ritual space allows the class system to perpetuate in the broader culture by means of the experience of communitas, how this system of enforced equality and obedience contributes to pro-social, pro-hierarchical behavior. Because the tribe's highest and lowest ranking members find themselves on equal footing during the liminal stage, they are able to forge the person-to-person human bonds that are actually the basis for the tribe's coherence, the root cause of the social structure itself. The king only earns legitimacy as a leader by his experience as a peer to his subjects. This temporary

community of equals, the communitas, is a kind of utopian pre-social "anti-structure," much like the schools in these early stories. In a seeming paradox, what the existence of communitas really indicates is a rigid social hierarchy in the wider society.

When that hierarchy starts to collapse, or at least fragment, with the rise of urbanization, democracy, and the middle class, the function of the school in these stories shifts dramatically. Pinsent explains this shift as a change in the schools rather than a change in society: "The paradigm of school as a microcosm for society perhaps becomes more obvious when the school is set in the wider community" (18). In other words, as schools open their doors to students from all social classes, they come to represent a cross-section of each community. Perhaps just as motivating, though, is anxiety over the school's ability to absorb an ever greater diffusion of social classes, a strain on the cohesive power of the communitas. In either case, the public school in fiction ceases to be at an elevated remove from society (the "high school on a hill," as went the anthem for my alma mater) to a highly concentrated distillation of that society, a setting more fitting for "social realism" than utopian fiction.

This new paradigm did not emerge without significant social anxiety over the change. One of the sharpest illustrations of the tension between an optimism for the democratizing potential of public education and a fear of racial and social integration is the 1955 film *Blackboard Jungle*, based on a novel by Evan Hunter from a few years previous. In one of the opening scenes of the film, hundreds of rowdy, racially mixed teenagers threaten to overwhelm the few white teachers at the assembly on the first day of school. Students heckle the principle, cat-call the new female teacher, and physically threaten their weaker members on the way to class. The visual language is unambiguous: the school is a powder keg ready to explode in racial and intergenerational violence. With *Blackboard Jungle* and *Rebel Without a Cause* both opening that year, 1955 was ground-zero for the juvenile delinquent in American cinema.

The boarding school story didn't go away, however, and with the paradigm shift towards social realism and the school as microcosm came a radical reinterpretation of its conventions. William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, first published in 1954, can be read as the dystopian counterpart to the boarding school story, a sharp criticism of Rousseau's educational philosophy based on an ideal of man in the state of nature. In the film *Dead Poets Society* (1989), director Peter Weir created a boarding school story in which adolescent conformity and self-discipline are the central dramatic

problems rather than the solutions.

Dead Poets Society (1989): The boarding school students naturally fall into lock-step.

In *School Ties* (1992), the utopian facade of the boarding school obscures the anti-Semitism of its students and faculty. Most recently, the videogame *Bully* (2006) from Rockstar Entertainment features a simulated New England boarding school, literally a microcosm, where players control 15 year-old Jimmy Hopkins in his efforts to first subdue but then reconcile the violent cliques that stratify the school. In a way, the goal of this highly controversial game is actually to recover the utopian values of the boarding school, to rescue it from being, as the instruction manual knowingly claims, a "microcosm to the whole world." Similarly, J.K. Rowling has attempted to rebuild a new, multicultural model of the utopian boarding school, albeit a highly fantastic version, in the Harry Potter series.

Our cultural forgetting of Sarah Fielding's innovations in the school story should be a hint that these stories, too, provided radically different visions of adolescent development depending on what sex was doing the developing. "School as refuge" and "school as microcosm" both have different meanings in girl-oriented stories like *The Governess* and Elinor Brent-Dyer's Chalet School Series than in the masculine *Tom Brown's Schooldays.* Though it is a bit of a generalization, it is not inaccurate to argue that girls in early school stories are educated to become good wives and mothers, to become accommodated to a primarily domestic life. Boys, on the other hand, are apprenticed to a life of social and economic competition. Consider the initial moral lesson of *The Governess.* The nine girls are provided a basket of apples, but one is bigger than the rest. Each girl argues for why they deserve the larger apple over the others, and the conflict quickly turns physical. Jenny Peace, frustrated with her inability to quell the disagreement, picks up the offending apple and throws it

over a hedge (what a teenager!). This only causes more fighting until Mrs. Teachum arrives and, with Jenny's help, resolves the issue. The moral is clear: a lady should love her peers, not compete with them. School stories for boys, however, are filled with opportunities for masculine competition. The "refuge" of the school may level the playing field, allowing the poor boy to defeat his economic superior in hand-to-hand combat, but does not dissuade the act itself.

Following the turn towards social realism, female-centered school stories began to deconstruct the myth that schools were a refuge of feminine sisterhood, and of feminine chastity. Movies like *Heathers* (1989) and *Mean Girls* (2004) show the cutthroat competitiveness of female social groups; the sisterhood has given way to the clique. Perhaps following the honest depictions of sexual angst in Judy Bloom's *Forever* (1975), Young Adult fiction has turned in recent years to explicit descriptions of the sexual politics of high school. On the MTV reality series *Laguna Beach: The Real Orange County* (2004-)*,* the drama hinges on which of the girls on the show will "hook up" with which of the boys. This has proven an unsettling shift for both the forces of tradition and of change, for parents and educators as well as feminists. I'll discuss this issue in greater detail in the next chapter.

Bildungsroman

Having come to the Bildungsroman by way of the picaresque and the school story, I feel a distinct sense of anti-climax. Here is the direct progenitor to the coming of age story, the pioneer of the novel of "psychological realism," the genre that remains improbably relevant after two centuries of imitation, experimentation, and attempted subversion. Here is the framework for a type of narrative that has survived transliteration to the media of comics, film, television, and, most recently, video games (see Chapter 3). But I hope that my brief narrative has shown that, by the time Goethe set down the text of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, so much of the groundwork for this Bildungsroman had been lain by previous novelists. What made the genre the "killer app" of literary history, then, was not the invention of the concept of a "novel of development," but a synthesis of already-existing narrative devices, and a pronounced emphasis on those elements concerned with the growth and change of the main character; those elements that we might, in another context, call the journey of the adolescent to maturity.

Mikhail Bakhtin wrote that the innovation of the Bildungsroman was its concern with the

hero's becoming, whereas other novels depicted only the "ready-made" hero, a constant around whom the plot and setting are dynamic and variable. But in the novel of becoming, the hero himself is the variable, and his changes acquire significance to the plot. In short, through the Bildungsroman, "time is introduced into man" (21). Like the School Story, the Bildungsroman has a distinct chronotope, its own way of structuring space and time as meaningful. In the case of *Wilhelm Meister*, the hero reaches his destination only after many years of wandering, and his external movements mirror his psychological development. This trope of formative travels and adventures, however, could also be said to describe the picaresque. Indeed, David Miles has suggested that the the structure of *Wilhelm Meister* was actually a synthesis of the picaresque adventure and the religious confessional as typified by St. Augustine's writings: "the three parts of the novel form a dialectical progression in terms of both narrative content and technique: extensive-picaresque (Bks. I-V) and intensive-confessional elements (Bk. VI) combine in an ultimate synthesis of the two (Bks. VII-VIII), which both unites and transcends the elements of the two earlier parts" (984). This gives us another hint to the relationship between adolescence and religious conversion in early articulations of the concept, the formal similarity between notions of maturity and spiritual awakening. But this resolution of picaresque and confessional is made possible, more than by the actions of the hero himself, through the self-conscious reflection of the narrator. In *Wilhelm Meister* there is an uneasy schism between hero and narrator, but in later examples "there is a tendency for the hero of any Bildungsroman, if he develops in a truly psychological fashion, to become a narrator" (984). The parade of ironic, deceased, or otherwise unreliable narrators that quickly followed notwithstanding, this configuration of the artist-narrator-hero has remained a durable device in the author's toolbox, especially in the adolescent nostalgia fiction of the 1980s, in films like *Stand by Me* (1986) and the TV series *The Wonder Years* (1988-1993). The authoritative voice of the narrator, the fully-realized version of the gestational adolescent hero in these narratives, structures a Bildungsroman from the picaresque episodes of the drama.

This gels fairly well with how some contemporary psychologists in the constructivist paradigm, specifically in the fields of cognitive narratology and autobiographical memory, model how humans build a coherent consciousness and personality from their fragmented daily experiences. Jerome Bruner and Dan P. McAdams view narrative as fundamentally structuring how we process experience, such that one might measure an individual's level of maturity by how

compelling and internally consistent their life story is. Bruner's work, especially, has been highly influenced by literary history, and it's not easy to separate the psychology and literary theory in his writing. According to these theories, each individual plays the role of narrator, gathering materials from the experiences of childhood and adolescence to elucidate the trajectory of one's life. These Bildungsroman, then, offer the reader plenty of material for sample and comparison; reading becomes a kind of psychological peer review process.

Another thread in the analysis of the Bildungsroman concerns itself less with some abstract psychological "growth" and more with the protagonist's changing relationship to society. Hegel critiqued the genre as being an inherently bourgeois form, because the hero, the bildungsheld, always eventually turns away from his life of adventure and takes his predefined place within society. Franco Moretti's later study modified this basic analysis, judging the tensions within the work as more central that the simple outcome of the plot. It is "the conflict between the ideal of *self-determination* and the equally imperious demands of *socialization,*" that defines the Bildungsroman (15). The bildungsheld must internalize and become resolved to the inherent contradiction between individual autonomy and social restriction that characterizes the liberal nation-state. This concern with socialization strongly aligns the Bildungsroman with the school story, though the traditional ghettoization of children's literature away from "serious" adult fiction has perhaps obscured the relationship between the two genres. Unfortunately, this bias seems to have followed the adolescent narrative from literature to film. Rarely do film scholars consider coming of age films dramas like *Lost in Translation* (2003) or *Almost Famous* (2000)—which tend to be the domain of the auteur and "important" independent cinema—as meaningfully related to those mainstream works set in high school like *American Pie* (1999) and *Some Kind of Wonderful* (1987)—often derided as "exploitation."

These often contrasting definitions have split scholars of literary history on a rather important point of contention: the existence of the female Bildungsroman. As I have previously indicated, adolescence narratives have constructed the task of maturation in wildly contrasting ways, depending on the sex of the protagonist. Some have argued that, because early novels with adolescent female protagonists lacked many of the structural elements of the male Bildungsroman —e.g. the wandering adventures and the serial romances—they cannot reasonably be associated with the genre. A more inclusive definition, such as Moretti's, which is based on abstract tensions embodied by the novel rather than concrete plot elements, has no problem encompassing female

becoming stories. Indeed, Moretti argues that the works of Jane Austen are, like *Wilhelm Meister*, canonical of the "classical Bildungsroman." Austen's heroines, as Goethe's, must learn to internalize social norms, to somehow become accommodated to the contradiction between her individual desires and her social opportunities. It is too simple, and perhaps chauvinist, to claim that, because the options available to Elizabeth Bennet were limited, her choices lacked meaning. To assume that Bennet, and Austen herself, were merely victims of history, is to forget that masculinity is also socially constructed. Just as dangerous, however, would be to concede an equivalence between the male and female Bildungsroman. Austen's novels, however brilliant and groundbreaking, represent one culturally sanctioned path of becoming that has been reproduced, over the years, as the "natural" or only path.

Later female coming-of-age stories, such as Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868), would reveal stronger resistance to this normativity, even as tomboy protagonist Jo capitulates to marriage at the end, leaving behind her aspirations as a writer to be a wife and teacher. Owain Jones has argued that much coming-of-age fiction, especially those works set in the country, construct childhood as "naturally" masculine. So a tomboy protagonist represents a paradox, her behavior "can be seen as a resistance to narrow and strict gender delineations, but also reveals the gendered basis of constructions of childhood" (132). Girls in these stories enjoy the social acceptance of "male" behavior in their youth, but in becoming mature women must lose or abandon that part of themselves, and the social freedoms that came with it. In recent "issues" dominated young adult fiction, which has been criticized by some for its relentless moroseness and its emphasis on traumatic plots (Feinberg, FitzGerald), the loss of innocence is often manifested as a literal death. Consider *The Bridge to Terabithia* (1977), in which the tomboy hero dies while playing alone in the fantasy world she has forged with her male friend. Or the film *My Girl* (1991) in which the female protagonist, already reeling from the loss of her mother, must learn to cope with the death of her male playmate. In the next chapter, I'll show how this model of female adolescence as a tragic loss of childhood innocence and freedom has penetrated some very influential recent books about teen girls, and is addressed in Sofia Coppola's adaptation of *The Virgin Suicides*.

Conclusion

Together, the picaresque, the Bildungsroman, and the school story provide a nearly complete

picture of what it means to live a good life in a given culture. The picaresque, with its ultimately pro-social representations of anti-social characters—the tricksters, thieves, and rebels—explore the boundaries of belonging, the frontiers of acceptable behavior. The Bildungsroman, with its more conformist characters, the exemplars of proper behavior, hold up a complimentary notion of the cultural center, the normative. And the school story shows the instructional process and models the role of social institutions in helping individuals find their place. Evaluating these three genres as narratives of adolescence, though they are historically distinct, reveals a hidden unity.

Clearly the Bildungsroman was not the end-point in the development of adolescence narratives, but even these early prototypes offer significant explanatory power for the analysis of contemporary works. It gets more difficult, as time goes by, to extract from recent works what parts owe their heritage to the school story or the picaresque or the Bildungsroman, and which parts have been innovated since then. For there have been innovations. New genres of adolescence have emerged as thinking about adolescence, and the experience of youth, has changed. Stephen Prickett has suggested that the Victorian "faerie romance" was the direct successor to the Bildungsroman, that it embraced a contradiction between the real and the symbolic that was a crucial theme in *Wilhelm Meister*. So the genre of Fantasy, which so often features adolescent protagonists, and attracts adolescent readers, may have its roots in the Bildungsroman (Freud's theory of the unconscious may have something to do with it, too). Around the time Jean Piaget was developing theories that would lead to a "cognitive revolution" in psychology, that would describe children as little scientists who mature by forming and testing theories about the world around them, teenage detectives like the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew were growing in popularity. And it wasn't long after sociologist Robert K. Merton suggested that delinquency was an outcome of a disconnect between social norms and opportunities that sensitive portrayals of the teen rebel hit the screen (though I would argue that the teen rebel also bears the trace of the picaresque hero).

These are only a few of the possible connections one could make by looking at adolescence as a common theme in fiction and in cultural context, and that would benefit from further exploration. In the next chapters I'll address two of the recent developments in adolescence narratives that I have found to be most compelling: the highly charged debate over representations of adolescent women as exemplified in the life and work of Sofia Coppola, and the translation of adolescent genres into the interactive worlds of video games.

2   Ophelia, Spoiled Brat, Queen Bee: The Films of Sophia Coppola

Adolescent narratives of the past several decades have worked hard to repair the classical marginalization, bowdlerization, our outright omission of female becoming stories in Anglo-American culture. Whether as a result of greater grassroots demand for honest and empowering female narratives in a changing culture, or the trickle-down influence of feminist and gender studies programs in the academy which worked to canonize exemplary literature by women writers such as Maxine Hong Kingston and Toni Morrison, popular culture since the 1970s has provided a greater quantity and, more importantly, variety of female protagonists than it has in past epochs. Filmmakers have reclaimed heroines from the past, adapting and reinterpreting literary works, particularly those of Jane Austen, for the sensibilities of contemporary audiences. They have shone a light on the difficulties facing modern teenage girls, including those from previously invisible minorities. And they have imagined future worlds in which women of unprecedented physical and/or political power are accepted and celebrated by their societies. These decades have even seen the birth and flowering of the female action hero in the iconic characters of Ripley from the *Alien* films, *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995-2001), and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer.*

As representations of women, and adolescent girls, have become more physically powerful, anxiety over the psychological strength of real young women in America has seized many parents, educators, and psychologists. Mary Pipher's *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* (1994) has proven a persuasive characterization of the process of female development under the stresses of modern media culture and peer pressure. Evoking Hall's storm and stress metaphor for adolescent development, Pipher describes girls entering the pubescent period as "saplings in a hurricane." She provides case studies from her practice of girls who were once creative, energetic, and gregarious but upon entering adolescence "lose their resiliency and optimism and become less curious and inclined to take risks" (14). The processes of biological maturity and socialization significantly changes these girls, and Pipher blames American culture, particularly the unrealistic representations of women in the media. Our society, she writes, "teaches that sex, alcohol, and purchasing power lead to the good life" (291). For many teenage girls, being feminine means dressing up and dumbing down.

Almost a decade later, Rosalind Wiseman's *Queen Bees and Wannabees* broadened the analysis

of unsettling adolescent female behavior to the social sub-unit, explaining how the clique dynamic and female bullying creates widespread misery in American secondary schools. In their desire for popularity, social belonging, and independence from their parents, many otherwise kind and well-adjusted teenage girls submit to the conformity of the peer group. Like Pipher's Ophelias, they compromise their identities for a socially convenient performance of femininity. But many are also complicit in cruelly excluding those who fail to live up to the standards, and turning the leaders of the popular groups into teen tyrants. Those leaders, the "queen bees" as Wiseman names them, are almost always in total denial of the situation and refuse to take responsibility for their actions (23). This book, like Pipher's, hit a nerve with readers, and even inspired the teen comedy film *Mean Girls*.

Certainly, one does not have to look very hard to find traces in popular narratives of these two distinct but compatible models of pathological female development. Some of the bestselling Young Adult books from the last few years, such as the *Gossip Girl* series by Cecily von Ziesegar, have drawn criticism for their explicit descriptions of teenage sexuality, and the dramatic exploitation of the kind of social scheming that Wiseman describes in her study (Padgett). These books for young females seem to revel in the very conditions that upset so many adults. In celebrity culture, too, we're in a moment of heightened awareness over the extreme bodies and foolish behaviors of young women. News and images exposing the partying lifestyle of young female stars have spread beyond the bounds of the tabloids to an indignant mainstream press. Hotel heiress and socialite Paris Hilton has become a poster child for... well, that cliché seems like a good candidate for a Googlism[1]:

"Paris Hilton is the poster child for the estate tax"

"...of what we Americans have become"

"...for pure excess"

"...for Anorexia"

"...for the cult of empty celebrity"

"...for mandatory sterilization"

"...for worst daughter of the year"

---

1   A Googlism can be defined as an open ended Web search which uses an incomplete seed phrase to generate a list of results in which the phrase is completed in various ways. It was popularized as a way of finding humorous descriptions of famous people, or of the searcher, e.g. "George Bush is" or "Grigsby is." In this case, I used two seed phrases, "Paris Hilton is the poster child for" and—to find results in which the writer did not adhere to the exact wording of the cliché—"'Paris Hilton' and 'poster child for'." The results I've listed represent a selective subsample of all results. The search was performed on Google.com on April 26, 2007.

"...for rich, talentless, self-absorbed brats"

But Hilton, particularly because she was not famous for anything other than her social escapades, is propped up by the same forces that tear her down. She is the embodiment of a self-fulfilling prophecy, the spoiled brat made famous so that she can become infamous. These models of female adolescence—the spoiled brat, the queen bee, the drowned Ophelia—have been incredibly successful at proliferating, and, as I'll argue next, are intimately related to the larger discourse of feminism. Despite real social change, the war over female sexuality, education, power, and representation is as heated as ever. And in this war, the minds and bodies of adolescent girls are highly disputed territory.

Second, Third, Post

Though Pipher's and Wiseman's books come out of their individual experiences and their specific concerns as psychologists and educators, and may seem removed from the more abstract debates about feminism, they are reactions to many of the same theoretical issues and observations, the opportunities and crises, that accompanied the shift from what has been characterized as "second wave" feminism to "third wave" and/or "post-" feminism. As a relative outsider to this discourse, rather than provide a blow-by-blow account of a transition which has been so thoroughly described and debated in other sources, I want to provide a personal reflection on the way I, and I'm sure many other men of my generation, was introduced to some of these contradictions, the awkward mixture of influences that formed my cultural models about gender and sexuality: education, experience, and popular culture.

The public schools I attended in Central California during the 1980s and 90s were struggling to adopt a version of "equality feminism" that was undermined by many of the entrenched practices of these institutions and the ideologies of faculty members. In word, we were taught that boys and girls were equal, that a woman could do anything a man could do. We were persuaded of the superstitious ignorance of the past and of other cultures that still failed to demonstrate our brand of enlightenment. In act, however, once we stepped out of that magic circle of pedagogical idealism, boys and girls were treated very differently, and attempts to transgress normative constructs of masculinity and femininity were met with disapproval if not punishment. One image haunts me to this day from elementary school: a boy who wore a girl's dress to school on Halloween

sitting outside of the principle's office, weeping from the admonishment he had received from his teacher, and in anticipation of the punishment he knew was coming from the school's highest-level administrator. Of course, the reality of my full apprenticeship to social norms of gender was likely accomplished through actions much more subtle, persistent, and insidious. But that incident, in particular, upset any simple ideas about gender equality I might have had.

This was confusing enough, but in the films and television I watched at the time (and I watched a lot), women and men seemed to be dealing with something else entirely. This idea of women as essentially "equal" to men seemed itself a part of the "ignorant past," a concept contentious and needing revision. These texts took for granted that women could do the same jobs that a man could do, could be powerful bosses and business leaders, crime fighters and action heroes. But what then? The 1988 film *Working Girl*, directed by Mike Nichols, embodied many of the anxieties over female empowerment in a way that would influence my own understanding. Rebecca Traister has argued that the film, and others like it that came out at around the same time (*Baby Boom*, *Broadcast News*, and, I would add, the television show *Moonlighting*), expressed nothing more than a fear of women in the workplace. Katherine, the woman boss played by Sigourney Weaver (*Alien's* Ripley herself), was the zenith point in a trend to depict female executives as "frigid, needy, capricious, hysterical, manipulative and promiscuous," the "dragon lady" stereotype (2). Katherine gets her comeuppance in the film, evidence that a still-patriarchal culture desires to punish women who dare aspire to high levels of success and influence. And yet the person giving the comeuppance is another woman. Tess, played by Melanie Griffith, though just as wily and ambitious as her predecessor, represents a different kind of empowered female. Where Katherine is cold and spiteful, Tess is warm and generous. Where Katherine is quick to stab her female underlings in the back to ensure her continued prominence, Tess remembers her working class background and maintains connections to the secretarial pool from which she came. In their very physical proportions, the two women present a stark contrast: Weaver with her couture fashion looks— statuesque figure, high cheekbones, angles everywhere—and Griffith softer, shorter, more conventionally "pretty." *Working Girl* wants its hero to be as successful as a man without losing her core of femininity. As the lead male character remarks upon seeing Tess at a business party, "you're the first woman I've seen in one of these things that dresses like a woman, not like a woman thinks a man would dress if he was a woman."

A bit later, another representation of an empowered woman would become a touchstone in the "culture war," and for my own conflicted development. In 1992, when the television character *Murphy Brown* became pregnant, and decided to carry the baby to term, Vice President Dan Quayle criticized the show for glamorizing single motherhood, and trivializing the role of the father in raising a child. Being raised by a single mother myself, I sympathized deeply with the outcry against Quayle that followed. Who was he to say what kind of family was normal or necessary? At the same time, my teenage cynicism creeping in, I recognized the tired television ploy of announcing a pregnancy whenever a series starts to lose steam. Less obvious to me at the time, but consistent with the previous pop culture narratives of female power, was how this choice fit into the trend to make representations of successful women more traditionally feminine. The hard-nosed, uncompromising reporter Murphy Brown would finally succumb to biological destiny. Moreover, she would be another representation of the mythical super-woman, who, through the magic of television, would show how women can both raise a child alone and have a career without making sacrifices and without the help of social institutions.

What lessons about female power does a young man, looking for ways to understand his own gender and build his own cultural models about the opposite sex, take away from these examples? Just that women don't need to buy into the alpha male paradigm of success, that they can be "feminine" and still powerful? Or also that some types of feminism were "good" and others "bad"? In working though this anxiety over female power, do these works represent a kind of progress from earlier versions of feminism, or a regress to a new normative idea of femininity? Were representations like this pushing the equality feminism that I was learning in school to the next level, or reinscribing the forces that would make a teacher punish a boy for wearing girls' clothing (or, in the case of *Working Girl*, a woman for wearing men's clothing).

It was only much later, of course, that I discovered many of these questions to be at the heart of the debate over the definition of feminism itself. Something like the confusion I felt, the paradoxes and contradictions that had not been resolved in my ensuing years of experience and study (the deep skepticism I had, as a undergraduate film student, for the totalizing rhetoric of Laura Mulvey's feminist theory of film pleasure), had been embraced by a new generation of feminists. As summarized by Leslie Haywood and Jennifer Drake, feminists of this new generation, called the "third wave," do not merely reject pop culture as patriarchal, but "contest a politics of

purity that would separate political activism from cultural production. We acknowledge the tension between criticism and the pleasures of consumption, and we work the border between a critical, even cynical, questioning of things-as-they-are and a motivation to do something anyway, without the 'support' of a utopian vision" ("We Read America Like a Script," 52). For the third wave, a role model of sorts can be found in someone like the Gen X celebrity Courtney Love, "a prototype of female ambition and a sharp cultural critic of both the institutions that sustain that ambition and those that argue against it" (Introduction, 4). Love is able to be both a critic of beauty culture and, occasionally, a high fashion model. She does not resolve the contradictions inherent in her celebrity, she wears them on her sleeve.

Parallel to the development of this feminist movement calling itself the "third wave" has been the rise of a related thread of thought: "post-feminism." The delineation between these two concepts has been a point of deep confusion and debate, with little agreement amongst the interested participants. Deborah Siegel has suggested that "postfeminism" identifies the conservative backlash against the feminism of the 1960s and 70s (the second wave) by critics such as Naomi Wolf, Katie Roiphe, and Rene Denfield. These writers represent a conscious rejection of the values of the previous generation, with Wolf characterizing as "victim feminism" the rhetoric utilized by second wavers like Gloria Steinem. Elsewhere, postfeminism has been used as a more general label to describe the backlash feminists like Wolf *and* the third wave feminists. Chris Holmlund has described three major strains of thought within this umbrella version of postfeminism: the "chick" postfeminism of the backlash, the "grrrl" postfeminism of the third wave that bridges pop culture and politics, and looks to expand the diversity of feminist voices, and "academic" postfeminism that speaks in more abstract terms and takes its "post" from the tradition of "postmodernism" (116).

Whatever the terminology, one fairly important and concrete point of comparison between contemporary (post)feminist thinkers has been how each one defines him or herself in relation to the previous generation. Do we acknowledge the contributions of the second wave and see an unbroken link between the efforts of the past and the present, or do we see the new ways of thinking as making a clean break with the past, a revolutionary rather than an evolutionary step? Often, the articulation of the contradictions within contemporary feminism comes with a demonization of the representatives, and representations, of the past movement. In the pop culture

of the late 80s and early 90s, as many have noted, it was the female boss character that stood in for those feminist matriarchs, that embodied critiques from the right and the left of the teachings of the second wave.

As the third wave has consolidated its space within the discourse, many have called for an end to the intergenerational conflict. Traister describes how this uneasy truce has partially found its way into the "boss from hell" genre, in the film version of *The Devil Wears Prada*, which offered a finally sympathetic portrait of its power feminist. The nuanced script, and Meryl Streep's expert performance, created a character who "is more than a bloodless billboard on which to project all our anxieties about femininity and professional power." But the same essay reveals an unfortunate flip-side to the defense of the older generation. In saving the soul of the "devil" boss, Traister damns the novel's young author and protagonist. The experiences that inspired Lauren Weisberger to write the book, Traister claims, were "clouded by entitlement, inexperience and resentment at being spoken to with anything other than the reverence she apparently got at Brown." The character Andy she describes as "bland, a whiner just as grating as her supervisor, but without the experience or success to back it up." It's the "spoiled brat" response couched in more elegant prose. Weisberger is held up as a representative of all that is wrong with the generation of women currently coming of age. We've shifted our fears and anxieties over female power from the older generation onto to the younger. Instead of the man-hating, power-hungry, emotionally distant old woman, the new "straw-feminist" may be the pampered, fussy, and historically ignorant young woman.

My intention is not to play "gotcha," to expose hypocrisy in Traister's analysis, but to indicate how difficult it is to navigate this issue. Feminism may be inclusive enough to encompass varied and dissenting opinions, but still needs a core set of values to be meaningful. In a world where everything can be spun as "female empowerment," nothing really is. But what is core and what is not, and who gets to say? Can young and inexperienced women rebel against feminist pioneers and not be considered "spoiled brats?" Are sexualized images of women and traditional norms of femininity inherently dangerous or do they hold the potential for a type of liberation? The lives of adolescent girls play heavily into debates over these questions, and parental concern drives up the stakes for providing concrete answers. Consequently, representations of female youth are a lightning rod for controversy. And since 1999's *The Virgin Suicides*, Sofia Coppola has been the most

visible auteur of female adolescence.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman

Of course, before Sofia Coppola was a filmmaker exploring the theme of female adolescence, she was an adolescent herself. Being the daughter of one of the most celebrated American filmmakers of the century, Francis Ford Coppola, put her in the public eye on more than one occasion. Still an infant, she made her film debut in the famous baptism scene that concludes *The Godfather.* In *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse,* the documentary chronicling the near-tragic drama behind the scenes of *Apocalypse Now,* there is footage of a young Sofia playing on set. In some interviews she describes her childhood, filled with travels with her father and exposure to the atmosphere and community of Hollywood, as unconventional; "I don't think it was normal, but it was exciting" (Libby). Francis and her mother, Eleanor, she claims, "were always encouraging of us being creative however we wanted to be" (Krueger). Some indication of exactly what that means can be surmised from an audio recording of Sofia, aged 5, being interviewed by her father. The clip surfaced on NPR's *All Things Considered* following her nomination for a Best Director Oscar for the film *Lost in Translation.* Francis begins the recording with the introduction, "Now, we're making another tape," indicating that this was not the first time he collaborated with his daughter on creative audio. He asks Sofia to describe and send a message to the grown-up version of herself. Sofia largely ignores her father's prompt at first, describing herself and all her relatives as little fishes. Finally, though, she expresses her desire to "be middle sized, not fat and not skinny. And I wanna be a teacher, or maybe a nurse." At the end of the recording, she tells how her father gave her an "Oscar necklace." Francis reads the inscription on the "necklace," which seems to be the statue itself, his award for the screenplay of *The Godfather.* One senses the none-too-subtle parental influence towards a career in cinema, and Sofia confirms "it's hard to be around my dad and not be curious about filmmaking, because he thinks it's the ultimate medium" (Krueger).

Despite the abnormality of her childhood, her father's iconoclasm ensured that she would also not have the typical adolescence of Hollywood royalty. His love for Northern California—San Francisco and the wine country—kept the family at a distance from Hollywood. Of her teen years, Sofia describes: "I went to high school in a small town in the Napa Valley. It was pretty normal." The creative collaborations with her father did not stop, however. At age 16 she co-wrote the script

for the short film, "Life Without Zoe." Unlike their previous work together, this film was not kept private, but was directed by Francis for his contribution to the 1989 anthology *New York Stories,* which opened that year's Cannes Film Festival. Of the three films that made up the anthology, Coppola's was the most poorly reviewed. The meandering story of a pampered and precocious 12 year-old who lives in a Manhattan hotel, the film, in retrospect, fits surprisingly well into Sofia's oeuvre, but prompted one critic to suggest that it "ought to have remained in the family's home video album" (Malcolm). A less polite review called it "a monument to the imaginative poverty of the rich and famous" (Mars Jones).

"Life Without Zoe" from *New York Stories (*1989): Zoe is awakened by her servant, her toy dog by her side, recalling the later opening of *Marie Antoinette* (2006)

So began a critical antagonism towards Sofia that would come to a head the next year, when she acted a prominent role in her father's trilogy-capping *The Godfather Part III.* Winona Ryder had originally signed on for the part, but had to drop out due to illness. Francis frantically filled the vacant role with his daughter, who at the time was studying photography at Mills College in Oakland. Though a minority of critics praised Sofia's freshman acting effort—Mick LaSalle of the San Francisco Chronicle claimed that her "quality of willfulness and naivete and her very Italian-looking pretty face make it hard to imagine anyone else in this role"—most were brutal, and relished the part. Hal Hinson called her acting "hopelessly amateurish." Time Magazine reported that Sofia's "gosling gracelessness comes close to wrecking the movie" (Corliss and Schickel). Among

the most repeated objections to her performance was that she had failed to mask her "Valley Girl" accent, an odd statement given that she had never lived in Southern California.

In these early forays into the public spotlight, Sofia's family connections and privileged upbringing provided convenient justification for critical attacks that quite often veered into the personal. Few would excuse her failures as the result of simple inexperience. Rather, her critics used the films to show the dangers of sycophancy and the tragedy of a sheltered childhood. Critics of "Life Without Zoe" saw oblivious literalness in Coppola's exaggerated fairy-tale of New York. In her subdued Mary Corleone, they saw a clueless California Valley Girl. Which is not to say these works did not deserve or invite the criticism. In fact, "Life Without Zoe," and the later films that would redeem Sofia Coppola in the eyes of many critics, did little to challenge one's expectations for a film by a white, economically advantaged daughter of a famous director (hereafter abbreviated DoaFD). If it was intended as a satire on the life of a silly rich girl, rather than the earnest and unselfconscious expression of a silly rich girl, it did not overtly announce itself as such.

Following the disastrous reception of her acting debut, Sofia went under the Hollywood radar, and only appeared again as an actor in shorts, music videos, and independent films by friends. She dropped out of Mills, enrolled in the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), and eventually dropped out there, too. In 1994, with childhood friend Stephanie Hayman, she started a line of clothing available mostly in Japan called Milk Fed. It's worth a brief reflection on the title of that business. The phrase references milk-fed veal, the flesh of a young calf confined and fattened for expensive tastes. Boutiques that sell the Milk Fed label in Tokyo and Los Angeles, called Heaven-27, display the clothes along with items that express Sofia's "fun philosophy of dressing and living," including copies of Nabokov's *Lolita* (Maciel). With her choices as a fashionista, Coppola again provides fuel for critics, seemingly embracing negative stereotypes of affluent young women as kept, overindulged, and exploited.

During this period, Sofia collaborated with friend and fellow DoaFD Zoe Cassavetes on a pop culture magazine show for Comedy Central called *Hi-Octane,* canceled in 1995 after only four episodes. Coppola married Spike Jonze in 1999, the same year each debuted their first feature-length films: Coppola's *The Virgin Suicides* and Jonze's *Being John Malkovich*. But previous to her feature debut, Coppola co-wrote and directed the short film *Lick the Star,* and it played at several festivals and on the Independent Film Channel. Again, despite her seemingly unfocused and

capricious experimentation in sundry creative endeavors, *Lick the Star* fits exceedingly well alongside her later films, starting with an opening shot that has become a signature for the director: a girl staring dreamily out the window of a moving vehicle. In less than 15 minutes, the film tells the story of a clique of junior high school girls led by Chloe, "the queen of the seventh grade." Chloe's plan to slowly poison some annoying boys in their class, inspired by their reading of *Flowers in the Attic*, is thwarted when the gossip mill transforms an insensitive comment she made into a racial slur, and the entire school turns against her. She unsuccessfully attempts suicide, further estranging her from her peers. Now completely ostracized, the victim of the kind of bullying she so recently perpetrated, Chloe pens a poem to herself—"everything changes/nothing changes/the tables turn/and life goes on"—and files it in a copy of *Edie: An American Biography*.

Lick the Star (1998): One of what would become Sofia Coppola's signature shots.

The character who narrates the film is not Chloe, but one of her clique. She returns to school on crutches after an accident, psychologically on edge because she knows how fast the politics of junior high can spin out of control: "missing school is like a death wish." This simple conceit allows the character to serve as the viewer's stand-in, to observe and question the machinations of the plan already in motion, and ultimately to watch Chloe's downfall with some detachment. The school principal even anoints her a "non-student" as punishment for skipping class, reifying her status as a quasi-outsider. Though this character frames the narrative, Chloe is

clearly the star of the film, both during her charismatic early phase and after her comeuppance. She appears superimposed against the sky in a dreamy fantasy, a technique Coppola would later use in *The Virgin Suicides* to illustrate the ethereal seductiveness of Kirsten Dunst's Lux Lisbon. Chloe is not an innocent, but her punishment is also not just. She is undone by a lie that her classmates are all too eager to believe, shades of *Marie Antoinette* and "let them eat cake." The film, like her others, begs to be read as autobiography. Given Coppola's semi-celebrity, was she the "queen bee" of her school, the perceptive outsider, or both? Is *Lick the Star* a critique of the "mean girl" phenomenon, or apologetics for it? She explains the genesis of the film in an interview: "I just remember seventh grade as being really difficult, because there's nothing meaner than a girl at that age. You gang up on people, and it's traumatic" (Tobias). That inclusive "you" suggests she was not innocent of the kind of bad behavior Wiseman would rally against a few years later, but also acknowledges its negative effects. Charlotte of *Lost in Translation*, a later character of Coppola's, would confess to her adult confidant in the film, "but I'm so mean," to which he responds, "mean's OK." Coppola does not provide a simple condemnation of the kind of young women who fill the watchdogs of contemporary girlhood with such apprehension.

Lick the Star (1998): Chloe, the "queen of the seventh grade."

In these early examples of her work, especially *Lick the Star*, Coppola had already established

many of the themes that would sustain her female coming-of-age trilogy. In her play with perspective, including frequent problematic shifts from participant to observer, the films partially collapse the distinction between subject and object, between surface and essence. Coppola is at least as concerned with how her characters see and are seen than with who they "really are." Second, her films are an archeology of notions of femininity and an attempt to preserve and defend female pleasures. Finally, Coppola's films, even the adaptations of previous works, are autobiographical on both a textual and meta-textual level. The films refer to Sofia's personal history, in the traditional sense of autobiography, but they also refer to themselves as problematic texts that will enter into a discourse about her life and inevitably be misinterpreted. For example, *Lick the Star* may or may not have been inspired by events that she experienced in high school, but it can also be read as the story of her own future film career, a story of popularity, gossip, misinterpretation, and the inevitable backlash. As I hope to show with a closer analysis of the trilogy, each of these thematic concerns has ramifications for the debates over female adolescence and feminism. And like many of the cultural products from an era of third wave feminism, Coppola's films are perhaps best understood by the tensions they embody, their contradictions, rather than the concrete answers they provide.

Missing School is Like a Death Wish: *The Virgin Suicides*

According to interviews, Sofia Coppola adapted Jeffrey Eugenides's 1993 novel, *The Virgin Suicides,* as an innocent exercise. A favorite novel of hers, when she heard it was being made into a film she "got protective of it" and started to imagine her own version. She took the leap of writing down her thoughts into screenplay form with the excuse that, "if nothing else, I'll learn how to adapt a book into a screenplay" (Anderson). Ultimately, her version of the screenplay made it in front of the producers and won out, and she was pegged to direct as well.

The film follows the plot of the novel closely, and preserves one of its most characteristic features: the first person plural voice of the narrator. The voice represents the collective remembrance, a kind of Greek chorus, of a group of men who attempt to reconstruct a period of their adolescence in which five neighborhood girls, the Lisbon sisters, committed suicide. Starting with the first suicide of 13 year-old Cecilia, the film shows attempts by the boys to break through to the hermetic world of the remaining girls, and the events leading up to their inevitable deaths. The film is a reminiscence of the past and a period piece, set in a Michigan suburb during the waning

years of Detroit's automobile industry. Unlike many recent works that evoked the fashions and fads of the 1970s for mostly comedic effect, such as television's *That 70s Show*, Coppola treads a careful line between mockery and fond remembrance, saving most of her comic barbs for the era's exaggerated signifiers of male masculinity—the aviator sunglasses worn by a swaggering foreign exchange student, the feathered hair and red muscle car of high school heartthrob Trip Fontaine.

For the Lisbon sisters, however, Coppola mostly maintains the novel's bemused but worshipful portrait. They are figures of male desire and objects of voyeurism, both literal *Rear Window*-style voyeurism and a more active version that has the teen boys reconstructing the girls' lives through the close examination of scavenged ephemera. When the boys finally do come face-to-face with the girls in school and at the prom, they speak past each other. The girls have their own coded language and express contempt for the boys' clumsy tries at communication. As the narrator explains, "we knew that they knew everything about us, and that we couldn't fathom them at all." Near the end of the film, the boys seem to break through the communication barrier, but not by speaking. They call the girls on the phone and play music that expresses the truth of their feelings, and the girls finally reciprocate with their own selections in a pop-culture mediated "conversation." But, it turns out, this connection comes too late to allow the boys to do anything more than discover the bodies on the night that the four remaining sisters all kill themselves. They die an eternal mystery, paragons of "feminine mystique" or symbols of the change that turns adolescent girls into invisible "Ophelias."

However, the affordances of a visual medium potentially changes the dynamics of the viewer's relationship to the girls. Because they are embodied by flesh and blood actors rather than described in text, the girls inevitably have a concreteness and reality that they lack in the novel. Coppola allows the viewer glimpses, however brief, of the girls' lives unfiltered by the boys' imaginations. When Trip Fontaine leaves Lux Lisbon asleep on the football field after seducing her, we see her wake up alone and find her way back home by taxi. The sequence is sensitive and heartbreaking, and Coppola marks it with her signature shot, but it is as frustratingly ambiguous as ever: Lux stares silently out the cab window, the reflection in the glass creating a misty haze over her inscrutable face. This is as restrained an insight into the reality of the girls' lives as one might imagine. Coppola does not herself attempt to "save" the girls by bringing them fully down to Earth. She provides hints of psychological depth, but resists explaining them.

Her choice of actors reinforces this ambiguous approach. Since her breakout role in *Interview with a Vampire*, where she played a mature vampire eternally trapped in the body of a young girl, Kirsten Dunst has cultivated a persona of hidden depths, of psychology obscured by beauty. In *The Virgin Suicides* she makes use of her quality of etherealness and unattainability as 14 year-old Lux Lisbon. But this supernatural affect—as Melissa Anderson put it, "she shows but never tells. She is a heavenly creature, a celestial sight"—is only half of the picture. Dunst is adept at allowing cracks in the facade to show through. Following Cecilia's death, the school launches a suicide awareness campaign, alerting students to the markers of teen depression. Coppola zooms in on a class picture of the Lisbon sisters, ending on an extreme close-up of Lux. The narrator asks us to look for warning signs: "Were the Lisbon girls' pupils dilated? Had they lost interest in school activities? In sports and hobbies? Had they withdrawn from their peers?" Dunst's indeterminate expression is the Kuleshov effect par excellence, revealing everything and nothing at once.

The Virgin Suicides (1999)

Coppola's interpretation of Eugenides's book is not the overtly feminist appropriation one might desire from a female director, is not the destruction of visual pleasure preferred by Mulvey. Though she suggests depth beneath the surface of beauty in the Lisbon sisters, she mostly lingers on the beauty. As one negative review of the film put it, "Coppola does know how to shoot, especially in the case of Lux, the fragments of desire that drive boys wild" (Chang). She participates in the objectification of the girls, the fetishization of the feminine minutia that fill their rooms. Coppola's view on the story is through a hall of mirrors: an adult woman describing female adolescence through the eyes of teenage boys and the words of the men they became (themselves

written by an adult male novelist). And it's unclear whether these filters obscure some truthful essence, whether the objects that remain after the deaths of the girls, "the most trivial list of mundane facts," aren't all that there is to them. The unreliable narrator finally rejects the wisdom of the Lisbon sisters. The girls may see through male infatuation and adult misunderstanding, but they fail to see beyond their own confined worlds. Their suicides represent "the outrageousness of a human being thinking only of herself."

Maintaining the boys' perspective on the events of the plot may have allowed Coppola at least one productive cross-pollination. Her film provides a rare example of a female-centered narrative with traces of nostalgia for female adolescence. While narratives of male becoming are almost always steeped in the longing for a time of youthful vitality, female adolescence is most often portrayed as a period of trauma, something to be endured not enjoyed. Indeed, for the Lisbon sisters, their adolescence ends in tragedy. But Coppola's camera, lingering as it does over the girlish materials of their existence and the sun-bleached suburban streets, participates in that nostalgia without becoming an unreflective "clean teen" charade of American life. It acknowledges the possibility for pleasure in female adolescence, which makes the tragic end even more unsettling.

Still, *The Virgin Suicides*, like the novel that inspired it, looks mostly at the play of surfaces, refusing to participate in the process of assigning blame or explanation. It thinks only of itself. This interpretive resistance pushed many critics to try to interpret the artist instead. Was the film's ambiguity a deliberate choice, or an empty accident? Is Sofia Coppola an understated genius, or just a dolt? How one answered these question was a reliable predictor of whether or not they enjoyed the film (or vice/versa). And Coppola's next film would resoundingly fail to provide resolution to the debate.

Life Goes On: *Lost in Translation*

The opening shot of *Lost in Translation*, the title words of the film fading in one by one over the view of a young woman's bottom clad in translucent pink panties, has been endlessly debated among critics attempting to discern Coppola's attitude towards female objectification. Armond White, perhaps the harshest critic of Coppola's short directing career, expresses cynicism about her intentions. "*Stuff* magazine couldn't have asked for more... It's hard to think of other filmmakers who tried this hard to make a virtue of privileged-girl petulance or other films by women that so

evidently bought into patriarchy and the male point of view." Like *The Virgin Suicides*, it turns out that the shot does literally adapt the male point of view, at least one male's point of view; it is a reference to the paintings of John Kacera, the photo-realist whose favored subject was womens' butts in see-through panties. In an interview, Coppola cites her inspiration, and claims that she wanted the shot to "just be a glimpse of femininity" (Fresh Air). The casualness with which she associates femininity with male objectification is hardly a defense against White's attack. Another critic asked, "perhaps we have arrived at a postfeminist stage of enlightenment where a film can begin on a woman's ass and not be a big deal, but is a piece of ass ever really just that, especially in the movies?" (San Filippo)
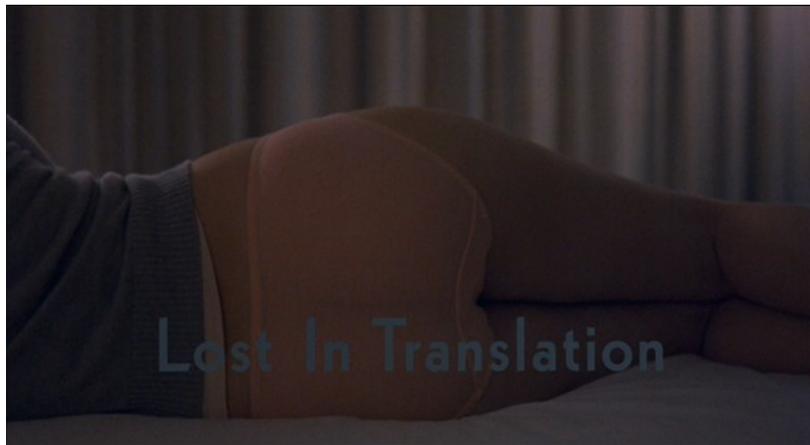
Lost in Translation (2003)

From this opening shot onward, Coppola's hall of mirrors approach is again in full effect. The story follows the relationship between two Americans who meet while traveling in Tokyo, a rudderless young woman, Charlotte, whose husband is there on a photography job, and a middle aged actor, Bob, who has come to endorse a Japanese whiskey for a huge payday. Charlotte's young adult crisis meets Bob's mid-life crisis and, combined with their mutual insomnia and feelings of dislocation, the two hit it off. When we first see Bob he is, naturally, gazing out the window of a moving car. He looks half-asleep but is goggling at the bright lights of Tokyo. Among the neon signs is a huge billboard advertisement featuring a glamor shot of himself. He literally rubs his eyes in disbelief. He is seeing his own image fed back to him as it has been processed through another culture's system of meanings and values. He is seeing himself through the collective eyes of the Japanese and, in a sense, he and Charlotte see themselves through each others' problems.

Much has been written about the film's insensitive and stereotypical depiction of Japanese

culture, and whether or not it is justified within the context of the film. I won't belabor the point except to add that those stereotypes mostly function at the expense of Bob, to make him seem like a gawky teenager. As if he has just undergone a growth spurt, or like Alice after eating one of Wonderland's magic pastries, he towers over Japanese businessmen and stumbles in a shower made for a smaller man. When a prostitute is sent to his room he acts like a sexual novice, unsure of what to do and confused by her directions. Almost everywhere he goes the language barrier makes him unsure of what people want from him and how he should act. The director of his commercial speaks lengthy instructions to him, but the translation only comes out as a few words. At a photo shoot where the director does speak English, Bob is directed to perform an exaggerated stereotype of American male masculinity, like an adolescent boy acting manly for the benefit of anxious parents. This contrasts with Charlotte's experiences of foreignness, which never play on the linguistic disconnect. When Charlotte is exploring alone, Coppola makes Japan a series of quiet portraits of a highly gendered adultness: the stoic spirituality of the Buddhist monks, the businessmen casually reading pornographic comics on the subway, the serene industry of women making flower arrangements, the confrontational sexuality of the strip club. She finds none of these visions of adulthood satisfying, which perhaps explains why she spends so much time in her hotel room.

This last point provides another area of contention for any feminist interpretation of the film. Given a situation that would make any hero of the classical male Bildungsroman jealous—being young, rich, and beautiful in a big foreign city to explore—Charlotte chooses the path of the Jane Austen heroine: to mope around the house and worry about her marriage. But unlike Elizabeth Bennet, or the suburban American housewife before the feminist revolutions of the 60s, Charlotte's confinement is self-imposed. In fact, Coppola's film provides a subtle parody of the tenets of the Bildungsroman, especially the ideals of education and enlightenment. Charlotte's pedigree signifies "Western education" like no other: she has a philosophy degree from Yale. And yet she does not have the answers to her most basic questions, she does not know how to make herself happy. As for the concept of enlightenment or transcendence, it is reduced to a joke, a cheesy self-help audio cassette (not even a proper book) that she is embarrassed to admit she owns until Bob quips, "I've got that." Overall, the film speaks the lie to the certainty of adulthood. Charlotte asks Bob if life ever gets easier, and he responds intuitively, "no." But after a suggestive pause, "yes, it gets easier."

Lost in Translation represents the first time that Coppola has made her passive observer character the star, and with her quiet demeanor and quirky, harried photographer husband, it's a thinly veiled self-portrait (Coppola and Jonze divorced the year of the film's release). Again, Coppola's artistic choices invite a comparison with her life and, for those so inclined, a judgement. What value does the story of an affluent white woman who confines herself to her high-rise hotel room have for others? Is she, Charlotte and/or Sofia, just a navel-gazing elite? With *Lost in Translation*, Coppola became the first American woman to be nominated for an Academy Award for Best Director. Some would interpret this as a victory for feminism, a milestone for an institution where the woman director is still the exception to the rule. But another interpretation sees that institution rewarding a certain kind of women's film, and a certain kind of woman director. Not the brave critique of patriarchy, or the expose of social injustice. Not the voice from the margins, or the angry riot grrl. Just Hollywood royalty making a movie about how hard it is to be her.

Everything Changes, Nothing Changes: *Marie Antoinette*

Coppola made her most bold and controversial choice as a director when she chose Marie Antoinette as the hero of the last film in her coming-of-age trilogy. This historical figure has long been a symbol for the oblivious vanity of the aristocracy and the empty-headedness of young and affluent women. Critics looking for evidence that Coppola's concept of female adolescence is hopelessly out of touch couldn't have asked for better proof. Even *A Little Princess*, in which the young protagonist looks to the doomed queen as a role model, specifically appropriated only the bravely suffering adult version, the woman "already deposed, already 'the Widow Capet,' beautiful, noble, and unjustly oppressed" (Gruner, 166). Coppola ends her film there, more concerned with the queen as teen, with her life of of partying, consumerism, experiments in fashion, and sexual dalliance.

Coppola's much-discussed use of anachronism, though less pronounced than many sources indicate, signals the film's hybrid identity as history and as commentary on the present time. It also represents a wry transformation of the criticism she received as an actor. Kirsten Dunst certainly fails to mask her "Valley Girl" accent in playing the Austrian-born queen of France, but this time it is clearly an intentional choice. Is Coppola indicating that it was all along? The anachronism also has precedent if viewed as one technique in the service of decentering the viewer's perspective on

the film; again, the hall of mirrors approach (in a setting containing a literal hall of mirrors, Versailles). Coppola collapses at least three distinct historical time periods into one: the final years of the French monarchy in the 18th Century, the period of her own adolescence from which she pulls the Post-Punk and New Wave songs on the soundtrack, and the current period in which Hollywood starlets and hotel heiresses are held up as the enemies to all that is right and good. Sometimes, the film is Coppola looking at Generation Y through the metaphor of the French court; Marie Antoinette as Paris Hilton, complete with accessory dog. Sometimes Marie Antoinette is Coppola, as when, moved by the opera, she decides to produce and star in an amateur production herself.

Marie Antoinette (2006): Opening night of Marie's play.

Still other times, especially in the scenes with Madame du Barry—portrayed by DoaFD and iconic Gen X-er Asia Argento—the film is Coppola looking at Generation X through the eyes of Generation Y. Du Barry, the elder king's dark and dramatic mistress, is hated by the gossips of the court for her low birth, her vulgarity, and because, as one gossip whispers indignantly, "she's political." It's a portrait that, I would argue, recalls the riot grrl movement of feminist punk rockers. It is a sympathetic portrait, the rare example in the film of an outsider to the aristocracy who tries to penetrate its sealed world, but who is cast out by the King on his death bed. But Coppola does reserves some criticism for her. Spurned by the Dauphine, when Marie Antoinette finally acknowledges Du Barry she beams with pride, so transparent in her desperation to be acknowledged by those who now lord over the scarce resource of youth. For all of her political aspirations and righteous pride, she just wants to be one of the cool girls.

With *Marie Antoinette*, Coppola comes back full circle to *Lick the Star*. Her Versailles—a

cloistered world in a line with the Tokyo hotel of *Lost in Translation* and the suburban home of *The Virgin Suicides*—is the royal palace as high school. She fills it with cliques, gossipy girls, a mind-numbing routine of meals and liturgies, and the constant surveillance of disapproving adults. And Marie Antionette is Versailles's Queen Bee, paradoxically the seat of power, able to bestow favor with a word, but the prisoner of her own coterie. Her continued power is contingent on fulfilling the expectations of the adults and the only real duty of a queen: to produce offspring. As such her appearance and her fitness as a sexual partner is constantly being evaluated. The first question the elder King Louis XV asks about the woman who will marry his son is, "how's her bosom?" Marie's adherence to norms of femininity is a matter of national security.

In a different era, if she were to be any kind of role model for modern women, Marie Antoinette may have been depicted showing resistance to this compartmentalization of her sexuality, her failure to produce an heir a symbol of triumph (think of Francis Ford Coppola's own *The Godfather II*, with the startling realization at the end of the film that Kay has aborted Michael Corleone's male child). Yet here, Marie Antoinette is earnestly complicit in her domestication. Improbably spurned by her awkward husband (portrayed by Jason Schwartzman as the 18th century equivalent of a video game geek, obsessed with locks and Bagatelle, a precursor to pinball), she takes various comic, and unsuccessful, steps to seduce him. When her sister-in-law gives birth before Marie has yet become pregnant, she collapses in tears. As she reports to her mother, "letting everyone down would be my greatest unhappiness."

In making the story of Marie Antoinette relevant to a modern audience Coppola, adapting the biography by Antonia Fraser, helps humanize the historical figure. She rescues her from centuries of bad PR, peeling away layers of embellishment and misrepresentation until we see her as a young girl who was unfairly burdened with the expectations of a entire nation, and made a scapegoat for all of its problems. As with mean girl Chloe from *Lick the Star,* Coppola refuses to find a simple villain in an unfortunate situation for which the broader society shares the blame. This, I would argue, is itself a feminist goal. But her strategy for accomplishing it is a double-edged sword. In adopting Marie's perspective, and moreover collapsing that perspective into our own, the viewer must meet the historical figure half way, must learn how to value the world like the French aristocracy. But this task is very much at odds with contemporary ways of valuing, especially when it comes to the role of women. In order to be moved by the story of Marie Antoinette, one has to

empathize with a woman who defines her happiness by how well she satisfies her husband and in her ability to produce children. And the necessity of such an identification is, for many strains of feminism, still a matter of dispute.

Sofia Coppola, Feminism, and Adolescence

In resisting the temptation to close down avenues of interpretation, to maintain ambiguity in the face of increasing doubt over her artistic intention and agency, Sofia Coppola proves a generous filmmaker. Her films, and her understated persona, clearly demonstrate that the way we interpret, far from being an empirical process, is a biased and highly gendered one. When confronted with the ambiguity of her works, many critics have fallen back on prevailing cultural models of female youth. They assume Coppola is a spoiled little rich girl with no understanding of the historical processes, including the feminist historical processes, that have created her.

Some critics doubt the inherent cultural value of ambiguity, especially where feminism is concerned. Armond White rallies consistently against the indifferent hipsterism of many young American filmmakers. And certainly, Coppola's films revel in irony and eccentricity, placing her firmly within the company of such filmmakers as Wes Anderson, Paul Thomas Anderson, David O. Russell, and her ex-husband Spike Jonze. Such irony can obscure real honesty and self-criticism, vitally important components of semi-autobiographical works like Coppola's. So where are her moments of honesty in these films, the hints that we're not just seeing a dispassionate exercise in "cool" cinema? They're actually much easier to find in Coppola's films than in those of her male peers, though they are usually moments that voicelessly express a feeling or mood. What comes through most strongly from the films are the revelries—the royal party that goes on until daybreak, the karaoke session where singers reveal true aspects of themselves through the music of others, the subjective majesty of the high school prom—and the contrasting moments of isolation and self doubt—meditations on the Tokyo skyline, the wistful stares out a carriage window. With a look back at female adolescence that allows itself to be nostalgic, she makes the radical suggestion that young women should begin to enjoy the fruit of the labors of previous generations of feminists. Of course, even these are open to (mis)interpretation: pleasure as hedonism, self-examination as narcissism.

The question remains, though, can Sofia Coppola really speak for young women? Is she a

role model of third wave feminism, or is she too affluent, educated, and elite? Certainly she cannot be expected to speak for every woman, but who can? One characteristic of the third wave has been its emphasis on inclusionism, in opening up the discourse to encompass more voices, and in showing that there is not a monolithic "feminism," but rather "feminisms." An instructive scene here is the famous wordless climax of *Lost in Translation*. Having parted without a proper goodbye, Bob sees Charlotte out the window on his ride to the airport (the wistful staring pays off!). He runs to her, and they embrace. He whispers something in her ear that Coppola does not privilege the audience to hear. She resists the universalizing temptation of the Bildungsroman, the suggestion that the answers to Charlotte's problems are the answers to everyone's. She knows that pat answers are never satisfying.

Coppola's films do not try to "solve" the contradictions in contemporary feminism, and offer few concrete answers to what we should do about the problems facing young girls. Thankfully, she does not attempt to speak for cultures of women to which she does not belong, does not assume that her experience as a DoaFD makes her an authority on female adolescence. And yet her films have resonated with many young women and men who do not necessarily share her lifestyle. Perhaps it is their calculated imperfection, and Coppola's complicity in the very criticisms leveled against her, that makes them so powerful. They are self-critical but not apologetic, pleasurable but not frivolous. They reject victomhood without erasing suffering and assert a version of femininity without attacking other perspectives.

In an era where young women are becoming the new targets of anxiety over female power, with so much hyperbole and warning over their corruptibility, humanizing the queen bees, Ophelias, and spoiled brats of the world may be a fairly vital way to do feminism. And for this Coppola may have the perfect set of qualifications.

3   Video Games and Adolescence

The adventure game incorporates facts about your life—your familial relations, your phobias, your special talents—and adapts itself to you. It transforms these facts into the details of a symbolic fantasy world, and creates evocative and disturbing mini-games that you can play again and again until you've worked through the psychological barriers that keep you from finding success. In this virtual world, play is therapy. Leveling up is self-cultivation, *bildung*. The skills that you have to master in order to find your place in the world you can practice, free of immediate real-world consequences, until you get them right. But the physics of the world constantly change, and the solutions to the challenges may each require a different kind of approach, or even an action more metaphorical than practical. Sound like a fascinating interactive experience? A blueprint for the next big thing in video games?

In fact, this is not a description of a real video game at all, but a thought experiment designed to show how narratives of adolescence might migrate to interactive media, how the pedagogical principles that are usually trapped within stories for adolescents about other adolescents are potentially released by a medium in which the reader is also the main character (or co-author). It is also the description of a game within a story: Orson Scott Card's novel *Ender's Game*, published in 1985. Though the gaming hardware at the time of the novel's publication was crude by today's standards, Card imagined innovative possibilities for the new medium that have yet to be realized, even while next-gen home consoles have made convincing and immersive 3D worlds more commonplace. Perhaps even more frustrating than the industry's failure to live up to the promise of the novel has been the overall dearth of interesting adolescent characters in games. With such a robust history of adolescence narratives, and much within those narratives that has been profoundly game-like (microcosmic settings, protagonists who master skills and rule systems, authorities that must be challenged), why have game narratives largely left out teenage characters? Where are the medium's Holden Caulfields, Ferris Buellers, and Buffy Summerses?

One may question: if the player is the main character, aren't all games played by adolescents then games with adolescent characters? What does it matter if the player's embodied representation in the virtual world, her avatar, looks anything like her? Certainly, even in literature, stories written for adolescents need not necessarily feature adolescent characters. For these, adolescence is more

than an attribute of the characters, it is a mode of address. "Adolescence" may be manifested in a work's thematic concerns, its style and tone, or restrictions on vocabulary (its "reading level"). I have argued earlier, however, that representations of adolescence, in works for teenagers as well as adults, do important work. And video games have unique characteristics that make these representations potentially more powerful. To explain why, I will examine how some writers have imagined the video game as an ideal platform for exploring the adolescent, and compare these imaginings with some recent attempts to apply the principles of adolescence narratives to commercial games. In effect, I will analyze science fiction as game design, following Mark Pesce's observation that sci-fi has influenced the work of real engineers, functioning "as a 'high level architecture' (HLA), an evolving design document for a generation of software designers brought up in hacker culture."

Card's "Mind Fantasy Game"

When Orson Scott Card wrote the short story *Ender's Game* for publication in the August 1977 issue of *Analog*, the "game" in the title referred unambiguously to the simulated space battle at the climax of the story, the simulation that turns out to have been real all along, such that a child genius named Ender, trained in military strategy and drilled in zero-G warfare, could exterminate an entire race of aliens without even knowing it. The date of publication puts it concurrent with Cinematronics' release of the arcade game *Space Wars*, a year before the release of the phenomenon *Space Invaders*, but well into an early history of video games rife with examples of space shoot-em-ups. Card's original story seemed to take this growing phenomenon, the images of children glued to glowing video screens, blowing up waves and waves of alien spaceships, and ask: what if the kids playing these games were being trained to kill for real? Was the video game generation, empowered by technology like none before it, being dehumanized by the same technology?

Card's story helped crystallize anxiety over the new medium in much the same way that episodes of *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits* had, for television, "frequently targeted the medium's paradoxes of visual presence, playing on the indeterminacy of the animate and inanimate, the real and the unreal, the 'there' and the 'not there' to produce a new folklore of electronic media that continues to thrive in contemporary accounts of cyberspace and virtual reality." (Sconce 127). And as those series had often posited the suburban housewife as the "victim" of such

indeterminacy, due to the domestic deployment of the television, so too *Ender's Game* followed the trend of constructing children as the perpetual victims of the video game and the ontological slippage between computer simulations and reality. Even today, despite inconclusive or outright suspect evidence (Bensley and Van Eenwyk, Griffiths), the fear that video game violence trains children to perpetrate real violence persists in calls for anti-gaming legislature (Goodale and Wood).

When Card significantly expanded his short story into a novel published in 1985, the climactic battle simulation may have seemed merely quaint to readers that had busted their wrists on *Space Invaders* years previous, had experienced the visual majesty of Disney's computer-animated *Tron,* and were anticipating the United States release of the advanced Nintendo Entertainment System. Video games were becoming more complicated, and Card himself had penned a criticism for *Compute!* magazine of the types of games that still required only rote pattern recognition and button mashing: "Why should all those wonderful graphics, all those fantastic imaginary worlds, be devoted to either frustrating my son or programming him until he learns how to do his part perfectly?" In Card's novel, the climax still took place in the space battle simulator, but he had added a second major—and much more complex—game to the story. "The Mind Fantasy Game" synthesized some of the tropes of children's fantasy literature and a surreal vision quest structure with a seamless interface that engendered player exploration. Card first describes the game from Ender's perspective:

> "It was a shifting, crazy kind of game in which the school computer kept bringing up new things, building a maze that you could explore. You could go back to events that you liked, for a while; if you left one alone too long, it disappeared and something else took its place.
>
> "Sometimes they were funny things. Sometimes exciting ones, and he had to be quick to stay alive. He had lots of deaths, but that was OK, games were like that, you died a lot until you got the hang of it.
>
> "His figure on the screen had started out as a little boy. For a while it had changed into a bear. Now it was a large mouse, with long and delicate hands." (62)

In this introduction, and as he relates his play experiences to the reader throughout the novel, some salient features of the game begin to emerge. First is the conspicuous symbolism of its narrative detail. The game in this science fiction functions to underline Ender's emotional arc much the same

way as a dream sequence might in realist fiction: revealing the character's deepest fears (as when he is torn to pieces by wolves with the faces of children), alerting him to subtle dangers, but also encouraging self-reflection. In short, playing the game scaffolds Ender's exploration of his own unconscious.

Several of the aesthetic touches in the game—a laughing giant, human/animal shapeshifters, a lonely castle tower—recall the fairy tale-inspired, Tolkien-esque visual language that permeates so many popular sword-and-sorcery video games, including *World of Warcraft*, *The Elder Scrolls*, and *Baldur's Gate*. And the castle tower, with its ominous secret for the young protagonist, echoes the climax of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship,* and that novel's play with the "indeterminacy" between the real and the unreal. Games so often exploit elements of literary fantasy for visceral effect yet rarely help players interrogate the personal or cultural meanings of the symbology. In Ender's game, however, the high fantasy "hook" that first suggests only a facile appropriation of symbols from the Jungian collective unconscious soon becomes background to a more personal iconography. In an unexpected and unsettling development, even to the adult monitors, the game shows Ender his mirror reflection transformed into the visage of his possibly homicidal older brother. Instead of merely broadcasting generic scenarios to a universal child player, the game fully adapts itself to Ender as an individual, and reconfigures its setting as a landscape of the mind.

Following this uncanny turn, the adults in the novel debate the merits of the game, and reveal the little they know about its original design (a detail Card wisely left ambiguous). "The mind game is a relationship between the child and the computer. Together they create stories. The stories are true in the sense that they reflect the reality of the child's life. That's all I *know*" (121). In describing the video game as a creative "relationship" between the player and the system, Card paraphrased the tenor of his own video games criticism, and anticipated much of the scholarship that would emerge in the ensuing decades, the resistance against a theory of games as authored narratives in the same sense as literary fiction (Aarseth, Frasca). But the Mind Fantasy Game takes the concept to the extreme, with the game system not just allowing sandbox-style play—as some have described the vast, open-ended worlds of games like *Grand Theft Auto III* or the digital doll-houses in *The Sims*—but responding intelligently to the player's actions through the very structure of the game, in essence reprogramming itself to better address the individual gamer. It's not hard to imagine why game developers have not perfected such a system, as it posits an artificial intelligence

of greater sophistication than some even believe possible. Yet, as we shall see from later examples, this level of player/program bond remains one of the holy grails of game design.

In his revised version of Ender's story, Card posited that games could be profoundly powerful if they somehow turned the focus of play back on the player, if they reconfigured the typical puzzles and challenges to have an introspective quality, hints of autobiography or confession, the interactive equivalent of "psychological realism." And if the novel *Ender's Game* represents a qualitative development from the short story, so too does it complicate the short's simplistic critique of games, its warning against the confusion of simulation and reality. Card's vivid, surreal description of the Mind Fantasy Game more closely captures the feeling of immersion and connection many gamers experience, rather than the alienation and disaffection suggested by the space shooter model. Ender is drawn into the game world, forging an synaesthetic bond with his avatar and really caring about the story and its outcomes. But because Ender's play is secretly monitored by adult authority figures with morally questionable aims, who use the game as a way to identify potentially subversive children, the novel also represents a nightmare vision of the use of such games as a form of social and military control. This facet of Card's concern with games turns out to have been mostly irrelevant, until recently. Not long after the publication of the novel, a sea change in the games industry shifted consumption away from arcades to the home console, from social gaming in public spaces to largely single-player experiences in private homes. With gamers relatively dispersed and hidden, it was perhaps more difficult to imagine some Big Brother monitoring or controlling children gamers en masse. But following the shootings at Columbine High School in 1999, and the discovery that its perpetrators had been fans of first-person shooting games like *Doom* and *Wolfenstein 3D*, the political reaction brought us a step closer to monitoring play as a litmus test for anti-social behavior. With games becoming more networked and massively-multiplayer, the implications for privacy become fairly mind-boggling. It may be time to revisit Card's exhortation that we protect the private play experiences of children.

To return to the model of games suggested by the novel: I do not wish to indicate that Card was a lone visionary in imagining what games could be, but it is clear from his descriptions that he recognized a few important qualities of the form. The first is that games have a special appeal to adolescents. Kids were major drivers of the early commercial boom in games, and despite evidence that the audience for games is growing more inclusive, a recent study has shown that 6 to 17 year-

olds make up the largest percentage of "heavy" gamers (NPD Group). Many adult gamers express distaste for the association of games with adolescence and would love those kinds of statistics to go away. So advocates for the seriousness of gaming like to cite misleading statistics like "women over the age of 18 represent a significantly greater portion of the game-playing population (30%) than boys age 17 or younger (23%)" (ESA). This statistic fails to distinguish between so-called casual and hardcore gamers, a problematic but important distinction. It also reinforces the belief that teenage boys as a demographic lack cultural legitimacy. I have no doubt that games could be designed to satisfy the tastes of even the most stolid and high-minded adult, but the games industry shouldn't be so quick to dismiss the teen audience. In doing so they only reinforce a notion that teens are best served by low-quality or thoughtlessly sensationalist games, by big explosions and bouncing boobs. But as a previous chapter suggests, the rise to cultural acceptance of the novel proceeded in parallel with efforts to create compelling and sympathetic portraits of adolescence, not by some misguided attempt to purify the revenue stream.

It may not have been such a stretch of the imagination to posit, in 1985, that kids liked video games. Any half-competent observer would have reached the same conclusion; adolescents were certainly early adopters of gaming technology. But it is also not unreasonable to suggest that games may have a formal quality that resonates with a teen audience, that there is a natural affinity between games and adolescence. Raph Koster has postulated that cognitive mastery and pattern recognition may be exactly what makes games fun, and why challenges that may seem like an awful lot of work from the perspective of an external observer may be profoundly satisfying to the player. Recent psychological studies have supported the theory that games are most successful when they reinforce feelings of "autonomy, competence, and relatedness" rather than merely rewarding twitch behavior or good hand-eye coordination (Ryan, Rigby, and Przybylski). If we combine these observations with Jean Piaget's "child scientist" theory of human development, this makes games potentially irresistible to adolescents. Piaget's theory of cognitive development posited adolescence as the stage when children acquire "formal operational" competences: the ability to make generalizations from observations, to form and test hypotheses, and to reason from a perspective outside of their own (132). If video games can be said to reward these very skills, and certainly many complex games require the player to develop highly involved hypotheses for how to master their puzzles (Johnson), then video games may confirm and extend an adolescent's control over her newly-acquired cognitive

abilities, rewarding her very adolescent-ness, as it were.

Theorists from other disciplines have further attempted to explain the specific appeal of games to children and teens. Folklorist Sharon R. Sherman offers an analysis of Nintendo's popular *Super Mario Bros.* in terms of hero's adventure monomythology and Turner's concept of liminality: "Like ritual, the adventure game represents a transitional state which must be overcome" (251). The game character's becoming, she claims, echoes the task of adolescence; both the teenager and her avatar are liminal beings. This analysis would seem applicable to many of the most successful game franchises. *The Legend of Zelda* series features a young hero—sometimes childlike and cartoonish, sometimes a powerful young adult rendered with more photo-realistic aesthetics—eternally engaged in a quest to save the titular princess from mythological beasts. The epic RPG series *Final Fantasy* has players control a team of young warriors and magicians charged with saving the world. The characters in these games are nominally adolescents, but Sherman would argue that the games' most salient "adolescent" characteristic is the quest structure itself. The drive towards completion of the game mirrors the adolescent's drive to complete herself. This recalls Trites's interpretation of Young Adult fiction, that it is partially designed to "propel" teenage readers out of their immaturity. Indeed, the connection between mastery of a game, or especially a team sport, and the process of maturation has been regularly explored in fiction.

The second thing Card gets right is that representations in video games do matter; not just the formal challenges. When Ender looks in the mirror and sees the image of his brother staring back at him, it is a non-trivial event. The quest structure gains meaning in the way it patterns Ender's real life experiences. However, the formalist game studies tradition, perhaps in reaction to alternately outraged or apathetic responses to games in the cultural studies paradigm, is devoted to explaining why games are important apart from, or even in spite of, their representational power. Exemplars of the formalist approach peel back the layers of aesthetics and narrative to focus on the rules and goals built into a game system, the "ludemes." Another trend in game studies examines the economic systems that have grown inside of massively multiplayer online games (Castranova). This and the (again) misleading statistic that showed the videogame industry was bigger than Hollywood (only if you compare hardware and software sales to domestic box office), are cited to prove that video games are legitimate cultural products for study (Yi), as if value were a result of the existence of economic systems rather than the reverse. In this black box approach to game

scholarship, it hardly matters that the people who play *World of Warcraft* are taking on the identities of elves and orcs in a Tolkien-esque fantasy world, or that the kids playing Pokemon are training and fighting animal-like monsters in a series of mazes. This scholarship is indeed exciting and important, but needs to be balanced by more holistic analyses that take the representational overlay into account.

Raph Koster tested the limits of his own formalist approach to game design by imagining what it would feel like to play a game of Tetris where the falling abstract blocks were replaced with the bodies of holocaust victims being pushed into a mass grave. The rules and goals of the game would be the same, but the aesthetic "overlay" would dramatically change the experience of play (168). A friend who is a huge fan of the original *Star Wars* films, and spent many hours mastering the space dogfight simulator based on the movies, *X-Wing*, refused to play the sequel, *Tie Fighter*, in which the player commands the fighting spacecraft of the evil Galactic Empire. He so identified with the heroes of the films and their campaign against fascist dictatorship that, to him, this game was something akin to Koster's "holocaust simulator." Despite being nearly the same game with regard to the mechanics of play, he couldn't bring himself to shoot down the heroic rebel fighters. These examples illustrate that gamers do, in fact, invest intellectually and emotionally with the aesthetic and narrative qualities of video games—that the aesethetic overlay does not merely "melt away"—though the extent to which a gamer will ascribe importance to aesthetics is certainly variable. Plenty of *Star Wars* fans got over their aversion to the dark side of the Force to play *Tie Fighter*. In fact, many of the *Star Wars* games that came later, including Raph Koster's own *Star Wars Galaxies* and even the child-skewing *LEGO Star Wars,* allowed the player to choose between good, evil, or morally ambiguous characters.

James Gee, in his tribute to the educational potential of games, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy,* rejects both ludological essentialism and representational determinism by expanding what is meant by "content" in games to include the play mechanics, the representations, and how they work together to reinforce or challenge cultural models. For Gee, a "good" game employs strategies that force the player to challenge the types of models that "operate so as to do harm to ourselves or others but go unexamined" (147). Gee uses the example of *Operation Flashpoint*, which on the level of representation seemed a jingoistic celebration of American military power, but at the level of gameplay challenged his preconceptions about military values.

Even games that may not refer directly to the real world or real phenomena may still challenge the player to reflect in a beneficial way. Playing a character who would typically be the enemy in a less complicated game, such as one of the Imperial pilots in the Star Wars universe, trains the player in their ability to shift perspectives, to think and value in a different way, without necessarily accepting or adopting those values in real life. The reader will recall that this practice in perspective-shifting is a key component of many adolescence narratives, an innovation evident in texts as early as Sarah Fielding's *The Governess*. Good games, then, have the potential to be not just educational, but meta-educational, or, as Gee puts it: "Good video games have a powerful way of making players consciously aware of some of their previously assumed cultural models about learning itself." (162).

Stephenson's "A Young Lady's Illustrated Primer"

For Gee, educational games are about more than beating quests, mastering cognitive skills, or even teaching subject knowledge. Good games teach literacy. This premise inspired another acclaimed science fiction novelist to "design" what could be described as a super-charged update of the Mind Fantasy Game almost a decade after Card released his novel. When it was published in 1995, Neal Stephenson's *The Diamond Age or, A Young Lady's Illustrated Primer* was heralded as being one of the first works of science fiction to address the potential world-changing power of nanotechnology; it examined the sexy but scary notion that the engineering of microscopic machines could create a post-scarcity economy where computer hackers had as much control over the physical world as they do over the virtual. Stephenson also offered detailed extrapolations concerning the future of media and culture in a world where paper is "smart"—every leaf presents animated images and sound—and the predominant narrative form is the "ractive"—short for interactive, where participants vie with professional actors in a Holodeck-like virtual reality. Such a world resembles the post-literate, tribally-organized future Marshall Macluhan predicted would come about under the influence of electronic media. Because written language has been supplemented with "mediaglyphs," an animated iconographic system, and the success of radically Libertarian politics has eliminated most forms of social security, including public schools, many children never learn to read or write. So ironically, in this world where abject poverty has been eliminated, where the basic necessities of life can be generated by a "matter compiler" with the press of a button, social inequality has proliferated to an extreme degree. The few social organizations, "phyles," that

adopt an ethos of strong self-discipline and child education thrive, while the disenfranchised poor get left pathetically behind.

In one advanced phyle, the Neo-Victorians or "Vickies", an engineer designs an interactive book that uses new media technologies to teach its child reader everything she would need to know to get by in the world, and that instills a moral of self-reliance and subversive independence. Basically, it is a powerful video game that teaches multiple literacies and activates political awareness. This "Primer," initially meant for the child of a Neo-Victorian "Equity Lord," falls into the hands of an illiterate, impoverished young girl named Nell. It immediately begins to co-create with her, much like Ender's fantasy game, a fairy tale story about a young girl named Princess Nell who is trapped in a castle. Nell grows up with the book, and it changes with her, teaching her more and more complicated skills that are directly relevant to her life—first how to read, then how to defend herself, how to communicate with people from radically different contexts, how to write computer code, even strategies for coping with loss. In its ultimate lesson, delivered when Nell is a fully grown woman, it connects her to the creator of the book, who hands her a key that unlocks all its secrets, down to the very blueprints for its creation. Along the way the Primer has helped Nell become a crafty, observant, motivated, and physically dexterous individual who takes command of an army of girl orphans to become a major world leader. Serious games indeed.

Card described the Mind Fantasy Game as a "co-created" narrative, a relationship between the game and the child, but the "stories" generated by this relationship emerge spontaneously during the child's play. Excluding the novelty of the game's intelligent response, this is not so different from how most video games work: providing a framework for activity that can't really be called a story until the player chooses how to act within it. Stephenson pushes the concept a little further: imagining the Primer as a game that scaffolds Nell's ability to tell stories, not just enact them. On her first encounter with the Primer, it bonds with Nell, and makes her the main character in a fairytale that structures all of their ensuing sessions. That is, the main character is not literally Nell, but Princess Nell, "a girl who looked much like Nell, except that she was wearing a beautiful flowing dress and had ribbons in her hair" (95). The Primer both tells stories to her, and encourages her to tell them, as in the following example:

> "When Mom got home, she screamed and cried for a while and then spanked Nell for
> making a mess. This made Nell sad, and so she went to her room and picked up the

Primer and made up a story of her own, about how the wicked stepmother had made Princess Nell clean up the house and had spanked her for doing it all wrong. The Primer made up pictures as she went along. By the time she was finished, she had forgotten about the real things that had happened and remembered only the story she had made up." (185)

The virtual world of the Primer is at once immersive and buffering. The fantasy narrative that the Primer co-creates with Nell is simultaneously about her real life and separate from it—or, to use the term proposed by Jesper Juul to describe video games: "half-real." This allows the Primer to provide overt commentary on Nell's situation, to trigger reflection and suggest courses of action, but also to shield her from the real traumas that she endures. Juul has also written of games that they are partially characterized by "negotiable consequences," one decides how seriously to take the outcomes of play. By translating her abuse into the interactive narrative, Nell mediates her experience through the story and "negotiates" the emotional consequences of her abuses. Play becomes a tool for coping.

In learning to tell stories she is also practicing what the narrator/protagonists of the Bildungsroman took for granted, and what the constructivists like Bruner and McAdams find such an important skill for generating personal meaning: the ability to incorporate the events of one's life into a coherent narrative. In this way the Primer could be a direct response to early games designed for female adolescents, such as *Rockett's New School* and *Chop Suey,* that were criticized for being narratively rich but only reinscribing the author/reader dichotomy from literature. As Justine Cassell wrote of the deficiency of those examples: "Stories by others may be resources for storytelling and for constructing oneself through stories. But the teller of the tale holds the power of construction —of meaning making—in her hands" (302). But how do you get a computer, a technological tool which lacks awareness, to "listen" to your stories? Some of the titles from Purple Moon's Rockett series provided a space for kids to tell personal stories, as through diary entries, but such opportunities generated no meaningful feedback from the system. A recent treatise by a very successful game designer espoused the sensible maxim, "if the world ignores the player, the player won't care about the world" (Birdwell, 1). How could one design a video game so that it will not ignore the player's stories, where both game and player "care" about the world they are creating?

Card left ambiguous the details of just how the Mind Fantasy Game "co-created" the stories

with Ender, but Stephenson is a little more explicit about the design of the Primer. John Hackworth, the Primer's creator, explains to his patron how the computer processes Nell's input into a prescribed but still flexible structure, how after bonding with the child "it will see all events and persons in relation to that girl, using her as a datum from which to chart a psychological terrain, as it were. Maintenance of that terrain is one of the book's primary processes. Whenever the child uses the book, then, it will perform a sort of dynamic mapping from the database onto her particular terrain" (106). The database he describes is filled with Jungian archetypes from mythology and fairy tales, the same pool of tropes and characters drawn upon by many fantasy video games. But these are smart archetypes. The game "maps" the typology onto the real people and places in Nell's world, which it learns about through the instructions she gives and its own observations.

If this seems technologically far-fetched, and certainly some of the details are (a computer that watches and competently understands its physical environment), the idea behind it is pushing some of the thought leaders in video games to develop methods of overcoming the design challenges. *The Sims* designer Will Wright spoke to this effect in his keynote to the 2007 SXSW Interactive Festival. What follows is an approximate transcript:

> "I think it's always been much more interesting to me over the last few years to think about not telling the story but listening. If we can teach the computer to listen to the player, stories would be much more powerful. One approach we could take would have the computer come to some understanding of the story the player is trying to tell—are they doing romance, comedy, horror—where the computer is slowly learning the story in the players' heads."

Wright talks not of "mapping" the story but "parsing" it, building off techniques developed for computers to process natural language commands. Given Wright's prominence and authority within the games industry (the designer of the best selling computer game ever), it seems likely that if the technological barriers to this kind of implementation can be breached, they will be.

The priority given to immersion and personalization informs another fundamental purpose of the game: to instruct and educate Nell in a variety of subjects and skills. Here Stephenson addresses a more conventional educational principle—that knowledge and print literacy are powerful and potentially life-transforming. Nell's education, her mastery of writing and the rules of etiquette amongst an illiterate and insensitive world, helps her achieve social and economic mobility. What

the Primer represents that is different from school-based notions of education, however, is the way it transmits these lessons. Like the best pedagogical literature for children and adolescents, the lessons imparted by the Primer are, with one important exception I'll get to later, seamlessly integrated into the narrative. A story, if well written, provides strong motivation for instruction, and a context to make it meaningful. But unlike in literature, where one protagonist sits in for all possible readers, the interactive narrative of the Primer and its myriad embedded lessons are driven by the user's own motivations in a more personally meaningful context. Another way to look at it: video games can teach by activating a child's natural capacity for play.

Play has been identified by Henry Jenkins and the Macarthur Foundation-supported New Media Literacies project as one of the "key competencies" of the 21st Century. This ability of games to motivate learners and situate lessons within a context suggest that video games and virtual worlds may be the most likely platforms for the activation of such competencies. As stated in the white paper which outlines the project, "players feel a part of those worlds and have some stake in the events unfolding. Games not only provide a rationale for learning: what players learn is put immediately to use to solve compelling problems with real consequences in the world of the game." (23). In Stephenson's novel, the Primer allows Nell to direct her own education, to actuate each lesson in the course of her progress through a narrative that she has a hand in creating. Like Carroll's Alice, she is driven through the story and all its challenges by her own curiosity rather than adhering to a pedagogical program developed top-down for a universal child.

For this reason Nell's intellectual development seems to unfold entirely naturally and without artifice. However, *The Diamond Age* also disturbs the notion that any educational practice can be ideologically neutral. As with *Ender's Game*, the developers of the Primer have a hidden agenda, but the ideological lesson hard-wired into Nell's game is one of self-emancipation or even downright rebellion. Just as *Alice in Wonderland* provided Victorian children and adolescents an anarchic salve to the rigid propriety of that culture, the Primer is designed to provide a counterpoint to the stifling formalism of the Neo-Victorian educational institutions. Like many of our own contemporary American schools, these institutions reward the paradoxical tenets of achievement and conformity. The co-founder of the Neo-Victorians realizes that his phyle, with its ethos of entirely volunteer membership, is not likely to survive if the next generation if they are not able to come to the conclusion themselves that the Neo-Victorian way of life is superior. Therefore he commissions the

Primer with the instruction that it be designed to instill the values of self-reliance and skepticism of authority.

With this, Stephenson firmly enmeshes *The Diamond Age* in the discourse of adolescence, and the domain of adolescence narratives. This is not just about how Nell learns to write, or how she comes to cope with her abusive home life by escaping into fantasy, it is about her understanding of and engagement with the systems of authority and power that have partially constructed her, and the assertion of her individual voice against the social cacophony. It is, like the Bildungsroman, concerned with her self-determination and socialization. Stephenson has a central metaphor for the bildung of his heroine: computer programming. Princess Nell's final quest is set in a fantasy world of automatons. She is locked away in a tower by guards and must learn how to communicate with and manipulate her captors using lengths of chain that feed into their chests. Through experimentation, she learns to encode commands to the machines by flipping toggles on the chain. In effect, the Primer teaches her the binary machine language at the heart of all digital computers. Having escaped the machine kingdom, she travels to another, then another, every time encountering slightly more sophisticated beings who, nonetheless, she recognizes as just more complicated machines.

In learning to recognize what makes the machines not-human, she necessarily comes to understand the human in herself. In decoding how the computer thinks, she engages in what it means to think, meta-cognition. This aspect of Stephenson's novel should sound familiar to anyone acquainted with Sherry Turkle's psychoanalytic studies of children using computers. In her 1984 work *The Second Self*, Turkle culls observations of kids learning Logo to show how developing programming skills could accelerate and deepen a child's understanding of human psychology, how an encounter with a "thinking machine" gives them practice in "thinking about, talking about, and defending their ideas about the psychological" (52). This resonates, as well, with James Gee's conception of the value of mastering, in the parlance of his discourse theory of literacy, a secondary Discourse. Only by learning a secondary Discourse, he claims, can we gain the vocabulary to analyze and critique our primary Discourse, our taken-for-granted way of being. He describes this view as rather uncontroversial and traditional (though perhaps not put into practice as much as it should), "the analogue of Socrates's theorem that the unexamined life is not worth living." (Literacy, Discourse and Linguistics, 530).

By learning how to write and interpret software, Nell also acquires the ability to understand the design of the Primer itself. Following its final challenge, the game completely deconstructs itself. A representation of Hackworth, the Primer's programmer, appears to Princess Nell and pulls the curtain on the game's fantasy world, presenting her with the schematic for the book's creation and an encyclopedic reference covering computer programing and nanotechnology design. By baring the artificiality of the device, the story of the Primer is reminiscent of postmodern or deconstructionist adolescence narratives like *The Neverending Story*, in which Bastian graduates from reader to author of the fantasy world, or *Sophie's World*, in which the main character indeed learns that she is merely a character in a book written for a real girl. These narratives represent a model for a child's engagement with media that address what Jenkins has named the "transparency problem." Though media, especially video games, may encourage a high level of engagement, "there is a difference between trying to master the rules of the game and recognizing the ways those rules structure our perception of reality." The New Media Literacies project calls for innovative teaching methods and the creation of instructional materials that "encourage users to question their structuring or their interpretation of the data" (15). The Primer makes as a requirement for mastering its rules the understanding of its structure. And because the Primer is "about" Nell as much as it is about computer programming—the girl is the data—not only does it encourage her to question the Primer's design but her own relationship to it.

The final sense in which mastering the language of programming is integral to Nell's coming of age is that, in the context of her future world, coding is the language of power. Nanotechnology allows the engineers of the novel a profound and unprecedented control over the physical world, a manipulation of matter at the level of the atom. David Foster Wallace, writing about the wars over English usage in American schools, has made a claim for Standard Written English as American society's own language of power. As literacy scholarship has questioned any causal link between written language and high-level consciousness, and has upheld the legitimacy of local dialects and other means and media for communication, Wallace suggests that standard English remains an important gateway to social mobility because, "in this country, SWE is perceived as the dialect of education and intelligence and power and prestige, and anybody of any race, ethnicity, religion, or gender who wants to succeed in American culture has got to be able to use SWE" (54). While Jenkins agrees that "textual literacy remains a central skill in the twenty-first century," he suggests

that the acquisition of reading and writing skills is only a first step towards participating in a networked digital media ecology (19). Those unable to fully participate, as a result, will lack the social and economic opportunities of their peers. What all of these claims share is the belief that a certain profile of competencies will empower those who acquire them and leave the rest at a disadvantage; in a sense, the right kind of education offers the keys to the kingdom, exactly the metaphor the Primer employs to reward Nell's success.

My analysis of *The Diamond Age* reveals a curiously strong connection between this science fiction Bildungsroman and the discourse of new media literacy. Why the affinity? As James Gee's quotation from Socrates hints, many of those working within this field, for all their appeal to the power of high-tech digital media and the careful rhetoric pitched at educational administrators, implicitly share some very traditional educational goals. As the United States has fallen behind the rest of the world in academic achievement, and schools have been forced to eliminate "soft" subjects like creative arts and music in favor of a "skill and drill" approach to teaching only the core disciplines, the idea of a holistic education, the kind of apprenticeship to the world so familiar from the classics in the Bildungsroman genre, has migrated to this new discourse and disguised itself with new vocabulary. In *The Diamond Age*, Stephenson gives a colloquial description of this educational principle. The Primer's patron explains how, "in order to raise a generation of children to reach their full potential, we must find a way to make their lives interesting" (24). The desirability of "interesting lives" is the ideology of the Primer and media literacy, and the strategies for achieving this aim—helping individuals know themselves better, empowering the disenfranchised to participate in culture, understanding how social norms are constructed, and questioning the status quo—have proven just as controversial as they were in Socrates's time.

And lest one think that a technological marvel like the Primer is all that is required to engage the next generation in this way, Stephenson deconstructs even that notion by the end of the book. When all the layers of mediation are pulled away, we realize that two people were primarily responsible for Nell's successful upbringing: the programmer who designed the Primer and the actor who gave it a voice, Nell's surrogate parents. In an ironic return to the Victorian family ideal, where the father embodies rationality and discipline (the logic of programming) and the mother sensitivity (the empathy of the actor), Stephenson reveals both the true aims and shortcomings of educational media: it attempts to, but cannot completely, provide a substitute for good parenting. As I move on

to describe the ways some video games have represented adolescence, and how some have aspired to the kinds of pedagogical and narrative models suggested by the games at the heart of *Ender's Game* and *The Diamond Age*, it is important to keep any utopian hyperbole in check. Games can be powerful tools for education, for inspiring reflection, and for modeling the transition from childhood to adulthood, but they can't replace the role of good communities, teachers, or parents.

Managing Adolescence: Life Sims

I described earlier how many games provide a symbolic experience of adolescence through the adventure quest structure, but few attempt to represent adolescent characters in a way that can be productively compared to reality. To find adolescence modeled as something more than a set of physical obstacles to be breached or fierce monsters to be destroyed, one may look to a genre of games called Life Sims. These games take "normal" aspects of human life, such as intimate relationships and child rearing, and reverse engineer them as simplified systems that can be represented by a computer simulation. The most notable and successful examples in the West have been Will Wright's *The Sims* and *The Sims 2*, although in Japan this approach has yielded many hundreds of games in subgenres known as Dating Sims and Raiser Games.

The *Tokemeki Memorial* seriesvis the most popular example of the Dating Sim. In these games the player takes on the role of a teenage student, most often (but not always) a boy, and faces the challenge at the core of so much fiction: to get the girl. To this aim, the player must cultivate his virtual Romeo in a way that is attractive to the girl he is wooing, interpret clues to her personality, and reward her with attention in the form of frequent dates and thoughtful gifts. Though the novelistic narratives common to the genre are melodramatic and reflect a romantic view of human coupling, the mechanic by which one find success is rather unromantic or even cynical. Teenage romance, in these games, occurs as a function of efficient resource management. The player's primary interface to the world of the game is a schedule through which time can be allotted to work, sports, studying, and the all-important dates. Depending on what the target girl desires in a mate, the player must strike the right balance between all the activities on his schedule. Furthermore, each girl has certain personality quirks that the player must remember when deciding where to take her out or what presents to purchase.

This schedule-and-gift mechanic also drives games in the Raiser genre, of which *Princess*

Maker is the most well known in the US. Unlike the dating games, however, in these the object of cultivation and affection are one in the same, an adolescent girl who the player "raises" to adulthood. In *Princess Maker 2*, the player takes on the persona of an independent warrior who finds himself in the favor of a rich kingdom after saving it from an evil force. One night he sees a glowing light in the forest and follows it to find the form of a 10 year old girl whom he adopts to raise as his own. By making adjustments to the girl's monthly calendar—adding schooling, combat training, work, etc.—and purchasing gifts that help modify her attributes, the player puts the girl on the path to one of several careers. The game ends when the girl turns 18, and reveals how the decisions the player made during play translates into her occupational outlook, which can run the gamut from the queen of the kingdom to a prostitute.

The adolescent stage is not such a central concern of Wright's *The Sims*, but occurs in the course of a character's longer life span. Though these games break from the formal severity of the schedule-and-gift interface—allowing characters to roam more freely in an interactive 3D space—and allow romantic relationships and child-rearing as only two of many possible pastimes for the avatars, they nonetheless operate on similar principles of resource management. The lives of the Sims represent quantities of time to be filled with work, skill-building, socializing, entertainment, and biological function. Time spent working yields money that the player can use to purchase items to make the lives of the Sims happier or easier. To master the game, one must master the statistics-driven algorithm that governs the relationships between character needs, aspirations, and the possible actions. Wright has not kept it a secret that he partially based the algorithms on Maslow's hierarchy, a model of human motivation that prioritizes certain needs over others, such that humans must "satisfy primal needs such as hunger and safety before addressing demands such as love or self-actualization" (Thompson). However, the game is less catholic about evaluating success. One may decide to pursue career advancement, wealth, relationships, happiness, or any combination of these, and the game only rewards these decisions insofar as the player can succeed in obtaining their goals. Teens in *The Sims 2* are functionally similar to adults, they have the same needs and can choose from the same set of aspirations. However, like in real life, teens have to go to school and, very unlike real life, cannot have sex or bear children.

It is easy to criticize these games for boiling down highly complex and emotionally fraught human experiences into data-driven models, for turning the wonders and mysteries of life into a

kind of economics, but that is just what computer simulations do. We shouldn't necessarily bemoan the attempt, but instead examine how the designers have selected which rules and sets of data are meaningful to simulate, and what cultural models they challenge or reinforce. In this sense, the games that I've described are deceptively complex. As purchasing gifts for a mate potentially wins the player favor in *Tokimeki Memorial*, this and other Dating Sims could be said to reinforce the rather problematic conflation of intimacy and consumerism, the maxim that "diamonds are a girl's best friend." The game also casts the object of one's affection as just that, an object, an antagonistic but ultimately knowable other whose personality is not much more than a puzzle to be solved to reach a goal. However, the game also constructs the goal of intimacy as nontrivial and demanding of personal change across many spheres of life. The player does not merely react to the girl during dates, but must be attuned to her preferences and incorporate her desires into each of his daily activities. It reinforces, then, a model of intimacy that privileges personal transformation and self sacrifice over "love at first sight." In transforming himself to satisfy the girl, the protagonist achieves a state of voluntary ego loss which closely matches what psychologist Erik Erikson described as central to the process of maturation.

Raiser games like *Princess Maker 2* seem to objectify the female even more completely than Dating Sims. In these, the player takes on the role of an adult male who molds and crafts his budding female charge in a way very reminiscent of the myth of Pygmalion and its derivatives. Even more disturbingly, girls in these games are exaggerated sexually and the narratives often leave open the possibility of a romance between the parental figure and the grown child, very much playing into fantasies of possession and control over the female adolescent body. But as with the Dating Sims, the gender politics are not so clear cut. Though *Princess Maker 2* frames its narrative with the story of the typically heroic adult male protagonist, during the gameplay itself it is easy to forget that the *girl* is not the player's real avatar. The game even provides the option of sending one's girl on an "adventure," during which the interface switches to the top-down map familiar from 2D role playing games. For these perilous journeys outside the castle gates the player assumes direct control of the girl's movements and actions, effectively becoming the girl for a brief period. Mastering the game requires that sometimes one put themselves in the mindset of the parent, and sometimes the child. The player cannot make unreasonable demands on the girl, nor can he allow her absolute freedom. The former causes the girl to become rebellious and unresponsive, the latter

will leave her unprepared in the face of the kingdom's dangers. These games create a high degree of slippage between player-as-parent and player-as-child, approximating a common aspect of literature about adolescence, the constant oscillation in the reader's identification between adult and teen characters. It also takes advantage of one of the unique properties of video games: their ability to inspire a feeling of responsibility for the virtual characters.

Compared to the Japanese model for Life Sims, *The Sims* is more palatable to American tastes. Gender bias is not so overt, being mostly a function of what the player brings to the game, and teenage characters can date and fall in love but are not hyper-sexualized. In fact, as I mentioned previously, the teenage characters are so de-sexualized as to reify taboos against underage sex. The game engine enforces the mandatory abstinence for its teenagers that US educational policy tries in vain to engender in the real suburban America. That said, this limitation runs against the dominant cultural model of adolescence in the rest of the game, that teenagers are in almost every sense equivalent to their adult counterparts. There is something subtly emancipatory about this model: it shows adolescents as fully formed in every way except for their social constraints. Teenagers in the game do not suffer from "storm and stress" automatically, but may become unhappy when their needs conflict with those of their parents'. As with the adults, when their aspirations match their situation, they will be more content. Therefore teens with aspirations towards skill building and careers will be well served by school, and those who prioritize romance and the instant gratification of the part time job will find it merely a tax on their schedules.

The management simulation model provides a deceptively agile platform for some problematic but nuanced representations of adolescence. Though in each of these games the player does very similar things—scheduling time, building stats, managing resources—the aesthetic and narrative overlay adds considerable power to the play experience. One wonders how much more effective these games could be in evoking the experience of adolescence if they made it more central to the simulation and more rigorous to the activities teenagers really value. In *The Sims*, teenage characters spend most of their time off-screen, at school, which reflects the bias the game has towards modeling the domestic sphere. What if, as in real life, the domestic was just one of the many social contexts for the protagonists, if, as the character moved from one world to the next, he or she had to pursue different needs and aspirations? Emphasizing the whole adolescent experience seems like one possible strategy for making these simulations more compelling. From a literacy

standpoint, these games also typify the transparency problem. A player may master the techniques necessary to "raise" his adoptive daughter to any of the careers at the end of *Princess Maker 2* without challenging the wisdom that went into choosing that set of possible careers, or without interrogating the ideology that links certain in-game actions with specific outcomes (for example, that working in a bar increases skill at conversation but decreases intelligence). I'll discuss the possibilities for moving beyond the model set by these games a bit later in this chapter.

Adventures in Adolescence: *Fable, Psychonauts,* and *Bully*

When we move to action and adventure type video games, there is more emphasis on linear narrative, and a potential for games to more closely approximate the types of stories one expects from literature or film. Yet as I've indicated, few have attempted to adapt genres of adolescence like the coming-of-age story, the teen detective, or the school story to the interactive form. This is not terribly surprising, as action-oriented plots tend to be a better fit to action-oriented games, while adolescence narratives tend to be "internal" with stronger emotional or psychological drama. So fantasy, science fiction, horror, and espionage plots dominate action games, which are mostly built around such player actions as hand-to-hand combat, shooting, running, jumping, or some combination of these. More recently, however, a number of games have attempted to incorporate a wider variety of narrative genres into still combat-oriented action games, and a subset of these have drawn from coming of age narratives.

Bakhtin's argument for the importance of the Bildungsroman as a literary genre, that it did away with the ready-made hero and, by concentrating on the protagonist's growth and change, brought the protagonist of the novel into historical time, seems an apt description of what Peter Molyneux aimed to accomplish with his fantasy-themed Action-RPG *Fable*, released in 2004. Most Western-style RPGs begin with a character design interface by which the player builds her representation in the virtual world, her avatar. The player selects the aesthetic qualities of the hero, its race and gender, sometimes its species and combat style (thief, warrior, mage, etc.). Upon completion, the character is generated and dropped into the world. It emerges, like Athena, fully formed from the head of the player. Through play the character may "level up" and hone different powers, or even work against the characteristics originally chosen, but will never change its "essence." In *Fable*, by contrast, the protagonist begins as something of a tabula rasa and as a child.

The character "grows" from a young boy to an adolescent warrior apprentice to an adult adventurer. Along the way he is presented with a series of decision points, story nodes that help determine what kind of hero he becomes: will he be pure-hearted and good, a devious and evil trickster figure, or something in between? Here is a game very much concerned with the process of becoming rather than just the end result. Whatever other shortcomings the game may have, and it has quite a few, this innovation can not be deemphasized.

The player's first decisions in the game foreshadow the moral tenor of the gameplay in later stages. The protagonist (who is never named and never speaks) is told by his father to purchase a birthday gift for his sister. The father will give the character a gold coin for every good deed he does in their village. As the player explores the village, however, he learns that for every situation in which he could do good there is a reciprocal immoral choice that will reward him with the same amount of gold. The player can be just as successful in moving the narrative forward with immoral acts as with moral ones. What changes based on the player's actions are the attributes of the character and the narrative frame of the story. We know from the opening cinematics that the character is fated to become a "great" person, but the player chooses whether to make him a hero or a tyrant. Moral choices also have a symbolic affect on the protagonist's visual representation. A "good" character will gain an ethereal glow and be followed around by blue butterflies. A "bad" character will darken, become deeply scarred, and even grow horns.

Molyneux wants to show how actions have long term consequences, to get the player thinking about morality as an axis of human development and the trade-offs one has to make to live a good life. The game also allows the player an embodied experience of the classical villain, an ability to step outside of social norms and the moral restraints that are compulsory for most video game heroes, to provide an experience of the picaresque in addition to the Bildungsroman. At the same time, the path of the wicked in *Fable* has its own opportunity costs, its own particular challenges, rules, and constraints. It's hard out there for an imp. But as a kind of moral simulator, a game whose lessons can be analogized to the real world (indeed, as a fable), the game falls well short of the mark. Molyneux has made a game where good and evil are choices with definite consequences, but where the is no uncertainty or ambiguity about those choices. In the game, some choices are essentially good, others essentially bad, and a cosmic scoreboard tallies up karma points like moral RBIs and errors. In the language of Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development,

the character is stuck eternally in the "conventional" stage, forced to judge actions against a decontextualized, fundamentalist rubric. And even by conventional standards, there's something off about Molyneux's formulations. In that opening scene, one is faced with this dilemma: join with a bully to take money from a child or punch the bully to teach him a lesson. Of course, either way you're a bully. The one kind of hero you can't be in the game is a pacifist.

If any mainstream game has come close to Card's Mind Fantasy Game, Tim Schafer's *Psychonauts* is it, although the game rejects the dread seriousness of Ender's psycho-geographic exploration for a pun-filled, Tim Burton-esque romp through the mind. *Psychonauts* at once invents a new genre and sends it up, like a parody of a type of game that has never been made. Again, the game uses fairly standard action-adventure controls, in this case a mix of platforming and combat mechanics, and hangs on this framework a relatively linear but engaging narrative. As a designer, Schafer is well known for creating quirky characters and absurd but complex stories. The basic plot of *Psychonauts* follows the protagonist Razputin, or Raz, on his adventures at Whispering Rock Psychic Summer Camp, where children train in the ability to enter and explore other minds, interacting with the psyche as if it were a physical space. The narrative advances as Raz interfaces with the minds of the camp counselors and learns the psychic abilities necessary to survive in these carnivalesque cognitive worlds. Every mind, the player soon discovers, shares certain basic characteristics with others, the game "tokens" that Raz collects such as "figments of the imagination," "mental cobwebs," and "emotional baggage." In most other aspects, however, each mind has its unique configuration and challenges. Every new level is like an interactive dream sequence that reflects the personality and anxiety of the individual character. So a war veteran who teaches "basic braining" has a mind like a World War II battlefield, with constant noise and explosions, barbed wire, land mines, and dirigibles floating overhead. Another counselor with a more rational, scientific outlook has a mind like a perfect cube, but overrun with "censors," mental bureaucrats who threaten to stamp out the player.

The exaggerated expressionistic aesthetics, broad characters, and dark comedy, as with Burton's films, obscures a more serious and melancholy core. As Raz explores the minds of his counselors, he comes across memory fragments, in the form of simple slide shows, that partially explain how the people became who they are. They show triumphs, unfulfilled desires, and, most often, heartbreaking traumas. Parallel to his apprenticeship with the camp counselors, Raz also

enters his own mind and confronts the physical manifestations of his fears and the dark memories that he has suppressed. In some of the best fantasy fiction about adolescence, the quest through the fantasy landscape is a journey to self knowledge. *Psychonauts* repeats this trope in a way that is absolutely literal, but no less affecting. The game employs a pastiche of concepts from psychoanalysis that rewards those players familiar with the theoretical language, but could also serve as a kind of embodied introduction to these concepts for younger players. Though it is unlikely that the game would hold up to rigorous review by expert psychologists, part of its power comes from being such a lark, the silliness obscures hidden depth. Upon playing the game, one may begin to ask oneself fanciful but nontrivial questions like: "What would the landscape of my mind look like?" and "What memories do I keep locked in my memory vault?" The game inspires self-reflection and meta-cognition in a way that few others can.

I've written previously about how Rockstar's controversial video game *Bully*, released in 2006, effectively evoked the tension so central to school stories in literature and film: the school's often self-contradictory functioning as both a childhood refuge and a social microcosm. The game's ties to adolescence narratives in other media don't end there. In the opening cinematics, we meet the main character, Jimmy Hopkins, as he's dropped off in front of Bullworth Academy by his mother and new stepfather. They dump him at the boarding school as prelude to a year-long honeymoon vacation, not wanting to devote any attention to the 15 year-old boy who is now a distraction to their new life together. As they drive away, Jimmy laments, "why did you have to marry that phony?" That one line clearly telegraphs Hopkins's literary heritage. It is a reference to a character well known for his belief that all adults are "phonies": Holden Caulfied from *Catcher in the Rye*, the model of emotionally troubled, alienated, yet ultimately idealistic youth. References to other adolescence narratives abound in the game, including a nod to the cafeteria scene so prevalent in teen movies, in which the new student at the school is introduced to the different cliques that self-segregate during the lunch hour. All of this intertext positions Bully as a participant in the relatively recent thread of adolescence narratives concerned with social realism. If *Fable* and *Psychonauts* could be said to represent symbolic experiences of adolescence, *Bully* is concerned with the real, with the kinds of institutions and social situations familiar to teenagers in the 20th and 21st century.

The play mechanics reinforce this realist approach to narrative. *Bully* employs the same basic interface that made their gritty *Grand Theft Auto III* series so influential: it is a "sandbox" game that

allows the player to freely explore a convincingly rendered 3D city that seems to be alive with foot and automobile traffic. While *GTA III* presents a disturbingly anonymous and disinterested metropolis, one in which cloned non-player characters (NPCs) wander the streets aimlessly, weather systems sweep through areas seemingly at random, and day turns into night but nothing ever really changes, the world of *Bully* is grounded in a more humanistic experience of space and time. In the case of *Bully*, seasons change and holidays come and go. The school campus that players get to know so intimately takes on new facets as, for example, a blanket of Winter snow covers the grounds and the Christmas decorations go up. It is no coincidence that *Fable* and *Bully* both pioneered innovative uses of time in games; the tangibility of time's passage is so central to youth experience. Also, instead of NPCs being interchangeable clones, the students on the Bullworth campus are each unique. A mission in which Jimmy must photograph every one of the students for the school yearbook forces the player to develop an awareness of the physical differences between characters who might otherwise smear into the background. This fundamentally changes one's way of even looking at those characters and, if school violence thrives in environments where students refuse to see the humanity in each other, provides the best argument against the pundits who claimed the game would inspire more Columbine attacks.

But the most innovative aspect of *Bully*, what makes it important as a narrative of adolescence in the video game medium, *is* the simulated school, Bullworth Academy. On one hand the school is an anchor to the real experience of adolescence—most individuals in Western society, adults and children, have experience with educational institutions. The game may be easier to relate to one's own life than the adventures through space and fantasy worlds that most action games provide, so the exaggeration of that reality really shines through as satire. The school in *Bully* is also a metaphor for the society at large, the school-as-microcosm trope common to adolescence narratives. In the game, the playable area extends beyond the school grounds to the surrounding city of Bullworth. The social cliques that make up the school population are reified in the organization of the larger city; the "Preppies" hail from the upper-class suburbs in the hills, the "Greasers" from the slums on the wrong side of the tracks (literally). The attitudes of the school administrators in the game also reinforce the microcosmic perspective: the principle allows rampant bullying to continue because he believes it will toughen up the students and better prepare them for society. Prefects roam the hallways looking for delinquents, and taking sadistic pleasure in punishing

them, in the same way that the police officers maintain order in the town.

Finally, the school is a metaphor for video games themselves. It is a walled garden simulation of real life, a system of rewards and punishments, an institution governed by rules that a "player" must master or break. The game invites the player to shift between these three perspectives quite fluidly: school as school, school as society, school as game. Like any student, Jimmy is enrolled in classes. For the player, these classes are abstracted as simple mini-games that get gradually more difficult. Outside of class, Jimmy also comes across several arcade games; games within the game that help scaffold the player's awareness of the materiality of the medium. One game called "Future Street Race 2165" is a concise distillation of the themes of the larger game. It is a simple racing game with shooting elements, such that the player can both outrun and shoot down his opponents. The more aggressively one attempts to destroy the other racers, the more vicious they will be at retaliating. To master this mini-game, I found myself questioning: "Is it better to attack first or try to outrun my opponents?" "Should I take a leadership position if it makes me a target for attack?" These are exactly the kinds of decisions that Jimmy makes in the story of the game. In asking the player to interrogate the difference between the arcade mini-games and the classroom mini-games, *Bully* links the educational perspective on games with a gaming perspective on education. Like in fantasy fiction, where the protagonist's journey between "real" and fantasy worlds adds a meta-fictional level to the novel, the game both builds a living microcosm and forces the player to see it as a constructed world.

Conclusion: Adolescent Video Games Come of Age

What I hope these examples show is the latent power of video games for the creation of original stories and interactive experiences about adolescence, both as a continuation of the narrative heritage of literature, film, and television, and as a significant expansion and divergence from it. As designers branch out from the types of games that have traditionally dominated production and embrace a wider variety of narrative genres, I suspect we'll see more games that leverage the significant affinities between games and adolescence, games that build in meaningful character growth as well as opportunities for player education, self-reflection, and story co-creation, not from some sense of civic responsibility but as a means to legitimately expand a game's emotional and intellectual pull. Similarly, as the serious games movement produces games that

attempt to speak to a generation raised on the medium, and consciously embed lessons of literacy and adolescent empowerment into computer simulations, they may be well served to look at the ways the more mainstream designers have begun to deal with the same issues. Already Ian Bogost has taken the bait in an article that asks how a game like *Bully* could be redesigned to more rigorously reflect the values of the serious games movement. I'd like to expand that line of inquiry and ask, given the examples described above from both literature about games and the games themselves, what opportunities remain unexplored?

First, I want to return to the question evoked by Card's Mind Fantasy Game: can games meaningfully adapt themselves to the individual player? This is related to Wright's desire for games to be better at interpreting player actions, to more effectively "listen" to the stories the player is trying to tell. Wright has defined a technological approach to the solution, the "parsing" of player feedback, very similar to Stephenson's idea of mapping the child's life to narrative archetypes. The ability of machines to more intelligently interpret human input, incidentally, is also one of the leading contenders for the suite of technologies that will constitute "Web 3.0" (Markoff).

The possibility for a technological solution is very exciting, but not the only solution. The single player to machine paradigm, basically the reader to book model, is becoming less ubiquitous as games and game consoles exploit greater networking capabilities. Next generation systems support peer-to-peer interactivity in a way that may provide an opportunity to think beyond the hyper-competitive, mano-a-mano multi-player formula of the first fighting and shooting games. Proving that humans are infinitely better than machines at predicting what other humans will find meaningful, the most popular e-commerce companies, such as Amazon and Netflix, compare profiles of similar users to provide seemingly intelligent product recommendations. Basically, they side-step the need for complex machine AI by anonymously connecting users with similar tastes. It may therefore be more productive to think of a platform on which players "co-create" stories with other human players instead of building relationships with software. This should come as no surprise to fans of MMORPGs like *World of Warcraft*, in which players regularly team up with dozens of others to defeat the game's bigger challenges. However, these games are still built around a player/designer dichotomy, just with a lot more players interacting at the same time. A truly player "co-created" game would allow players to fundamentally co-design the game, not just allow a collective experience of the finished product. To imagine what such a game would be like requires

one to think differently about how multi-player games are "balanced." This usually entails making sure that each participant has the same view on the world and comparable abilities. But if we took a page from adolescence narratives, which so frequently set at odds the goals of adult and teen, or master and apprentice, it might be possible to imagine a game in which world-builders interact in real-time with world-explorers, where one player designs the challenges that the other player faces, and both learn and adapt based on the outcomes of play.

Another model for designer/player co-creation is the Alternate Reality Game or ARG. Games like *The Beast* and *I Love Bees,* which were built as promotional campaigns for the film *A.I.: Artificial Intelligence* and the video game *Halo 2*, used everyday communications technologies like the Web, e-mail, cell phones, and voice mail as distribution for a series of puzzles and challenges that required cooperation from thousands of geographically dispersed participants to solve. Due to the synchronous nature of these games, with challenges and plot points being added while the game is in play, the traditional designer-player divide partially breaks down. Designers must respond dynamically and intelligently to community actions, so players can have a tangible effect on how the game evolves, even potentially becoming part of the game's narrative world.

The other half of the equation, what made Ender's gaming experience so memorable, was not just that the machine responded in an intelligent way, but that it did so to blur the line between fantasy and reality. The game dug into Ender's personal file, as it were, and brought an important piece of his real world, an image of his brother, into the game. Could a video game be designed to not just interpret our in-game actions, but "know" who we really are? Should it be? Card's generation may have balked at the implications of such a technology for privacy, but behavior on the Web is showing that a new generation may be willing to make significant trade-offs of privacy for access to new kinds of networked experiences. On Flickr and YouTube, users regularly upload photographs and video clips of a highly personal nature, and on social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook users broadcast additional information about their friends and personal tastes. In short, many Web users are voluntarily making themselves more electronically "knowable" all the time. It remains an open question, and a critically important one, whether or not this trend is socially desirable, but it does seem to be a reality. It also seems well within the realm of possibility that a game could harvest the information trail an Internet user leaves behind and represent it back to her as part of the narrative overlay of a game. One of the pioneers of personal blogging, Justin

Hall, has tried just this with his design of what he calls a "Passively Multiplayer Online Game." The PMOG tracks how a player uses the Internet and maps the behavior to the conventions of a Role Playing Game. Hall has stated that such games would help develop a "literacy for personal data control." These games have educational potential, they could teach people "to expect to control, manage, and profit from their personal data trails" (6.1.3). But, like the magic mirror that showed Ender his haunting reflection, might such a game also help the player know herself better?

Stephenson pontificates in *The Diamond Age* that computer programming will be the language of power for the future, if it isn't already. His interactive Primer, then, makes learning to program the central task of Nell's adolescence. Can video games help teach the skills that our own society values most? Literacy scholars disagree on what the single, dominant discourse of power may be, and even whether such a thing exists. It may be naïve to think that, by teaching Standard Written English or computer programming, a game would thoroughly empower its players. Computer literacy may not be enough, but it may be a baseline competency that no individual can afford to be without, so many game designers continue to pursue ways to turn players into coders. At the MIT Media Lab, Mitchel Resnick and his team are developing *Scratch*, a simplified programming environment that allows kids to quickly learn how to make their own games and animations. Matt MacLaurin is developing *Boku* at Microsoft Research as a kid-friendly platform for learning the basics of coding and debugging. The latter uses the metaphor of robots interacting with objects in a 3D landscape as the programming environment. Players "program" these cartoonish robots by assigning them a string of simple rules and commands for how to move about the landscape and interact with the objects they find (Foy).

These projects bear a striking resemblance to an earlier attempt to lower the barrier to entry for computer programming, the Logo programming language that the subjects of Sherry Turkle's psychological study found so evocative. Even the cute robot from *Boku* seems like the spiritual cousin of Logo's famous "turtle" cursor. Yet over 30 years after Logo, computer programming remains a skill of the technological elite, and America faces a waning interest among its youth for science education and careers (Wallace, Kathryn). It is the very scarcity of programming skill, rather than its adoption as a normative discourse, that has ironically made those who master it so successful, at least economically. Perhaps game designers and computer programmers suffer from a systemic bias, an assumption that all they need to do is make programming easier and kids will want

to learn coding because, after all, those computer programmers found it significantly compelling themselves. In making this assumption, they may be ignoring the lesson of other video games: that given sufficient motivation, players will master incredibly complex tasks. In designing a game to teach coding, one should not simplify the task yet remove the motivation for play.

Or perhaps computer programming itself is a red herring, just a helpful metaphor for one's ability to crack the "code" of human culture. In adolescence narratives, the education of the protagonist often takes the form of the movement from an embedded and narrow perspective on life to a fluid and wider perspective, and an awareness of how the cultural machine works. In some of these, that wider perspective includes a deconstruction of the storytelling medium, such that the reader sees the artificiality of the novel or, in the case of *Bully*, the video game. In *A Diamond Age*, it is important both that Nell learns computer programming as a skill, and as a way of seeing through the Primer, which is constructed from code. The design of the Primer tackles head-on the "transparency problem" in new media. Another way to address this problem is through the creation of what Peter Suber calls "nomic" games. In these, the creation or modification of the rules of the game is part of the game itself; "changing the rules is a move." In a multi-player environment, players vote on which rules should be added or deleted from the core list, very much like the process of a democratic government. One might also image a single-player version of this, in which the game allows users access into the "back end" to tinker with the rule set. I would love to see a Raiser game like *Princess Maker 2* have, as one of the possible careers for my adoptive daughter, a "Hacker" track. Once she gains a level of competence in programming, the player could access parts of the raw code from within the game, could modify the statistical algorithm that determines the outcome for the character, perhaps even unlocking hidden outcomes or designing new ones.

These are just some of the strategies and design trends that video games have only begun to exploit. I would like to take a step back and suggest another less structural suggestion: writers of video game narratives should not avoid stories about adolescents, or assume that the best way to serve a multi-generational games audience is to make more "adult" fare for adults while creating games for the teen audience that play into stereotypes of what those teens will appreciate. In the film industry, some of the biggest blockbusters of all time have been the movies that appeal to adults, teens, and children equally. The Harry Potter series is so successful partially because it provides multiple levels of entry and identification, speaking to audiences of all ages and mobilizing

a shared family experience of the novels. The games industry has tended to think of their markets and potential markets as highly stratified: girls desiring "girly" games, teen boys the power fantasy, adult women the casual distraction from work. This is partially the legacy of early games that pit lone individuals against a computer opponent, but it is also a failure of the imagination. Multi-player gaming has been primarily implemented as a process of matching players with equally skilled competitors or collaborators across an anonymous network. I'd like to suggest a corollary to one of the lessons of *The Diamond Age*. Technology is no substitute for good parenting, but good parenting may be served by technological design that can help strengthen personal bonds across generations. For video games to come of age, they may need to get the whole family playing together.

Games about adolescence would benefit adults as much as teens. Thrown into a competitive world with few social safety nets it may be psychologically beneficial to believe that, as an adult, you have gained some mastery over yourself and over the world. The embarrassing errors of youth are behind you, the "storm" has passed. And yet, in a dynamic and technologically fast-developing world, an unselfconscious belief in one's utter self-sufficiency is increasingly a liability. Mastering a single way of seeing and living—as James Gee puts it, one's "primary Discourse"—is no longer sufficient, if it ever was. We are in a period of history that could be characterized as a "ceaseless becoming," where constant social and technological change has been hard-wired into our institutions and practices. For this reason the "adolescent" perspective remains a valuable one to understand well into adulthood. Good adolescence narratives scaffold that understanding, providing adults a conduit into a frame of mind that may be increasingly removed from their experiences So adults shouldn't feel ashamed to enjoy these narratives. We should embrace what is symbolic about adolescence in these stories.

At the same time, we must recognize that these stories encode an inherent conflict of interest. An adult creating stories about adolescence may do so for a variety of reasons: to summarize and hence make a symbolic break from the events of their youth, to instruct the next generation in what they think is important about life, to distill the spirit of an entire generation into one exemplary character, or to warn other adults about youth gone astray. These representations of adolescence, and the models and metaphors that they challenge or reinforce, should not be mistaken for the real thing. However honorable the intentions of the adult author, he or she cannot provide a substitute for the stories of youth in their own voices. Adults should not just tell stories but listen to

them, which means designing systems, games and real institutions, that allow those stories to be heard. Or, when they must speak for youth, like Sofia Coppola acknowledge the contradictions, the problematic shifts in perspective, that this process entails. Adolescence may be symbolically powerful, but it is also a fact of life for real teenagers.

With these caveats in mind, I would like to suggest that it is time to reframe the discourse of adolescence. The "storm and stress" metaphor needs serious revision. In the early 1970s, a generation attempted to venerate the perspective of the child. A meme spread through popular culture, calling for adults to embrace their "inner child." This soon became a kind of joke, an easy target for parody, but not before many had partially accepted and internalized the lesson. We value the child's perspective now, even as we recognize its limits. We can have a positive sense of "childlike wonder" and still admonish someone for acting "childish." We do not yet grant adolescence the same kindness. And yet from my own studies and experiences, I find much to admire about that stage of life: an awareness of, or even an outright preference for, the inevitability of change. A critical self-reflection, and an expectation of personal growth. An ability to live in the moment and plan for the future. A feeling of communitas, a connectedness with one's peers.

So read a coming of age novel. Watch a teen movie. Play a video game. Embrace your inner teenager.

Works Cited

Introduction

Coupland, Douglas. *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991.

Dawkins, Richard. *The Selfish Gene.* 30th Anniversary Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Gee, James Paul. *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Glass, Ira. "What I Learned from Television." Host Ira Glass. *This American Life.* Chicago Public Radio and Ira Glass. 16 March 2007.

"Global Potter Sales Top 300m Mark." *BBC News.* 04 Oct. 2005. 25 April 2007 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/4308548.stm>.

Lakoff, George. *Moral Politics: What Conservatives Know That Liberals Don't.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Mittell, Jason. "A Cultural Approach to Television Genre Theory." *Thinking Outside the Box.* Eds. Edgerton, Gary, and Rose, Brian. Lexington, KY: The University of Press of Kentucky, 2005.

Pollan, Michael. *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's Eye View of the World.* New York: Random House, 2001.

Salinger, J.D. *The Catcher in the Rye.* Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1991.

Thibodeau, Patrick. "Homeland Security Researcher Laments 'Playstation Generation.'" *Computerworld.* 02 March 2007. 25 April 2007 <http://www.computerworld.com/action/article.do?command=viewArticleBasic&articleId=9012093>.

Chapter 1

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women, or, Meg, Beth, and Amy.* Eds. Philips, Anne K., and Eiselein, Gregory. New York: Norton, 2004.

Anonymous. *The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes.* Trans. Staley, George Stephen. 2005. 25 April 2007 <http://www.4olin.com/home.html>.

Arnett, Jeffrey Jensen. "Adolescent Storm and Stress Reconsidered." *American Psychologist.* 54.5 (May 1999): 317-326.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice.* Ed. Pat Rogers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Bakhtin, M.M. "The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel)." *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986. 10-59.

Barstow, Anne. *Joan of Arc: Heretic, Mystic, Shaman.* Studies in Women and Religion, Number 17. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellin, 1986.

Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure. Dir. Stephen Herek. Orion Pictures, 1989.

Blackboard Jungle. Dir. Richard Brooks. MGM, 1955.

Bruner, Jerome. *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds.* Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Carey, Mike. "Signs and Wonders." *Spellbinders.* Vol. 1 #1-6. Marvel Comics, 2005.

Carol, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.* Ed. Richard Kelly. Orchard Park: Broadview Press, 2000.

Dead Poets Society. Dir. Peter Weir. Touchstone Pictures, 1989.

Dunn, Peter N. *The Spanish Picaresque Novel.* Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1979.

Esman, Aaron H. "Shakespeare's Adolescents." *Adolescent Psychiatry.* (1998). 25 April 2007 <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3882/is_199801/ai_n8795810>.

Feinberg, Barbara. *Welcome to the Lizard Motel: Protecting the Imaginative Lives of Children.* Boston: Beacon Press, 2004.

Ferris Bueller's Day Off. Dir. John Hughes. Paramount Pictures, 1986.

Fielding, Sarah. *The Governess.* Ed. Ward, Candace. Toronto: Broadview Press, 2005.

Fitzgerald, Francis. "The Influence of Anxiety: What the Problem with Young Adult Novels." *Harper's Magazine.* Sept. 2004: 62-70.

The 400 Blows (Les Quatre Cents Coups). Dir. Francois Truffaut. Cocinor, 1959.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams.* Translated by A. A. Brill. New York: Modern Library, 1994.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. Vol. XIV. Harvard Classics Shelf of Fiction. New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1917; Bartleby.com, 2000. 25 April 2007 <http://www.bartleby.com/314/>.

Hall, G. Stanely. *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1904.

Jones, Owain. "Tomboy Tales: The Rural, Nature and the Gender of Childhood." *Gender, Place and Culture*. 6.2 (June 1999): 117-136.

Kerenyi, Karl. "The Trickster in Relation to Greek Mythology." In *Trickster: American Indian Myth*. Ed. Radin, Paul. New York: Schocken Books, 1972.

Kett, Joseph F. "Adolescence and Youth in Nineteenth-Century America." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*. 2.2 (Autumn 1971): 283-298.

Kiell, Norman. *The Adolescent Through Fiction: A Psychological Approach*. New York: International Universities Press, 1959.

King, Stephen. *Carrie*. New York: New American Library, 1974.

Livi-Bacci, Massimo. *The Population of Europe*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

Locke, John. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

McAdams, Dan P. *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self*. New York: Guilford Press, 1993.

Mead, Margaret. *Coming of Age in Samoa*. New York: Harper-Collins, 2001.

Miles, David H. "The Picaro's Journey to the Confessional: The Changing Image of the Hero in the German Bildungsroman." *PMLA*. 89.5 (Oct. 1974): 980-992.

Miller, Arthur. *The Crucible: A Play in Four Acts*. New York: Penguin Books, 1976.

Moretti, Franco. *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*. Trans. Sbragia, Albert. New York: Verso, 2000.

My Girl. Dir. Howard Zieff. Columbia Pictures, 1991.

Paterson, Katherine. *The Bridge to Terabithia*. New York: Harper Collins, 1977.

Pinsent, Pan. "Theories of Genre and Gender: Change and Continuity in the School Story." *Modern Children's Literature: An Introduction*. Ed. Reynolds, Kimberly. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Prickett, Steven. *Victorian Fantasy*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2005.

Rodriguez-Luis, Julio. "Picaras: A Modal Approach to the Picaresque." *Comparative Literature*. 31.1 (Winter 1979): 32-46.

Rousseau, Jean Jacques. *Emile*. Trans. Foxley, Barbara. New York: Dutton, 1966.

Swales, Martin. *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

Traube, Elizabeth. "Reply to Moffat."*Cultural Anthropology*. 5.4 (Nov. 1990): 374-379.

Trites, Roberta Seelinger. "The Harry Potter Novels as a Test Case for Adolescent Literature." *Style*. 35.3 (Fall 2001): 472-487.

Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995.

Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Ria Press. June 2005. 25 April 2007 <http://www.riapress.com/riapress/product.lasso?productid=87>.

Ward, Candace. "Introduction." *The Governess*. Ed. Ward, Candace. Toronto: Broadview Press, 2005. *The Wild One*. Dir. Laszlo Benedek. Columbia Pictures, 1953.

Chapter 2

Anderson, Kasia. "The Virgin Filmmaker: Sofia Coppola Talks About Her Directorial Debut." *Reel.com*. c2000. 27 April 2007 <http://www.reel.com/reel.asp?node=features/offhollywood/festivals/sfiff#reviews>.

Anderson, Melissa. "The Sun Queen." *Film Comment*. 42.5 (Sep/Oct 2006): 27-30.

Canby, Vincent. "Film View; Anthologies Can Be a Bargain." *The New York Times*. 12 March 1989.

Chang, Chris. "The Virgin Suicides." *Film Comment*. 36.2 (Mar/Apr 2000): 73-74.

Corliss, Richard and Shickel, Richard. "Schemes and Dreams for Christmas." *Time Magazine*. 24 Dec. 1990.

The Devil Wears Prada. Dir. David Frankel. 20th Century Fox, 2006.

Eugenides, Jeffrey. *The Virgin Suicides*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1993.

"Filmmaker Sofia Coppola." Host Terry Gross. *Fresh Air from WHYY*. 23 Feb 2004. 27 April 2007 <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1692826>.

Gruner, Elizabeth Rose. "Cinderella, Marie Antoinette, and Sara: Roles and Role Models in *A Little Princess*." *The Lion and the Unicorn*. 22.2 (1998): 163-187.

Heywood, Leslie and Drake, Jennifer. "Introduction." *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism*. Eds. Heywood, Leslie and Drake, Jennifer. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 1-24.

Heywood, Leslie and Drake, Jennifer.. "We Read America Like a Script: Activism in the Third Wave; or, Enough Phantoms of Nothing."*Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism*. Eds. Heywood, Leslie and Drake, Jennifer. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 40-54.

Hinson, Hal. "The Godfather Part III." *The Washington Post*. 25 Dec. 1990: B1.

Holmlund, Chris. "Postfeminism from A to G." *Cinema Journal*. 44.2 (Winter 2005): 116-121.

Krueger, Lisa. "Sofia Coppola." *Interview*. 30.4 (April 2000): 46.

LaSalle, Mick. "It's a 'Godfather' You Can't Refuse." *The San Francisco Chronicle*. 25 Dec. 1990: E1.

Libby, Brian. "The Coppola Clan's Best Director?" *Salon.com*. 23 Sept. 2003. 26 April 2007 <http://dir.salon.com/story/ent/movies/int/2003/09/23/sofia_coppola/index.html>.

Lick the Star. Dir. Sofia Coppola. Film Movement, 1998.

"Lost and Found Sound: Sofia Coppola at Age 5." Producers Silva, Nikki and Nelson, Davia with Folger, Laura. *All Things Considered*. 27 Feb. 2004 <http://www.npr.org/programs/lnfsound/stories/040227.sofiacoppola.html>.

Lost in Translation. Dir. Sofia Coppola. Focus Features, 2003.

Maciel, Diana. "Sofia Coppola Lets You Into Her World and Into Heaven-27." *Flux*. 14 April 1999. 27 April 2007 <http://www.journalism.sfsu.edu/flux/specials/coppola1.html>.

Malcolm, Derek. "Three Get Lost in Manhattan." *Manchester Guardian Weekly*. 19 Nov. 1989: 26.

Marie Antoinette. Dir. Sofia Coppola. Columbia Pictures, 2006.

Mars Jones, Adam. "Manhattan Transference: New York Stories." *The Independent*. 9 Nov. 1989: 15.

Murphy Brown. Creator Diane English. CBS, 1988-98.

New York Stories. Directors Woody Allen, Francis Ford Coppola, and Martin Scorsese. Touchstone Pictures, 1989.

Padgett, Tania. "Page Burners: Sex and the Teenage Girl." *Newsday*. 4 April 2006: B04.

Pipher, Mary. *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls.* New York: Putnam, 1994.

San Filippo, Maria. "Lost in Translation." *Cineaste.* 29.1 (Winter 2003): 26.

Siegel, Deborah L. "Reading Between the Waves: Feminist Historiography in a 'Postfeminist' Moment." *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism.* Eds. Heywood, Leslie and Drake, Jennifer. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 55-82.

Tobias, Scott. "Virgin Territory." *The A.V. Club.* 3 May 2000. 13 April 2007 <http://www.avclub.com/content/node/22872>.

Traister, Rebecca. "Sympathy for the She-Devil." *Salon.com.* 30 June 2006. 27 April 2007 <http://www.salon.com/mwt/feature/2006/06/30/women_bosses/>.

White, Armond. "Petulance & Pantyhose: Sofia Coppola's post-feminist platitudes." *New York Press.* 9 Sep. 2003. 27 April 2007 <http://www.nypress.com/print.cfm?content_id=8852>.

The Virgin Suicides. Dir. Sofia Coppola. Paramount Classics, 1999.

Wiseman, Rosalind. *Queen Bees and Wannabes: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends, and Other Realities of Adolescence.* New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002.

Working Girl. Dir. Mike Nichols. 20th Century Fox, 1988.

Chapter 3

Aarseth, Espen. *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Bensley, Lillian, and Van Eenwyk, Juliet. "Video Games and Real-Life Aggression: Review of the Literature." *Journal of Adolescent Health.* 29 (2001): 244-257.

Birdwell, Ken. "The Cabal: Valve's Design Process for Creating *Half-Life.*" *Gamasutra.* 10 Dec. 1999. 1 May 2007 <http://www.gamasutra.com/features/19991210/birdwell_01.htm>.

Bogost, Ian. "Persuasive Games: Taking Bully Seriously." *Serious Games Source.* 2 Nov. 2006. 1 May 2007 <http://seriousgamessource.com/features/feature_110206_bully_1.php>.

Bully. Rockstar Games, 2006.

Card, Orson Scott. "Constructing the Ideal Computer Game, Part I." *Compute!* 38 (July 1983), 30.

Card, Orson Scott. *Ender's Game.* New York: Tor, 1994.

Cassell, Justine, and Henry Jenkins, eds. *From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998.

Castronova, Edward. "Virtual Worlds: A First-Hand Account of Market and Society on the Cyberian Frontier." *The Game Design Reader: A Rules of Play Anthology*. Eds. Salen, Katie, and Zimmerman, Eric. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005. 814-63.

Fable. Designer Peter Molyneux. Lionhead Studios, 2004.

Frasca, Gonzalo. "Simulation versus Narrative: Introduction to Ludology." *The Video Game Theory Reader*. Eds. Wolf, Mark J.P., and Perron, Bernard. New York: Routledge, 2003. 221-36.

Foy, Laura. "TechFest '07: Boku: Video Games That Teach You How to Program." *Channel 10*. 20 March 2007. 1 May 2007 <http://on10.net/Blogs/laura/techfest-07-boku/>.

"Game Player Data." *Facts and Research*. ESA: Entertainment Software Association. c2007. 1 May 2007 <http://www.theesa.com/facts/gamer_data.php>.

Gee, James Paul. "Literacy, Discourse, and Linguistics: Introduction and What is Literacy?" *Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook*. Eds. Cushman, Ellen, et al. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1989. 525-544.

Gee, James Paul. *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Goodale, Gloria, and Wood, Daniel B. "As Screen Violence Rises, So Do New Tactics to Curb It." *The Christian Science Monitor*. 23 Feb. 2007: USA 1.

Griffiths, Mark. "Violent Video Games and Aggression: A Review of the Literature." *Aggression and Violent Behavior*. 4.2 (1999): 203-212.

Hall, Justin. *Passively Multiplayer Online Games*. 14 Feb. 2007. 1 May 2007 <http://www.passivelymultiplayer.com/PMOGPaper.html>.

Johnson, Steven. *Everything Bad Is Good For You: How Today's Popular Culture Is Actually Making Us Smarter*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2005.

Juul, Jesper. "The Game, the Player, the World: Looking for the Heart of Gameness." *Level Up: Digital Games Research Conference Proceedings*. Eds. Copier, Marinka, and Raessens, Joost. Utrecht: Utrecht University Press, 2003. 30-45.

Kohlberg, Lawrence. *The Psychology of Moral Development: the Nature and Validity of Moral Stages*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984.

Koster, Raph. *A Theory of Fun for Game Design*. Scottsdale, AZ: Paraglyph Press, 2005.

Markoff, John. "Entrepreneurs See a Web Guided by Common Sense." *The New York Times*. 12 November 2006. 1 May 2007 <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/12/business/12web.html>.

Pesce, Mark. "Magic Mirror: The Novel as Software Development Platform." *Media in Transition Conference at MIT*. 19 Dec. 1999. 1 May 2007 <http://web.mit.edu/m-i-t/articles/index_pesce.html>.

Piaget, Jean. *The Psychology of the Child*. Paris: Presses Universalis de France, 1966.

Princess Maker 2. Designer Takami Akai. Gainax, 1993.

Psychonauts. Designer Tim Schafer. DoubleFine Productions, 2005.

"Report from the NPD Group Shows 45 Percent of Heavy Video Gamers Are in the Six- to 17-Year-Old Age Group." *The NPD Group*. 19 Sept. 2006. 5 May 2007 <http://www.npd.com/press/releases/press_060919a.html>.

Ryan, Richard M., and Rigby, C. Scott, and Przybylski, Andrew. "The Motivational Pull of Video Games: A Self Determination Theory Approach." *Motivation and Emotion*. 30.4 (Dec. 2006): 347-363.

Sconce, Jeffrey. *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000.

Sherman, Sharon R. "Perils of the Princess: Gender and Genre in Video Games." *Western Folklore*. 56.3-4 (Summer-Autumn, 1997): 243-258.

The Sims. Designer Will Wright. Maxis, 2000.

Stephenson, Neal. *The Diamond Age or, A Young Lady's Illustrated Primer*. New York: Bantam, 1995.

Suber, Peter. *Nomic: A Game of Self-Amendment*. 1996. 1 May 2007 <http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/nomic.htm>.

Tokimeki Memorial. Konami, 1994.

Turkle, Sherry. *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005.

Wallace, David Foster. "Tense Present: Democracy, English, and the Wars over Usage." *Harper's Magazine*. April 2001. 39-58.

Wallace, Kathryn. "America's Brain Drain Crisis." *Reader's Digest*. Dec. 2005. 1 May 2007 <http://www.rd.com/content/america-s-brain-drain-crisis/>.

Wright, Will. "SXSW: Will Wright Keynote." *Wonderland*. 13 March 2007. 1 May 2007 <http://www.wonderlandblog.com/wonderland/2007/03/sxsw_will_wrigh.html>.

Yi, Matthew. "They Got Game." *The San Francisco Chronicle*. 18 Dec. 2004: A1.