



**Imagining Selves: The Politics of Representation, Film Narratives, and Adult Education.** Aristides Gazetas. New York: Peter Lang, 2000. 219 pp.

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In his book *Imagining Selves: The Politics of Representation, Film Narratives, and Adult Education* Gazetas takes five postmodern approaches to questions of identity and representation, and chooses a film to explicate each theory. He uses Lacan to analyze *Fried Green Tomatoes*, Foucault to understand *Mephisto*, Derrida to interpret *Being There*, Baudrillard to look at *Solaris*, and finally, Lyotard to read *Landscape in the Mist*. Then, Gazetas connects each critique/theoretical explication with perspectives from adult learning theory.

Although the structure of the text is tight, and Gazetas's understanding of film history and postmodern theory is wide-ranging, the text itself is limited. He uses film critiques to talk about theory rather than the other way around, and the result is a textbook-like analysis. Because of this, the reader encounters pages of analysis of *Fried Green Tomatoes*, as well as references to films such as *Jules and Jim*, and *The Conformist* that thoroughly ignore their queer content. I am sure that Gazetas has read Vito Russo's landmark study, *The Celluloid Closet*, and the many queer theorists who write about identity and representation. He expresses his concern for the expression and liberation of all aspects of identity through education. However, because he is using *Fried Green Tomatoes* as an example of Lacan's theory of the functioning of the unconscious in psychoanalysis, he cannot offer us the rich filmic analysis of which he is clearly capable.

Another limitation is that he puts the theorists on ice. Because he is explicating Lacan, Foucault, Derrida, Baudrillard, and Lyotard for audiences presumably unfamiliar with them, he stops their work in time, ignoring important critiques from feminist, postcolonial, and queer theorists who have contributed much to these debates throughout the 1980s and 1990s. While this strategy may be necessary to make the book accessible to readers unfamiliar with these discourses, I wonder if he could have introduced at least some critical concerns.

Gazetas does engage with the work of Patti Lather and Deborah Britzman--a definite plus--but he does not mention the important contributions of authors such as Lata Mani, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Diana Fuss, Judith Butler, or Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick to the debate. Also, Gazetas's use of secondary sources is unfortunate. He quotes theorists through the work of their interpreters too frequently for my taste, and when he does cite an author's work directly, he focuses on introductory texts, such as *The Foucault Reader*, a compilation of essays and excerpts, rather than the major texts. Perhaps he chose introductory works to make initial references accessible to readers new to these theorists, but that could have been accomplished more appropriately with a separate bibliography.



These critiques do not mean that Gazetas's book is not useful. Instead, they speak to the difficulty of interdisciplinary projects, especially of speaking to three discrete audiences at once: postmodern theorists, educators, and film studies scholars.

In fact, Gazetas's analysis shines in his application of postmodern theory to adult learning. He brings Lacan's notion of desire--the drive toward psychic unity--to the ways in which adult learning is initiated, and he emphasizes the role of figurative language and the unconscious in liberation struggles. Foucault's genealogical method is deftly applied to program planning in adult education, and Derrida's concept of intertextuality can speak to relationships among students, teachers, history, chance, and educational practice. Gazetas also considers Barthes's notion of myth making as it applies to adult identity formation, and urges educators to critically analyze myths and the ways they are naturalized through societal norms. And finally, he argues that if Lyotard is correct, and scientific discourses lead to a kind of homogeneity that is the postmodern condition, then the narrative practices of adult education--multiplicitous and politically situated as they are--offer a respite from its clutches. Lyotard's notion of *dissensus*, the opposition to any discourse that leads to conformity or consensus, also fits nicely into the multiple voices of adult education classrooms.

The question that Gazetas leaves undeveloped is that of the relationship between postmodern theory and critical pedagogy. He concludes by citing the similarities between lesser aspects of postmodernism and critical pedagogy; certainly they are there. However, the bigger problem is this: Political mobilization depends on some call to ethical behavior, some metanarrative of human rights, and postmodern thought is the antithesis of this. How is it that educators committed to education for social change can use postmodern theory in ways that are productive and theoretically aligned? This is a difficult question, and I am impressed that Gazetas even mentions it. Most writers avoid even pointing down this road.

In sum, Gazetas's *Imagining Selves* offers readers an innovative way to read adult education, postmodern theory, and film studies side-by-side. If the film analysis is less engaging than it could have been, Gazetas makes up for it with provocative linkages between adult learning theory and postmodern theory. Adult educators will benefit from his rethinking of the theoretical foundations of their field, and postmodern theorists will be broadened by the educational applications. *Imagining Selves* has much to offer.

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