Spinning Popular Culture as Public Pedagogy
Critical Reflections and Transformative Possibilities
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*Spinning Popular Culture* is a book about the effervescent activity lying (perhaps dormant) beneath the surface of seemingly inert and mundane cultural items in everyday life. It is a book about the power of the Everyday to maintain loyalty to, or, at the very least, an unthinking acceptance of particular ways of being in the world. It is also about the capacity of such seemingly mundane artefacts to provoke resistance to this, and to enliven the visioning of social alternatives. It is a book about individual critical analyses of album cover art.

Following a brief history of the development of the aesthetics of the packaging of recorded music, eleven internationally recognised critical scholars each interrogate the cover of a particular vinyl record album they grew up with or with which they have some personal experience or resonance. The totality of the cultural artefact that is the vinyl record album is, essentially, dissected and considered from perspectives of paratextuality and pedagogy.

In this book, the contributors make the connections of everyday life to memory and history by locating the album in their personal biographies. They then look to the artwork on the album cover to explore the pedagogical possibilities they see resident there. The individual chapters, each in very different ways, provide examples of the exposure of such broad public pedagogies in practice, through critiquing the artwork from both reproductive and resistance positions.

Hopefully, readers will be encouraged to look more consciously at the Everyday – the mundane and the taken-for-granted – in their own lives with a view to becoming more critically aware of the messages circulating, unnoticed, through popular culture. *Spinning Popular Culture* might also encourage the reader to pull out that box of old vinyl records sitting in the back of a storage cupboard somewhere and revisit and rethink their histories. Or maybe, to just find a turntable somewhere and play them one more time!
Spinning Popular Culture as Public Pedagogy
IMAGINATION AND PRAXIS: CRITICALITY AND CREATIVITY IN EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

VOLUME 11

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SCOPE
Current educational reform rhetoric around the globe repeatedly invokes the language of 21st century learning and innovative thinking while contrarily re-enforcing, through government policy, high stakes testing and international competition, standardization of education that is exceedingly reminiscent of 19th century Taylorism and scientific management. Yet, as the steam engines of educational “progress” continue down an increasingly narrow, linear, and unified track, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the students in our classrooms are inheriting real world problems of economic instability, ecological damage, social inequality, and human suffering. If young people are to address these social problems, they will need to activate complex, interconnected, empathetic and multiple ways of thinking about the ways in which peoples of the world are interconnected as a global community in the living ecosystem of the world. Seeing the world as simultaneously local, global, political, economic, ecological, cultural and interconnected is far removed from the Enlightenment’s objectivist and mechanistic legacy that presently saturates the status quo of contemporary schooling. If we are to derail this positivist educational train and teach our students to see and be in the world differently, the educational community needs a serious dose of imagination. The goal of this book series is to assist students, practitioners, leaders, and researchers in looking beyond what they take for granted, questioning the normal, and amplifying our multiplicities of knowing, seeing, being and feeling to, ultimately, envision and create possibilities for positive social and educational change. The books featured in this series will explore ways of seeing, knowing, being, and learning that are frequently excluded in this global climate of standardized practices in the field of education. In particular, they will illuminate the ways in which imagination permeates every aspect of life and helps develop personal and political awareness. Featured works will be written in forms that range from academic to artistic, including original research in traditional scholarly format that addresses unconventional topics (e.g., play, gaming, ecopedagogy, aesthetics), as well as works that approach traditional and unconventional topics in unconventional formats (e.g., graphic novels, fiction, narrative forms, and multi-genre texts). Inspired by the work of Maxine Greene, this series will showcase works that “break through the limits of the conventional” and provoke readers to continue arousing themselves and their students to “begin again” (Greene, Releasing the Imagination, 1995, p. 109).

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IN MEMORIAM

PEPI LEISTYNA

1963–2015

An ideological brother to many of us, a scholar-activist and musician extraordinaire

When this book project was in its very early stages of conceptualisation, one of the very first people I contacted about contributing was Pepi Leistyna. We had met a year or so earlier in Sicily and had maintained a regular Facebook and email relationship from that time. Of the many things that amazed me, both Pepi’s knowledge of the technical side of the music craft – a seemingly life-long passion for him and honed through his work as guitar/sound tech for many musicians – and his own musicianship stood out.

His encouragement of this project was, like most of the things in Pepi’s life, huge, but he couldn’t fit a contribution into his schedule at that time. His Facebook post says it all.

December 19, 2013

12/19, 11:04pm

Pepi Leistyna

Dude, that sounds like an awesome project! I wish I could but I've got Palgrave on my ass for a late book contract and I want to get my book on Israel/Palestine done so I'm buried. Thanks for thinking of me as music is life

Very much our loss.

“If you’re not angry, you’re not paying attention”
1. INTRODUCTION

[The late 60s were] a time when, having purchased a new gatefold album, you would get it home and religiously study every image, comma, and hieroglyph on the sleeve for any last nuance of possible meaning. It was vital to believe that the group were trying to contact you through the images, and was saying deep things about the juxtaposition of totally disparate things. I scrupulously read all lyrics, all the credits, and spent hours thinking to myself: “Now what do they mean – Printed in Slough?”

Andy Partridge (Thorgerson, 2005, p. 220)
Our Romance With Vinyl

There is something about the vinyl record album that evokes affection for and admiration from cross-generational aficionados/collectors and music listeners alike. It is this affective connection that has meant that, though going through periods when obituaries of the vinyl were appearing frequently and the purported advances in music technology lauded, vinyl has continued to survive and, according to present sales figures at least, is experiencing a rapid growth in new sales across almost all genres. It is not just the re-issue of “vintage albums” that is responsible for this growth; vinyl versions are now almost-standard formats of increasing numbers of releases of “new music” as well.

The vinyl format has seen out the challenges of the cassette tape and 8-track cartridge (such challenges being almost exclusively based on the problems of mobility of the record album¹), it has weathered the increasing sterility of electronic forms of music carriage² – cd, flac. files and the now almost-ubiquitous mp3 – and sits on the edge of new technological developments that attempt to bring whatever it is that vinyl has to contemporary gadgets. One interesting example of the attempt to capture the warmth and sonic range of vinyl in an electronic format is Neil Young’s PONO format.

Originally developed under the name PureTone, Neil Young and his collaborators changed the name to Pono to avoid trademark clashes and conflicts with an already existing product of that name. Pono is an Hawaiian word meaning “righteous and good” (Young, 2012b, p. 428), and is essentially a high resolution music download site and a high quality audio player intended to overcome some of the leaching of the "viscerality" of music captured on vinyl. The problem, as Young describes it, resides in the technological changes in the ways of capturing the musical experience:

“You know, the way people experience music today is so different from how it used to be. It’s not the same part of the culture that it was. I think a lot of that has to do with the quality of the sound, so I am addressing that with PureTone. The music is not the problem. It’s the sound.” (Young, 2012b, p. 13)

However, even with a concerted attempt to develop a sonically equivalent to vinyl, there is still the widespread feeling that something greater has been lost with the diminution of the availability of recorded music in vinyl format. While much of the concern over the replacement of the vinyl album by, initially, compact disc and now the mp3 download resides in sound reproduction quality issues, one cannot discount the sense of loss of the broader listener experience – social, aesthetic and emotional – attendant upon browsing for and listening to recorded music in non-vinyl formats. Alex Turner, lead singer and guitarist of the Arctic Monkeys and the Last Shadow Puppets, captures something of the social context surrounding the vinyl album in recalling his initial engagement with the music of The Smiths:

“The guy who taught me how to drive lent me two Smiths LPs – the first record and ‘Hatful Of Hollow’. I’d been bought a Best Of on CD by an aunt before
INTRODUCTION

then, but I wasn’t quite ready for it. But he lent those two records to me one afternoon, and I put them on the record player in my mum and dad’s living room. It was something about the ceremony of taking it out of the sleeve, putting in on the turntable and feeling that you almost had to sit with it that got me into that band.

I sometimes think that if it hadn’t have been for that format, in a way, it might have taken me ages to discover them. (Turner, 2012)

Nostalgically rooted or not, the experience of music consumption is clearly different for most vinyl compared with mp3 formats. Something of the social experience of vinyl is captured in many of the chapters in this volume, often in quite personal and specific detail. More broadly, the playing of and listening to a vinyl album at social events, where the album cover might be read, lyrics (if available on the cover or as an insert) deciphered and used as forms of sing-along (or scream-along) sheets, and the minutiae of the album art combed for the smallest detail, often in pairs or small groups, is leeched from the listening experience as music recordings moved progressively (?) through increasingly sonically and aesthetically minimalist formats. The first releases on compact disc often contained versions of the vinyl release cover reduced in size to fit the disc case. With the often poor-quality printing processes involved, the text and the finer details of album art were largely inaccessible to all but those with the most acute vision, effectively relegating the cover of a cd to functioning almost exclusively as a disc-identifier: this case holds this cd.

The chapters in this volume address issues of the impact of the album cover art on listeners/purchasers/consumers of the album package. However, in the wider literature on the creation, performance and reception of music, there appear to be very few commentaries on the importance of album cover art from the point of view of the artist/performer. One artist who has written of this is Neil Young.

[A]lbum covers are very important to me. They put a face on the nature of the project. I know albums are viewed as passé by some today, I am an album artist and I am not ready to give up on my form. I think it has a future and a past. The album cover and liner notes reach out to the music lover, filling them with images and helping to illuminate the story behind the music, the feeling coming from the artist. My first album cover told a lot about me, without words…When CDs came along, it was more of a challenge to present our art. The CD package was about 25% the size of an album. Everything had to be small. The lyrics were not legible without glasses for anyone over a certain age. So our whole pallet was changed by the advent of the CD. (Young, 2012b, pp. 265, 266)

For such artists, the process of arriving at the album cover was clearly an often significant part of the overall creative process involved in the production of The Album. Whilst perhaps some albums had their cover art decided upon by record companies [and occasionally by legal challenges or the prospect of obscenity
charges], more frequently the connection between the album of music and the artwork on the cover packaging that music was very close and, at times, intense. The recording artist was/is often directly involved in, at the very least, the conceptualization if not the actual creation of the final album art itself. To indulge my personal interest in Neil Young’s take on this just a little further, it is worth quoting at some length his description of the creation of the cover art for one of his most significant albums:

One of my favorite album covers is *On the Beach*. Of course that was the name of a movie and I stole it for my record, but that doesn’t matter. The idea for that cover came like a bolt from the blue. Gary [Burden] and I traveled around getting all the pieces to put together. We went to a junkyard in Santa Anna to get the tail fin and fender from a 1959 Cadillac, complete with taillights, and watched them cut it off a Cadillac for us; then we went to a patio supply place to get the umbrella and table. We picked up the bad polyester yellow jacket and white pants at a sleazy men’s shop, where we watched a shoplifter getting caught red-handed and busted. Gary and I were stoned on some dynamite weed and stood dumbfounded, watching the bust unfold. This girl was screaming and kicking! Finally we grabbed a local LA paper to use as a prop. It had this amazing headline: SEN. BUCKLEY CALLS FOR NIXON TO RESIGN. Next we took the palm tree I had taken around the world on the Tonight’s the Night tour. We then placed all of these pieces carefully in the sand at Santa Monica Beach. Then we shot it. Bob Seidemann was the photographer, the same one who took the famous Blind Faith cover shot of the naked young girl holding an airplane. We used the crazy pattern from the umbrella insides for the inside of the sleeve that held the vinyl recording. That was the creative process at work. We lived for that, Gary and I, and we still do. (Young, 2012b, pp. 265–266)

Perhaps the nostalgia for the vinyl record album might be seen as arising from a form of social loss through the increasing disappearance of human creative faculties compressed and etched into both the groove of the vinyl album and its cover. Certainly, the looming demise of the vinyl album cover led noted cover artists and designers to express their concern. One, Peter Blake, designer of what many argue is the most important album cover of all time, the Beatles’ 1967 *Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*, lamented such a possibility: *It [album art] survived from the LP to the CD, but… if that becomes obsolete then I guess album art won’t exist. I think it would be a big loss* (Bignell & Sunyer, 2008). Peter Saville, another album designer and artist takes the implication of such loss even further, into the realms of ’social disaster’:

Mr Saville believes that cover art is dead, not just because of technology, but because the youth culture in which albums once operated has changed: “We have a social disaster on our hands,” he said. “The things that pop music was there to do for us have all been done… there’s nothing to rail against now.

When I was 15, in the North-west of England…. the record cover to me was like a picture window to another world. Seeing an Andy Warhol illustration
on a Velvet Underground album was a revelation…. It was the art of your generation… true pop art. (Bignell & Sunyer, 2008)

This book is meant to provide an alternative view of the impact of the album cover in this time, positing a more optimistic and liberatory potential than perhaps those who have foretold the death of the album over several decades now.

IDENTITY, COMMUNITY AND THE PORTOBELLO ROAD RECOLLECTIONS PROJECT

As the product of the material culture of its time, the album cover carries traces of desire, hope, and belonging. Many cultural artefacts exhibit a multifaceted character— as both items of individual consumer desire and as a means whereby individual and collective identities are forged, sustained, and embedded in forms of lifestyle. In this, record albums are certainly no exception, with both musical style and artistic genres contributing to senses of desire and belonging. David Riesman was one of the first to investigate the importance of cultural goods to the newly-emerging teenage consumer insofar as fitting in or belonging was concerned:

In the fall of 1947 I conducted some interviews among teenagers in Chicago concerning their tastes in popular music and also consulted professional musicians, jukebox listings, and other sources to round out my impressions. My interest was principally in seeing how these young people used their musical interests in the process of peer-group adjustment. Like the trading cards which symbolize competitive consumption for the eight to eleven-year-olds, the collection of records seemed to be one way of establishing one’s relatedness to the group, just as the ability to hum current tunes was part of the popularity kit. (Riesman, Denney, & Glazer, 2001, p. 77)

Jan Butler explored the role that styles of album cover art in the 1960s and early 1970s played in anchoring aspects of personal identity in the psychedelic music scene and associated communities, and, in drawing upon the work of Ellen Willis, argues that albums in general offer the basis through which disparate individuals can feel themselves to be part of a community while retaining a sense of their individual freedom (Butler, 2013, p. 186).

A widely-acknowledged example of the individual-community identity relationship expressed through cultural representations of individual social and geographic genealogies was the Portobello Road ReCollection project in London in 2010. A collaborative project involving artist Natasha Mason and photographer Teresa Crawley working with local residents, the project involved compiling something of a musical genealogy of the community and constructing a 2-metre high photographic representation of that history via vinyl album cover spines and full covers attached to a one hundred-metre long wall. At one end of the wall, the visitor was presented with an explanation of the point and purpose of the project and
a quote attributed to Joe Strummer, former Clash and Mescaleros singer/songwriter/guitarist. Although clearly not referring to the ReCollections project (Strummer died in 2002, the ReCollections project was launched in 2010), this quote captures the importance of artifacts of the everyday carry for senses of history, belonging and identity:

_There’s a brick wall in Notting Hill near Portobello market that I would rather look at for hours than go to Madame Tussaud’s and it’s totally free and full of history_ (EgoTrip, 16/1/2013).

The ReCollections project was scheduled to have a 6-month residency, but its popularity, both with locals and visitors, led to a much longer run. Such popularity, one suspects, was derived from the effectiveness with which the work connected to local subjectivities and displayed these by way of public pedagogical processes to a much wider (global) audience. A major local community website described the project:

Portobello ReCollection, a new public artwork, is now on Portobello Road on the section between Oxford Gardens and Golborne Road, opposite the Spanish School. The work is a 2 metre high 100 metre long array of LP spines running along the wall and it will be in place for next six months. Artist Natasha Mason and photographer Teresa Crawley hit upon the simple but effective idea of gathering all the LP sleeves (that’s long playing records for our younger readers) and stacked them up as if they were on a shelve [sic] along Portobello Road...
Road. This echoes an interior decor feature that almost every home had before CDs came along. Mason and Crawley consulted a wide range of local people to decide which albums should be represented, choosing ones that have a connection to the area. This long stretch of previously bare brick wall has now become known as the Portobello Wall. It’s been the site for three previous public art works supported by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and local businesses. The new work is perhaps the most intriguing so far and certainly the most specific to the area. (n.a., 2010)

In identity terms, the album cover itself functions as far more than an illustrated protective sleeve for the vinyl disc – it also carries semiotic markers of shared histories, futures and senses of belonging and Home. I would argue that this occurs through two separate but interconnected processes: the paratextual and the public pedagogical.

ALBUM COVERS AS PARATEXTUAL & PUBLIC PEDAGOGICAL

The contributors to this volume have looked deeply, critically, and in highly idiosyncratic ways at the function of the album cover as both paratext and as public pedagogical artefact. The formats of album covers have been explored in part as paratexts aimed at the general public, mediating to some degree both decisions to purchase the album and the expectations of the type of listening experience that purchase might lead to. As importantly (and probably more significantly), the contributors have viewed album covers as public pedagogical elements with both conservative and disruptive, oppressive and liberatory political potential.

THE PARATEXTUAL

Album covers are prime examples of what, in the literary theory world, have been called paratexts, and, as such, it is germane to the analytic and pedagogical purposes of the individual chapters contained in this volume to make the connection between the cover art and their function as paratexts visible. Whilst the origin of the idea of the paratext is to be found in the literary analysis of the book – fictional or other – in the sense of theoretically uncovering the more complete range of core and peripheral aspects of a text that, in combination, became one with the Text. The same concepts derived from literary paratext are readily applicable to understanding the broad social, political and pedagogical functionality of the record album cover.

Paratexts, in summary, are those elements associated with the Text (in this case, a musical text, or text in the form of music) that mediate the reader’s (in the original analysis) or listener’s (in the context of the current volume) experience of that text. Some paratexts operate as entry level paratexts, preparing or orienting the listener for the text to be engaged with. Genette described such a device as *an airlock that helps the reader pass without too much respiratory difficulty from one world to
the other, a sometimes delicate operation, especially when the second world is a fictional one (Genette, 1997, p. 408). In the contemporary world of mass and social media marketing and communications, the release of a new piece of recorded music would typically be heralded by various forms of advertising, online promotion and individualized emailing campaigns (for example, online megastore, Amazon, regularly sends its customers material regarding upcoming releases personalized according to previous purchasing histories and searches of its catalogue). At times, paper handbills and graffiti appear promoting the piece from a fan-base. Reviews of new music appear across the range of print and electronic magazines and newspapers. Depending on the location of the review, the potential listener is likely to consider or appraise the text as one to listen to or not. For example, a review for an album/disc/download carried in a mainstream, high-circulation generalist newspaper is quite likely to deter purchasers/listeners who would usually put their faith in the critiques contained in specialist magazines. The presence of a review of an album in, for instance, *Uncut* would function paratextually to prepare a knowing reader – that is, one who is familiar with the type of music covered by that magazine – for a certain type of listening experience. To quote Genette again, such a factual paratext consists not of an explicit message [verbal or other] but of a fact whose existence alone, if known to the public, provides some commentary on the text and influences how the text is received. Two examples are the age or sex of the author…Do we ever read “a novel by a woman” exactly as we read “a novel” plain and simple, that is, a novel by a man? … I am not saying that people must know those facts; I am saying only that people who do know them read Proust’s work differently from people who do not. (Genette, 1997, pp. 7–8)

Transposing elements of the literary text to the album cover, elements such as the title of the album, the performers’ or artists’ name, the imagery or artwork, fonts used, lyric sheets, etc all work in certain ways to prepare the listener (in multiple ways) for the actual text – the music – itself. Would the knowing music consumer ever listen to an album by the Dead Kennedys as they would one from Kenny G? An “original pressing” carries more status than a re-release or re-issue. The addition of one word – “remastered” – adds yet another dimension to the expectations of the music store browser. As such, the paratextual functions of the album cover also work to build communities of knowledgeable insiders. As Jen Butler noted,

the paratext concept is a useful one for considering the role and importance of album art and posters in the formation and maintenance of musical subcultures, and offers a means by which academic discussion about album art can be brought into popular music study. (Butler, 2013, p. 181)

Unless we can so closely attach the album cover, theoretically, to the vinyl disc and, together, to the musical text it carries so as to make a separation of the three elements difficult if not impossible, one must view the cover as a (significant) paratextual
“airlock” surrounding the primary text – the music. Were such fusion possible, the cover itself might be seen as a part of the text, and not as a paratextual element.

Of course, in the contemporary era, paratextuality functions also in commercial and marketing ways, where *a large proportion of the para-textual world is commissioned into existence by Hollywood* (Gray, 2010, p. 20). In contemporary times, the profit-generating environment drives the growth of the culture industry (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947/2007), and whilst certain artists – perhaps those more commercially successful or those whose work is released on more obscure labels – are able to exert sufficient control over their work as to be able to privilege the artistic and the semantic over the commercial, it is likely the case that marketing departments increasingly make the key decisions about the “appropriateness” of paratextual elements.

Additionally, the whole aesthetic experience of creating and absorbing the design elements of the album-cover-as-paratext cannot be overlooked in terms of community construction and identification. Much like schools of painting and styles of music, album cover artwork has its own fan-base. Aficionados will collect and organise collections according to artist or design group. A classic example of this are HIPGNOSIS designs (n.a., 2016), largely the work of Storm Thorgerson, and featured on almost countless album covers for artists such as Pink Floyd, Yes, Ian Dury & the Blockheads, Led Zeppelin and many many more. Whether there is a necessary connection between liking the music and the aesthetics of the album cover is uncertain. Suffice to say, for some, the aesthetic aspect probably carries a paratextual attraction of its own, independent of the formal text.

**THE PUBLIC PEDAGOGICAL**

Musicians have been described as public intellectuals and their music as having the potential to resonate with listeners and impart knowledge to them in the process (Gershon, 2010, p. 628). Further, *one of music’s central roles is education... Whether or not music is intended to educate, it almost always has the potential to do so* (p. 630). It is readily arguable that the paratextual elements of recorded music also carry the public educative potential of the music itself. The presence of public intellectual activity in popular culture, particularly in the music area, is often overlooked or dismissed because, as Gershon argues, *one of the central reasons musicians are not considered public intellectuals is because of their relationship to entertainment and pleasure* (Gershon, 2010, p. 633).

The result of such public intellectual and activist engagement with education in a broader sphere than the classroom has constituted the focus of a strand of critical educational research that has come to be understood as public pedagogy. In summary, public pedagogy refers to *educational activity and learning in extrainstitutional spaces and discourses. This form of education, commonly known as public pedagogy, has been largely constructed as a concept focusing on various forms, processes, and sites of education and learning occurring beyond formal schooling and is
distinct from hidden and explicit curricula operating within and through school sites (Sandlin, O’Malley, & Burdick, 2011, pp. 338–339).

The pervasive and ubiquitous presence of public pedagogical grit embedded in the full range of popular cultural material, intellectual and emotional cultures is the subject of decades-long intellectual, cultural, and political analysis and activity. In considering public pedagogy, and in the context of this volume, the public pedagogical functioning of album cover art, it is important to acknowledge the history of thinking about what it means to be publicly pedagogical. Whilst in more recent times, a cultural studies disciplinary approach to considering the flow of public pedagogy through cultural artifacts has tended to dominate – the work of Henry Giroux is very prominent in this, particularly from an educational point of view (see, for example, 1994, 1999, 2000, 2001) – a previous and still relevant way of considering what it means to be publicly pedagogical also has pertinence to the current project. Sandlin, O’Malley and Burdick (2011), argue that the use of the term and its conceptual content emerged first in a review note by Chamberlain (1894) of D’Arvert’s (1893) research on Parisian schools: National education, says the author, is education given by the nation; its nature, its sphere, are vast problems of public pedagogy, requiring careful investigation (1894, emphasis added). Essentially, this identification of public pedagogy viewed it as any form of education (broadly conceived) occurring with public or civic learning at heart, explicit or otherwise is not certain. In explaining D’Avert’s application of the term, Chamberlain connects what he translated as “public pedagogy” to that area of education of the child concerned with civic or national identity-formation. In some ways, one might argue that this early (earliest?) application of the term was tied to content or curriculum (that part of the curriculum that looked to develop an allegiance to the State and to forge normative civic values, orientations and loyalties) than necessarily to any particular ways of teaching this material – that is, to the aspect of the teaching-learning process contemporarily thought of as pedagogical:

To arouse and to develop the national conscience in the child is a species of education which belongs peculiarly to the state, and to the state alone. At his birth three concentric circles surround the child—the family, the church, the state. Between the family education, which forms the “enfant de la maison,” and the moral (religious or lay) education, which makes of the child a member of humanity comes necessarily the national education, which makes of the individual a citizen. This last the state alone is fit to give. (Chamberlain, 1894, p. 285)

So, despite sparking more interest and intellectual and activist engagement in more recent times (Sandlin, et al’s review located 5 works published before 1975 compared with 281 published in the period 2006–2010), the term has a far lengthier history of use than might otherwise be assumed.
This view of public pedagogy came to encapsulate those forms of public education conducted through various means but always in the public arena and for public purposes. Public health programs (anti-smoking, encouraging vaccination of children against serious illnesses, etc.) through to information about citizen rights and responsibilities (in the current Australian context, for example, public education campaigns regarding changes to the Federal election process) would be seen as public pedagogical practices and projects. Two distinguishing features of this type of educational activity are its explicitness of purpose and visibility of practice.

The (so-called) cultural studies or discursive perspective on public pedagogy typically looks to the ways in which the affective power of popular cultural artefacts and productions is drawn into processes of standardising, normalising, and universalising particular ways of being in the world. In this particular strand of analysis and critique, the work of Giroux (1999) and Giroux and Pollock (2010) on the impact of the Disney cultural world, primarily but not only, on children and youth is illustrative. Locating their critique within the ever increasingly rapid colonisation of all aspects of everyday life by corporations and the agenda and politics of neoliberalism, Giroux and Pollock acknowledge two fronts across which such corporate power operates: one, in the increasing attachment of children and youth to consumerist culture through the ever-expanding range of goods, events, and experiences constructed and marketed as objects of desire formulated through the takeover of mainstream forms of media. The second front is that of the embodiment of hegemonic norms of everyday life through the ideological content of such products and media:

[I]t is important to understand how the Disney corporation in the twenty-first century represents the new face of neoliberal power, capable of not merely providing entertainment but also shaping the identities, desires, and subjectivities of millions of people across the globe as ardent consumers and deskilled citizens.

Giroux and Pollack’s plea to educators is to adopt a critical pedagogical approach in assisting their students (and others, including themselves, obviously) to not avoid or refuse to engage with such forms of popular culture – clearly, this is an impossibility in today’s media-drenched environment – but to utilise encounters with the cultural images and narratives that constitute the Disney curriculum in order to learn about themselves and others (2010, location 72–85). They further encourage educators specifically to work towards reskilling their students to think about, and take control over, the ideas, feelings, and activities they experience in relation to their habits of consumption and to risk a defiant analysis of the way media messages shaped their actions, hopes, and desires (2010, location 85).

In a similar vein, bell hooks reminds us that in the viewing or consumption of images “we are all affected by the images we consume and by the state of mind we are in when watching them” (hooks, 2000, p. 96) Whilst hooks was particularly
concerned to expose and disrupt the sexism and patriarchal ways of seeing and knowing the world underpinning such states of mind⁹ – *We cannot talk about changing the types of images offered us in the mass media without acknowledging the extent to which the vast majority of the images we see are created from a patriarchal standpoint* (p. 96) – other frames of reference based upon other hegemonic ways of knowing – race, class, sexuality, etc. – work similarly to orient the viewer in certain ways and to effect a reinforcement of dominant mores.

In the chapters in this volume, the potential of popular cultural artifacts to also carry oppositional or disruptive images and narratives is brought to the fore, as is the possibility of drawing upon critique and consciousness-raising interrogations of album cover art in critical pedagogical experiences. In all of this, the idea of public pedagogy is crucial.

Album covers here have been viewed paratextually by exposing something of the way each individual author was brought to their personal engagement with and experience of the album, and public pedagogically as the ways in which the album cover possibly connects the consumer of the album art to broad social mores, expectations and hegemonic ways of knowing the world, and to hopes for and visions of alternative social and personal futures. Perhaps the pedagogical and political multifunctionality of the album cover might be seen as a progression of the individual being drawn into the listening experience via the cover art and then leaving the experience either more deeply embedded in the ways of the world or exhilarated by the possibilities of a new social order. Or both.

**BRIEF TO AUTHORS**

This volume contains the highly subjective engagements with vinyl record cover art of noted critical scholars. All have visible publications records and pedagogical presence, both in formal education and public pedagogical settings. All share a concern to use their work to contribute to social betterment and to the growing resistance to neoliberal and neoconservative intrusions into and dominance over everyday life. Their individual contributions here are further expressions of their political engagement through social and cultural critique.

The contributors were asked to revisit, recollect and write about their experiences with a particular record album that had, at one time at least, found its place in their personal or family record collection. This part of each chapter looked to restore their connections – emotional, political, aesthetic or otherwise – to the album cover itself, in isolation as far was possible from the recorded music contained within it.

The point here was to attempt to provide an initial point of engagement with the album cover – its art, its layout, its overall impact on them in their initial engagement with the particular artefact. That is, in its paratextual functioning. For many of the contributors, this meant dredging up recollections from childhood or teenage years. For all of us involved, I expect, this led to a refreshment of memory and a meandering traversing of many associated events and experiences in our lives at that
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time. Nostalgia can lead to welcoming and comforting memories, as well as quite the opposite at times. I suspect the authors all went on this see-saw ride whilst using a particular album cover to anchor them temporally and emotionally.

The second request of contributors was to reconsider the album and re-view the cover art, this time from the perspective of a critical scholarly engagement with the imagery, concepts, politics, and pedagogical possibilities in the time of the contemporary. All the contributors have made significant contributions in various ways to the ongoing praxis of critical pedagogical work in both their professional and personal lives, and it is from this background that each author brings highly idiosyncratic ideas about the public pedagogical content and possibilities of the album cover they’ve chosen.

The authors selected albums that they believed met the basic expectations of the volume and that they felt provided sufficient material with which to work for the purposes of elucidating ways in which cultural artefacts, often ignored or invisible in our everyday lifeworlds, carry both superficial and submerged meanings. Beneath the often sensationalist and eye-catching album cover art frequently lay deeper, more liberatory, pedagogical possibilities for the exposure of dominant tropes of consumer capitalist socialisation. At times, the album cover art in itself was a response and resistance to those tropes. The contributors to this volume have each applied their aesthetic, pedagogical and critical critique to album cover art. As Butler (2000, p. 96) notes, despite the clear importance of our artwork to music fans, there has been little scholarship published on the topic; most writing about album art is contained within glossy collections of album covers which focus more on celebration than analysis of their role in music culture. The contributors to the current volume have made a valuable contribution to overcoming this absence.

Jeff Black’s chapter provides something of an overview of the development of the record album cover, albeit in very summary form. Jeff is a recognised music historian on the Australian scene, and is frequently consulted by major recording companies as they prepare collections and catalogue rarities from particular eras. Whilst differing from the other authors in this book insofar as his background is concerned, he has been an active teacher for several decades, both in the formal sense of the primary school classroom and through his public radio programs about popular music, particularly from the 1960’s and 1970’s. The other contributors are from academic backgrounds, all with education in some form as a focus, and the range of genres of music they have drawn upon here is quite wide; from 1960’s popular rock through to far more “specialist” (and consequently possibly more obscure) punk and hip hop pieces.

Contributors chose the album cover to be the subject of their chapter on purely personal grounds, and it is interesting that two contributors chose what has been described as arguably one of the most internationally recognisable albums covers: Pink Floyd’s *Dark Side of the Moon*. These chapters have been positioned adjacent to each other to assist the reader to more readily draw upon the dual analyses and thoughts about the cover art. Such juxtapositioning demonstrates the highly subjective
nature of the experience of any album, in terms of its art, its music, and its political/
pedagogical/paratextual impact, and highlights very divergent threads of thought
about pedagogical possibilities any such analysis might unravel. In determining the
final sequencing of the chapters, age has been privileged: the chapters have been
presented in order from the oldest (in release date terms) to the most recent.

CONCLUSION

Mikhail Bahktin (1986, p. 170) points to a feature of any text or “dialogue” that
is visible in the work of all contributors to this volume; viz. the fact of the restless
nature of meanings attaching to texts (and in this case, paratexts):

There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic
context [it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future]. Even
past meanings, that is, those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never
be stable [finalized, ended once and for all] – they will always change [be
renewed] in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue.
At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense,
boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments
of the dialogue’s subsequent development along the way they are recalled and
invigorated in renewed form [in a new context]. Nothing is absolutely dead:
every meaning will have its homecoming festival. (p. 170)

By reconsidering and reinterrogating meanings embedded in the texts that constitute
the particular instances of album cover art contained here, the authors in this
volume have taken up opportunities for the provocation of multiple “homecoming
festivals”.

NOTES

1 There were attempts – unsuccessful – at developing in-car record players. See, for example,
2 The lamenting of this increasing emptiness in recorded music is captured, from the performer’s and
recording artist’s point of view at least, by Neil Young on his 2012 triple disc vinyl release Psychedelic
Pill:
When you hear my song now
You only get five percent
You used to get it all
You used to get it all (2013, p. 180).
3 I happily admit a many-decades-long enamoredness with the extensive Neil Young catalog.
4 The reader who wishes to pursue the specific topic of public pedagogy should consult the comprehensive
volume on the topic edited by Sandlin, Schultz, and Burdick (1986) in the first instance.
5 I am not suggesting hooks was unaware of or ignored the intersectionality of many such axes or sites
of oppression, only that in the particular text cited, she was particularly focussed on the effect of
patriarchy in many/all aspects of our lives. Her wide-ranging work on the structures of domination
and alienation impacting the lives of people world-wide can be sampled from many of her texts.
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REFERENCES


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