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## Editorial: Challenging Conventions: Provoking Thought with Engaged Teaching and Learning in Popular Culture

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## Challenging Conventions: Provoking Thought with Engaged Teaching and Learning in Popular Culture

As 2023 comes to an end, we are delighted to have celebrated 10 years of *Dialogue*, exploring, questioning, and promoting engaged teaching and learning in, with, and through popular culture. In this special issue, we bring together highlights from across the decade, showcasing popular culture and pedagogy across themes, and modalities, from classical interpretations to current sociocultural, environmental, and political directions. These articles, starting from 2014, offer insights into how multimedia platforms such as literature, film, and comics, provide directions for interrogating the relationship between power and popular culture, questioning the status quo, and incorporating informal and formal pedagogy within and beyond traditional educational spaces.

As we reflect on the past decade of *Dialogue*, we also look ahead to the future possibilities that popular culture holds for education. The journey has been marked by a dynamic interplay between traditional and contemporary perspectives, demonstrating the evolving nature of pedagogy in response to societal shifts. Looking forward, we aim to continue fostering a space where educators and learners alike can explore the intersections of popular culture and education. In the coming years, we anticipate delving deeper into emerging themes, embracing technological advancements, and further amplifying diverse voices in the discourse. The articles underscore the importance of connecting timeless and contemporary narratives to present-day concerns, whether through interpretive frameworks or contemporary retellings, to foster meaningful engagement and pedagogical exploration. As we embark on this continued exploration, we express gratitude to our contributors, readers, and the broader educational community for their unwavering support in making *Dialogue* a vibrant hub of innovative pedagogical discussions and transformative opportunities.

The past decade has seen a great number of excellent and timely articles come across the editors' desks. Interpretations of pedagogy and pop culture have been varied during this time, but a consistent linkage between these articles—particularly the vibrancy of the selected work for this tenth-anniversary issue—has been the notion of communication as a form of change. From a discussion of postmodern influence and re-envisioning in Homer's *The Odyssey* to a meditation on the power of books to impart lessons about social justice, to discussions of queer culture, mixtapes, and the classroom itself, *Dialogue* authors have demonstrated their awareness of how communication in its many forms can change both individuals and societies at large. This has held true from the earliest modes of storytelling through the permutations of written communication and into our flourishing digital age; there is real, tangible power in transmitting information. At *Dialogue*, we've been grateful to witness our readers and contributors step into their positions of communicative power, changing the lives around them for the better as they go.

Leon Trotsky argues that art, including the cultural products borne of popular culture, is not just an individual's isolated expression of genius but arises from the interplay between an artist's life and their environment, including the social and political contexts it emerges from. Art can be a tool through which

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we forge—or resist—a collective social and standpoint. Because of this, cultural products from literature to video games are mirrors that reflect back to us the naturalized values and norms of the particular social and historical contexts they emerge from. Popular culture can also reflect our dreams for the future of society. As Audre Lorde (1984) argues, poetry “forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action.” As a social and political act, art is, thus, an invaluable pedagogical tool that can make deconstructing abstract or complex political concepts more relatable and accessible. The articles highlighted in this issue demonstrate the immense potential of using popular culture as case studies through which to critically engage with broader social and political issues. These articles also show how some pop culture products can function as beacons that prompt alternate ways of thinking in the classroom.

Similarly reflecting on the potent educational possibilities of popular culture, late Black feminist scholar bell hooks argued that

whether we’re talking race, or gender, or class, popular culture is where the pedagogy is, is where the learning is.” Indeed, bell hooks stressed the primacy of popular culture as a “pedagogical medium for masses of people globally who want to, in some way, understand the politics of difference (1997)

For hooks, popular culture was (and perhaps remains) a generative site of learning and unlearning, of personal and collective transformation, one where questions of power, social identity, and (mis)representation can be engaged in complex and meaningful ways. The articles highlighted in this issue not only speak to the transformative potential bell hooks witnessed in her own experiences incorporating popular culture in the college classroom but also highlight the myriad liberatory modes of knowing and seeing that such critical engagements with popular culture invite.

Thank you for joining us throughout these last 10 years. Here’s the next years!!

**Anna CohenMiller** (she/ella)

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