

The Queer Timing of Reparation in Philippe Falardeau's *Monsieur Lazhar*

Hannah Dyer and David K. Seitz
University of Toronto

At a moment when children and youth living with trauma are routinely assured that “it gets better,” what would it mean to linger a bit longer on loss, and the unruly, unpredictable character of affective repair? This essay proposes a queer and psychoanalytic alternative to the prescription of progress narratives as remedies for young people grappling with trauma. We argue that the processes of affective integration and repair theorized by Melanie Klein can be helpfully understood as *queer* in their conception of temporality. Marked by non-linearity and surprise, her theory of repair departs from progressive, heteronormative modes of temporal organization. Against the insistence that trauma is straightforwardly repaired over time, we suggest that children and adults, different yet not absolutely so in their capacities for paranoid judgment or reparative insight, are better positioned as fellow learners alongside one another in the unpredictable, queer trajectory of affective repair.

We ground our claim in an analysis of an aesthetic work that inspired both of us in our thinking about (and experience with) our own queer damage: Philippe Falardeau's 2011 film *Monsieur Lazhar*. The aesthetic experience of viewing this film has caused us to establish a connection between its representation of trauma and Klein's theory of reparation. For us, this film operates as a resource for symbolizing an emotional world marked by queer damage. *Monsieur Lazhar* depicts a teacher and his students working together to increase their capacity for symbolization of inner conflict caused by trauma. Prior to Bachir Lazhar's arrival at the elementary school as a substitute teacher, the children's previous teacher, the beloved Martine

Lachance, hanged herself with a blue scarf tied to a pipe that runs across the ceiling of the classroom. The morning after her death, it is Simon, a child, who finds her lithe body hanging in the classroom. The child characters' reactions to the unpredictable death of their teacher animate the inner world of object relations after the traumatic experience. Lazhar enters the classroom with his own trauma: forced exile from Algeria due to political antagonism and the murder of his family. A former civil servant who presents himself as a seasoned teacher, Lazhar cannot adequately know how to respond to the children's grievous loss, nor they to the scars left on his own emotional world by the untimely death of his wife and children. Yet, though their suffering remains mostly reciprocally illegible, they establish empathy through a shared attempt to make sense of how death, loss and grief impact on the production of knowledge.

On the surface, *Monsieur Lazhar* may seem like a curious choice given our queer stakes. None of the film's characters are identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer as such. Yet the relationships among the film's traumatized protagonists – an Algerian refugee claimant turned substitute teacher and an elementary school class – offer insights on reparation's surprising timing, and a powerful example of an ethical relation stretched across an incommensurable experiences of loss. Our engagement with this aesthetic text thus considers the queer time of mourning (non-linear and cyclical) as it relates to the psychic life of learning. *Monsieur Lazhar* provides an example of what it can mean to listen to children ethically. The titular character clears a path for mourning in part by developing experiments in matching words to inner conflict, hoping that the classroom can foster a conversation about the traumatic impact of an unplanned death. Taking the emotional economy of a children's classroom as its setting, *Monsieur Lazhar* does not draw us nearer to certainty about how it is best to grieve. Rather, it

compels us to make a better future in recognition that our current set of resources for talking about loss is impoverished, particularly in its understanding of the temporality of grief.

Underscoring our engagement with the film are Melanie Klein's descriptions of the psychic lives of children and her unique account of integration and repair. Klein understood the emotional and imaginative life of infants and children as typical of the searing greed, envy, rage and crushing anxiety that makes us human. For Klein, the infant's psychic existence is full of sadistic phantasies resulting from an innate aggressive drive. The Kleinian child, for example, is not innocent or naïve to an aggressive world; there is an aggression inside of her that makes this child want to hurt the people and things who frustrate her wishes. Klein's clinical observations of children suggest that aggression is a primary phenomenon that is fundamental to everyone's psychic composition. Klein understood paranoia – the state in which one experiences objects and one's ego as bifurcated into good and bad fragments – as a recurring psychic *position* rather than a developmental stage to be overcome once and for all. Similarly, Klein's alternative to paranoia, the comparatively integrated and sober depressive position, is neither a developmental inevitability nor a fixed outcome. In a dilemma resonant with Klein's observations of the messiness of trauma, Simon, the boy who witnessed his dead teacher's body, struggles to locate a venue to symbolize his aggression. Lazhar's patient pedagogy creatively provides care for Simon's guilt, while together they figure out what happens to education after the unwelcome occurrence of a traumatic event.

In Monsieur Lazhar's classrooms, students and teacher reside together in the emotional aftermath of a traumatic event. Cathy Caruth suggests that trauma “describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive

phenomena.”¹ As Caruth describes, trauma generates a specific form of non-congruence between affect and reason, causing the subject to symptomatically reenact the effects of the inaugural traumatic event. A traumatic event repeats itself in the subject’s mind; not worked through, it renders this subject incapable of controlling when psychic debris, created by and left over from the surprising event, will blend with reality. The experience of a traumatic event can interrupt an expected future and cause parts of the mind (and body) to defend against memory of the past. Trauma, then, is a violence that targets the subject’s ability to form historical narrative: It is a crisis in representation that makes it difficult to make narrative sense out of the disruptive event, which is necessarily forgotten or distorted, and lies latent, likely to return.² Trauma, according to Caruth, produces a history that is “no longer straightforwardly referential” (182). Thus, trauma exposes the mind’s ability to defend against knowledge, and against memory. It reveals the possibility that we might sometimes rather forget than remember.

Trauma’s effects on learning and historical memory can also be helpfully understood as queer. Lazhar and his students find themselves held in suspension by trauma; they dwell outside the (hetero)normative organization of time and space.³ Queer theorists such as J. Halberstam and Lee Edelman have linked the forward march of progressive accounts of temporality not only with contemporary capitalism, but with a specifically heteronormative ordering of the subject’s affective disposition and life course.⁴ Such scholarship has played a leading role in the turn toward “subjectless critique” in queer theory, which explores an increasingly wide range of forms of non-heteronormative subjectivity and sociality, not all of which necessarily identify as LGBTQ. For us as viewers, *Monsieur Lazhar* provides an opening into a dialogue concerning the psychic life of trauma as it creates and reflects conflicts concerning LGBTQ politics, futurity, childhood development and pedagogy. We turn to this film together because it helps us to

understand the impact of the unconscious on learning, the psychic processes of grieving and reparation, and the emotional life of cultural production. An unlikely representation of queer relationality, this aesthetic text becomes a study of collaborative mourning between subjects whose histories appear unrelated.

Our interpretation of the film is offered at a contemporary moment when LGBTQ activism and queer theory debate temporality and futurity with fervor. The recognition that trauma interferes with linear temporality – the ability to move forward without being haunted by the past – can be used to conjure a theory of queerness that illuminates the fragmented, resistant and non-linear ways that knowledge and history are made. Our reading of this classroom drama, which stages the emotional conflicts of teaching and learning, blends considerations of queer collectivity with emotional and instinctual life to pose questions of the psychological procedures that animate the work of mourning. We call on Freud’s clinical observations of the psychic dynamics of mourning to offer a queer alternative to activist programs that insist on a knowable, predetermined future sanitized of histories of grief, loss and suffering.

The work of mourning, as described by Sigmund Freud,⁵ involves repairing the ego after the world is impoverished by the loss of an object. To perceive the world as good after devastating loss requires “reinvest[ing] the free libido in a new object.”⁶ Mourning is not pragmatic, nor does it assume a chronological timeline. Rather, it involves using the enigmatic psychic character of loss to create new encounters with old objects. Lazhar’s classroom is seething with emotional responses to death and trauma. Between Lazhar and his students, circuits of transference feelings drift as they narrate their losses through each other. Uninterested in the pursuit of mastery, the teacher learns from the children how to become a figure of authority who can provide a holding environment for them. He becomes a container for

their aggressive projections and insecurities as they slowly assimilate reality with the world of phantasy and instinctual wishes. The teacher in this film learns to make curriculum out of grief, his own and his students. To do so requires an acknowledgement of the atemporal, nonlinear struggle required to mourn a lost object. Thus, as we will elaborate in the following section, the film dialogically pairs the child and the adult refugee – two figures at the horizons of subjectivity – in an ongoing negotiation between mourning and melancholia.⁷

Exile, Mourning and Queer Temporality

Most interpretations of *Monsieur Lazhar* have read its narrative as a parable suggesting the values affirmed by Canadian liberal multiculturalism.⁸ It has been suggested that, in the space of the classroom and through compassion for suffering, the fullness of the humanity of both Lazhar and his pupils can be uniquely recognized and cultivated in "benevolent Canada."⁹ Invested in a different conversation, our engagement with this aesthetic text is informed by and instructive for contemporary queer theory.

Seeking to reassess what it can mean to succeed in LGBTQ politics, many currents of contemporary queer critique are marked by a "backward orientation," which considers the costs, conditions and ghosts of LGBTQ inclusion and mainstreaming.¹⁰ As some queers have provisionally, contingently and unevenly entered the folds of (hard-won) subjectivity, many have been refused, or left out of, such a progress narrative. In contemporary Canadian LGBTQ politics, the queer child and the queer refugee have emerged as two of the more discernible figures at the horizons of subjectivity, precarious or proto-subjects around whom other queers and allies engage politically.¹¹ One of the most prominent narrative strategies addressing queer youth has been developed by the "It Gets Better" project, a video-turned-multimedia platform

launched by U.S. sex columnist Dan Savage and his partner Terry Miller. This endeavour offers precarious, bullied and/or suicidal queer youth reassuring messages from currently successful and seemingly fulfilled queer adults.¹²

Queer activists and scholars have critiqued “It Gets Better” for its assumed temporalities (politely deferred emancipation by progressive history) and spatialities (not all queers are chipper bourgeois white men who “made it” to a cosmopolitan city, nor would all queers share in such urban desires). They have also contested and reclaimed the discursive space of the campaign with feminist, antiracist, anti-xenophobic and trans-positive interventions.¹³ Thus, rather than reduplicating or rehearsing such important critiques of the “It Gets Better Project,” we aim here to reconsider the psychic temporalities imagined and advocated in many queer narratives about refugees and children and the losses they negotiate. Alongside our sympathy with, and susceptibility to, crucial messages like “It Gets Better” – as well as important correctives like “Make It Better” – we also worry about the discursive, material and psychic conditions broadly undergirding such diverse assurances and enjoinders.

It may be asked whether LGBTQ activism in the “It Gets Better” era, in their drive to help precarious queers make their worlds more livable in conditions hostile to their being, comprise reparative gestures. In loving, Kleinian fashion we can only answer yes ... and no. On the one hand, activism addressing queer kids and refugees often powerfully and creatively reread and reclaim locales easily written off by paranoid, metropolitan readings as hostile to queers – childhood, suburbia, the Global South, red states, rural Canada, religious schools and communities. They refigure these locales as terrains of meaningful struggle and as potential sources of perverse nourishment and sustenance. On the other, it seems crucial to recall reparation’s affinity with Klein’s depressive position: Reparation is, paradoxically, at once an

ethical choice of reading practice and an elusive, recurrent, and non-linear psychic state marked by a non-progressive temporality.

In *Monsieur Lazhar*, moments of confrontation, tenderness and healing between child and adult effectively subvert both the progressive histories of Canadian multiculturalism and “healthy,” ordered child development. The film thus offers a valuable intervention in queer debates on the relationship between loss, temporality and politics, reminding us that some of the most meaningful forms of psychic reparation tend to eschew both the tick of the clock and our best intentions. Lazhar remains haunted by the memory of his late wife and children, as well as by asylum hearings that cynically make light of his losses. In their precocity and synchronistic expression of grief with their teacher, these children exhibit a queer growth. This growth does not follow lines of human development that assume divisions between childhood and adulthood, divisions justified by a measured absence and then the strengthening of emotional maturity. In a neoliberal era that insists “It Gets Better” despite abundant evidence to the contrary – a time broadly structured by an affect Lauren Berlant helpfully terms “cruel optimism” – *Monsieur Lazhar* perversely offers a vision not of dour quietism, but rather contingent and non-progressive reparation.¹⁴

Bachir Lazhar has not taught before, nor has he the credentials to do so. But his ability to use curriculum to symbolize psychic life makes the classroom a transformative site for learning. The queer and reparative potential of Lazhar’s pedagogy lies in its attunement to children’s affective entanglements with the experience of learning and the likelihood of transference between teacher and student. An uncertified and improbable teacher, he creates lessons for his students that help them to risk returning to memories of death and to integrate them as recognizable parts of the self. In two events that mirror one another, Lazhar is presented with

boxes that contain the physical effects of a teacher's work. From the post office he collects a box that contains what is left of the belongings of his dead wife, who was herself a teacher: brightly coloured rubber stamps for marking her student's work, class photos with children seated in rows, a photograph of herself with her own children. Later, he is presented with a box that holds some of Martine Lachance's belongings left at the school after her death: stickers for marking student assignments, class photos and a young adult novel. An inheritance from two women whose deaths were the result of different forms of violence, the contents of both boxes make their way into his teaching practice. When he is able to find ways of integrating these inheritances into his own work (reading the novel to the children and using the stamps when marking assignments, for example), it signals a move in the film towards reparation. Unworked-through grief is converted into a resource for a more creative teaching practice, which opens up Lazhar's classroom to conversations about how to recover from a premature death. Impressed upon his teaching method are ghostly reminders of these women's work as educators and their attempts to introduce to the classroom creative challenges in the work of education.

In Lazhar's pedagogy we find a method of building a relationship to loss that does not disavow its reappearance in contemporary relations, but rather enlarges the potential for the representation of inner conflicts. As viewers, we encounter characters collaborating to creatively repair and represent¹⁵ their brokenness within the confines of school policies that enforce compliance and ignore the queer, unruly time of mourning. Throughout much of the film, Simon, his friend Alice, and their classmates linger in a space of melancholia. They keep up with their schoolwork, for the most part, and even get on well with their psychologist. But beyond all such redemptive measures of "progress" and a "return to normal," the students exhibit a sobriety, honesty and perverse fascination in the face of an inexplicable death. This sustained queer desire

to look back at loss, to confront and meditate on the loss of their teacher, consistently exasperates parents and school officials alike.¹⁶

We now move to read two scenes from the film which depict how, though the uniqueness of their situations stays intact and the teacher's authority remains certain, children and adult make meaning out of death and loss together. In Lazhar's classroom, the curriculum operates as a transitional object¹⁷ which facilitates the binding of affect to representation. In both scenes mourning is facilitated through play with words, an act Lazhar encourages the children to risk performing despite a school-wide policy that segregates psychology from pedagogy and represses sustained confrontation with difficult affects.

What Children Can Do with Words

In one of *Monsieur Lazhar's* most decisive scenes, Alice delivers a presentation to the class that directly addresses the suicide. Her statements on the difficult subject are transformative and visibly touch the other children. The child has taken the curricular assignment to write and present a speech on a self-chosen topic as a chance to play with how words can be used to symbolize emotional life. She uses the curriculum to hold open a space for representation of the ego's journey towards making sense from trauma. Her teacher's death has called into question her understanding of violence. School was described to her as a venue where children are kept safe from danger and violence is punished. But now, she points out, the children must incorporate violence into their knowledge of what can happen at school. The school's policy to repress the acknowledgment of death forecloses the space needed to learn to represent conflict; Alice adroitly contravenes this policy by speaking directly to the death within the curriculum's parameters. Alice's persistent effort to forge a time and space to represent this conflict might be

understood as queer in the disruption it introduced to the hastened and linear timing of mourning imposed by the school. She demonstrates how the curriculum can survive her need to mourn, and can even be used to support her queer experiments with words.

Later, inspired by Alice, and in an act of resistance to school policies that coax children into abstracting themselves from their suffering, Lazhar invites all of his students to find and play with the words that come closest to signifying their feelings and uncertainties. A child has told the class about his grandfather, who was detained in Chile during political conflict and later committed suicide. The room throbs with the wish to incorporate Lachance into the discussion, to relate her death to the conversation of suicide. Lazhar gives up on an agreement made with the school's administration and the school psychologist to "separate psychotherapy from pedagogy" and to leave the ghosts of the dead outside of the lessons he imparts in the classroom. He cannot contain his frustration with procedural responses to the children's trauma that encourage measured and predetermined allocations of moments where grief can be addressed. Such policies prove to be out of time with mourning. Mourning persistently and unpredictably erupts, boisterous and indefensible, because as Freud knew repression cannot result in the annihilation of an idea but rather builds obstacles on the path of its travel towards consciousness.

"You keep re-opening her grave," the principle accuses Lazhar before he is dismissed from his job at the school. Yet, it is Lazhar's brave commitment to noticing how the dead continue to instruct encounters in the classroom that allows learning to continue after trauma. Before he departs, Lazhar provides a final example of how his classroom lessons patiently show the children that they can tolerate the difficult work of symbolizing conflict surrounding death and trauma. He has the students correct intentional mistakes made in grammar and spelling in a

fable he has written for them about the developmental trajectory of a butterfly, entitled “The Tree and The Chrysalis.”

There is nothing to say about an unjust death.
 Nothing at all. As we will now show.
 From the branch of an olive tree there hung a tiny chrysalis, the colour of emerald.
 Tomorrow she'd be a pretty cocoon.
 The tree was happy to see his chrysalis grown, but secretly, he wanted her to stay a few more years.
 “As long as she remembers me”.
 He had shielded her from the wind.
 He had saved her from ants.
 But tomorrow she would leave to alone face predators and bad weather.
 ...
 That night, a fire ravaged the forest, and the chrysalis never became a butterfly.
 At dawn, the ashes cold, the tree still stood, but his heart was charred, scarred by the flames, scarred by grief.
 When a bird alights on the tree, the tree tells it about the chrysalis that never woke up.
 He pictures her, wings spread, flitting across a clear blue sky, drunk on nectar and freedom, the discreet witness to our love stories.

His lesson on literacy is knotted with an attempt to build the children's capacity for using and listening to words as objects to signify affect. He uses this lesson in service of refinding himself outside of them and also disinvesting himself of the role of teacher. His lesson responds to the children's need to engage in learning without the help of the teacher and, generally, to work towards separation from the other.

Alice knows that he is telling them a story about how they must now acquire independence from him, which does not mean that they must forget his influence. She is noticeably distraught after listening to his fable. In the school, expressions of affection and touching between teachers and students are diligently monitored. The film solicits an inquiry into how a teacher can at times comfort and at others punish a child through touch. Lazhar seems to be asking how to comfort a child in distress when you cannot touch them, and how one can punish a child without touch. In between the teacher's and children's bodies is the tyranny of the

shriek of a gym whistle, the grumbling of an empty stomach which prevents a hungry boy from playing games at recess, and the memory of a mother's embrace. When these bodies do manage to touch, the school's administration reminds Lazhar of laws that forbid the hitting of a student. Despite the dangers of touching, he trespasses the boundaries that control the expression of affection: The film ends in a hug between Alice and her beloved teacher.

By engaging the students' need to confront loss head-on, Lazhar could be understood to prop up a progress narrative of his own by helping the students pick up the pieces and struggle to carry on. But by persistently disobeying his superiors and allowing his students to tarry with the negative – through his insistence on discussing the loss that dare not speak its name – he affirms that their melancholia is not a pathological response to loss. Crucially, Lazhar opens a space for reparative engagement with Lachance's death, not through some liberal “compassion for suffering children,” but rather through his own alienated relationship to progressive nationalist histories that scramble but ultimately fail to overwrite memories of trauma.¹⁸ Some critics have read Lazhar's initial foibles in the classroom – straight rows, his attachment to classical texts such as Balzac – as suggestive of his “awkwardness” as a newcomer, as a kind of hurdle to overcome in the film's narrative arc presumed to reach toward full subjectivity and integration.¹⁹ However, it might be just as plausible to read Lazhar's pedagogical style as a legacy of his French colonial education in Algeria. In this view, his initial approach signals a return of the repressed of the colonial in the postcolonial, as well as a desire for a more complex negotiation of good pedagogy on the part of a postcolonial, diasporic subject.²⁰

Lazhar's nightmares, his (post)colonial attachments, and his tongue-in-cheek dialogue with Claire over her approach to teaching the history of colonialism do not paint a composite picture commensurate with preferred romantic idioms of anticolonial resistance. But it is

precisely in his indeterminate – rather than obdurate or “progressive” – psychic state between grieving and reparation that he can help to short-circuit both the pat narratives that cast benevolent Canada’s “here and now” as discrete from the refugee’s horrific “then and there,” and the cult of the child that seeks to immure children from death.²¹ The reparation this pedagogical intervention makes possible is not the product of an easy teleological guarantee, like the conceits of Canadian multiculturalism or the claim that “It Gets Better.” Rather, it is a contingent pivot in a world populated by complex, contaminated, irredeemable – and thus lovable – objects.²²

Despite its apparently “straight” veneer, then, *Monsieur Lazhar* speaks volumes to queer-theoretical debates on children, loss, politics and temporality.²³ Challenging Edelman’s dazzling but ultimately too airtight identification of queerness with the death drive and children with reproductive futurism, *Monsieur Lazhar* stages a perverse, chaotic and disruptive assemblage, a queer encounter that mixes up the sanctioned boundaries of nationhood, adulthood, and life in which neither teacher nor student come out innocent, redeemed or unchanged. So, while we readily grant that contemporary queer theory’s fascination with negative affects harbours dangers of its own, following Heather Love we wonder whether the activist push to dispense with such psychic and sociopolitical conflicts might at times belie a superficially upbeat variant of paranoia. If paranoid reading practices know the endless reiteration of relations of domination in advance in order to foreclose surprise and wonderment, might the insistence that it gets better foreclose openness to the contingency of history and the inevitability of some bad feelings, thereby staging its own rigid, violent and ultimately self-defeating response to the pain enacted by historic subordination? Might an ostensibly sunny yet deeply wounded attachment to progress, in the wake of grand historical narratives, comprise its own kind of paranoia?²⁴ At issue here is not so much the important concern that the deferred utopian telos that frames “It

Gets Better” forecloses political agency in the present; at stake instead is the related apprehension that certain contemporary activist prescriptions, in paranoiacally overestimating our political agency through fantasies of (ever-increasing yet ever deferred) plenitude, upend the less predictable but potentially more generative psychic confrontations with loss that characterize reparation.

In the face of pervasive and urgent incitements to confess and redeem individual histories of injured queerness, what might it mean to develop a narrative strategy that began, not with the fantasy of progressive alleviation of suffering, but by making adequate space for the integration of loss? How might an alternative strategy for working through loss figure the relationship between loss, collectivity, politics and temporality differently, and what kinds of ethical relations might it make possible? What would it mean to elaborate a reparative narrative strategy for dealing with loss – a strategy that make the world more livable while engaging with, rather than beyond, the aching reverberations of the past in the present, as we all must? For some partial answers, we find it helpful to depart from the universe of LGBTQ politics to consider a decidedly queer and perversely reparative fictive encounter among other minor subjects: the adult refugee and the children of *Monsieur Lazhar*.

Hannah Dyer recently defended her PhD at the University of Toronto/OISE and is a faculty member at Sheridan College. Her SSHRC-funded doctoral research integrates studies of contemporary visual culture with socio-historical discussions of childhood and psychoanalysis.

David K. Seitz is a Ph.D. candidate in human geography, women's and gender studies, and sexual diversity studies at the University of Toronto. His dissertation project explores alternative concepts and practices of citizenship at a predominantly LGBTQ church in Toronto. David's writing has appeared in the journals *Gender, Place and Culture*; *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*; *Emotion, Space and Society*; *Toronto Xtra!*; and the collection *Queering Religion, Religious Queers* (Routledge, 2014).

Notes

¹ Cathy Caruth, "Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History," *Yale French Studies* 79 (1991): 181-192, p. 181.

² See Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); and Dina Georgis, *The Better Story: Queer Affects from the Middle East* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013). Further references are incorporated into the text.

³ See Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); and José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

⁴ See Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

⁵ Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Worlds of Sigmund Freud (SE)*, trans. James and Alix Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute for Psycho-Analysis, 1953-74), vol. 14, pp. 239-258.

⁶ T. Clewell, "Mourning Beyond Melancholia: Freud's Psychoanalysis of Loss," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 52 (Winter 2004): 43-67, p. 43.

⁷ See Sue Ruddick, "At the Horizons of the Subject: Neo-liberalism, Neo-conservatism and the Rights of the Child, Part One: From 'Knowing' Fetus to 'Confused' Child," *Gender, Place and Culture* 14.5 (2007): 513-527; and Sue Ruddick, "At the Horizons of the Subject: Neo-liberalism, Neo-conservatism and the Rights of the Child, Part Two: Parent, Caregiver, State," *Gender, Place and Culture* 14.6 (2007): 627-640.

⁸ See Himani Bannerji, *Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2000); Sherene H. Razack, *Dark Threats, White Knights: The Somalia Affair, Peacekeeping and the New Imperialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); and Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

⁹ See for example Peter Howell, "Monsieur Lazhar Review: When Truth is Hard to Teach," *Toronto Star*, 26 January 2012; Melissa Leong, "Review: Canada's Oscar-Nominated *Monsieur Lazhar* Asks the Hard Questions," *National Post*, 26 January 2012; Eli Glasner, "Film Review: *Monsieur Lazhar*," *CBC News*, 2 February 2012. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/arts/things-that-go-pop-blog/2012/02/film-review-monsieur-lazhar.html> and Jennie Punter, "Monsieur Lazhar: An Unforgettable Tale, Artfully Told," *The Globe and Mail*, 27 January 2012. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/arts/movies/monsieur-lazhar-an-unforgettable-tale-artfully-told/article2316222>

¹⁰ See Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon, 2003); and Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

¹¹ See Sharalyn R. Jordan, "Un/Convention(al) Refugees: Contextualizing the Accounts of Refugees Facing Homophobic or Transphobic Persecution," *Refuge: Canada's Periodical on Refugees* 26.2 (2011): 165-182.

¹² "What Is the It Gets Better Project?," *It Gets Better Project*.
<http://www.itgetsbetter.org/pages/about-it-gets-better-project/>

¹³ See Jasbir K. Puar. "Coda: The Cost of It Getting Better: Suicide, Sensation, Switchpoints." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 18.1 (2012): 149-159; Eng-Beng Lim, Jasbir Puar, Ann Pellegrini, Jack Halberstam, Joon Oluchi Lee, Lynne Joyrich, and Gail Cohee, "Queer Suicide: A Teach-In." *Social Text Periscope* (2010).
<http://www.socialtextjournal.org/periscope/queer-suicide-a-teach-in/>
 and Kyle Bella, "How to Put School Bullying In Check," *Colorlines*, 18 October 2010.
http://colorlines.com/archives/2010/10/five_ways_to_stop_bullying.html.

¹⁴ See Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

¹⁵ Here we are suggesting that Melanie Klein's theory of reparation, which considers the child dealing with loss and guilt, is useful for understanding the child character's movements towards and away from the depressive position. For Klein, the infant's psychic existence is full of sadistic phantasies resulting from an innate aggressive drive. The stress of love and hate in the infant's psychic governance leaves impressions that are worked out symbolically, both consciously and not, in creative endeavors such as play. Klein's model of early infantile development, as elaborated by Eve Sedgwick in an effort to characterize a reading practice that does not operate from the paranoid-schizoid position, also helps to explain the film itself as reparative text.

¹⁶ See Dina S. Georgis, "Cultures of Expulsion: Memory, Longing and the Queer Space of Diaspora," *New Dawn: The Journal of Black Canadian Studies* 1.1 (2006): 4-27.

¹⁷ See D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (New York: Basic Books, 1971).

¹⁸ David L. Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

¹⁹ See in particular Howell, "Monsieur Lazhar Review," 26 January 2012.

²⁰ See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. (London: Routledge, 1994); and M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

²¹ See Jonathan G. Silin, *Sex, Death and the Education of Children: Our Passion for Ignorance in the Age of AIDS* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1995); and Lee Edelman, *No Future*.

²² See Melanie Klein, *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works* (London: Virago, 1988).

²³ See Kathryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); and Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley, eds., *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

²⁴ See Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) and *Politics Out of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).