REPOSITIONING IDENTIFICATION: REFLECTIONS ON A VISIT TO HISTORICA'S HERITAGE FAIR

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In this article, I offer a reading of the psychoanalytic concept of identification, with specific attention to its meaning in the context of children's historical learning. In educational contexts, it is not identification but historical empathy that teachers and researchers typically regard as holding pedagogical status. Using examples from my visit to *Historica's* 2004 Heritage Fair, I argue that identification is important for the way it marks the young subject's ambivalent entry into a world of historical relations. A study of identification cannot advance historical consciousness, but it does highlight the senses of vulnerability and emotional conflict in trying to orient the self to a very old world and the losses this implies.

Key words: historical empathy, children, elementary education, representation, Freud, Lévinas

L'auteure propose ici une lecture du concept psychanalytique de l'identification en analysant plus particulièrement sa signification dans le contexte de l'apprentissage de l'histoire chez les enfants. Les enseignants et les chercheurs en éducation ont l'habitude d'accorder un statut pédagogique non pas à l'identification, mais plutôt à « l'empathie historique ». À l'aide d'exemples tirés d'une visite à la Fête du patrimoine 2004 de Historica, l'auteure soutient que l'identification est importante, car elle marque l'entrée ambivalente du jeune dans un monde de relations historiques. Une étude de l'identification ne peut faire progresser la conscience historique, mais elle met en lumière le sentiment de vulnérabilité et le conflit émotif qui surgissent lorsqu'on essaie de s'orienter dans un univers très ancien tout comme les pertes qu'implique cette démarche.

Mots clés : empathie historique, enfants, enseignement primaire, représentation, Freud, Levinas

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Recently I attended the National Heritage Fair, 2004, organized by a major historical institution in Canada, *The Historica Foundation*. The Fair was housed under the bright skylights of one of Montréal's historic sites, Windsor Station, and contained hundreds of projects, organized by province and territory, displaying some aspect of Canada's past. As I turned the corner into Newfoundland, one project in particular caught my eye. This project was called "St. John's—City of Spirits." The student researcher of this project told stories of ghosts that haunted old St. John's. Rather than a series of events frozen in time, in this student's representation, history was very much alive. At least two other projects studied ghosts as an entry point into history: one focused on a haunted Manitoba theatre known as "The Walker," while the other focused on the ghosts of famous people in Ross Bay Cemetery, a graveyard in British Columbia. Other popular themes included family trees, heroes of war, and natural disasters as well as famous Canadian sports legends, inventors, and artists. One student displayed medals won by his great grandfather who fought in WWII. A student from Nunavut traced the ancestors on her father's side. A student from British Columbia searched for her grandfather's grave at Harling Point Cemetery. A grade-five student from Winnipeg staged songs sung in the 1940s by youth protesting the inflation of chocolate bars from 5 to 7 cents. Still another student recreated the bloody scene of the Halifax explosion. I met a distant relative of Lucy Maude Montgomery from Prince Edward Island.

For those of us in education, these examples are neither remarkable nor rare. Indeed, I expected that students would explore the most prominent aspects of Canadian heritage: ancient origins, decorated soldiers, natural disasters, death, royalty, and fame. In the months that followed my visit, I became increasingly curious about the meaning and significance of these representations for young learners. My curiosity arose in spite of a general agreement among educators that history education should be problem-solving activity, not simply a matter of stargazing (Fertig, 2005). Still, I found myself wondering: How do we explain students' identifications with the heroic and tragic narratives of history? What might identification have to do with the work of learning, even if it plays among history's stars?

In psychoanalytic terms, identification is more than a daydream; it organizes ego boundaries through its relations with others. Identification, largely unconscious, does not want anything to do with reality. Thinking psychoanalytically on the conflict between the child's unconscious and the "real world", Julia Kristeva (2002) writes:

The child's unconscious forces us to confront *another form of knowledge*, an enigmatic knowledge that characterizes the *fantasy* and that remains resistant to 'enlightenment,' a knowledge that does not wish to be *familiar* with the real world through learning and adaptation to reality. Such *knowledge* staves off *awareness*. (p. 40, emphasis in original)

Beginning with this difficult assumption, my interest is to explore how fantasies of identification may be the basis of historical learning, even as they resist pedagogical aims to enlighten. I ground my theoretical journey in my visit to Historica's Heritage Fair in the summer of 2004. Using examples of student representations, I argue that the Heritage Fair is an important site of learning precisely because it holds off on education's reality principle and the aim for "a rigorous conceptualization of history" (Britzman, 2000, p. 37).

Like a good fairy tale, the Fair opens a space in which students experiment with a range of contradictory dynamics—from the wish for omnipotence to the fear of lost love—that constitute individuals' emotional ties, or identifications, to the world. A study of identification cannot promise to heighten historical consciousness, but it can reveal the deepest senses of vulnerability and conflict that arise in trying to represent the world as historical, that is, before the time of the self.

HISTORICA'S HERITAGE FAIRS

The *Historica Foundation of Canada*, a charitable foundation, aims to "help Canadians come to know the fascinating stories that make our country unique" (*Historica Foundation of Canada*, 2005). Formerly a part of the CRB Heritage project, *Historica* was established as an independent foundation in 1999 to further its project of promoting public interest and awareness about Canada's history. Part of this mission has been developed through educational initiatives, including the organization of local, regional, provincial, and national Heritage Fairs, which take place over the course of every year from February to July. Although these Fairs are not

representative of how history is taught in classrooms across the country, they have become a popular nation-wide educational initiative. *Historica* reports that approximately 200,000 Canadian students from 900 communities participate every year in Heritage Fairs across Canada. With the development of an on-line showcase, *Historica* hopes to expand the already sizeable number of students who participate every year in these Fairs.

One aim of the Heritage Fairs is to promote responsible citizenry through improving students' knowledge of the diversity of Canada's national history. It is presumed that in learning about Canada's diverse history, democratic values such as respect, civility, and justice can be forged. To achieve these rather explicit democratic aims, *Historica* encourages students to make personal connections to the material. This is evidenced not only in the catchphrase from 2004: "*Your* Place in History," but also in its description of what kind of learning is enabled through participation in the Fairs. As *Historica* puts it, "The Historica Fairs Program encourages students to explore Canadian heritage in a dynamic, hands-on learning environment. Students use the medium of their choice to tell stories about Canadian heroes, legends, milestones, and achievements — and present the results of their research at a public exhibition" (*Historica Foundation of Canada*, 2005). In 2005, the *Historica* website featured an animated Sir John A. Macdonald who popped up to tell viewers, "History is good," a theme that evolved a year later into a multi-media website that features "intimate portraits" of Canada's Prime Ministers (www.primeministers.ca). In this online archive, viewers can browse through a range of historical documents: audio commentaries, speech transcripts, instances of political satire, and personal photographs.

Whether the focus is on history's goodness or its intimacy, at the heart of the *Historica* is a rather explicit aim to excite the Canadian public, and students in particular, into developing meaningful connections to the nation's past. And yet, despite its orientation to public education, *Historica* leaves under-theorized the question of precisely what kind of learning it mobilizes. Despite *Historica*'s good intentions, history educator and theorist Peter Seixas (2002) suggests that heritage,

like myth, mobilizes strong feelings and ultimately precludes critical thought. He writes:

Myths evoke strong feelings. They … reinforce collective identities, social values and moral orientations. But there is no way to challenge them. We don't revise them on the basis of new evidence. The whole point of myths is to pass them on unchanged to the next generation. Heritage is similar. It involves myth-like narratives in which people can believe deeply and faithfully. (p. 1)

According to Seixas, heritage mobilizes historical attachments that are rooted in belief and feeling, as opposed to evidence and analysis. It neither questions the terms on which historical narratives are told nor how they should be judged from the perspective of the present. Of course, with the expansion of its website on Canada's prime ministers, *Historica* has begun to represent at least some of the multiple and conflicting voices in political history and their relevance for present-day issues and debates. And yet, I suspect that Seixas would remain wary of *Historica's* Heritage Fairs, where mythic, heroic and tragic aspects of history dominate students' representations year after year, almost without exception. In light of the critique of mythic history, two questions come to mind: What good are feelings if they do not advance historical consciousness? Is feeling the opposite of thinking?

HISTORICAL EMPATHY AS AN INTELLECTUAL ACHIEVEMENT

A well-established discourse of educational research begins with these questions that ask what, if anything, is accomplished by having students to feel their way into others (Ashby & Lee, 1987; Barton & Levstik, 2004; Davis, 2001; Dickinson & Lee, 1978, 1984; Foster, 2001; Lee, 1984; Lee & Ashby, 2000, 2001; Seixas, 2000, 2002; Shemilt, 1984; Yeager & Foster, 2001). Within this divergent field, theorists have highlighted the pedagogical significance of empathy as a form of "historical understanding" (Lee & Ashby 2001, p. 25). As historical understanding, empathy has been distinguished from its less critical cousin, sympathy. Whereas sympathy refers to an emotional closeness or fellow feeling, empathy refers to a mode of understanding how people in past times and places may have felt and why they behaved the way they did, without presuming to share their purposes or confuse their feelings with one's own. Historical empathy requires students to analyze evidence and

entertain multiple perspectives in constructing explanations of past events; historical empathy does not depend on fellow feeling, or being "at one" with another.

Yet, if the historical empathy literature makes a distinction between empathy and sympathy, sympathy is often used interchangeably with identification. And taken together, identification and sympathy are used to highlight the impulsive play of affect in representing history. As Peter Lee (1984) writes, "identification and . . . sympathy are signs of partiality, lack of detachment, or just plain bias" (p. 98). The problem with identification and sympathy, many theorists charge, is a failure to understand the difference between other people's experiences and one's own.

To get at this collapse of difference and its risks, British history educator Denis Shemilt (1984) draws on R. G. Collingwood (1946) to describe a hypothetical notion of the historian as "psyche-snatcher" (p. 41). This view of the historian is much like sympathy in so far as it refers to a collapse of the distinction between the self and other, and past events and present re-constructions. The psyche-snatching historian works on the assumption that one can inhabit, or snatch, the psychic realm of the other: perhaps the supreme example of "getting in the shoes of the Other." Shemilt warns about the risk of assuming to take up such a position: "Should the historian make too many empathetic errors, history would be in danger of becoming, in Voltaire's phrase, 'a joke which the living play upon the dead'" (p. 41). At issue here is the risk of making too many mistaken assumptions about the motives and actions of others on the basis of ego projections. Psyche-snatching is, then, both mistaken and deceptive because what one experiences is not the psychic state of the other, but rather the fears, worries, and pleasures of the self.

Although psyche-snatching points to the ethical risks of effacing the other's difference, a handful of theorists come at the question from the other side. They argue that students can too readily take on the experiences of others at the expense of the self (Baum, 2000; La Capra, 2004). This observation is particularly important in encountering historical trauma because there is a risk of taking on others' experiences to the point of repeating difficult emotions of aggression and victimization. Dominick LaCapra (2004) points to the risk of "becoming a

surrogate victim" (p. 77). From the other side, so to speak, A. Gard and P. Lee (1978) question whether it is desirable to identify with the aggressor: "Do we really want children *to identify* with Hitler . . . or become emotionally involved with him?" (p. 32, emphasis in original). At issue here are the risks of identifying so closely with the other that one loses a sense of the self and one's critical faculties. Within this critical literature, there is, it seems to me, an implicit (or not so implicit) question of development for education: How can teachers help students graduate from sympathy to its more critical cousin of empathy?

As a response, several studies have mapped out the increasingly complex ways in which historical empathy develops in children at various ages and grades (Ashby & Lee, 1987; Dickinson & Lee, 1984; Lee & Ashby, 2000; Shemilt, 1984). In mapping this field, developmental frameworks have provided educators with a heuristic tool through which to notice—and ultimately to encourage—students to move to higher levels of historical empathy. For instance, Rosalyn Ashby and Peter Lee (1987) have proposed a five-tiered framework to outline characteristic qualities of students' empathetic development. At the most complex stage, students have an understanding of the contingency of meaning and the ongoing need to construct, re-construct, and critique historical knowledge. Although critical of categorizing children into developmental stages, Ashby and Lee assume that higher levels replace lower levels of thinking. In particular, students move from "the use of personal projection . . . based on stereotypical roles or conventional classification of situations" (p. 72) to contextual historical empathy. At this higher level, students demonstrate the capacity to construct plausible explanations for behaviour and events of the past, in the awareness that present interpretations are structured by the constructed (and often incomplete) nature of historical evidence.

This developmental model provides a way of speculating on the level of empathy implied in the projects at the Heritage Fair. Levels II and III, what Ashby and Lee (1987) call, "generalized stereotypes" and "everyday empathy," are perhaps most applicable (pp. 72-74). In the former, children tend to engage the world in terms of binaries (i.e., good/bad). In the second, children tend to relate to others on the basis of their own projections of what a particular event might have felt like. To

the extent that the majority of the projects at the Heritage Fair represented history in binary terms (disasters and victories, war stories and rescue stories, heroes and villains), they can be understood to operate at the level of "generalized stereotypes" (Ashby & Lee 1987, p. 72). Moreover, several student projects employed strategies such as role-play and the re-enactment of past events, suggesting a level of "everyday empathy" (Ashby & Lee, 1987, p. 74).

Some students wrote diary entries from the perspective of soldiers overseas. Others played the part of their chosen historical figure in mock interviews. Many dressed up in costumes relevant to the era of their chosen past. Of course, not all these projects indicated the same level of historical empathy. Indeed, the aforementioned discourse of historical empathy reminds educators that not all forms of relationality demonstrate a complex mode of engagement. That is, not all forms of relationality represent a student's understanding of historical perspective, nor do all forms confront the learner with the social and political conditions that produced particular events. And so although it seemed quite clear that something had engaged the attention of the students at the Heritage Fair, there is still the question of what kind of engagement—what level of historical empathy—was achieved in this context.

Representing Generalized Stereotypes and Everyday Empathy

To illustrate the application of Ashby and Lee's typology, I have considered one student project in particular. The project represented the experience of the student researcher's great grandfather, a fighter pilot in WWII: "World War II—A 'Great' Grandfather's Experience." The display itself was decorated with rows of medals and pictures of the great grandfather, both as a young solider and as an older man. In the recent pictures, he posed dressed in his wartime garb. The student explained to me that his great grandfather had attended an earlier Heritage Fair, but he could not make the trip to Montréal. When I asked him how he came to make the project, he answered, "Well, I know *I* would have been so afraid to go to war." To this he added, "He must have been afraid too. My great grandfather was brave to get Hitler out of Europe." Our exchange ended at this point because the student researcher quite

suddenly turned around, sat down, and looked back toward his display. This abrupt end was just the beginning of my thinking about the meaning of identification and the significance of children's efforts to symbolize their relationship to (past) others.

The aforementioned framework of historical empathy can help educators decipher the kind of attachment implied in this student's project. To the extent that medals and photographs showed a highly decorated soldier, both young and old, the project can be read as representing a heroic portrait of war experience. The student's awe-struck comment about his great grandfather's bravery added to this heroic image. The soldier's heroism was pitted against a child's fear. In these ways, this student provided a relatively uncomplicated view of historical experience. Educators may locate his display in Ashby and Lee's (1987) level of "generalized stereotypes." His initial comment about being afraid to go to war also indicates a level of "everyday empathy." The student imagined, based on his own expectations and fears, what the other's experience might have been like.

To the extent that the majority of the students' projects represented the heroic aspects of Canada's heritage, they may be read on terms similar to the aforementioned project. Focusing on heroes or victims, victories or disasters, progressive or primitive ways of life, most projects offered a relatively uncomplicated view of historical experience. In this way, the Heritage Fair may be viewed as an uncritical pedagogical site that fails to promote a level of historical consciousness beyond merely stereotypes and fantasies. I might add that representing the mythic (or heroic) qualities of the "great" grandfathers of a nation does not invoke a rigorous understanding of the conditions that produce war, nor what it would mean to judge our beloved forefathers' implication in the horrors of war itself. There is perhaps an imaginary safety in the easy answers that stereotypes provide.

Despite this critical reading, I maintain that the Heritage Fair is an important site of learning, precisely because it does not require complex historical understanding. In this regard, I agree with Kieran Egan (1989) who suggests that the "mythic" and "romantic layers" of historical engagement are constituents of understanding even as they can function as obstacles to it (p. 282). The expression of these attachments is

important, I think, because it allows children to work out in fantasy the internal conflicts that historical knowledge brings to bear. For instance, identification allows them to imagine being a hero of war and being too afraid to go, simultaneously. Taking off from Ashby and Lee's (1987) typology of historical empathy, I wish to offer additional terms for understanding why students identify with the fantastic and heroic aspects of the past and, moreover, how identification enables learners to tolerate the force of knowledge that both precedes and exceeds the time of the self. Indeed, children learn to question the world not only from the adult who demands rigorous understanding, but also from fantasies that resist conscious thought.

THINKING IDENTIFICATION THROUGH FREUD

Freud (1921) defined identification as "the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person" (p. 134). Through this emotional tie, the ego fashions a sense of self. As Freud (1921/1991) puts it: "Identification endeavours to mould a person's own ego after the fashion of the one that has been taken for a model" (p. 135). Important for my analysis of the Heritage Fair are the two competing forces implied in identification: both the hostile wish for someone's removal and a sense of susceptibility to the other, which is felt as a fear of lost love. In terms of the first aspect, Freud (1921/1991) explains: "[Identification] behaves like a derivative of the first, *oral* phase of the organization of the libido, in which the object we long for and prize is assimilated by eating and is in that way annihilated as such" (pp. 134-135, emphasis in original). This first aspect can be understood in terms of incorporation, a fantasy of swallowing the other whom one would like to become. Through identification, the ego fulfills omnipotent fantasies by incorporating all the qualities of others it desires for itself (be it a lost and/or loved object). Like the relation between the fan and the superstar or role model, the ego takes on qualities of others that it wishes to have for the self.

In the context of the Heritage Fair, the incorporative aspect of identification suggests that students' interests in their chosen historical figure have less to do with history itself and more to do with the fulfillment of their own wishes. In this regard, another student's project "St. John's—The City of Spirits" provides further insight. The project

itself was decorated with cobwebs, gravestones, and skulls and photographs of haunted houses lined the panels of the Bristol board display. At the centre of the project was a miniature-sized haunted house with tiny people living among ghosts. The historian, a grade-six student, was herself dressed up as a ghost; she wore a white robe, white face, and painted red lips. As one of several adults and children who listened as she relayed spooky tales of the spirits of St. John's, I was struck at first by the sense of wonder and awe that animated this young student's narration. This sense of awe suggested to me that something deeply significant had engaged—or haunted—this student's representation of St. John's.

Read through the lens of identification, educators can say that this student's project fulfilled any or all of the following fantasies: to consume the past, to be watched over, to be watchful of others, to be invisible, to be seen, to escape death, and to participate eternally in the present. Educators can find similar wishes underneath the heroic narratives that dominated the Fair, even those that dealt with the more difficult side of human existence. For instance, one student represented her great grandfather's experience as a prisoner of war under the Imperial Japanese army during WWII. After detailing the horrific conditions of prison life, she emphasized his mental strength and sense of hope that preserved his sense of humanity in the face of such atrocity. What these projects shared in common were identifications that fulfilled the wish to overcome great obstacles. That is, the students' projects not only represented the goodness of history, but also indicated a wish on the part of students for the good to do away with the evil.

Freud's theory of identification deepens educators' understanding of why students may so readily narrate the heroic aspects of historical experience. Through identification, the ego projects outward all that is bad (i.e. feelings of helplessness and fear) and takes in their place good or heroic images of the past. In his work on fairy tales, Bruno Bettelheim (1976/1989) explains why identifying with the fantastic qualities of others is an essential part of growing up. As he argues, such identifications do indeed involve internalizing to stereotypical extremes, but it is through these extremes that children can begin to formulate and imagine solutions for complex existential questions: "Who am I? Where did I

come from? How did the world come into being? Who created man and all the animals? What is the purpose of life?" (p. 47). Educators can add complex questions of history and memory: What was life like before me? What will life be like after me? What were children like a thousand years ago? What will happen a thousand years from now? Is yesterday history? How did history happen? In Bettelheim's view, the fantasies of identification are not obstacles to thinking, but the very means through which the ego learns to ask questions about the nature of time and of history.[1] The questions raised in/through identification are a mediating space between an internal psychic reality of fantasy and the existence of the outside world.

D. W. Winnicott's (1971) theory of "transitional objects and transitional phenomena" elaborates the significance of this mediating space between internal and external reality (p. 1). Winnicott developed the concept of the transitional object from his observations of the relation between mother and child; he noticed that the transitional object enabled the child to tolerate the gradual separation from the mother while retaining a sense of closeness. Transitional phenomena, for Winnicott, are neither wholly internal nor external. They are "possessions" that carry internal fantasies (Winnicott, 1971, p. 9). The child uses a transitional object, usually a blanket or stuffed toy to retain an illusion of omnipotence in coming to accept the world (i.e. the mother) as existing outside of her or his control. In other words, the fur guardian accompanies a child on the journey of disillusionment; it creates the possibility for a child to tolerate and even take pleasure in the separate reality of the mother, someone with her own experiences and desires that do not always involve and may even oppose the child's.

The projects at the Heritage Fair served a similar purpose for students of history, except here, a relation to the past (or elder) replaced the relation to the mother. From this vantage, the students' identifications with past heroes and/or ghostly figures can be viewed as a gradual acceptance of the world as an existence outside and before the time of the self. The Bristol board displays mediated both internal and external reality: at once the discovery of the world as already invented by others and the child's representation of that world in an inventive way. Here, I am reminded of the students who studied inventions, such

as the snow mobile, as well as novelists or painters. Among the most popular were Canadian classics, such as Lucy Maud Montgomery and the Group of Seven. Like a child who takes a transitional object, these Winnicottian "possessions" allowed children to make something creative, and even pleasurable, from the difficult experience of trying to make a history for the self and having to encounter others who have "made it" already.

THE SHADOW SIDE OF IDENTIFICATION

Critiques of identification tend to swirl around the image of the ego consuming, or snatching of the other's psychic difference (see Shemilt, 1984). Identification is also made from an underside, that is, from feelings of extreme dependence and vulnerability. This underbelly suggests that identification is not only a narcissistic bolstering of the ego, but also a sign of susceptibility to the other who challenges, or better, interferes with the ego's sense-making capacities. I begin this section with the following questions: What does this underside mean for understanding students' representations at the Heritage Fair? How are students' identifications articulating their susceptibility to actual others? And what does a discussion of susceptibility offer to conceptions of identification as both uncritical and unethical?

Freud (1921/1991) gives a concrete example that illustrates how susceptibility is performed through identification. "A child who was unhappy over the loss of a kitten declared straight out that now he himself was the kitten, and accordingly crawled about on all fours, would not eat at table, etc" (p. 138). In citing this example, I would like to suggest that identification represents not only a means of engaging the world through wishful thinking (here, a wish for the kitten's return or the ego's wish to be sought out by others). Paradoxically, identification is, here, an unconscious acknowledgement of someone missing. Freud (1921/1991) cast this melancholic kind of identification in terms of a shadow: "The shadow of the object has fallen upon the ego…. The introjection of the object is here unmistakably clear" (p. 139). To introject the lost other is not just to consume something for the self; it is also to be affected by that Other's absence.

Writing over fifty years later, Emmanuel Lévinas (1978), a self-declared non-Freudian, posits identification in terms that are strikingly similar to his adversary. He writes: "It is, as it were, a dual solitude: this other than me accompanies the ego *like a shadow*" (p. 88, emphasis added). This internalized shadow is a sign of the ego's susceptibility, that is, a sign of being haunted by something other than itself. To return to Freud's example of the kitten, identification can be understood as a response to the loss of that other, or perhaps to the otherness that is loss. Identification with the lost object implies that the ego has been affected by loss to the point of taking on qualities of the lost object (A. Freud 1967/1998). ² There is, then, a dual logic of identification: the first is a defensive maneuver that involves taking in only those aspects of the other that gratify the ego, while discarding all that obstructs it. The second is a drive for a relation with the other who resides beyond the ego's omnipotent grasp. Through identification, then, the ego both defends against the other and performs its vulnerability to the other who accompanies one "like a shadow."

The notion of subjectivity as affected, or accompanied by the shadow of another, is repeated throughout the body of Lévinas's later work. In *Otherwise Than Being*, he uses a number of phrases to get at the susceptibility of subjectivity: "obsessed with responsibilities," "accused in its innocence," "a hostage," "a traumatic effect of persecution," "answering for everything and everyone," "emptying itself of its being," and "subjection to everything" (Lévinas, 1998, pp. 111-117). These claims can be difficult to read when they are taken as moral imperatives, or directives, which is not how Lévinas intended them. On quite different terms, Lévinas is describing a particular quality of being that is always already ethically oriented for the other. Lévinas is helpful, then, for understanding why the little boy in Freud's example would feel so susceptible for the lost kitten he may or may not have been responsible for losing.

To suggest that responsibility is rooted in a radical susceptibility to the other challenges assumptions of the public character of responsibility. In his work, Lévinas bases responsibility primarily on the intimate quality of human relations: responsibility is prior to the knowledge one acquires about the other, and prior to the public

deliberation of meanings of historical representations. Significantly, Lévinas provides a lens through which to understand the self as a responsible subject, "accused in its innocence," prior to the development of critical faculties, such as judgment and analysis (p. 112). For Lévinas, responsibility emerges from a pre-linguistic, or we might say, pre-critical experience of being. Levinas's sense of responsibility is, then, something one feels before the decision to perform a duty and before the effort to strike just enough emotional distance in empathizing with others. It begins, but does not end with the surprising discovery of the self as always already constituted in relation to others. As Lévinas (1998) puts it, "I am 'in myself' through the others" (p. 112).

It is on these terms that I think we can read identification not only as a narcissistic consumption of the past, but also as a sign of the vulnerability that constitutes being *as* responsible for others in times and places before the self. From a Lévinasian perspective, it is significant that the majority of the Heritage Fair projects could be traced back to an actual other, often a grandparent. Even projects that represented objects—such as the airplane, the iron lung, or snowmobile—were almost always attached to a grandparent or great grandparent who had benefited from a particular invention or who had owned an early model. Many students interviewed grandparents and proudly displayed pictures. I met a handful of grandparents who attended the Fair. It suddenly stuck me that the boy who spoke of his *great* grandfather and then turned away may have been missing his great grandfather's presence at the National Fair. In this regard, students seemed to be responding not merely to abstract historical knowledge, but to actual others in the world. The palpable affect implied in the representations at the Heritage Fair was, I think, an expression of the intimate quality of the Lévinasian self/other relation. At the Heritage Fair, historical knowledge was animated not just by unconscious fantasies, but also by a kind of vulnerability to the demands of actual others, indeed elders, who could instruct, pass on their stories, and who would eventually pass away.

REPOSITIONING IDENTIFICATION IN HISTORY EDUCATION

My intention in this article has been to explore the dynamics of identification implied in students' representations at the Heritage Fair.

These dynamics represent both an incorporation of and a susceptibility to otherness. In exploring these dynamics, I have tried not to evaluate identification, or student responses against a pre-given framework of historical empathy, although I recognize the importance of such frameworks for examining what kind of learning pedagogical initiatives such as the Heritage Fair mobilize. Indeed, developmental frameworks have themselves opened up a discussion of the unconscious aspects of identification in learning. And yet, such frameworks presume that unconscious modes of engagement, such as identification, must be harnessed by more sophisticated modes of understanding. Identification is not, to my mind, a stage that learners must out-grow; it is, rather, an essential *position* that enables one to tolerate the difficulty of growing up into a very old world and the losses this implies.

The difference between a level and a position is important here. Whereas the former invokes the image of a ladder with rungs that one must pass through in a normative and linear way, the latter suggests a teeter-totter of positions that require each other in making knowledge meaningful. If developmental theory suggests that unconscious processes, such as identification, become less and less prevalent as conscious understanding improves, then psychoanalysis asks teachers to recognize "another form of knowledge" in unconscious processes that resist enlightenment (Kristeva, 2002, p. 40). Egan (1989) expresses a similar need to move away from developmental levels or foundations in theorizing learning.

The metaphor of foundations is not right: These layers [the mythic and the romantic] are not left behind or beneath future developments in understanding, they are rather constituents of them…. Apart from being pedagogical good sense, it is a matter of courtesy to address things to students in the terms that they can best make sense of. (pp. 291-292)

I think the Heritage Fair makes "good sense" if we accept the idea that "mythic" and the "romantic" are essential positions of learning, even if they are not yet critical modes of understanding. Although teachers and researchers seem to agree that these positions do not yet constitute an ethical or critical engagement with history, what is a little less certain, though no less important, is the emotional significance of historical

knowledge, tinged with desires to replace elders and fears of losing them.

What is needed in education are sites, like the Heritage Fair, where students can give expression to fantasies at play in trying to know historical realities, without too quickly turning to conventions that insist upon "premature explanations" or "wishes to enlighten" (Britzman, 2003, p. 138). Of course, history education needs very much to be about the critical examination of historical evidence. And I do agree that mythic and heroic narratives of history are problematic when they are accepted without question. Yet, I suggest that the reverse is also true: in asking students to give up the mythic and heroic too soon, we risk refusing a child's questions. When it comes to students of history, especially young students, identification is an essential position of historical engagement, not a peripheral or lower level of understanding. In identifying with their chosen historical figure, the students at the Heritage Fair actually opened a space, not for rigorous understanding, but for reckoning with the force of a time before their own.

NOTES

[1] Egan (1979) made precisely this point in his text, *Educational Psychology*, just three years after Bettelheim's. Egan argues that children must "begin at the outside limits and work in," engaging "the exotic and bizarre" before grappling with ambiguities and ambivalences in between (pp. 30-31). In a later discussion on the specific ways in which children develop historical understanding, Egan (1989) explains why history's heroes are so attractive to young students. "Students associate with qualities such as courage, ingenuity, patience, power, etc. These are human qualities required to overcome the threats of the everyday world that bear down on students" (p. 285). Like Bettelheim, Egan argues that heroic identifications help children cope with feelings of helplessness and dependency that make growing up both tumultuous and ordinary.

[2] Anna Freud (1967/1998) elaborated her father's discussion of identification as a response to a lost object. In her analytic work, Ms. Freud (1967/1998) noted that people in the later stages of mourning had "typical dreams" wherein the dead person appeared in disguised form and tried to make her/himself noticeable to the survivor (p. 103). She describes this dream encounter as follows: "He [the lost other] searches for him [the survivor], or pleads with him, or beseeches him to come and stay; he expresses longing, or complains about being alone and deserted" (p. 103). Ms Freud argues that the typical dream stems from, "identification with the lost object," that is hooked into a number of conflicting feelings. The mourner's dream is as much about the wish to protect the lost other as it is about feelings of resentment for having been

deserted. Also hooked into the dream are feelings of guilt for surviving. In surviving (and being able to dream at all), Freud suggests that the one in mourning tends to feel, "disloyal to the dead and [a] sense of guilt about this" (p. 104).

I think that Ms. Freud's discussion may shed light on Heritage Fair representations that were haunted by the dead: the spirits of St. John's, heroes of war, spooky theatres, graveyards, and natural disasters. Much like the mourner's dreams, I have begun to wonder if students' representations of the dead were instances of identification with the lost object, whether the loss was actual or anticipated. Following Freud, I am suggesting a possible relation between the feverish desire to represent the dead, and to believe so faithfully in their stories as revealing something of the guilt and anxiety associated with surviving, and for young learners, the possibility of surpassing elders. It is important to keep in mind that in psychoanalytic terms, "surpassing" can mean something as simple (or not so simple) as traveling to Montréal without one's "great" grandfather.

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