Critical Race and Intersectional Feminist Critique of Transhumanism in Superhero Movies

FIONA BLAIKIE, GIANG NGUYEN HOANG LE, AND SOPHIA STRACHAN

Abstract

Transhumanism, race, gender, and cultural identity in early 21st century popular culture movies: *Black Panther*; *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon;* and *Wonder Woman* is the focus of this essay. Transhumanism refers to a super-powered human, able to transcend conventional human capabilities and accomplish physical, psychic, intellectual, and emotional feats of strength and perseverance such as extra sensory perception and the ability to fly. Three authors examine how their positionality impacted their experiences of the movies' narratives, characterizations, and significance. Each author considers their own enculturated, racialized, and gendered backgrounds to contemplate the personal impact of the films as empowering and inspirational.

Keywords: *Black Panther*, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *Wonder Woman,* popular culture, film studies, visual culture, movie posters, positionality

Introduction to Our Positionalities and Transhumanism in Superhero Movies

Three art educators, whose socio-cultural life experiences differ from one another, discuss three 21st century popular culture films: *Black Panther*; *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon;* and *Wonder Woman* in this essay. We met at a university in Canada and from our conversations forged feminist critical race interpretations of transhumanism performed in the three movies. Sophia Strachan, artist and arts-based researcher interested in gendered Black identities and celebrity cultures, is a young Black, heterosexual, Christian, Caribbean female adult student pursuing a master's degree in art education. Giang Le, a doctoral candidate in art education, is writing an autoethnography about growing up in Vietnam as a gay boy in a homophobic society in which his family and the surrounding society follow the conventions of Confucianism and Buddhism. Fiona Blaikie, a White cisgender female professor of art education in Canada, is originally from South Africa and the United Kingdom.[1] In discussing the three films, we recognized and contemplated together how our situated, lived experiences of gender, race, and cultural identity impacted the personal significance of the films as empowering and inspirational for our teaching, research, and personal lives.

Our definition of transhumanism[2] resides in the arena of culture, cultural studies, and popular culture. From our own meaning-making in viewing the films, we propose that transhumanism displayed in the three superhero movies may inspire humans to become exceptional forces toward changing their situated

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[1] Fiona teaches in the graduate program in the Department of Educational Studies at a Canadian university, where she is supervising Sophia Strachan's master's thesis and Giang Le's dissertation.

[2] Through the lens of science, transhumanism seeks to transcend humans' physical and mental capacities and limitations via utilizing technology, for example, to create and enhance artificial intelligences (Porpora, 2017). Some technological advances towards transhumanism face resistance, such as manipulating human consciousness and work on creating robotic hearts (Benedikter & Siepmann, 2016). Lipowicz (2019) defines transhumanism as interdisciplinary, expanding and amplifying human capacities via the advancement of technology.

conditions of homophobia, racism, and sexism. Within speculative imaginaries of technologists, creatives, teachers, scientists, among others, transhumanism expands human physical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual capacities. While transhumanism is a key theme in many arenas such as faith traditions, work in the sciences, technology, literature, and the arts, our focus in this essay is popular culture movies, and the ways in which the film's narratives and character development operationalize potentialities for expanding human capacities. A key notion of transhumanism important to our analysis is "one's right to one's body, not simply as self-ownership but also the right to transform/modify oneself to one's own desires" (Sandberg, 2013, p. 56). Technological refinement involving bodily modification is evident in *Black Panther; Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon;* and *Wonder Woman.*

An Intersectional Review of *Black Panther*

Our analysis frames *Black Panther*[3] within social justice scholarship focusing on critical race theory, transnational feminism, and issues of intersectionality as race intersects with gender and sexuality (Ahmed, 2002; Blaikie, 2021, 2020, 2018; Bhana, 2021; Crenshaw, 1991, 1996; Malcolm & Mendoza, 2014; Whitehead & Ringrose, 2021). The *Black Panther* is T'Challa, a young Black warrior from fictional Wakanda, a country on the African continent (Figure 1). Wakandans have developed an advanced culture and technology to create a unique metal, Vibranium. In the fictional narrative, Wakanda's King T'Chaka (whose name hearkens back to King Chaka, the King of the Zulu nation from 1787 to 1828 in Zululand, South Africa) visited his brother N'Jobu in 1992 in Oakland, California, USA. King T'Chaka, following his instincts, asked N'Jobu if he was working with a black-market arms dealer, a White South African criminal, Ulysses Klaue. T'Chaka accused N'Jobu of stealing Wakanda's precious metal, Vibranium. Zuri, N'Jobu's business partner confirmed T'Chaka's suspicions. Soon thereafter, King T'Chaka died, which compelled his son, T'Challa, a young Black man living in the United States, to return home to Wakanda to become king. T'Challa, that is, *Black Panther*, with his comrade all-gender warriors, must defend Wakanda, save Vibranium, and prevent a world war.

[3.] *Black Panther*, a film released in 2018, was a huge box office success, artistically and financially, grossing billions in profits.

Figure 1. The official poster for the *Black Panther* movie portrays all the key characters, all Black actors, in the movie (source: https://www.marvel.com/movies/black-panther). Significant as a counternarrative within the dominant White patriarchal film industry, the Black Panther movie features Black actors in leading roles, with White actors playing supporting roles..

Black Panther and his warriors team up with female warriors known as the Dora Milaje. T'Challa, as *Black Panther*, must use his superpowers of strength—mental, physical, emotional, and intellectual, as well as flight and weaponry. Black Panther's powers are enhanced when wearing his high-tech Black Panther costume, which empowers him to fight his enemies and save Wakanda, Vibranium, and the world, from destruction. The empowered female warriors, the Dora Milaje, are key to Black Panther and his male warriors' success. A tense racialized narrative takes shape in the form of Black Panther's powerful evil enemy, Eric Stevens, a fellow Black man, who works alongside another evil character, Ulysses Klaue, a White man. Eric Stevens is also known as Killmonger, epitomizing evil quite literally, and like Killmonger, Klaue is a fellow criminal and villain. Klaue

is a South African black-market arms dealer. Together, Killmonger and Klaue steal Vibranium from a museum in London, England. Their treachery, especially as Killmonger is a Black Wakandan, tests the solidarity of the Black Panther and his team of warriors, drawing them into internal conflict that endangers Wakanda and the entire world, given their mission is to save Wakanda and the world.

Facing extreme treachery, Black Panther successfully galvanizes his people, using his superpowered transhuman strength along with the strength of his people to defeat evil. In terms of gender, race, and cultural identity, Black Panther is the ultimate alpha male and Wakandan superhero. *Black Panther's* personal military and moral triumph is buttressed by the bravery of Wakandan male and female warriors, bring to prominence the female group, the Dora Milaje.

Leading the Dora Milaje is Black captain, Okoye. Okoye challenges gender roles, as her husband, W'Kabi, who is also a friend of Black Panther, must obey her orders as well. This power hierarchy causes W'Kabi and other males some distress, given that traditionally, Black Wakandan males have held greater power and authority than females. Okoye is defiant as a female warrior. Having no hair is part of the Dora Milaje tradition, so these female warriors wear wigs. However, Okoye refuses to do so, preferring to go bald, further challenging gender norms by looking somewhat androgynous, rather than feminizing herself with a wig. Watching *Black Panther* encouraged Sophia to think critically about her worldview growing up in Trinidad and Tobago. For example, growing up in Trinidad and Tobago, Sophia felt as though there were expectations for her hair to look a certain way. Being a Black Caribbean woman, the scene where Okoye refuses to wear a wig challenged her notions of femininity, specifically, Black femininity and appearances. Of the three movies, Sophia felt most connected to *Black Panther*, due to the positive representation of Black female figures in the movie. A film such as *Black Panther* aids in challenging stereotypical norms of what it means to be a female person, especially, for Sophia, as a Black Caribbean woman.

Always by Black Panther's side is his little sister Shuri, a Princess of Wakanda, who serves in a key role, as a creative intellectual. In Hollywood movies, intellectual giants and geniuses are typically played by men (Bucciferro, 2021). In *Black Panther*, Shuri is the intellectual genius behind technological

advancements in Wakanda, including designing and creating Black Panther's transhuman superhero suits and special tech gadgets. In this sense, Shuri also serves a role as a mother creator, giving life, strength, and power to Wakanda's greatest resources: Vibranium, Black Panther, and the Wakandan people. These various roles Shuri plays aid in challenging ideologies surrounding the Black female body as lesser than White bodies in relation to class, race, gender, and sexuality, especially in relation to White female bodies (Bhana, 2021).[4] Shuri's role in the Black Panther film, as a mother creator, is significant because she has overcome marginalization and oppression many Black women experience given intersections of their race and gender identities. Within the cultural milieu of Wakanda, Shuri is portrayed as a caring creative Black female intellectual, who is simultaneously empowered and empowering, and who, like the Dora Milaje, operates beyond the limiting confines of gender and race.

Fiona, as a child, growing up on a farm in South Africa, she spent very little time with her family, and all her time with Zulu children whose families lived and worked on the farm. Fiona experienced first-hand deeply ancestral intuitive ways of knowing with and about nature, animals, the weather, humans, life, and death. For Fiona, there is strong ancestral psychic power in the vital materializing of humans, nonhumans, temporalities, energies, spaces, and places. That is why, for Fiona, in *Black Panther*, she relates to the ritual of speaking to ancestors and/or speaking with human and beyond human entities. For example, Fiona appreciates the imaginary in *Black Panther* of drinking from a heart-shaped herb, and covering the body with dust, enabling the subject to travel to an "ancestral plane". This sense of peace and connection across time and space is something Fiona sometimes experiences in "sensory and thought watching" meditation, where she can become observant, and attuned across timeless space.

The focus on race, gender, and cultural identity in *Black Panther* is key, given the grip on popular culture held by Hollywood, where male/female, good/bad, and right/wrong are portrayed as oppositional. In many movies, including the transhuman superhero movies offered for contemplation here, heroes, villains, and criminals are tropes for superheroes and supervillains. Such tropes often frame

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[4.] Education scholar Deevia Bhana (2021) posits that Black female adolescents in South Africa see themselves as having less cultural, social, and political capital, and, therefore, as less valuable than White female youth.

cultural consciousness by actual and putative wars and/or political regimes, so that socially, politically, and culturally, countries and individuals are characterized as "good" or "bad" in relation to situated socio-cultural and political contexts. For example, Black Panther's sister Shuri calls CIA officer Eric Ross a "colonizer," after helping him to heal from a bullet wound. Here, there is an implicit reference to the United States and other colonial countries that engaged in the slave trade.

Martial Arts Cultural Identity in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon[5] demonstrates aesthetically the beauty and power of Asian martial arts. Revered for its martial arts choreography, aesthetics, plot, and cinematography, the movie follows Li Mu Bai and Yu Shu Lien. Both are warriors involved in an unrealized love relationship, and both are fighting to recover a special sword named Green Destiny, that once belong to Li Mu Bai's murdered master. The movie follows their challenges, including the intervention of evil Jade Fox who stands between these heroes and their dreams. It is noteworthy that in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* the actors are all Asian, highlighting Asian culture realized in the disciplined and highly culturally situated martial arts of Kung Fu.

While no two persons of any culture, race or ethnicity are ever so similar in beliefs, values, and behavior that they are identical, the praxis of martial arts or wuxia (martial arts heroes) is central to the cultural identity of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, and it is intrinsic to the identities of key characters in the film, alongside an implicit sense that the ethos of martial arts is central to Chinese, Taiwanese, and other Asian cultural identities. These implicit Asian racial and cultural qualities are hard work, courage, strength, emotional resilience, and calmness. Understanding hierarchies and respecting authority are also key to the Asian philosophy and praxis of Confucianism. Master Kong, widely known as Confucius, was a Chinese philosopher who coined and developed Confucianism in the period 551-479 B.C. Idealized selfhood is key to Confucianism and is

emphasized by promoting social harmony in human relations (Le et al., 2020). This harmony can be achieved through strict social order and appropriate behavior, including righteousness, etiquette, loyalty, and filial piety (Le, 2021). Further, following Zhang (2019), Asian martial arts embody "Chinese sociocultural and philosophical values" and are a means of aesthetically, materially, and physically transcending fears and physical limitations (p. 32). For Zhang (2019), the martial arts, as quintessentially Asian, privilege values such as humility, resilience, integrity, inner-strength, and self-defense over offense (Shimin, 2013). These cultural values are integrated into the main characters' personalities in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

In their superhuman focused Zen style strength and power, Li Mu Bai and Yu Shu Lien, like *Black Panther*, are superhumans who are so strong and so attuned that they can leap from tree to tree and from rooftop to rooftop. They can fly, they have psychic abilities, and they can absorb and withstand injuries— suggesting that potentially they might be immortal. In *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* the fighters' Zen focus and their calmness enhances their resilience, power, and strength. The ability to absorb injury, to fly, and to remain cool—speak to transhuman abilities gained from the focus, discipline, courage, and selflessness of martial arts training, heroizing Asian martial arts practices in Asian popular culture movies.

In terms of gender, female lead characters in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Yu Shu Lien, and Jade Fox, are as fearless as their male counterparts, using weapons, flying, and fighting with grace and power against allegedly stronger men. Figure 2 shows a scene in the movie where Jade Fox, a female warrior, faces warrior Li Mu Bai fearlessly. They are both effortlessly standing way above the ground, almost floating on branches of bamboo tree, as expressions of the praxis of Kung Fu. This form of Kung Fu adopted in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is known as Wing Chun, a traditional southern Chinese form of self-defense for women associated with strength and resolve combined with more female qualities of gentleness, elegance, and delicacy (Judkins & Nielson, 2015).

[5.] *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* was released in December 2000 by Taiwanese Director, Ang Lee, written by Taiwanese screenwriter, Wang Huiling. Huiling was nominated for a Best Writing Academy Award in 2001. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* has been a huge commercial and critical success. It was nominated for ten Academy Awards in 2001, including nominations for Best Picture and Best Foreign Language Film. The latter nomination was successful. In 2001, the movie also won two Golden Globe Awards and two BAFTA awards

Figure 2. In many scenes of *Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon*, women are portrayed and characterized as fearless female warriors who are facing male heroes (source: https://www.reddit.com/t/crouching_tiger_hidden_dragon_sword_of_destiny/)

Both male and female humans have super-powers in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, and females characters are not submissive conformists who follow traditional gender binaries (Connell, 1995; Paechter, 2018). However, it is noteworthy that in contrast to their male counterparts, female bodies in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* are slimmer, more fragile and slighter than males, following Asian popular culture gender binary stereotypes of women as demure, gentle, smaller, and more feminine than their male counterparts, especially in their graceful and elegant performances of martial arts.

Giang, drawing on his cultural identity as Asian Vietnamese, felt connected to the cultural identity embodied through the martial arts in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Like Chinese culture, the martial arts have historical roots in Vietnamese culture. Vovinam is known as the national martial art in Vietnam

(Carruthers, 2010). Vovinam synthesizes "Vietnamese Indigenous martials arts with techniques taken from other disciplines like Kung Fu, Judo, Tae Kwon Do, Aikido and Karate-do" (Carruthers, 2010, p. 45). Much like the martial arts in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* representing transhuman heroism, courage, and patriotism, Vovinam in Vietnam symbolizes vitality, a firm foundation, an indomitable will, and an invincible spirit, rooted in Vietnamese culture. However, Vovinam is a gendered martial artform, as it is highly recommended for male practitioners (Carruthers, 2010). The word *nam* means male and this martial art as physical training is meant for boys and men who need to become tough, strong, and macho. When Giang was a child, his parents mandated he receive Vovinam martial art training to make him look and act more like what they perceived a boy should be.

Cross-cultural Synergy in *Wonder Woman 1984*

Wonder Woman 1984[6] is located temporally and spatially in the 1980s Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States, where enemies are both real and elusive. Further, *Wonder Woman 1984* references the voraciousness of capitalism in which individual greed threatens the safety and viability of the wellbeing of the whole of humanity, a central theme of the movie. *Wonder Woman* is a superpowered transhuman superheroine of great physical strength, intellect, and moral virtue in that she always uses her extraordinary power for the common good (Figure 3). She respects her elders, is not susceptible to flattery, and she is graced with inner confidence and power.

[6.] *Wonder Woman 1984* was released in 2020. It is a transhuman superhero fantasy movie based on the DC Comics female superheroine character, *Wonder Woman*. Because it was released during the Covid-19 pandemic, *Wonder Woman* has not enjoyed the box office success of its counterparts *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and *Black Panther*.

Figure 3. In the *Wonder Woman* movie poster, Diana Prince played by Hollywood
    actress, Gal Gadot, demonstrates her goddess powers with armor and
    equipment—the Lasso of Truth (source: https://www.dc.com/wonder-
    woman-in-comics)

The role of Diana Prince, who is *Wonder Woman*, is framed historically in
the mythology and gendered faith traditions and cults of ancient Greece and Rome.
Her first name, Diana, is no coincidence: Diana is a revered Roman goddess,
patroness of hunters, the country, and nature. According to such mythology, Diana
is associated with lunar female power, which is submissive, passive, cool and
reflective, in the sense that the moon's light is indirect, and the moon does not
emit heat. Her light is indirect and second-hand, an energy that is reflected by
and therefore dependent on the generating heat and light energy of the sun. Male
energies of dominance and patriarchal power are suggested in the English language
term for a male child, "son," which sounds like "sun" and is associated with active
heat, light, and energy. Interestingly, this conceptualization of female and male
is expressed in the I Ching or Book of Changes (Baynes & Wilhelm, 1977) in
which the hexagram for The Creative is male; the hexagram for The Receptive is

female. This imaginary speaks not just to gendered power and energy, but to the
childbearing "receptive" biology of females. And in ancient Roman mythology,
Diana is in fact a virgin goddess and protector of women in childbirth. Her last
name, Prince, speaks to an implied royal and aristocratic lineage. In contemplating
Wonder Woman, Fiona was surprised by the cross-cultural synergy realized in
connecting the Roman Goddess Diana with the ancient Chinese Book of Changes
or I Ching (Baynes & Wilhelm, 1977). Here, females are imagined as lunar,
receptive, passive, reflecting light, and always framed and outshone by males as
solar, creative, active, heat and light producing. These are ingrained and ancient
cross-cultural social and aesthetic imaginaries about the roles and innate power of
males, set apart from females, with females as subordinate, and as dominated.

As *Wonder Woman,* Diana Prince belongs to a race of self-sufficient
super-powered super heroines raised on an isolated island by women who are
explicitly trained for and live with inherent transhuman potential to be moral and
physical warriors for the benefit of all humans. Amazonians do not need men and
are more than a match for them. Yet, Diana loves a pilot, Steve Trevor, featured in
a previous version of *Wonder Woman* released in 2017. In *Wonder Woman 1984*,
hero Steve has died. However, for a time, Diana's desire to have him return to her
via reincarnation makes her susceptible to evil, which incarnates in the form of oil
baron Maxwell Lord, who promises that everybody can have whatever they want,
if they give Maxwell Lord what he wants—power and money. Maxwell Lord is
an alpha male devoted entirely to self-aggrandizement. A greedy immoral liar,
he is ready to let the world destroy itself to serve his desires. The reference to a
powerful "lord" in the religious and aristocratic sense is important here. A struggle
between the power of good and evil is a central theme in this movie, where, except
for Steve, men come across badly, as depraved, and facile.

The gendered counterpart to Maxwell Lord is evil anthropologist, Barbara
Minerva. It is noteworthy that her last name is Minerva, a reference to a Roman
virgin goddess. Minerva represents wisdom, with a strong athletic build, often
depicted with a spear. Yet, as the movie unfolds, Barbara Minerva is unlike a
Roman goddess as she is easily victimized by males who harass or ignore her.
When Maxwell Lord pays Barbara a little attention, she falls for him immediately.
Barbara's nemesis is Diana, *Wonder Woman*, who represents the binary

opposite—the profound inner strength and goodness that Barbara lacks. Feeling that she wants to dominate, have power, and pay men back for their oppressive behavior, Barbara reincarnates as Cheetah, an evil powerful predator, and another transhuman incarnation. At the end of the movie, female powers of good versus evil do battle in the form of *Wonder Woman* as an armored angel against Barbara Minerva/Cheetah as an apex predator. As the movie concludes, *Wonder Woman* must allow Steve Trevor, the man she loves so much, who came to life again, to die, as we all must. The moral of the movie is one's actions should benefit all humanity and individual desires must not come before the good of the whole. As such, *Wonder Woman* defeats evil, not just in the form of selfishness and greed represented by both Cheetah and Maxwell Lord, but by successfully appealing to Maxwell Lord to protect the welfare of all humans and the planet.

In terms of race, it is noteworthy in *Wonder Woman 1984*, the most recently released of the three movies discussed in this paper, that the lead actors are all White. Actors of other races play minor supporting roles. At the beginning of the movie, Barbara is nice to a homeless Black man reading *Waiting for Godot*, which suggests the man is interested in ideas, yet he is deeply marginalized. Further on, Maxwell Lord's waif-like son, a young Asian boy, longs for his attention, but is ignored. And at the end of the movie, at Christmas time, an African American man and an Asian man high-five each other, which seems rather gratuitous and insincere nods to racial diversity.

Concluding Contemplations of Transhumanism in Three Films

The narratives in popular culture, such as the three films discussed in this essay, teach us about truth, goodness, what it means to be human, what it means to live, and what it means to love. In all three popular culture movies, *Black Panther; Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*; and *Wonder Woman,* women represent and express their own generative innate forms of energy, of action, heat, light, and power, as superpowered, across Black, Asian, and White racial constructs, and across the cultural contexts of an ancient African kingdom, Asian martial arts, and Amazonian female warriors. The image of Wonder Woman/Diana Prince differs from female characters in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. This difference might refer to cultural differences in how women have been characterized and imagined in patriarchal cultures dominant throughout the Americas, European, and Asian

countries. Diana Prince and all Amazonian women are fortified with armor and steel weapons; Diana is an immortal goddess. However, Yu Shu Lien in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon,* and her counterparts, are gentler and softer. They use small swords and can leap from tree to tree very elegantly, like dancers or birds. Physically they are less muscular, shorter, and lighter than men. Cross-culturally, both Diana Prince and Yu Shu Lien have superpowers, and are not submissive to men, using their powers to transcend physical limits and become equal to men within their own cultures. Patriarchal societal constructions of masculinity and femininity rooted in gender hegemony subordinate femininity and assumes women must be submissive to men (Connell, 1995, 2000; Schippers, 2007). However, in *Wonder Woman* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon,* Diana Prince, Yu Shu Lien, and Jade Fox become superhumans goddesses, who can stand up to men as superpowered transhuman female warriors.

Black women actors typically play supporting roles (Connell, 1995, 2000). Examples of strong and capable Black women are the Dora Milaje female warriors, while T'Challa as *Black Panther* must use his truly distinctive and unique Black male superpower as the ultimate superhero, utilizing strength, flight, power, and weaponry. Referencing Confucianism, in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* the praxis of martial arts or wuxia is central to cultural identity, which is an overarching theme, characterizing both the narratives and performances of lead characters who are disciplined, hardworking, courageous, strong, emotionally resilient, and calm, respecting hierarchies and authority. In their superhuman focused Zen style strength and power, Li Mu Bai and Yu Shu Lien, like *Black Panther*, are superhumans who can leap and fly from tree to tree and from rooftop to rooftop. They have psychic abilities and can absorb, withstand, and heal from injuries, opening to possibilities of immortality.

In all three movies the theme of contested identities is key, given humans occupy and are empowered within and through constructs of race, gender, and cultural identity. Each movie presents narratives of transhuman heroism, bravery, and ultimately, the triumph of goodness. An overarching theme and common narrative resounds: All humans can be empowered for the ultimate purpose of serving good and defeating evil, revealing a deeply humanitarian emphasis on the ways in which we might contemplate the limitations of our being and becoming as humans, and our possibilities.

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About the Authors

Fiona Blaikie is professor of art education at Brock University. An art educator, Fiona's scholarship has evolved into looking at visual and cultural identity constructs encompassing social theory on the body, clothing, affect, new materialism, Kathleen Stewart's (2019) worlding, and feminism's key concept of situated conditions. Fiona teaches in the graduate program in the Department of Educational Studies at Brock University, and she is supervising both Sophia Strachan and Giang Le.

Contact: fblaikie@brocku.ca

Giang Le is a gay Asian adult male from Vietnam. He is a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education at Brock University working on his dissertation, which is an autoethnography about growing up as a gay boy in a traditional and homophobic society, framed by his early childhood and youth in which the family and wider society follow the conventions of Confucianism and Buddhism. Hence, he is eager to bring his experiences and understandings of Asian cultures and ideologies and gender discourses into this work on interpretation of transhumanism through perspectives of race, gender, and culture in the Asian context.

Contact: gn19kq@brocku.ca

Sophia Strachan has a BFA degree from Canada and is a practicing artist. Currently, she is an international M.Ed. thesis student in the Faculty of Education at Brock University in Canada.

Contact: ss16yt@brocku.ca