TRANSGRESSIONS - CULTURAL STUDIES AND EDUCATION

Engaged Pedagogy, Enraged Pedagogy

Reconciling Politics, Emotion, Religion, and Science for Critical Pedagogy

Tony Monchinski

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TRANSGRESSIONS: CULTURAL STUDIES AND EDUCATION
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This book series is dedicated to the radical love and actions of Paulo Freire, Jesus “Pato” Gomez, and Joe L. Kincheloe.

TRANSGRESSIONS: CULTURAL STUDIES AND EDUCATION

Cultural studies provides an analytical toolbox for both making sense of educational practice and extending the insights of educational professionals into their labors. In this context *Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education* provides a collection of books in the domain that specify this assertion. Crafted for an audience of teachers, teacher educators, scholars and students of cultural studies and others interested in cultural studies and pedagogy, the series documents both the possibilities of and the controversies surrounding the intersection of cultural studies and education. The editors and the authors of this series do not assume that the interaction of cultural studies and education devalues other types of knowledge and analytical forms. Rather the intersection of these knowledge disciplines offers a rejuvenating, optimistic, and positive perspective on education and educational institutions. Some might describe its contribution as democratic, emancipatory, and transformative. The editors and authors maintain that cultural studies helps free educators from sterile, monolithic analyses that have for too long undermined efforts to think of educational practices by providing other words, new languages, and fresh metaphors. Operating in an interdisciplinary cosmos, Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education is dedicated to exploring the ways cultural studies enhances the study and practice of education. With this in mind the series focuses in a non-exclusive way on popular culture as well as other dimensions of cultural studies including social theory, social justice and positionality, cultural dimensions of technological innovation, new media and media literacy, new forms of oppression emerging in an electronic hyperreality, and postcolonial global concerns. With these concerns in mind cultural studies scholars often argue that the realm of popular culture is the most powerful educational force in contemporary culture. Indeed, in the twenty-first century this pedagogical dynamic is sweeping through the entire world. Educators, they believe, must understand these emerging realities in order to gain an important voice in the pedagogical conversation.

Without an understanding of cultural pedagogy's (education that takes place outside of formal schooling) role in the shaping of individual identity–youth identity in particular–the role educators play in the lives of their students will continue to fade. Why do so many of our students feel that life is incomprehensible and devoid of meaning? What does it mean, teachers wonder, when young people are unable to describe their moods, their affective affiliation to the society around them. Meanings provided young people by mainstream institutions often do little to help them deal with their affective complexity, their difficulty negotiating the rift between meaning and affect. School knowledge and educational expectations seem as anachronistic as a ditto machine, not that learning ways of rational thought and making sense of the world are unimportant.

But school knowledge and educational expectations often have little to offer students about making sense of the way they feel, the way their affective lives are shaped. In no way do we argue that analysis of the production of youth in an electronic mediated world demands some "touchy-feely" educational superficiality. What is needed in this context is a rigorous analysis of the interrelationship between pedagogy, popular culture, meaning making, and youth subjectivity. In an era marked by youth depression, violence, and suicide such insights become extremely important, even life saving. Pessimism about the future is the common sense of many contemporary youth with its concomitant feeling that no one can make a difference.

If affective production can be shaped to reflect these perspectives, then it can be reshaped to lay the groundwork for optimism, passionate commitment, and transformative educational and political activity. In these ways cultural studies adds a dimension to the work of education unfilled by any other sub-discipline. This is what Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education seeks to produce—literature on these issues that makes a difference. It seeks to publish studies that help those who work with young people, those individuals involved in the disciplines that study children and youth, and young people themselves improve their lives in these bizarre times.

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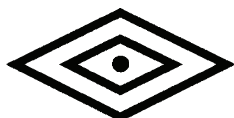
Tony Monchinski
City University of New York



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DEDICATION

For Ira Shor:
Thanks for your inspiration, example and guidance

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Of Barbarians, Warriors and Critical Pedagogy 1

2. Education & the M-60: What Rambo Taught Me About Morality, Politics, & Being a Man.. 19

3. Democracy, Care and the Human Condition 45

4. Misfits, Looney Tunes, Squalid Criminals and the Wars on Terrorism 67

5. Non-antagonistic Dualisms: Science, Religion and Developmental Systems 83

6. To Take Options: Prophetic Thinking and Dystopian Literature..................... 105

7. Engaged Pedagogy, Enraged Pedagogy.. 137

Endnotes 149

Bibliography.. 151

Index 159

CHAPTER 1

OF BARBARIANS, WARRIORS AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

OF BARBARIANS, WARRIORS AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

There is a scene towards the end of director Robert Milius' (82) *Conan the Barbarian* in which the sword-wielding titular hero must bid farewell to his love and send her atop a burning pyre to meet the gods. Valeria, played by the actress Sandahl Bergman, has been felled by an arrow fashioned from a straightened snake by the evil warlord Thulsa Doom (a wonderful James Earl Jones). After she dies in his arms, Conan carries Valeria to the Mounds, a burial site of kings from the time of the Titans; a haunted place of tombs and hungry spirits; a sepulcher of great winds where no flame should burn. A place where no flame *should* burn, yes, yet Conan carries the torch to Valeria's body and sets it alight, returning to his companions, the archer Subotai and the unnamed wizard (played by the actors Gerry Lopez and Mako, respectively).

Conan settles down, ostensibly mulling the business of killing—the riders of Doom will be coming, looking to finish what they started with Valeria. Subotai openly weeps, leading the wizard to ask him why *he* cries, to which Subotai replies, "He is Conan, Cimmerian, he won't cry, so I cry for him." Conan mourns without tears, reminding me, years later, of Mike Tyson in the James Toback documentary (08) *Tyson*; Iron Mike sobs remembering his friend and mentor, Cus D'Amato, but he sheds no visible tears. Conan taps into his sorrow, channeling it into a rage. A rage against those who took from him what he most cherished. He spends the next day methodically sharpening punji stakes and setting ingenious traps, welcoming the coming onslaught with cool calculated reason. Together with Subotai—and some help from Mako's wizard—Conan stands against the Vanir raiders of Thulsa Doom.

As the riders in their dozens appear on the horizon and Conan waits, concealed behind a tomb, he talks to his god, Crom. Conan's people, the Cimmerians, were slaughtered by Thulsa Doom when Conan was a child. His father fell before his eyes to the Vanir dogs and his mother, gripping his hand, was bespelled and beheaded by Doom himself. Later in his life, captured by Doom's minions and tortured, Conan confronts Doom with the genocide of the Cimmerians. Indignity of indignities, Thulsa does not recollect destroying this boy's people or life. Doom has carried out so many atrocities against so many different peoples he cannot recall particular massacres. Conan was carted off as a child and educated on the Wheel of Pain (a human-powered mill); as a gladiator in the fighting pits; and in philosophy and sword play by the masters of the Far East. Doom allowed the boy Conan to be enslaved and he allows the adult Conan to be hauled off a second time, to his crucifixion. It is nailed to the Tree of Woe, delirious from the heat, blood loss and mounting attacks

by circling buzzards, that Valeria and Subotai find the last of the Cimmerians and rescue him from certain death.

Hordes of riders bearing down on himself and the archer at the Mounds, Conan speaks to Crom, god of the mountain, deity of the Cimmerians. "Crom, I have never prayed to you before," he says, sounding similar to a lapsed Catholic. "I have no tongue for it…" Conan points out that he and Subotai were almost certainly sure to meet their ends here at the Mounds and that history would forget them; but what matters, Conan reminds his god, is that two stood against many. "Valor pleases you, Crom," he tells the god, "so grant me one request. Grant me revenge! And if you do not listen, then to hell with you!" What room is there for a god who merely watches and does not intervene in human affairs? *I renounce you*, Conan tells his god, if you fail to offer your succor in the coming battle. In the end it will be two comrades, men whose friendship has been forged in high adventure and battle, two men who will stand together against greater numbers. The education—at the wheel, in the pits, under the tutelage of the sword masters—that forged his body into the ultimate fighting machine; the sorrow and rage that suffuses his being as he awaits the first of the riders of Doom; the clear, calculating mind that coordinates what he himself must conceive on some level as his last battle; a faith in his god but a greater faith in himself; all these buttress Conan's stand at the Mounds.

The movie *Conan the Barbarian* was based on the character created in a series of books by Robert E. Howard. The movie helped *make* Arnold Schwarzenegger—more so than the documentary *Pumping Iron*—and set him on his path to being a household name and later, governor of California. My father took my brother and I to see this movie in theaters when I was ten and Jason was seven. Some people—I would think especially today, but given the desensitization to violence and sex and the intersection of the two in contemporary pop culture perhaps I'm wrong—*some people* would wonder why my dad took us to an R-rated movie. *Conan the Barbarian* promised "high adventure" and delivered.

As a ten-year-old boy in America, I was being raised in a militarized gun-culture. Ronald Reagan was in the White House. G.I. Joe was my favorite toy. We still played cowboys and Indians. My mom cut our peanut butter and jelly sandwiches into individual *soldiers*. I was unaware of the evolution of *who* and *what* were considered boyhood heroes. "Manly men" had evolved from the stoic and taciturn John Wayne to guys like Paul Newman and Robert Redford, characters who were more human, more in touch with their feelings, more vulnerable. But even the Redfords and Newmans were anachronisms of manhood in the early 80s. The golden age of the action movie genre was upon us, with muscle-bound actors like Schwarzenegger, Stallone, and Van Damme. These guys (nearly all were male) weren't above being carried away by their emotions—the operative emotion being rage—to feats of inhuman strength and violence. Looking back it is easy to track this evolution; as a ten-year-old sitting in the theater with composer Basil Poledouris' soundtrack thundering out of the speakers, I was enveloped in the swords and sorcery, the special effects, a glimpse of Valencia's breasts.

I remember going home feeling bad for Conan. Here was a man whose family and girlfriend had been robbed from him. Here was a hero whose heroism was

defined in his loss: the loss of his family and people; the loss of the woman who mattered most to him; the loss of a childhood and life he would have known. I also went home thinking Schwarzenegger looked awesome and I wanted to look like him. There is a scene when Conan infiltrates and attacks Doom's men at an underground orgy, his muscular body streaked with paint to camouflage him and strike terror into his enemies. Doom's number two and number three men—bodybuilder Sven-Ole Thorsen and NFL football player Ben Davidson—square off against Conan and the barbarian turns to face them, nothing like fear in his bearing. He spreads his mighty arms, holding them straight out at his sides, one hand gripping his sword, then shifts into a defensive position as they attack. That pose and the music that accompanies it are indelibly etched into my mind. Arnold just looked so bad ass; in today's argot, *brolic*. Arnold with his twenty-one inch arms: *that's* what a man looks like, I remember thinking. That's what I wanted to look like. Schwarzenegger, with his unique mix of genetics, hard work, and steroids—none of which I comprehended at the time—brought the Frank Frazetta images of Conan the Barbarian to life on the big screen.

I grew up in the 1980s and missed the 1960s. From what I am told and read about that decade it seemed like *the* Revolution was imminent. Perhaps the participants did not and could not agree on what the Movement and the Revolution were for, but many of them were clearly against capitalism and the greed and selfishness it engenders. The groundwork for this revolution was laid on the front lines of the civil rights movement, where the mode of battle often eschewed actual violence in favor of non-violence, a non-violence that itself faced relentless violence every step of the way. Years later when I attended Queens College as an undergrad I would daily pass the monument erected to slain civil rights worker and QC alum Andrew Goodman, a non-violent warrior cut down in Mississippi in 1964. The groundwork for the Revolution in America was laid in the classrooms as a generation was seemingly radicalized—if by "radicalized" we mean people came to see democracy and equal rights as desirable ends and means, and that they came to question their rulers' actions and intentions. But the Revolution—the radical socioeconomic restructuring so many hoped for—did not come to America, and the Movement seemingly petered out. Did the Movement and the Revolution fail, or did the '60s only prove the adage that historical change is realized slowly, in fits and starts?

Whatever, a conservative retrenchment gripped America. A movie actor turned Governor from California turned president. Gordon Geckos on *Wall Street* told us that greed was good (Stone, 87). Former radicals bought into the system or pursued revolution as some kind of lifestyle maxim. Talk of barricades gave way to a battle for hearts and minds, a battle we find ourselves in to this day. Critical pedagogy, as a field, a practice, a way of life and world view, made significant gains in this period. Paulo Freire, in his homeland of Brazil as well as the countries of his exile, Bolivia, Chile and the United States; Augusto Boal, founder of the Theater of the Oppressed, in Brazil; second-wave feminism in the United States. All these seemingly disparate threads, yet upon historical investigation we can view the way in which the threads were being weaved together. In the 1980s, when I was a tween (a word we did not use then) and teen and had no inkling of who they were, men and women like

Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg, bell hooks and Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux (widely credited with coining the term *critical pedagogy*) and Maxine Greene were continuing the struggle, on Native American reservations, in primary and secondary classrooms, in campus protests and sit-ins, in their books and articles. Critical pedagogies were being developed and pursued, the struggle to realize alternate educational, political and ethical visions was being fought.

I liked—and still like—*Conan the Barbarian* as a movie. Sure, the film isn't above criticism from the progressive left: Of the three most desirable things in life Conan lists hearing "the lamentation of … women"; Conan ("destined to wear the jeweled crown of Aquilonia") is fated to be a monarch, not a democratically elected leader; problems in the movie and the world are solved by violence and the sword, not by discussion and compromise; the ethic at work in Conan's Hyborian Age is Thucydides', that the strong do what they will and the weak put up with what they must. Conan worked for me as an action movie, as an escape. Conan also helped define what masculinity would mean for me and helped spark my life-long love of the sport of bodybuilding, a sport I was never very good at, issues discussed elsewhere in this book. Conan sparked all sorts of day dreams and visions of grandiosity on my part. To this day the soundtrack to the film causes a welling of emotions within my being.

Yet I am no warrior like Conan the Barbarian. I watch these Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) and Ultimate Fighting Championships (UFC) bouts on television and a part of me is scared—I'd get killed in that ring! I watch the aging Mike Tyson with some measure of sympathy and sadness and I think back to his street fight with fellow boxer Mitch "Blood" Green in 1988, and what I think is that the blow that deposited a black eye on Green's face may very well have snapped my neck. But there are different types of battles and different types of warriors, much as there are alternative ethical, political and pedagogical visions. In other words, not all wars are waged on battlefields and not all warriors come armed with blade, bullet or bomb.

INTELLECTUAL WARRIORS

I first heard about the idea of an "intellectual warrior" in the one class I was lucky enough to take with Joe Kincheloe. Joe had developed the idea of a warrior of the intellect with his urban students in mind, a way for these kids to envision what it might mean to be a scholar in a socio-historical context that downplayed or denigrated education, that accused anyone who took their education seriously of "selling out" or "Uncle Tom-ism." Joe's intellectual warrior was conceived as demilitarized and gender-inclusive, as "tough young men and women" who "develop the ability to think critically and analytically"; who "understand the world as *it is* in relation to what *it could be*"; who comprehend "the invisible forces at work in shaping particular situations"; who "cultivate a humility that allows them to be both good leaders and good members of diverse learning communities"; who reconceptualize the role of "good citizen in a way that speaks and acts in relation to dominant power and how it oppresses those around them" (Kincheloe, 06: xxvi).

Joe's idea of a warrior intellectual resonates with me. It really helps one understand the stakes that are involved inside and outside our classrooms and academic

communities. Make no mistake: we are at war. On one side are the forces of greed and exploitation; those who tell us that inequality is best addressed and overcome, if at all (it may just be *natural* to the human condition, this side argues), through personal initiative and gumption; who tell us that government is bad and that private citizens—including all-powerful *corporate* citizens—should be left free of governmental interference; that our educational system is broken and standardized tests, educational vouchers, and charter schools are the way to fix the damage. A certain irrationality pervades this side, from its questioning of the facts of evolution to its unquestioned faith in free markets. On the other side are the forces of democracy and equality: those who recognize that inequality is a social condition capable of address through concerted political, social and economic action and restructuring; who recognize government as a potential democratic tool that can be made responsive to the people and serve as a check against the powerful; that our public education system is rife with problems but that the problems can be repaired and that the cure is not greater privatization of public schools. A certain irrationality pervades this side as well, from a postmodern contingent that questions the facts of science (facts that have made our lives enjoyable and have the potential to make them more enjoyable still) to the ill-founded, almost messianic faith in the ability of one black American man to usher in an era of change that goes against the grain of two hundred and forty years of American history.

It doesn't seem like a war because we have grown used to it. We are told that the system—call our economy *capitalism*, call our political system *democracy*—is inviolable. We are told this when the facts of everyday life (economic disaster and protectionist bailouts, shenanigans and assorted hijinks in high office) openly contradict it and prove it false. Many people have accepted that there is no alternative; they have bought into the system and perpetuate it. The violence that accompanies this war is not always glaringly in your face, the violence of the jackboot and the bayonet. More often than not it is the violence of poverty and inequality; the violence of millions in America and billions in the world living without adequate health care and meaningful, well-remunerated employment; a violence of low expectations and unequal opportunities in our schools; a violence where the financial sector can come close to destroying everything only to be rescued by taxpayer money.

It is a war that blames the victim. You don't have health insurance? It's your own fault you can't afford it or couldn't find a job that provides it. You lost your house because the bank foreclosed on you when you couldn't pay your mortgage? It's your own fault for buying a home you couldn't afford and not understanding what sub-prime loans and variable-interest rate payments are about. Your retirement savings got wiped out? It's the price you pay for living in a robust economy that knows both Bull and Bear markets; now continue to pay that tax money to bail out the Lords of Finance and subsidize American aggression in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the world. You graduated from a sub-par high school and couldn't get into a good college? It's your own fault for losing the genetic lottery and being born to the parents you were born to in the communities you were born in and for attending an overcrowded school with too few resources. It is a war in which we are all victims to a greater or lesser degree, yet the more sanguine among us view ourselves and

our positions as akin to Camus' Syssiphus: we struggle against the boulder only to have it roll back down on us, convincing ourselves we are content and finding meaning in the constant pushing itself.

Even the aggressors are, in a sense, victims. Paulo Freire (97) was clear that the oppressed do not struggle to replace the oppressors with themselves. The struggle is a struggle against *oppression* per say, against an inequality and dehumanization that ascribes roles of oppressor and oppressed. We struggle for the oppressor as well as the oppressed to overcome a situation in which there are neither, much like Marx and Engels argued we struggle for a future classless society, not one in which the lower class becomes the ruling class. Sometimes it seems like the only thing that matters in our world is money and power and that the two go together. Freire was adamant that the oppressors themselves, though benefitting from the status quo materially, lose their humanity, which is misshaped and malformed in a system that demands haves and have-nots.

On the other side are the billions of us who labor, love, live, and struggle in the face of all this bullshit. But this talk of sides is inadequate and incorrect. We are all victims and victimizers to a greater or lesser degree. We are caught up in a hegemonic way of life that reinforces and rewards these degradations. It is an institutional and systemic problem we face that rewards the individual against the social and prizes cupidity and materialism over cooperation and solidarity.

The idea of an intellectual warrior highlights the fact that one of the main theaters of war at this juncture in human history is the hearts and minds and men and women and children. Questioning things is a dangerous act of subversion to a system that feeds off apathy and the belief that things are just the way they could be. Developing and nourishing a critical spirit is an act of treason against the status quo of greed and institutionalized malfeasance.

That said, I take minor issues with Joe's idea of a warrior intellectual. Remember: Joe's audience in his initial delivery of the intellectual warrior concept was urban students and their teachers. Our inner cities and disenfranchised youth know about violence first hand. Joe wanted to make the point that *warrior* is not synonymous with blood and guts, gats and hot war, hence his description of the intellectual warrior as "demilitarized." And history provides testament to the efficacy of non-violent civil disobedience in championing and advancing civil and human rights. That said, we cannot conceive of the warrior intellectual as a pacifist in all times and all places. Instead, he is shrewd enough to choose her battles wisely, knowing that her individual physical violence in the face of institutional, systemic violence will be misinterpreted and maligned as pathology and hence be counterproductive. When the anarchist Alexander Berkman marched into the Pittsburgh offices of Carnegie Steel and tried to assassinate chairman Henry Clay Frick he failed and was jailed for 14 years, a confinement that came close to breaking him and kept Sasha from his love, Emma Goldman. When I think of men and women I would consider warrior intellectuals I think, of course, of Joe and Shirley, of Paulo and Ira Shor. I think of Che and Rosa Luxemburg, of Amilcar Cabral and the revolutionary priest Camilo Torres: all figures who theorized and fought and died violently for what they believed. But I also think of Philip and Daniel Berrigan and Red Emma, people

who didn't die violently, though the institutionalized violence of the state faced them at every turn.

Joe describes the intellectual warrior as young and I would argue he meant "young at heart". He meant people like the Reverend Carl Kabat, who at 75 years old still protests at American missile silos armed with his hammer and bolt cutters, decked out in his clown suit to reflect St. Paul's words that "We are fools for Christ's sake" (Frosch, 09). Their dedication to human rights and flourishing is edifying to us all, serving as a constant wellspring of renewal as we—like Conan and his comrade Subotai—struggle against overwhelming odds, under what often feels like an apparently absent or disinterested god or gods. In a sense what matters is the struggle. But unlike Camus' Sisyphus, the struggle is nothing if it is not collective. When the painter Fernando Gerassi ran off to fight Franco's fascist forces in the Spanish Civil War, his friend Jean-Paul Sartre asked Fernando's wife, Stepha, why Fernando went off to fight when he knew he had no chance of being successful. He fights fascists, Stepha told Sartre, because they're fascists (Gerassi, 09). But the struggle intellectual warriors dedicate themselves to brings—and has brought—real gains and progress.

When Joe speaks of "invisible forces" he hints at the hegemony of the institutional and systemic factors that condition but do not determine us. The forces are invisible because of their omnipresence; because we are, ourselves, "in the soup." Religion in the United States, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four, is one of these hegemonic forces. When people sneeze other people say *God bless you*, and you're often considered rude if you do not. Weddings are, by and large, still religious ceremonies. Though the number of nonbelievers is growing, many people still presume one is religious in some sense and many—especially my self-identifying "liberal", "spiritual" friends—recoil when I identify as an atheist. The "fact" of a God is usually taken for granted. In mentioning "invisible forces", Joe does not mean conspiracy theories of secret cabals, though these have and surely do exist. Joe's criticism is an institutional analysis of a way we are taught our lives should be lived, of the economic-political-social systems we inhabit.

Joe speaks of the intellectual warrior as humble and this is a humility that arises from strength and conviction, not weakness and vacillation. It is the humility of one confident in her convictions, but also confident that she must be ever-examining her convictions. It is a self-questioning, self-nourishing humility rooted in a pragmatic assurance that is comfortable with flux and constant reassessment.

So I take minor exceptions to Joe's conception of the warrior intellectual, but that's as it should be. There are no sacred cows in critical pedagogy, either individuals or ideas. Everyone and everything is up for critical examination and re-evaluation; isn't this what allows us to question "the system" in the first place? That said, there are men and women and ideas that came before us and live amongst us that deserve our respect for their insights and contributions to advancing the struggle. I have the highest regard for Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg, for Ira Shor and Paulo Freire. When we study and advance critical pedagogy—in our classrooms and libraries, on the streets, in cyberspace, and, should the opportunity arise, on the barricades—we stand on the shoulders of giants. Of Ira and Shirley and Joe and Paulo, *yes*, but they

in turn stand on the shoulders of (if you will) titans, of Marx and W.E.B. DuBois, of Antonio Gramsci and the Frankfurt School, of the liberation theology movement in Latin America and the civil rights movement in the United States.

MOVE OVER CONAN

Here's how I met Joe Kincheloe and here's what Joe has done for me. In 2005 I had finished up my course work in the Ph.D. Political Science program at the City University of New York's Graduate Center. I'd been plugging away in the program since 2002 and it wasn't easy. The difficulty wasn't necessarily due to the classes that demanded 500 pages of reading a week. In grad school you learn survival strategies like being an excellent skimmer and second-guessing the professor, figuring out which articles among the 500 pages she would be able to cover in next week's two hour seminar. Nor was the difficulty necessarily due to working full-time as a high school teacher and having to commute to class or study and remain intellectually sharp after a full day that began when the alarm clock buzzed at 5 AM. And it wasn't solely due to the feeling that, though I was in my 30s, I was paying someone to grade me, and that in a bid to get good grades and garner my degree I felt akin to a little poodle jumping through hoops at the circus. No, it was some combination of all these things. Figures like Roland Barthes who had never gotten their Ph.D. but done good work in their fields became increasingly attractive to me as my time in the program increased. There were a couple of times—interestingly enough when I had made it as far as the writing of my dissertation—when the option of packing it in, of abandoning the degree and seeking a publisher or self-publishing the fruits of my studies, when this all seemed extremely attractive. But I stuck it out, which, in retrospect, I would learn is exactly what Joe Kincheloe would have wanted me to do.

When I completed my Political Science coursework I decided I would take some classes outside my department. I had the time, relatively speaking—Myoungmee and I had not had our kids yet—and I definitely had the interest. Turned out I didn't, in fact, always have the time: Virginia Held's classes were at 2 PM and there was no way I could make those, what with work. I was able to take some wonderful classes outside my program—from David Harvey's *Reading Capital* to a couple with Ira Shor—and one I signed up for was titled *Critical Pedagogy*, offered by the Urban Education Department. Joe Kincheloe was the professor.

Joe *was* and *is* the living embodiment of the warrior intellectual. I write *was* because Joe was taken from us much too soon. I feel somewhat selfish writing this because I did not know Joe the way Shirley or his children did, the way his closest friends and long-time students did (Joe had a way of making new friends feel like old ones). I write *is* because Joe was the most prolific human being I have ever known; at the time of his passing in December 2008 he had authored, co-authored or edited more than sixty tomes. These books and his innumerable articles continue to nourish and challenge our critical spirits, serving as guides and departure points.

Joe Kincheloe was a humble man, but again, his humility was rooted in his strength and determination of purpose. He was a humble man because he stood

above the clouds—in his intellect, his dedication, his sense of purpose—and could survey the terrain ahead of us. Joe could be humble because he was confident in his abilities and the rightness of his ideas and the struggle of which he was a part. Joe wasn't like other professors who set up barriers between themselves and students; he was never condescending or paternalistic, even when he disagreed with a student. But make no mistake about it—like the inscription on Jules' wallet in *Pulp Fiction* (d. Tarantino, 94), Joe was "a bad ass motherfucker." A more erudite, intelligent human being you'd be hard pressed to meet. Joe's writings—like critical pedagogy itself—encompassed a variety of topics and concerns, from Christian fundamentalism's use of mass entertainment to the meanings of intelligence, from the shape and form of urban education to post formal educational psychology, from the reception of Islam in the west to the culture of consumerism and kindergarten. Joe was, in his person and his deeds, an example to be followed. On top of all this, he was a hell of a musician and singer, as any *Tony and the Hegemons* fan knows.

How many of us owe our academic writing careers to Joe? He made it a point to get his students published and to nurture and develop our writings and minds. I remember when Joe called me into his office a week after we'd turned in our mid-terms. *Great*, I remember thinking, *he probably thinks I plagiarized something and I'm going to need to defend myself*. I couldn't have been more wrong. Joe was impressed with my mid-term and asked me if I'd like to expand it into a book in a series he and Shirley were editing in lieu of a final paper. I didn't need to be asked twice! This book in your hands is the fifth academic text I've authored and I don't write that to brag but to express my thankfulness to Joe and Shirley, because publication of these books would not have been possible without their intercession, and I remain ever grateful to them.

Like I was saying, Joe Kincheloe was a bad ass motherfucker. Joe would have been on top of the barricades, but those were not his times. Instead his fifty-eight years on earth found him teaching on Indian reservation, at LSU-Shreveport, Clemson, Florida International University, Penn State, and McGill; loving Shirley and their children; befriending and collaborating with Paulo and Henry and a host of other scholars and activists—many of them former students—dedicated to bettering our lives here on earth. Not bad for a kid from rural Tennessee who's guidance counselor told him he'd grow up to be a piano tuner, eh? I am no Conan the Barbarian, so I cry for Joe.

I cry for Joe because he is gone and the "presence of his absence" is all too real. I imagine if it feels this way for me, a peripheral figure in his life, then it must be nearly overwhelming for Shirley and the kids, for his close friends and students. I cry for Joe because there is nothing wrong with crying or showing emotion, so long as it does not prove debilitating. Because the struggle continues and the warriors, from Coney Island and all other parts, must "come out and play" (d. Hill, 79). This is a book about critical pedagogies and emotions, about the nexus of faith and reason, of prophetic thinking and dystopias. Much like maps of old warned "thar be monsters", this is a book in which you will find warriors. Some, like Conan and Rambo and Achilles, I am sympathetically critical of; others, like Anton Chigurgh, though they entertain me on the written page, I fear; still others, like Shirley and Joe, Paulo and

Ira, bell and Peter, have helped clear the way and shown us the path we must continue to make.

NOURISHING THE CRITICAL SPIRIT

What is critical pedagogy? Critical pedagogy is an outlook, an academic field, an approach to knowledge creation, and a way of life. Critical pedagogy—the term was coined by Henry Giroux in the 1970s—is all these things and more. Critical pedagogy asks the questions that others would not have asked. It is a realization of revolutionary futurity, of prophetic thinking (Freire's terms, discussed in chapter 6). Critical pedagogy is a call to action and action in itself. Critical pedagogy asks teachers and students together to question their assumptions and beliefs of scientific and historical facts, of religious and political doctrine and economic orthodoxy. To ask why these things are constructed the way they are; to ask who benefits from this construction and who does not benefit and how they do or do not; to conceive and work to implement alternatives to these things. Critical pedagogy is usually associated as an academic field in universities but the university or primary school is just one site of its manifestation and implementation.

Critical pedagogy recognizes that all forms of education are political. There is no such thing as a value-free, neutral or unbiased education, in form, content or delivery (Monchinski, 07). Teachers who decide to keep politics out of the classroom—for example, the science teacher who refuses to broach evolution, the history teacher who glosses over the historical and contemporary crimes of her country, or the health teacher who doesn't question the efficacy of abstinence-only sex education—are maintaining the status quo, no matter what they tell themselves. Neutrality is not an option. And the politics of education extends beyond the classroom and school to our everyday lives and the cultural texts and relationships that "educate" us in a broader sense.

Critical pedagogy is not a unified field or outlook on life. People and their circumstances vary, hence the critical pedagogies that arise in different situations—say, among illiterate Brazilian peasants in the 1960s versus urban middle school students in the inner city in the twenty-first century—reflect the disparity of these situations. Yet the goal remains the same: to celebrate difference while overcoming it as an impediment to unified action; to critically apprehend the institutions and relationships that structure our lives; to change those beliefs, institutions, and relationships that keep us from being more.

One of the things that immediately resonated with me about critical pedagogy is its reading of cultural texts and what it considered worthy of study. Arcane academic arguments, "book knowledge", the facts we take for granted in history and science, all are worthy of investigation by critical pedagogy. Equally worthy of study are the movies and television shows, music and clothing, novels and magazines, sports and entertainment of our times. As are the opinions and beliefs, the attitudes and social milieu that surround us and of which we are active participants and players. All are parts of the ideologies that structure our lives. This is an extremely important point because there are whole fields of learning that would look with contempt on the study

of "pop culture" as though studying such were not legitimate. Critical pedagogies recognize that we can learn about the human condition studying psychology and *American Idol*. There are academics who would object to my use of contractions and words like *bullshit* or *brolic* in an "academic book." Not critical pedagogy. As Joe Kincheloe explained, text "does not simply refer to print materials or books but to any entity open to analysis and interpretation" (99: 24). Hence my opening discussion of *Conan the Barbarian*.

Critical pedagogy doesn't require that we all march in lockstep. I know I hold opinions that differ from many who consider themselves progressives and embrace critical pedagogies. I don't like abortion; I do consider it a form of murder (let's be intellectually honest here), though I support a woman's right to choose. I like guns and firmly believe they don't kill people, that the people who pull triggers kill people; though I recognize that guns make killing easier, that indeed, as Lynyrd Skynryd sang, "handguns are made for killing" (King & Van Zant, 75). I favor a form of individual liberty many on the left don't or won't talk about: if you're a well informed adult and you want to use drugs—from alcohol and tobacco to marijuana and steroids to cocaine and heroin and LSD—I think you should be able to do so as long as you are not directly harming others. I'm not religious—I identify as an atheist—and though I have no truck with those who are and try not to be snobbish enough to dismiss those who are as unintelligent, I have little tolerance for religious fundamentalism or "spiritual" condescension. I watch porn and don't consider all of it as violence against women, though I avoid the stuff that I think is (e.g., choking, slapping, and fellatio-induced vomiting hold no attraction for me). I have laughed at my share of what others may consider racist or sexist jokes in my life—I am an unabashed Howard Stern, South Park, and Sasha Baron Cohen fan—though I recognize the difference between the socially appropriate and inappropriate and curtail the inappropriate in my classroom. I recognize the importance of personal responsibility and accountability—shibboleths of the right in America—to individual autonomy and group living: *don't* get a woman pregnant and an abortion decision *won't* have to be made; know the difference between use and abuse and don't give drugs a bad name for the millions who can use them without abusing them; complaining isn't enough—come together with those who share your concerns and struggle to change what you don't like.

Perhaps some of the above statements and positions may cause the reader to shake her head and say *this guy is a sham, he's no progressive, this isn't a progressive point of view*. To which I say *Bullshit*. There is no critical pedagogy high command that dictates party position for loyal followers. For me the progressive point of view entails a commitment to the relationship with and between self and others rooted in democratic forms, function, and spirit. What unites scholars and activists in critical pedagogies is an unflagging belief in the potential of human beings to critically understand their relationships and situations; a belief in the triumph of the human spirit as a tool of creation capable of providing models we can then work to attain on earth; a commitment to democracy and democratic forms in all spheres of life. That said, perhaps you disagree with me, perhaps you regret shelling out the considerable chunk of change it cost to buy this book or opening it in the first place.

Perhaps you're mad. *Good*. Anger, and its' bigger, surlier cousin, *rage*, are emotions that we can use to sustain our struggle. There is such a thing as justified anger, and the trick lies in knowing how to contain and apply it.

This is a book that begins to explore the nexus and interstices between reason, faith, and emotion; between the individual and her place in a society that needs her as much as she needs it; between violence and pacifism and creativity in the service of humanization. It is a collection of essays that critically examines and uncovers the hegemonic forces—from what rap music tells us about what it means to be a man or woman to the role of fundamentalist religion in retarding human flourishing to the place of ethics in our lives and relationships—that shape us and that we, in turn, help shape and can remake. As noted, critical pedagogy recognizes movies, books, television shows and attitudes as cultural texts worthy of exegesis and criticism; it doesn't limit itself to the academic. Throughout this book I will be drawing on cultural texts—from characters in fiction and film, from song lyrics to theoretical ideas—that I am familiar with and that I hope you will have some familiarity with as well. But I will not assume you are, so I will explain as I analyze. A risk I run is revealing spoilers, giving away what happens in a novel you may not have read or a movie you may not have seen, but I have made every attempt not to do so unless I feel it is absolutely necessary to the discussion at hand.

OVERVIEW

This chapter has served as an introduction and overview to the issues and topics explored in greater depth and detail within. As a coda to this chapter I have included a discussion I had with Joe Kincheloe from 2006. The interview first appeared in *The Advocate*, the CUNY Graduate Center's student newspaper and is reprinted here with their permission.

The idea of the warrior and her ethics is explored and unpacked in chapter two, *Education and the M-60: What Rambo Taught Me About Morality, Politics, and Being a Man*. My friends and me found ourselves drawn to the action heroes of the 1980s and early '90s, from Schwarzenegger's *Commando* and *Conan* to Jean Claude Van-Damme's *Bloodsport* to Dolph Lundgren's *Universal Soldier*. In my mind, Sylvester Stallone's John Rambo—a character and a franchise that were recently resurrected to box office success—is the epitome of a certain type of American action hero. Chapter Two will explore the allure of the Rambo character, contrasting him to the super-villain warrior epitomized by Cormac McCarthy's Anton Chigurh in *No Country For Old Men*. It will discuss the ethics inherent in the words and deeds of these two disparate arche-types, how each represents a certain form of American individualism. The discussion unfolds with chapter three in mind.

The third chapter, *Democracy, Care, and the Human Condition*, will turn to the relationship between education and ethics. If all education is political and all politics are rooted in ethical visions, what kind of ethical vision do critical pedagogies promote? Chapter three will argue that critical pedagogies are rooted in an ethic of care, an ethic that recognizes and celebrates the primacy of human relationships and cooperation against the cut-throat competition and artificial individualism

foisted on us by an "ethics" divorced from life. The relationship is not one of critical pedagogies being reducible to an ethic of care; an ethic of care and critical pedagogies inform and remake one another in real time.

If we care about our futures on this planet we need to make sure we do not sow the seeds of our own destruction. Chapter four, *Misfits, Looney Tunes, Squalid Criminals and The Wars on Terrorism*, looks at the enemies the United States government has made and nurtured. Osama bin Laden, the Afghan Mujahideen, Manuel Noriega and Saddam Hussein all received U.S. government support before turning on or being turned on by America. The people of the United States are not synonymous with the government of the United States, and critical pedagogies need to expose how the interests of the wealthy and powerful few jeopardize the well-being of the many. Chapter four attempts to do just this with only a few examples, but examples whose repercussions are felt to this day.

The relationship between education, science, and religion is the topic of chapter five, *Non-Antagonistic Dualisms: Science, Religion and Developmental Systems*. As Muslim suicide bombers commit mass murder worldwide and Christian fundamentalism battles public education and secularism in America, religion and science are increasingly viewed as antithetical and irreconcilable. This chapter will look at some of the many ills visited upon the human condition by religious adherent but ultimately argue that religion and science, reason and faith, emotion and rationality can co-exist and enrich our lives.

Paulo Freire's notion of "prophetic thinking" guides the sixth chapter, *To Take Options: Prophetic Thinking and Dystopian Literature*. Dystopian literature is explored and unpacked: why is most "utopian" literature actually "dystopian" literature? What message is sent when the ills envisioned by these future societies are social in nature and the recourse is individual? Why does so much dystopian literature focus on children gone wrong? What do critical pedagogies have to say to dystopian literature?

The final chapter is less a summation than a statement of position. *Engaged Pedagogy, Enraged Pedagogy* looks at some of the challenges facing public education and organized labor from my own perspective as a New York State teacher, union member and progressive. Indignation towards those who perpetuate inequality has its place. It, along with our love of humanity, can fuel our critical pedagogies and action for social justice.

In closing I'd like to acknowledge and thank a few people. Joe, I miss you and regret that I didn't get to know you better than I did; Paulo, I wish I'd had the chance to know you. Shirley, I appreciate all you have done and continue to do for me, for critical pedagogy, and for our species. Myoungmee, I couldn't do what I do without your support, both of me and my personal quirks and the care of our children. Tony Michael and Honalee, you guys give me a reason for being and validate my existence in a way words cannot capture. I wouldn't be where or who I am without my mother and father, who, largely, do not share my politics. Jason, we've come a long way from that movie theater in Queens haven't we? This book is dedicated to Ira Shor, who lives his critical pedagogy and is one of those human beings that makes our earth a better place by dint of his being here. I like to include an email address

in my books because I enjoy hearing from readers, what they liked and didn't like, what their struggles and triumphs look like. So I hope to hear from you, and you can hit me up at tmonchinski@gmail.com.

JOE KINCHELOE INTERVIEW

When Joe Kincheloe was in high school in rural Tennessee considering his future options, his guidance counselor suggested he become a piano tuner. A few decades—and, with wife Shirley Steinberg, over forty books—later, Kincheloe is Canada Research Chair at McGill University's *Paulo and Nita Freire International Center for the Study of Critical Pedagogy*.

When the Canadian government started to actively recruit the best people in a variety of fields, they offered Kincheloe a position. His recent works had included *White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America, Rethinking Intelligence,* and *Measured Lies: The Bell Curve Examined*. CUNY did nothing to counter Canada's offer to Kincheloe, who left the GC's Urban Education department at the end of 2005.

Kincheloe has Masters Degrees in History and the Social Studies of Education and a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction, all from the University of Tennessee. With good reason, Joe and Shirley are recognized luminaries in the field of critical pedagogy, although their modesty would lead them both to dismiss such a description. Recent works include *What You Don't Know About Schools,* the *Critical Pedagogy Primer,* and *The Mideducation of the West: How Schools and the Media Distort Our Understanding of the Islamic World*. In addition to being one of the most prolific professors on the planet, Joe fronts his own rock and roll band.

Tony Monchinski: People have this image of New York City as this big liberal metropolis where multiculturalism flourishes. CUNY in general and the GC in particular have this rep as left-liberal institutions. I wanted to ask you about your experiences in the CUNY system and if this is an accurate description.

Joe Kincheloe: Is that a loaded question! (laughs) That's exactly what people say to me, "It must have been great to have taught in liberal New York, such an open place," etc. I come at this from a rather unique position, having taught high school and middle school in Tennessee and Virginia; having taught university in Tennessee, Louisiana, South Carolina and Florida. I have these experiences of teaching in these conservative, very right wing, very fundamentalist places. In those places I have been around students and faculty who are amongst some of the most conservative and, as far as race is concerned, some of the most racist places in the country.

I came to New York City after having been at Penn State, which shocked me with the level of racism and insensitivity to students of color that I've ever seen. I was shocked and just couldn't stay, as were many African and Latino students who came to Penn State. They were so taken aback that they shut the university down while I was there, just to protest the situation. So I came to CUNY to teach at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center. And I have to say, the most egregious forms of racism and bias of different types were at CUNY.

TM: How so?

JK: My position as endowed chair at Brooklyn College allowed me to be around faculty members from different fields. And the level of class bias I saw from these faculty towards students coming from lower socio-economic classes at Brooklyn and the GC floored me.

TM: It's disturbing because CUNY has a rep as a working class college system.

JK: The class bias I'm talking about I saw much more at the Graduate Center than I did on the individual campuses. In the Graduate Center class made such a difference in *who* was admitted, in *who* had certain types of cultural capital and who didn't. Amazingly, race had so much to do with the lives of students in the Graduate Center. There were times I watched faculty at the GC proclaim "We have a crisis in our programs because of the lack of ability of African American students." I'd been around those students and it was a god-damned lie.

TM: An inability to do what? Use "standard" English?

JK: They were talking about just general intellectual ability. To the great praise of many of my often-times white male colleagues, they fought against those sentiments. There were people who bravely stood up against that type of racism. I want to make sure I get that across. The racism certainly wasn't monolithic. But it was coming from people who were doing writing and research that was ostensibly against racism and class bias. To see the way they spoke in private situations but also the way they acted—and I think *that's* the key—the way they *acted* towards many Latino and African American students, towards students from working class backgrounds.

I had a group of students who quit the Urban Ed. Department because they refused to be treated that way. They went and complained to people in the administration about the racist treatment accorded them and nobody ever got back to them. I went to the administration myself and asked why nobody was getting back to them, but nothing ever happened. I never felt so impotent in all my life.

I was in a privileged position as a professor. But even I wasn't immune to their prejudices and class biases. There were colleagues—inside and outside my department—the ways they would treat me and what they would say about me and my own subcultural southern-Appalachian and class background.

TM: What would they say? Would they try and kid around with you?

JK: Kid around? No, never. It was basically trying to discredit my person and my scholarship. Saying I had no business being there. Saying there was a groundswell of people around the CUNY campus that *knew* I had no business being at an urban university teaching.

TM: You and Shirley publish more books—well received, positively reviewed books—in one year than most professors publish in their entire careers. How was that treated?

JK: I had people like Phil Anderson and Ken Tobin—nobody could have supported me more. I hated to leave them and I still really miss them. We were building an Urban Education program at the Graduate Center that had 60% minority enrollment.

I'm really proud of that. No other department in the GC comes close to that. But outside of these dear colleagues there were those who said the type of work I was doing was just shit. When I wrote the McDonalds book [*The Sign of the Burger: McDonalds and the Culture of Power*, 02], there were faculty who were like, "Why would anyone waste their time writing about McDonalds?"

TM: Do you think it was professional jealousy or a deeper ideological divide?

JK: Both. It wasn't necessarily ideological. Why would people who label themselves on the left be opposed to my work? Ostensibly we're fighting for similar things. Why would there be this kind of obsession with undermining and degrading my work and work like it? I'd like to emphasize not so much the bias against me as a lower class southern person with a southern accent. The point is how the students we brought in—African American and Latino students, female students, students who went to CUNY for their undergrad years—were mistreated. The point was to give an opportunity to indigenous New York students that Columbia and NYU weren't giving them. That was part of our charge. But there were a lot of faculty who wanted us to fill the Urban Ed. Department with students who'd done their undergraduate work at Brown and Harvard.

TM: CUNY sits in New York City, which has one of the largest public education systems in the world. Yet the Urban Education Department wasn't created until 1999.

JK: They purposefully kept it out for almost 40 years. Education was déclassé. People look down on education as a field in the disciplines. One of the things that all of us had to deal with was the condescension that we found from all around the university towards the education program. There were people I would speak to who wouldn't acknowledge me. It was almost like a joke. There were a few who ignored me to the point that it became a joke. I could say to a friend, "Watch this." Then say hello to one of these professors and they wouldn't say hello back to me.

TM: Ever get any good advice in high school?

JK: My guidance counselor told me I should be a piano tuner. That came out of left field. I searched my mind wondering why he would say I should be a piano tuner and I figured it out. I showed a lot of interest in music, which continues to this day with my band. Yet at the same time, coming from where I came from, and my lack of dominant cultural capital, it was deemed that somebody like me didn't have the academic ability to succeed in higher education. So if you're my guidance counselor and you go along the X-axis and say "high musical interest" and on the Y-Axis "low academic ability" you come up with "piano tuner." If it'd been "high musical interest" and "high academic ability" you'd come up with "conductor."

TM: I'd wager that your guidance counselor thought he was giving you advice that was meant to help you, not stifle you.

JK: Oh absolutely. It was very much a positivistic interest-inventory-vocational test. He was just going by the standard interpretation of it.

TM: What were your students at CUNY like?

JK: I was overwhelmed with where my students came from. The struggles they had to go through just to get a college education and get bachelors degrees, then to go on, get their Masters degrees while they were working full time.

The Urban Ed. Department is set up such that students have to take classes outside the department itself. Students would come up to me and say, "We've never had any classes that prepared us for what we're expected to know here." They were exposed to rigorous social theory classes—and rightfully so—very highly academic classes. Many of them didn't even know what that was. I realized very quickly that students in our program needed forms of social thought and social scientific understandings that they would never have taken in a vocationally oriented Masters class.

I'd have out-of-class informal seminars every week where we'd get together and go over, "What is sociology? What is social theory? Who is Durkheim? Who is Weber? What are the paradigm changes we've seen over the last 40 years?" I was doing it because they needed to know it, but also as a form of cultural capital so that when they walked into a class they'd know who Derrida, Foucault or Spivak was. They needed to show that they had the kind of cultural capital necessary to *belong* at the graduate center.

Don't get me wrong. These things are *very* important, but they're important on many levels. They're important for your intellectual development because you're going to study these things and need to know about them. But they're also important in the sense of a kid taking a standardized test in *No Child Left Behind*-Bushian public education. If you can't do that, you can't get through. If you don't know who these people are and you can't speak this particular arcane language, you're never going to get a doctoral degree at the graduate center because you'll be dismissed as being unworthy of being there.

TM: I think you hit the nail right on the head.

CHAPTER 2

EDUCATION & THE M-60

What Rambo Taught Me About Morality, Politics, & Being a Man

> "I called to the executioners that I might gnaw their rifle-butts while dying. I called to the plagues to smother me in blood, in sand. Misfortune was my God. I laid myself down in the mud. I dried myself in the air of crime. I played sly tricks on madness." - Arthur Rimbaud, *A Season in Hell*

RAMBO AT THIRTEEN AND THIRTY SEVEN

In 1982, the first film in the Rambo series opened in theaters. I was ten years old and in the fourth grade. For whatever reasons, Dad took us to see *Conan the Barbarian* but not *First Blood*. I caught *First Blood* (Kotcheff, 82) when network television started to run it. I remember my parochial school friends who were into hunting with their fathers being really into the film and the John Rambo character. I enjoyed the movie and always thought it was sad when Colonel Troutman (played by Richard Crenna) leads Rambo to his captivity at the end while Dan Hill sings "It's a Long Road" on the soundtrack, kind of the same morose feeling I caught every week watching Bill Bixbie as David Banner hitchhiking down the road at the end of every episode of *The Incredible Hulk*. It wasn't until 1985 and the release of a sequel, *Rambo: First Blood, Part 2*, that I really got hooked on the Rambo character and, unwittingly but head over heels, the themes pervading the film.

Rambo, the films, the novels, and the character, need to be viewed as a text, as cultural artifacts that teach us what is real, what is good, and what is possible. With hindsight I think I have a grasp of what it was that "hooked" me into the Rambo character, the franchise, and the underlying political and ethical messages, and this deconstruction—of my own attraction and the film's motifs—constitute the scope of this chapter. Like many pre-teen and teenage boys (and girls for that matter) I was experiencing firsthand the construction of gender, the ascribing of meaning to what it entails to be born sexually male or female. The 80s were a time of action heroes in film, and the demographic these movies aimed for were teenage males to men in their 30s and 40s. That these action heroes—from Stallone to Schwarzenegger to Jean-Claude Van Damme to Dolph Lundgren—were "jacked" (hyper-muscular) is not incidental. The build Sylvester Stallone unveiled in *Rambo: First Blood, Part II* (Cosmatos, 85), was what we then called "diesel," what kids in the high school where I teach today call "brolic." Rambo was more muscular and ripped than any action hero icon of the silver screen up to that time. I distinctly recall a scene in the film where Stallone affixes his bandana, filmed from behind to capture the muscles of his arms, shoulders, and back as they ripple; the entire theater erupted in cheers for

Sly's muscles and also for the fact that we all knew Rambo was about to get some payback for the death of his potential girlfriend. Fast forward twenty three years later to 2008 and, again, an entire theater applauded when a brutal Burmese soldier's head disintegrated after being hit by a .50 caliber shell in the fourth film in the franchise (Stallone, 08).

These *were* and—with the release of *Rambo* in '08 and talk of a fifth film in the works—*remain* action films. The action of Rambo's two-through-four carried extremely high bodycounts. This represents a disparity with the first film, where we only see one man die, an evil sheriff's deputy who, hell-bent on exterminating John Rambo, gets pitched off his perch sniping from a helicopter skid to his death on rocks below (after Rambo hurls a stone at the windshield, causing the pilot to jerk back on the yolk and send the whirly-bird cantering—in other words, an *unintended* death). To me and my friends, who were in various stages of puberty with testosterone coursing through our bodies and hair sprouting in places it had never been before, the site of Sylvester Stallone wielding a twenty-five pound M-60 squad automatic machine gun (and feeding it linked ammunition himself, usually with bandoliers of 7.62mm rounds crossing his chest), a Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) launcher, or dispatching enemies with an outsized "survival knife" and explosive-tipped arrows from a compound bow, these visions sent us into paroxysms of applause; an ovation that would rival any fans' at a football game.

I was personally primed for the action, weaponry, and muscularity to appeal to me. My father had gotten me into reading through comic books. I remember him bringing home titles like *Devil Dinosaur* (Kirby, 78) and the original twenty four issue print run of Marvel's *Godzilla* (Moench, 77). We'd sit and read these to one another and this early love of reading sparked a nascent literacy and facility with the written word in me. I distinctly recall dad bringing home *G.I. Joe* (Hama, 82) number one: the cover depicted a group of heavily-armed special forces soldiers springing into action, weapons blazing, from atop a massive tank. Go Joe! I was hooked and stayed loyal to the series through issue one-hundred-and-something until it had even gotten too silly for me. I started collecting the action-figures, tanks, planes, and even the P.I.T., G.I. Joe's base, and would amuse myself for hours with fake battles between G.I. Joe and their nemesis, the evil terrorist organization, Cobra. They fought *against* and then *with* their Soviet counterparts, the October Guard. There were other action and war comic books on top of Larry Hama's *G.I. Joe*, many with World War II settings such as *Sgt. Rock* (Kanigher, 59) and *Haunted Tank* (Kanigher, 61), the latter which ran in D.C. comic's *G.I. Combat* and featured the spiritual guidance of Confederate general J.E.B. Stuart.

At the time I was a small boy, slight of build and frame, though I did develop a bit of a paunch in 8th grade from bad eating habits and general physical inactivity. I had held my own throughout elementary school but something happened around 6th grade or so, maybe a lack of confidence, and I found myself the occasional butt of a group of bullies. I'll be the first to say I wasn't bullied as bad as some other students were, but the effect—feeling that no matter what I did, from eating crow to avoid confrontation to fighting back when no other option seemed possible to joining the bullies in bullying someone else in the hopes it would distract them from

bullying me, wasn't going to be good enough—left me with a vague sense of nervousness and anxiety that ranged in intensity from unease to occasional terror. I distinctly recall knowing I was going to get into it with this one kid after school and as I sat at my desk I considered how I might drive my pen through his eye socket and into his brain, a technique I had no doubt read about in one of the "men's action adventure" novels I was fond of.

One weekend I was out shopping with my mother and grandmother. While they shopped in whatever store they were in I headed over to the shopping center's *B. Dalton's* bookstore and looked through the magazine rack. I found an issue of Joe Weider's *Muscle & Fitness* with bodybuilder Rich Gaspari on the cover. I had never seen a human being that muscular. Rich looked like an anatomy chart: he was so massively developed and so dieted down that every fiber of each muscle seemed to be visible. His image exuded strength and discipline to me, and I figured anyone who looked that way probably could hold their own, if only because you'd have to be crazy to start any kind of drama with them, right? I was hooked!

My friends and I weren't very politically sophisticated in the mid- to late-80s. Avuncular Ronald Reagan was in office and, sure, there were the weird reports of his wife's reliance on astrologers for guidance, but these seemed to be glossed over in Reagan's image as "the great communicator" and leader of our free world against the evil empire of the Soviet Union. I remember the American invasions of Grenada and especially Panama well and the looming supposed threat posed by the communists down in Nicaragua who were two days marching distance from Texas. The Vietnam War was something some men in our neighborhoods but very few of our "middle class" fathers (go figure) seemed to have participated in. America, I was sure, was a force for good in the world, although occasional mistakes were made. But these mistakes—from bombing a mental institution in Operation Just Fury to leveling the slum neighborhood of El Chorillo in Operation Just Cause to mining the Nicaraguan harbor, rightly labeled an act of terrorism by the United Nations—were made for the greater good, not because the United States or its leaders were anything less than just and decent.

Not incidentally or coincidentally, many of the action films my friends and I enjoyed at this time had Cold War themes. In *Rambo: First Blood, Part II*, Stallone battles to rescue American P.O.W.s from Vietnamese soldiers and their Russian advisors. In *Rambo III* (MacDonald, 88) the setting is Afghanistan, the Russians are the bad guys again, and Stallone chums it up with the Mujahadeen, who don't make much of a deal of their religious fanaticism, treatment of women, or cultivation of opium poppies, but do engage in a traditional game of Buzkashi with Sly. Chuck Norris saved America from Soviet and Cuban encroachment in *Invasion USA* (d. Zito, 1985). Gene Hackman led a group of former G.I.s—inclduing Patrick Swayze—back to Vietnam to rescue P.O.W.s in *Uncommon Valor* (d. Kotcheff, 1983). A favorite among me and my friends was director John Milius's *Red Dawn* (1984), wherein Patrick Swayze, C. Thomas Howell, and Charlie Sheen lead a guerilla army—"Wolverines!"—of American youth against the Soviet/Cuban occupation.

So, a few years later (1985) when I was in the seventh grade and a bunch of my friends and I went to see the second Rambo film with its fancy military hardware,

huge body count, and Stallone's rippling muscles, we were (or at least I was) hooked! In other words, aside from any entertainment value the films may have (and I would argue they do hold such value, though we should be alert as to where they derive this value and how), the Rambo series seemed to speak to my own insecurities of the time, some of which I was conscious of, others that I would recognize looking back. Rambo stood up to bullies: the conniving governmental bureaucrats who schemed to leave our prisoners-of-war and MIAs behind; the sadistic Soviet torturers and their Asian underlings; the old school small town sheriff who isn't content to let good enough be.

Fast forward twenty-three years later to 2008's release of *Rambo*, the fourth film in the series. Stallone was in his early 60s when the movie was filmed and showed no signs of slowing down. Unlike earlier films in the series, his shirt stayed on[1], but vascular forearms were there and the shirt hung off a muscular upper body. Setting aside the enormous body count and outrageous action sequences, the most striking incongruity in the film was to be seen in the Rambo character's face. Stallone has apparently had "work done" (i.e., plastic surgery) and it, like Mickey Rourke's and a host of other Hollywood notables', is noticeable. Here's the Rambo character supposedly surviving as a smithy in Thailand for the past couple of decades—and he looks like he's been living it up in Miami or Brazil?

The fourth installment of the Rambo films worked for me, and judging by box office figures and the way the audience in the movie theater with me reacted, for others as well. I can only speak for myself, but here I was, a man closing in on forty in a land that had long celebrated the action hero, be he native-born like John Wayne, an adopted son like Arnold Schwarzenegger, or a new-jack action hero like Will Smith or Nicholas Cage, and here was Stallone on screen, still muscular and still whooping ass and taking names. For an hour and forty minutes I once again was able to relive my adolescent combat fantasies. Years earlier I'd played them out on the carpet of my room with my three-and-three-quarters-inch Kung-Fu action grip G.I. Joes. That day they were relived in a darkened theater, vicariously through Stallone's onscreen persona[2]. Towards the end of the film a sniper vaporizes an enemy's head with a round from the aforementioned .50 caliber rifle and the audience—myself included—broke into cheers. Part of me recognizes this as enjoying entertainment, as willfully suspending disbelief, yet another part of me is troubled, unsettled.

DECONSTRUCTING THE AMERICAN MOVIE ACTION HERO

When I was in middle and high school (the third Rambo film dropped in 1988) there was a lot about Rambo—the character, the motifs—that my friends and I just didn't "get." It's one thing to recognize the Rambo films as pure escapist entertainment—but escape from *what* and *whom*? On the one hand the violence, which has escalated over the course of the films and advances in special effects, is over-the-top and obviously fake (after all, how often does one warrior prevail over three or four or five hundred enemies, even when the violence is depicted in realistic *Saving Private Ryan* fashion?). Yet when we look at *whom* that violence is directed towards some disturbing recognitions arise.

When most people think of action heroes they think of males. The 80s were largely a time of the hyper-muscular action hero (e.g., Schwarzenegger, Stallone) or the action hero who mastered certain skills, usually martial arts (e.g. Steven Segal, Chuck Norris). Towards the end of the decade Bruce Willis introduced an "every-man" type of action hero in the *Die Hard* franchise (d. McTiernan, 88). Nicolas Cage and other actors have followed in Willis' footsteps with this model. An interesting consideration is whether or not a female action hero could continue to do what she does into her 50s and 60s. Could Sigourney Weaver return as *Aliens*' Ripley or Linda Hamilton as *Terminator*'s Sarah Connor? Would an America obsessed with youth and beauty and Megan Fox accept a female action star in her 40s, 50s, or 60s the way it has Willis in his 40s or Stallone in his 60s? I doubt it. The Rambo films do not raise this issue directly—the few women in the film are young and pretty and only one in four films is a warrior cut from the same mold as the titular hero; yet these questions are there if we seek them out. As I said above, there was a lot we didn't know about Rambo when we were kids watching these films, and it's to some of these now "known unknowns" I would, shortly, like to turn.

One thing seems certain, if movie audiences hadn't been so receptive and Hollywood so profit minded, the John Rambo character would have died and stayed dead in Kentucky. Who is Rambo? John Rambo is the creation of novelist David Morell: a fictional American serviceman, a former POW in Vietnam, highly decorated[3] but mentally unhinged, suffering from post traumatic stress disorder, unappreciated by his countrymen and women and government. Morell (88: ix) is clear in the preface to his *First Blood* that the Rambo character is named after the poet Rimbaud and a New York State apple. Arthur Rimbaud was a nineteenth-century French poet who wrote all his prose before the age of 21. A gun smuggler and mercenary in Africa, Rimbaud was the lover of poet Paul Verlaine. Verlaine abandoned his wife and infant child to live a life of squalor in England with the significantly younger Rimbaud, a pairing that ended when Verlaine eventually got fed up with Rimbaud and shot him twice in a failed attempt to kill him. Rimbaud died at the age of 37, a victim of cancer. One of his best known works, *A Season in Hell*, made David Morell think what it must have been like for a character like John Rambo in a Vietnamese prison camp.

The Rambo film character was born and raised in Bowie, Arizona, son of a Native American Navajo father and a German mother. Rambo is raised Catholic, an alter boy, though in *Part II* (the novel, not the film) he has come to identify as a Buddhist. As a teenage high school student Rambo raced stock cars for fun (Morrell, 88: 251). The Rambo home was ruled by an abusive father (Morrell, 88: 183). "My father drank and beat my mother," Rambo tells Troutman at one point, "I was glad to be in the army. To get away…" (Morrell, 85: 238). Though drafted into the conflict in Vietnam, Rambo will discover he has certain skills, abilities, and a mind set that allow him to prevail in battle: "…it was a measure of his inborn skill that Special Forces, which never took draftees, had agreed to accept him" (Morrell, 85: 63). Rambo's innate fighting ability is not obvious in his first encounter with the enemy in Southeast Asia, a melee that finds him freezing up, urinating his pants, and having to be dragged away.

Nor are his inborn skills a guarantee against hardship and privation. Rambo is captured and enslaved and tortured for six months in a North Vietnamese prison camp. He escapes and it takes him six weeks to stagger the three hundred and ninety miles back to an American military base (Morrell, 88: 46). It is to this same camp that Rambo will return in *First Blood: Part II*.

Rambo returns from "'Nam" and wanders the continental United States looking for survivors of his old squad, Baker Company. They're all dead, most in the war, others from the effects of the war. For example, at the beginning of the first film, Rambo learns that his buddy Berry has perished in the States, a victim of cancer from dioxin in the defoliant Agent Orange. Because he himself was being tortured as a POW and then convalescing at a Veterans hospital before returning stateside, Rambo was unaware of his comrades' deaths.

One of the significant departures of the first film from the novel is that, where Morrell staged the action in the mountains of Kentucky, the film is set in Oregon. In the novel Rambo is still a young man, fresh from the war. We are not told Rambo's age in any of the films, but Stallone was 36 in the first film, a year younger than Rambaud when the poet died[4]. Picked up as a vagrant, Rambo is roughed-up by the local cops. He freaks out on them in a PTSD-episode and escapes to the mountains where he wages a one-man war against them. I noted earlier that in the *First Blood* film no one dies except one overzealous police officer, and that death is accidental; the book is a different story. Morrell's Rambo kills nearly everyone and everything—cops, dogs, National Guardsmen—sent after him. Rambo's former commander, Colonel Samuel Trautman, is brought in to help apprehend this rogue warrior. The biggest difference between the novel and the first film is that Rambo dies in the book. Trautman realizes that Rambo is a tortured soul and, less he be taken captive again and caged for the remainder of his existence, mercifully blows his head off with a shotgun at the end of the book. "In my novel *First Blood*, Rambo died," writes Morrell, "In the films, he lives" (85: ix). In the movie *First Blood*, Trautman talks Rambo into surrendering[5].

In *Rambo First Blood: Part II*, Trautman recruits Rambo from a federal maximum security prison where Rambo is literally breaking rocks for a special mission: return to Vietnam and look for proof of the existence of POWs. *Rambo First Blood: Part III* finds Trautman attempting to recruit Rambo—who has been granted a pardon by the US government—for a mission in Afghanistan, but Rambo declines. In the film, when Trautman is captured, Rambo goes to rescue him, aligning himself with the Mujahideen against Trautman's Soviet captors; in the novelization that accompanied the film, Rambo decides to go and help Trautman *before* learning that his commander has been captured (Morrell, 88b). 2008's *Rambo* (d. Stallone) finds the character living in Thailand and reluctantly agreeing to shepherd a group of Christian missionaries into Burma. When the missionaries are captured by the Burmese military, Rambo goes in to rescue them with an international mercenary team.

In the years since the first film, Rambo has become a cultural phenomenon, an icon. He usually brings to mind violence ("going Rambo" on someone is an idiom in American vernacular English), jingoism and superior firepower. I remember "Ronbo" t-shirts from my youth, with Ronald Reagan's head superimposed on Stallone's M-60

wielding physique. The body counts aren't the only thing that escalates through the four films: the sophistication of the weapons used does also. Rambo's weapon of choice in the first two films is an M-60 squad machine gun which he wields single-handedly; by the fourth film it's a jeep mounted 50 cal. In *Rambo*'s DVD extras, Stallone discusses how he and the film's military advisors had considered letting Rambo wield the one-hundred-and-twenty pound .50 cal. machine gun by hand but decided against it.

Yet Rambo's weapons speak to the character's ambivalence towards technology. In *First Blood: Part II* he returns to the American base and he uses an M-60 to shoot up the computers and blinking data bases where the corrupt armchair intelligence officer presides. Earlier in the film and novel, when Rambo goes to exit an airplane dropping him into North Vietnam, he becomes entangled with all his high-tech gear and is forced to cut away the expensive and intricate gadgets (like an M-16 assault rifle with an under-barrel M-203 grenade launcher) so he can parachute to safety equipped only with his knife and bow. "Because of his half-Navajo ancestry," Morrell tells readers, "Rambo had learned early to be an expert archer" (85: 95). The compound bow is sported in the second, third, and (briefly) fourth films. It has a hundred pound pull and comes equipped with explosive-tipped arrows (Morrell, 85: 99). Rambo's other weapons include an eighteen-inch survival knife, and, in the fourth installment, a formidable machete Rambo smithies himself. Rambo's body is, perhaps, his deadliest weapon. Not only is it capable of directing all other weapons, but Rambo regularly dispatches men with his bare hands in the films. In the uncut director's version of *Rambo*, Stallone actually tears an enemy's throat out with his bare hands.

Rambo's choice of weapons and his ambivalence towards modern technology are directly tied to the moral model he exemplifies. Contemporary western ethical models are largely some variation of deontological (think Kantian), consequentialist (utilitarian models rooted in Bentham and Mill), or virtue ethics models. In the past three decades, an ethic of care has gained well-deserved prominence as a challenge to these models and care's challenge and promise will be considered in the following chapter. The dominant western ethical tradition (I have in mind here particularly the deontic and utilitarian models) are premised on an abstract reasoning individual, one unencumbered by social relationships, one who appeals to a disembodied rational calculus, be it the Kantian moral imperative or the utilitarian calculus of weighing the outcomes of actions. In contradistinction to these, the Rambo character appeals to an aristocratic warrior ethos of an earlier age.

BROTHERS IN ARMS: RAMBO AND ACHILLES

We often think of the term aristocratic today as connoting weakness and laziness, much as we are led to believe—by the Rambo films and innumerable other sources and cultural texts—that government *is* and *must be* inept, corrupt, and detrimental to the individual. The aristocratic way of life is perceived as having been effete, schlerotic, and fraudulent. We think of lazy French kings in their lavish palaces surrounded by sypophants and venal tax collectors socking it to the commoners on

the eve of revolution. At one time in human history, *aristocratic* connoted the warrior king or queen who proved their mettle in battle. I think the Rambo films' theme of violence as catharsis exemplifies this notion. What does Rambo do when he's cornered? He kills a lot of people. What does Rambo do when the woman he loves is killed? He kills a lot of people. What does Rambo do when his former commander is taken captive or idealistic missionaries are imprisoned and tortured? You guessed it. The second (69 killed), third (132), and fourth (236) films have tremendous body counts. Even when Rambo is finally shown leading a squad of men (the fourth film), he leads by example and places himself in the riskiest positions, such as outrunning the detonation of a World War II bomb he boobytraps himself.

Rambo and Conan represent a warrior aristocracy in the tradition of Homer's Achilles. Achilles at the siege of Troy is a killing machine, cutting a swath through his enemies, a beast on the beach. He is a son of the goddess Thetis. Valor is a part of who Achilles *is*. To keep him safe, Thetis hides her son in the court of King Lycomedes; Achilles' is disguised as a female. Odysseus comes looking for Achilles, knowing he is needed in the Trojan War. Confronting Lycomedes' women, Odysseus sounds a tocsin and while all of the women flee in terror and cower for safety, the cross-dressed Achilles takes up his spear and prepares to defend the court, giving away his identity. Similarly, Rambo is a born warrior. "Even at Bragg during his training, it was obvious he was a natural," Troutman tells CIA-agent Murdock, "A genius. He's got an instinct for fighting…" (Morrell, 85: 39).

Achilles is not alone. Closest to him on the beach is his cousin, Patroklos, his "greatest friend…[and] comrade in arms, whom [Achilles] held dear above all others" (Homer, : 438). It is in Patroklos that Achilles confides and it is his cousin's death that will send him into a kill-crazy frenzy. Around him are his men, the fearsome Mrymidons. It is amongst them that he camps, abruptly ceases to aid the Akhaians (Greeks) when he is slighted by King Agamemnon. What is Agamemnon's slight and what brought it about? After losing one chapter in the ten-year battle to defend their homeland, the Trojans present the Akhaians with prizes. Among the spoils of war are Briseis, whose three brothers and husband died by Achilles' spear. She is given to Achilles. Achilles is pleased with this booty but Agamemnon demands the runner hand her over. Achilles is furious and considers drawing his longsword and slaying the king, but divine intervention, in the form of Athena, stays his hand.

Why does Agamemnon demand Briseis? He feels Achilles has slighted him, has engaged in insubordination. The Akhaians are suffering the wraith of the gods on the beach, the arrows of Apollo falling upon man, dogs and pack animals for nine straight days. Agamemnon has angered Apollo by insulting a priest, Khryses. Khryses had come to Agamemnon to beg for the return of his daughter, captured in battle. "Give up the girl?" Agamemnon scoffed, "I swear she will grow old/ …far from her own country,/ working my loom and visiting my bed" (Homer, 74: 12). Agamemnon's own men feel he should return Khryses' daughter, but Agamemnon threatened the priest and sent him on his way. Kalkhas Thestorides, "wisest by far of all who scanned the flight of birds," who "knew what was, what had been, what would be", who guided Agamemnon's ships to Troy via Apollo's guidance, counsels

Agamemnon to return Khryses' daughter or face the continued wraith of the gods (Ibid).

Agamemnon is pissed off by Kalkhas' advice. *Okay, I'll return Khryses' daughter*, Agamemnon tells his assembled war council, which includes Achilles, "You must prepare, however,/ a prize of honor for me, and at once,/ that I may not be left without my portion" (Homer, 74: 15). Achilles points out that the spoils of battle have already been distributed among the men. *That's just your way of getting me to give up my girl while you keep yours*, Agamemnon tells Achilles. Things degenerate quickly from that point, with Achilles calling Agamemnon "dogface", a "thick-skinned, shameless, greedy fool" (Homer, 74: 16). Agamemnon decides he'll keep Khryses' daughter *and* take Achilles' woman as well. "I myself/ will call for Breseis at your hut," he tells Achilles, "and take her,/ flower of young girls that she is, your prize,/ to show you here and now who is the stronger/ and make the next man sick at heart—if any/ think of claiming equal place with me" (Homer, 74: 17).

Achilles leaves his sword scabbered, opting instead to give Agamemnon a piece of his mind. Agamemnon is a terrible leader, in part, Achilles says, because "[y]ou've never had the kidney to buckle on/ armor among the troops, or make a sortie/ with picked men—oh no; that way death might lie" (Homer, 74: 19). Better, and safer, no doubt, "in the middle of the army—/ is it not?—to commander the prize/ of any man who stands up to you!" (Ibid). *You can have my woman*, Achilles tells the king, *but I'm not fighting for you anymore*. Achilles refuses to continue to participate in the battle against the Trojans and prohibits his men from participating. He returns to his ships and sits with his back to them; Achilles "wept/ and sat apart by the grey wave, scanning the endless sea" (Homer, 74: 23). He weeps because he is frustrated and he loves Breseis even though she had been given to him. It is not the last time the runner will shed tears in the epic poem.

Achilles' criticism of Agamemnon—that the king does not fight with his men, that he does not lead by example—speaks to the warrior aristocrats' penchant for leading by doing. As fierce as his Myrmidons were renowned to be, Achilles was a greater fighter than they. He was at their head when they charged into battle. *The Illiad* abounds with references to the ferocious figure Achilles cut: his flowing red hair, his "giant length" (Homer, 74: 436)—enormous height and size, his large hands. His roar is enough to demoralize his enemy: "so harsh and clarion was Achilles' cry./ The hearts of men quailed, hearing that brazen voice" (Homer, 74: 442). We have already considered the premium placed on the muscular physique of a Stallone or Schwarzenegger as action hero. Achilles' prowess in battle is acknowledged—he is a "breaker of men" (Homer, 74: 394); he recognizes that "I am one who has no peer in war" (Homer, 74: 439); he is likened to "the implacable god of war" (Homer, 74: 519) and "[hurls] himself/ upon the Trojans like a wild god" (Homer, 74: 500).

I didn't read *The Illiad* until I was in my early 30s. What surprised me was how violent and how detailed in its violence the poem is. Before facing off against Hector, Achilles' cuts a swath through the Trojan's men; decapitations and disembowlments are the order of the day. Achilles "struck [a Trojan's] head square in the middle, and it split in two" (Homer, 74: 485); he runs an enemy through with his sword, leaving the man "sprawled out, his entrails/ held in his hands before him" (Homer, 74: 486);

his sword knocks “both head and helmet far away” (Homer, 74: 488); with another, “Near the navel/ he slashed his belly; all his bowels dropped out/ uncoiling to the ground” (Homer, 74: 499). Homer describes the runner leaping into the river Scamander, “he leapt in savagely for bloody work/ with sword alone, and struck to right and left,/ as cries and groans went up from men he slashed/ and dark blood flushed the stream” (Homer, 74: 494). Homer describes Achilles’ descending on Troy: “riding for his glory,/ staining his powerful arms with mire and blood” (Homer, 74: 489). The people of Troy are frightened less Achilles vaults the walls themselves. Similarly, Rambo “killed seven, maybe eight, soldiers with the bow and arrow,” a technician monitoring Soviet radio channels recounts to Murdock and Troutman in *Part II*. “After that, he stabbed a Russian. He strangled a Vietnamese with a vine. He strangled another Vietnamese with the string on his bow. He impaled a Russian with a spear. He’s picking up their AK-47s and shooting till they’re empty. He’s even rigged some kind of catapult and brained a Russian with a rock” (Morrell, 85: 201). For all their violence, the *Rambo* novels and films have nothing on Homer and his Achilles!

Others cut from the warrior aristocrat mold, we have considered. Troutman is a warrior like Rambo: in Merrill’s *First Blood*, Rambo dies by Troutman’s hand; in *Part III*, Rambo and Troutman stand side by side, Kalashnikovs bucking as hundreds of Soviet soldiers and their tanks bear down on them. Conan’s father, a smithy, dies fighting the Venir raiders. Achilles’ criticism of Agamemnon—that the king is greedy and, at heart, a coward—speaks against the idea of aristocratic as lazy and corpulent, growing fat off the sweat and work of other men and women, the connotation the word has taken on. Rambo works a forge in the sweltering heat of Thailand; Conan makes his living as a death-defying thief; Achilles on the beach with his men and ships “felt his valor staling in his breast/ with idleness, and missed the cries of battle” (Homer, 74: 24). Achilles painted himself into a corner and had to sit and stew, longing to rejoin the war but too stubborn to do so as long as he felt it benefited Agamemnon.

Rambo has a conflicted relationship with authority figures throughout the novels and films. Troutman is a father figure to him and the colonel recognizes himself as such. “I’ve got two daughters,” Troutman tells Rambo one afternoon in a Saigon bar in 1968. “I’m glad they were daughters. I love them….But…if I had a son, I’d want him…to be you” (Morrell, 85: 238). Troutman, like his spiritual son, Rambo, is a warrior at heart. “For a colonel, the way you’re talking, you don’t seem to like the military very much,” chief of police Teasle remarks to Troutman, to which the other man replies, “Of course I don’t. Who in his right mind would?” (Merrill, 88: 195). Rambo respects Troutman because he regnizes him as a fellow warrior; “Rambo felt the warrior bond between them” (Morrell, 85: 15). Troutman—like Rambo, like Achilles—enjoys battle. The United States military grants Troutman the opportunity to participate in war and to train warriors. Troutman will tolerate the government and its rules and laws as it allows him to sate his instinct for battle from time to time.

Chief of police Wilfred Teasle was once a warrior. When he drags Rambo down to the station house at the beginning of *First Blood*, Rambo recognizes the Distinguished

Service Cross on display in Teasle's gun case (Morrell, 88: 28). Rambo's war was Vietnam and Teasle's was Korea. Teasle has transitioned from warrior to protector of a small town in Kentucky, and his warrior instincts have been muted. "[A] town stays safe because of the little things kept in control," Teasle says to his friend. "But it's the little things that make a town what it is, that you can watch to make it safe" (Morrell, 88: 82). In *First Blood* the movie, Rambo walks into Teasle's town wearing an army fatigue jacket; not in the book. In the novel he is described as sporting "a long heavy beard, and his hair was hanging down over his ears to his neck" (Morrell, 88: 3). Teasle, with fifteen years on the job, looks Rambo over and espies "the mud-crusted boots, the rumpled jeans ripped at the cuffs and patched on one thigh, the blue sweat shirt speckled with what looked like dry blood, the buckskin jacket" (Morrell, 88: 4). Plagued by personal issues, including a divorce, Teasle doesn't recognize Rambo as a fellow warrior at first. He sees Rambo, whom he doesn't understand, as a hippie and a threat to his town. "First thing I know," he tells the unemployed, itinerant Rambo, "a bunch of your friends will show up, mooching food, maybe stealing, maybe pushing drugs" (Morrell, 88: 13). By the end of the novel, as Teasel lay dying, his town destroyed around him, he feels love for Rambo (Morrell, 88: 284). The recognition of their shared kindredship comes too late to save either Teasle or Rambo.

In *First Blood: Part II*, Murdock is a CIA-officer. Rambo is suspicious of the Agency and its ways because of an episode he was privy to in Vietnam (Morrell, 85: 13). Murdock does his best to ingratiate himself to Rambo, telling him and Troutman that back in Vietnam, "…I wasn't one of those chicken-shit officers who hangs back while his men lead the way. I saw combat. Plenty. I've got several Purple Hearts" (Morrell, 85: 33). Murdock's appeal—"I suggest we put away our personal differences and do our damnedest to get those POWs…*Back home where they belong*" (Morrell, 85: 34) moves Rambo. Yet Rambo is wary of Murdock, recognizing that Murdock is lying about his participation in at least one episode in Vietnam (Morrell, 85: 46). When Rambo discovers Americans missing in action being held prisoner in the North Vietnamese camp, Murdock abandons him and refuses to extract the POWs. When he confronts Murdock at the end of the novel and film, brandishing the ubiquitous M-60, Rambo tells the CIA-officer "You're what's wrong! Because of maggots like you, I went over there [Vietnam] the first time! And the second time! And both times, you betrayed me!" Rambo aims the M-60 at Murdock and pulls the trigger, but the weapon is empty. So is Murdock, who has evacuated his bowels.

JOHN RAMBO CONTRA FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Achilles adheres to a warrior code. John Rambo refers to "the code" that existed on the battlefield of Vietnam, a warrior ethic that is nonexistent in civilian America. The code, in part, is the idea that you stand with your men, besides your fellow warriors. Only Patrocles' fall will bring Achilles back to the battle. Valeria and Subotai rescue Conan from his crucifixtion on the Tree of Woe. Troutman and Co go back for Rambo and Rambo goes back for Troutman and avenges Co. In Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (69), Pike Bishop remarks, "When you side with a man, you stay *with* him! And if you can't do that, you're like some *animal*, you're *finished*! *We're*

finished!" At the end of the film, Bishop and his men load up their weapons and march off to their end battling hundreds of Mexican army soldiers and their German advisors, all in the name of refusing to leave one man behind.

Though Rambo is, in a sense, the embodiment of the rugged individualist ethos, he rarely stands alone outside of *First Blood*. In *Part II* he stands with Co and the POWs he rescues; in *Part III* he fights side by side with Trautman; and in the fourth film he accompanies a team of international mercenaries. In fact, it is a sense of social disconnect that drives Rambo over the edge in the first film and book: the feeling that his country does not appreciate him; that in Vietnam he was trusted to drive a tank and handle million dollar equipment whereas he cannot land a job parking cars in the states; that he is the last among his warrior kin; that the small town sheriff—a veteran of Korea and a fellow warrior who should know better—just won't leave well enough alone.

The warrior aristocratic code also involved warriors battling one another to prove their own mettle and valor. Achilles battled Hector—though Hector was never a match for the runner, even on his best day. Conan squared off against Thulsa Doom's minions, Rexor and the war hammer wielding Thorgrim. Rambo fought individuals, like Sheriff Teasle in Kentucky, the Vietnamese commander of the POW camp, the Soviet advisor in Afghanistan and their respective armies. As discussed above, war posed a test for the warrior who fought out of service to himself, to a higher ideal, and to other concrete individuals.

Friedrich Nietzsche enjoined one to "become who you are," an invitation to embrace a form of aristocratic elitism. Nietzsche is best known, perhaps, for his *ubermensch* or superman, a person of the future, one who acts so as to define his own morality. One of his many aphorisms, "that which doesn't kill me makes me stronger," is quoted onscreen at the beginning of *Conan the Barbarian*. Troutman calls Rambo a killing machine and implores him to come full circle with himself and what he is. We are left with the feeling that Rambo was born a warrior, not created, that this Green Beret lethal weapon was the result of some teleological unfolding and not any exercise of agency or choice or sociohistorical conditioning.

Nietzsche admired warriors like Achilles and seemed to feel we could all learn a lot from their examples and his own writings. He longed for an *ubermensch* but looked back approvingly on a noble mentality and morality. Nietzsche outlined a history of morality dominated in the beginning by nobles, men noble in mind and deed. Characteristic of this nobility was the way in which it determined its own values by its actions. The nobility, when they took the time to think about it (because, Nietzsche reminds us, they were usually busy *doing* and not *thinking about* doing), "regarded themselves as possessing the highest moral rank" (56: 163). What they did was *good* by dint of their doing it. "The noble type of man experiences *itself* as determining values; it does not need approval," opined Nietzsche, "it is *value-creating*. Everything it knows as part of itself it honors; such a morality is self-glorification" (66: 205). The noble does not seek nor need the approbation of others; the noble soul is suffused with a reverence for itself and its acts (Nietzsche, 66: 228).

Nietzsche's nobles were violent and they were happy, and their happiness stemmed in large part from their violence. "To behold suffering gives pleasure,"

opined Nietzsche, "but to cause another to suffer affords an even greater pleasure" (56: 198). Nietzsche wants to make sure readers understand: "it should be clearly understood that in the days when people were unashamed of their cruelty life was a great deal more enjoyable than it is now…" (56: 199). Nietzsche admires those who are capable of visiting suffering upon others with a clear conscious. "But not to perish of inner distress and uncertainty when one inflicts great suffering and hears the cry of this suffering—that is great, that belongs to greatness" he writes (Nietzsche, 67: 195)[6].

Below the nobles was the mass of humanity and the violence of the nobles was often visited upon this "herd". "[T]he noble caste was always the barbarian caste," explains Nietzsche, because, as "men of prey who were still in possession of unbroken sense of will and lust for power, [they] hurled themselves upon weaker, more civilzed, more peaceful races" (66: 201 & 202). Intolerant and cruel, the noble took pleasure from inflicting suffering on the masses. "Deep within…these noble races there lurks the beast of prey, bent of spoil and conquest," [said] Nietzsche, "This hidden urge has to be satisfied from time to time, the beast let loose in the wilderness" (56: 174).

One can imagine that "the herd" did not appreciate the occasional and unpredictable culls. The masses came together in reaction to the nobles, their sheer numbers assuring an intellectual, if not always physical, protection. "Suppose the violated, oppressed, suffering, unfree, who are uncertain of themselves and weary, moralize," Nietzsche invites, "what will their moral valuations have in common?" (66: 207). The fear of and loathing for the nobility turned creative amidst the herd and gave birth to valuations. The herd turned their weakness into strength: "Of course, they do not call themselves the weak; they call themselves 'the good'" (Nietzsche, 99: 33). Their morality began by saying *no*, no to the nobles and their actions, no to the noble conception of the good.

Rambo—and Achilles too, but I don't have the room to argue that here—represents the warrior aristocracy but *not* Nietzsche's conception of the warrior aristocracy. True, Rambo often acts from aggression and emotion, evident, for example, when he lets loose a roar for no especially apparent reason other than he is caught up in slaughter as he pilots a helicopter and fires missiles into his enemies' camp in *Part II*. But Rambo is not a selfish atomistic individualist; he is not what critics refer to as the "bourgeois man." Remember: he is looking for members of his squad at the beginning of *First Blood*, actively seeking out social connections; He risks his life to save the lives of others—Troutman, POWs, Christian missionaries; at the end of *Rambo* the character returns to his father's ranch in Arizona. Rambo doesn't prey on the weak: he defends the weak against those stronger and usually at great risk to his own self. Rambo doesn't necessarily enjoy violence; he's just good at it. In *First Blood* he isn't looking for trouble: the sheriff foists it on him.

THE APPEAL OF JOHN RAMBO AND HIS MESSAGE

Who do the Rambo films and the character appeal to? My friends and I were working class kids—though, like most working class people, we considered ourselves middle class. Our parents had mostly blue collar jobs. We wanted to look like

Rambo: muscular and ripped. Funny enough, Stallone at 61 years of age in *Rambo* (IV) looks great. Rambo, through a unique combination of Stallone's dedication to bodybuilding, diet and hormone replacement therapy, is inspirational to guys my age still, when middle age and paunches are starting to creep up on us.

The Rambo films rile up a populist sentiment against authority and government that was revolutionary in the days of America's independence movement but is now best viewed as conservative and devolutionary in nature, if not reactionary. The idea that we somehow weren't "allowed" to win the war in Vietnam by politicians and civilians at home permeates the first two films. "You wouldn't let me win the first time! And you did your damnedest to keep me from winning the second time!" Rambo shouts at Murdock (Morrell, 85: 239). But not once do the films address the immoral nature of the American war on Vietnam; the lies behind the Gulf of Tonkin that drew us in; the massacres of Vietnamese civilians as at My Lai and elsewhere; or the human cost of the war at upwards of two million Vietnamese lives and fifty-six thousand American. Yes, the United States government is to blame, but not because it *refused* to let loose the dogs of war. Furthemore, the Rambo films contributed to the idea that there were American servicemen and women still being held as prisoners in Vietnam, POWs and MIAs.

The Rambo movies come down decisively against pencil pushing bureaucrats and their government. The effete country-boy cops in *First Blood* and the bloated, pasty-skinned desk jockey in *Part II* stand in the way of the job getting done or actively undermine change agents like John Rambo. Teasle, the sheriff in *First Blood*, was a Korean War vet but he looks at the itinerant Rambo—with his long hair—wandering down his town's main street in his US Army field jacket (in the film at least) as some other creature. Rambo mentions war protestors spitting on himself and other returning soldiers at airports. The second and third films are especially definite articles of the Cold War and a certain mentality of that period.

Not only is Rambo a friend of the common man, he is befriended by the common man. Morrell tells us that born-warrior Rambo survived his first melee in Vietnam only because he is saved by a mountain tribesman: "Having nearly frozen in a firefight against the Cong, bullets slicing the leaves around him, members of his A-Team screaming and dying around him, his urine staining his pants, he'd felt the mountain tribesman grab him and drag him back to safety" (85: 63). When Rambo escapes the torturous prison camp and is wandering around the jungle delirious, mountain tribespeople in North Vietnam again come to his rescue. On the run from the law in *First Blood*, John Rambo encounters a Kentucky mountainman and his son. They share their two hundred proof corn mash whiskey with Rambo and provide him food, clothes, and a rifle (Morrell, 88: 78). "'Had to hole up in the hills a couple days myself,' the old man had said. 'Long time ago'" (Morrell, 88: 89). The mountain man is sympathetic to Rambo, whom he knows is on the run from the law.

The Rambo films are cheesy but they're effective as action movies. Discerning viewers may be able to tease out the ideological messages, overt and covert, from the shoot 'em up scenes, but that wasn't something my friends or I were interested in doing in middle school. That doesn't mean that the messages were not absorbed and internalized. For many of us they were.

ANTON CHIGURH AND NIETZSCHEAN NOBILITY

John Rambo, Homer's Achilles, and Conan the Barbarian are meant as heroic figures. Cue the 1980s, a surge in drug use and violence, and the arrival on scene of one Anton Chigurh, nightmarish creation of author Cormac McCarthy in *No Country For Old Men*. "[T]hey come like destiny," writes Nietzsche, "without rhyme or reason, ruthlessly, bare of pretext…" (56: 220). Chigurh, I will argue, is no hero or anti-hero: he is clearly a "bad guy" and quite possibly what many readers of the book and viewers of the excellent Coen brothers filmed adaptation (07) would describe as evil. To which Chigurh himself would answer, "It doesn't make any difference what sort of person I am, you know" (McCarthy, 05: 257). But Chigurh, like the Cimmerian, like the leader of the Myrmidons, like Trautman's spiritual son, is an example of an aristocratic morality, though one clearly spelled out in the works of Friedrich Nietzsche and differing vastly from the other examples.

No Country for Old Men follows the travails of Llewelyn Moss, welder, trailer park denizen, and, like Rambo, a Vietnam War veteran. One day when he's out hunting antelopes, Moss comes across the remains of a drug deal gone sour. Bodies—of men and a dog—and cars, are bullet riddled. Some distance off Moss finds "the last man," who has crawled away with a satchel full of cash and expired under a tree. Moss, like Woody Allen, takes the money and runs. The rest of the book details his attempts to avoid the men looking for the money, including Anton Chigurh, a task made all the more difficult by the presence of a tracking device stashed in the case. Sheriff Ed Tom Bell tries to track down Moss before Chigurh and a host of violent Mexican gangsters get to him.

Anton Chigurh is an embodiment of the Nietzschean noble, of a master morality run amuck. Nietzsche laments a slave morality that has gripped the west, a morality synonymous with weakness and "the herd instinct of obedience" (66: 110). Nietzsche felt that this herd man and woman stultified the evolution of the human race, that any advances in the human species are due to the prerogatives of an aristocratic master class of individuals. Yet the "herd man" "gives himself the appearance of being the only permissible kind of man, and glorifies his attributes, which make him tame, easy to get along with, and useful to the herd, as if they were the truly human virtues: namely public spirit, benevolence, consideration, industriousness, moderation, indulgence, and pity" (Nietzsche, 66: 111). "It takes very little to govern good people," Sheriff Bell's thirty six years in law enforcement have taught him, "Very little. And bad people cant[7] be governed at all. Or if they could I never heard of it" (McCarthy, 05: 64). The herd man looks upon the aristocratic noble with confusion and fear: here is someone, an individual or "bad people," that goes against all the rules and mores of society and social living.

Chigurh's appearance is described by the two boys who are the last characters in the book to see him as of "medium height. Medium build. Looked like he was in shape. In his mid thirties maybe. Dark hair. Dark brown…He looked like anybody" (McCarthy, 05: 293). An unremarkable appearance perhaps, but always the hint of something more, of some undefined menace: "But he didn't look like anybody you'd want to mess with" (Ibid). As Sheriff Bell and Llewelyn Moss get closer to Anton Chigurh they are confused by something they cannot get their heads around.

When Moss comes face to face with Chigurh, McCarthy describes him from Moss' perspective: there is "[s]omething about him faintly exotic. Beyond Moss' experience" (05: 112). There is "an odd smell in the air" when Chigurh is in the room, "Like some foreign cologne" (McCarthy, 05: 111). Chigurh shows up in a Texas full of good ol' boys and Mexican drug runners and he is distinctly not of this place; his name (*Chigurh*, the reader is informed, is pronounced such that is sounds like *sugar*) and the description of his scent suggests possible European ancestry. "Noble" in taste and refinement, he is described as "wearing expensive boots, maybe even ostrich", and recognizes and approves of fine artwork hanging in a businessman's office (McCarthy, 05: 290 & 253). He exudes menace. At the end of the book, when Chigurh has disappeared and Bell has failed in his task, the sheriff decides to retire, "and a good part of it is just knowin that I wont be called on to hunt this man. I reckon he's a man" (McCarthy, 05: 2) "[W]hen you encounter certain things in the world, the evidence for certain things," contemplates Bell, who himself has *not* faced Chigurh in person, "you realize that you have come upon something that you may very well not be equal to and I think that this is one of them things" (McCarthy, 05: 299).

"I just have this feelin we're lookin at something we really aint never seen before," another peace officer remarks to Sheriff Bell. But Chigurh isn't so much something new as something old, the Nietzschean noble, a throwback to a time past. Chigurh is an artist, and his medium is death. "Their work is an instinctive imposing of forms," writes Nietzsche, "They are the most spontaneous, most unconscious artist that exist. They appear, and presently something entirely new has arisen…" (56: 220).

Again, the Nietzschean noble is something the common man and woman cannot comprehend, much less appreciate. Llewelyn Moss, a sniper in Vietnam who himself has killed men, apparently does not grasp the full threat Anton Chigurh poses to his life and his loved ones; when Moss has the drop on Chigurh in his hotel room, he does not kill him. What Bell fears most, with drug-trade-fueled violence spilling over the border into the States, is that men like Chigurh are the tip of an iceburg. "I used to say they were the same ones we've always had to deal with," Bell tells his deputy, Torbert, "But I don't know if that's true no more…I ain't even sure we've seen these people before. Their kind. I don't know what to do about em even. If you killed em all they'd have to build a annex to hell" (McCarthy, 05: 79). Bell is a man who reads "*the papers ever morning. Mostly I suppose just to try and figure out what might be headed this way. Not that I've done all that good a job at headin it off. It keeps getting harder*" (McCarthy, 05: 40). Bell fears he isn't the only one not ready for the challenges of a new day and era: "*I think we are all of us ill prepared for what is to come and I dont care what shape it takes*" (McCarthy, 05: 295). Bell is leaving middle age behind and the looks he sees on the faces of old people do not assure him: "*they dont even look confused. They just look crazy….It's like they woke up and they dont know how they got where they're at*" (McCarthy., 05: 304). For Bell in his sixties, the arrival of Chigurh amid the upsurge in drug violence signals that this is no longer a country for old men.

The noble aristocrat stands outside society; Nietzsche conceptualized him as standing *above* society. Chigurh is described as "an outlaw" by another bad man,

his one-time partner and former Special Forces Lt. Colonel-turned-hit man, Carson Wells (McCarthy, 05: 156–157). Chigurh works and walks alone, as "it is every bit as natural for the strong to disaggregate as for the weak to congregate" (Nietzsche, 56: 273). When time permits, Chigurh has long conversations with the people he is about to kill. These are the only conversations we see him engage in.

THE NOBLE VERSUS THE HERD

Nietzsche and McCarthy's Chigurh scorn the masses of humanity. Nietzsche's disdain of "the herd" was clear in admissions such as "[o]ne feels contempt for the cowardly, the anxious, the petty, those intent on narrow utility….the doglike people" (66: 204–205). Chigurh's weapon of choice is an air-powered cattle gun, which he uses to brain people. Contemplating Chigurh's handiwork, Bell explains to Torbert that cattle ranchers "use a airpowered gun that shoots a steel bolt out of it. Just shoots it out so far. They put that thing between the beef's eyes and pull the trigger and downs she goes. It's that quick" (McCarthy, 05: 106). Bell and Torbert refer to cattle as "the beef", which indicates they see cattle in instrumental terms, as mere meat. Chigurh looks upon humanity in equally instrumental terms.

"A human being who strives for something great considers everyone he meets on his way either as a means or as a delay and obstacle," writes Nietzsche, "or as a temporary resting place" (66: 222). The noble, a man of action, is transcendent and does not conceive of himself as belonging to the same species as those populating this earth he walks. In Nietzsche's thinking, the noble is too busy doing what nobles do to care what others think or how his actions are interpreted. Yet his wake is littered with the carnage and destruction wreaked on the lives of "the herd" for

> [t]he essential characteristic of a good and healthy aristocracy….[is] that it therefore accepts with a good conscience the sacrifice of untold human beings who, *for its sake*, must be reduced and lowered to incomplete human beings, to slaves, to instruments. Their fundamental faith simply has to be that society must *not* exist for society's sake but only as the foundation and scaffolding on which a choice type of being is able to raise itself to its higher task and to a higher state of *being* (Nietzsche, 66: 202).

Chigurh's existence and actions are commensurate with what we would label a sociopath and/or psychopath. "He's a psychopathic killer but so what?" Carson Wells remarks to his employer when he is hired to find Chigurh. "There's plenty of them around" (McCarthy, 05: 141). Yet Chigurh, like Achilles, Rambo and every man and woman, has his own moral code he lives out, a fact Wells recognizes when he remarks to Moss, "He's a peculiar man. You could even say that he has principles. Principles that transcend money or drugs or anything like that" (McCarthy, 05: 153). Chigurh is not tempted by the money he retrieves, the money that has led to so much death. When his next victim offers him fourteen thousand dollars from an ATM in lieu of his life, Chigurh admits the amount is a good pay day, but "It's just the wrong currency" (McCarthy, 05: 173).

Chigurh embraces a brand of justice based on chance, with chance largely determined beyond the capacity of a man's or woman's knowledge and influence. When he shows up at widowed Carla Jean Moss' house and she begs him not to kill her, Chigurh tells her he is sorry and responds, "You're asking that I make myself vulnerable and that I can never do. I have only one way to live. It doesnt allow for special cases. A coin toss perhaps" (McCarthy, 05: 269). Nietzsche felt that pity leads to a degeneration of the species by violating natural selection and keeping alive what should not be allowed to exist (99: 24). Chigurh offers to spare potential victims' lives based on the outcome of a coin toss; he holds the coin up and turns it over for Moss' wife "to see the justice of it" (McCarthy, 05: 258). It is not a trick coin: it has a heads and a tails. "You need to call it," Chigurh instructs one man. "I cant call it for you. It wouldnt be fair. It wouldnt even be right…" (McCarthy, 05: 56). When they correctly call the coin, Chigurh lets potential victims walks away.

Accountability figures heavily in Chigurh's morality. On the phone he tells Moss to bring him the money and he will let Carla Jean live, "Otherwise she's accountable… I wont tell you you can save yourself, because you cant" (McCarthy, 05: 184). When he visits Carla Jean, Chigurh shows up in her home because he gave his word to her deceased husband. "[E]very aristocratic morality is intolerant," explains Nietzsche, "they consider intolerance itself a virtue, calling it 'justice'" (McCarthy, 66: 210). Carla Jean points out that one doesn't owe anything to dead people, to which Chigurh replies, "Yes. But my word is not dead. Nothing can change that" (McCarthy, 05: 255).

Chigurh conceives of his word as something with an existence beyond his corporeality. His arrival at Carla Jean's house is an unfolding of fate: "For things at a common destination there is a common path. Not always easy to see. But there" (McCarthy, 05: 259). He conceives of himself as an instrument of this fate ("I got here the same way the coin did" he tells Carla Jean [McCarthy, 05: 258]), doing that which he is intended to do, as he has "only one way to live." But fate is, in part, contingent on choice, on volition. Chigurh recognizes this when he states "Every moment in your life is a turning and a choosing. Somewhere you made a choice" (McCarthy, 05: 259). But fate offers limited options, and no choice can deviate from one's destiny. "All followed this [choice]," he assures Carla Jean, "The accounting is scrupulous. The shape is drawn. No line can be erased…And the shape of your path was visible from the beginning" (McCarthy, 05: 259).

DEITIES, ARISTOCRATS AND THE ETERNAL RECURRENCE

The aristocratic warrior ethos often serves to please a deity or deities. Rambo, raised Roman Catholic as a boy, is full fledged Buddhist by the time David Morrell wrote *Part II*. "If he'd been asked to declare his affiliation," Morrell writes of Rambo, "he'd have described himself as a follower of Zen, a Buddhist" (85: 62). Achilles is the son of the god Thetis; she and other Greek gods play a direct role in his life and death. Conan is lapsed in his religious worship of Crom, but he battles and beheads Thulsa Doom, a deity himself who can change forms from a man to a snake.

The warriors are sustained in battle, and, in the case of Achilles, laid low, by the gods. The spirit of Valeria returns to protect Conan at the mounds. Thetis brings her

son a suit of armor crafted by Hephaistos; Apollo, angered in part by Achilles' disrespect to Hector's corpse, guides Paris' arrow to Achilles' only weak spot. Rambo conceives of Zen Buddhism as "the ultimate weapon", after all, "What reason would he have to be afraid of death once he understood that death did not exist….[t]hat life itself…was but an illusion" (Morrell, 85: 63). Rambo's Buddhism allows him to retain his humanity in dehumanizing situations. "In the killing fields of combat," writes Morrell, "a Catholic might lose his soul. Even a Navajo./ But not a Buddhist" (85: 64). Morrell explains, that for Rambo, recognition of the illusory notion of life allows one to comprehend that which is not illusory, "the truly actual"; such recognition allows one to "[merge] with the Holy One" (85: 63).

"Even a nonbeliver might find it useful to model himself after God," remarks Anton Chigurh in *No Country for Old Men*. "Very useful in fact" (McCarthy, 05: 256). On the face of things, Chigurh has no religious convictions himself; as he leaves a trail of bodies behind himself in Texas, he does so under a starry vault apparently bereft of the watchful eye of a god. However, in keeping with the conception of Chigurh as Nietzschean noble let loose on the earth's herd, we should consider Nietzsche's conception of the eternal recurrence and Chigurh's place in it.

Imagine, invites Nietzsche, that a demon visits you and tells you that you will have to live your life just the way it has been over and over again; that "there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence" (74: 273). Would you throw yourself to the ground in existential despair, gnashing your teeth, asks Nietzshce, or would you embrace this eternal recurrence? "Joy," explains Nietzsche, "wanteth recurrence, it wanteth everything eternally-like-itself" (99: 232). However, beware, for "Said ye ever Yea to one joy? O my friends, then ye said Yea also unto all woe", for "[a]ll things are enlinked, enlaced and enamoured" (Nietzsche, 99: 233). The terrors and horrors of existence, these are we fated to experience again and again.

The strong, the noble, can look at this demon and say to him, "You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine" (Nietzsche, 74: 274). The noble can accept the eternal recurrence and all that comes with it. The herd, men of renunciation, cannot accept and actively deny the eternal recurrence (Nietzsche, 74: 230). Not Anton Chigurh. "The shape is drawn," he tells Moss' wife. "No line can be erased… And the shape of your path was visible from the beginning" (McCarthy, 05: 259). When Chigurh speaks of people being "accountable", they are accountable to the eternal recurrence, to all that was before and will be again, to a path from which they cannot deviate. "Everything becomes and recurs eternally—escape is impossible!" (Nietzsche, 68: 545).

Nietzsche felt the eternal recurrence was grounded in science, stating that "[t]he law of the conservation of energy demands *eternal recurrence*" (68: 547). In a world where matter is finite but time is infinite, all forms that are have been and will be again. It is worth quoting Nietzsche at length to see how he conceives the eternal recurrence:

> If the world may be thought of as a certain definite quantity of force and as a certain definite number of centers of force—and every other representation

> remains indefinite and therefore useless—it follows that,in the great dice game of existence, it must pass through a calculable number of combinations. In infinite time, every possible combination would at some time or another be realized; more: it would be realized an infinite number of times. And since between every combination and its next recurrence all other possible combinations would have to take place, and each of these combinations conditions the entire sequence of combinations in the series, a circular movement of absolutely identical series is thus demonstrated: the world as a circular movement that has already repeated itself infinitely often and plays its game *in infinitum* (68: 549).

Why, for Nietzshce, is the concept of the eternal recurrence terrifying for the mass of humanity? "No longer joy in certainty but in uncertainty; no longer 'cause and effect' but the continually creative; no longer will to preservation but to power; no longer the humble expression, 'everything is *merely* subjective,' but 'It is *our* work!—Let us be proud of it!'" (Nietzsche, 68: 545). As paradoxical as it sounds, the eternal recurrence demands action and decisions on the part of individuals. For Nietzsche, as for Anton Chigurh, embracing the eternal recurrence means setting aside all traditional conceptions of morality, for "[t]o *endure* the idea of the recurrence one needs: freedom from morality" (Nietzsche, Ibid). Hence the masses grasp of traditional notions of morality and religion. "Even a nonbeliever might find it very useful to model himself after God," Chigurh told Carla Jean. "Very useful in fact" (McCarthy, 05: 256).

Believers, Nietzsche felt, feared not having something to believe in. "The demand that one *wants* by all means that something should be firm (while on account of the ardor of this demand one is easier and more negligent about the demonstration of this certainty)—this…[is] the demand for a support, a prop, in short, that *instinct of weakness*" (Nietzsche, 74: 288). It was Nietzsche who opined that people would rather have the void as their purpose than to be void of purpose, which Sheriff Bell recognizes when he proffers that "I think sometimes people would rather have a bad answer about things than no answer at all" (McCarthy, 05: 282). "Do you think God knows what's happenin?" the sheriff asks his Uncle Ellis. "I expect he does./ You think he can stop it?/ No, I don't" (McCarthy, 05: 269). Bell is echoing Chigurh's earlier inquiry, "If the rule you followed led you to this to what use was the rule?" (McCarthy, 05: 175). Bell himself, confronted by the scourge of drug violence and men like Anton Chigurh, finds succor in religious belief. "*Come the middle years my belief I reckon had waned somewhat. Now I'm startin to lean back the other way. He explains a lot of things that otherwise dont have no explanation*" (McCarthy, 05: 218).

Anton Chigurh is unlike anything the men and women he encounters have ever met. This is because he is a Nietzschean noble, beyond and above the herd. "The other comes always from a height/ And lives where praise can never get–/Beyond your sight" (Nietzsche, 74: 67). Chigurh does not need the praise or approval of others. He looks with contempt on humanity and its morality. It's not so much that Chigurh doesn't care about people's opprobrium as it is he extirpates opprobrium when he finds it. "I have no enemies," he remarks, "I do not permit such a thing"

(McCarthy, 05: 253). "What is new, however, is always evil," posited Nietzsche, "being that which wants to conquer and overthrow the old boundary makers and the old pieties; and only what is old is good. The good men are in all ages those who dig the old thoughts, digging deep and getting them to bear fruit—the farmers of the spirit. But eventually all land is exploited, and the ploughshare of evil must come again and again" (74: 79). Anton Chigurh is the living embodiment of this ploughshare of evil. "I have only one way to live," he tells Carla Jean. "Most people don't believe that there can be such a person. You can see what a problem that must be for them. How to prevail over that which you refuse to acknowledge the existence of" (McCarthy, 95: 260).

The eternal recurrence demands action on the part of the individual, and the action is seldom pedestrian. Before he kills Wells, Chigurh tells him how he came to be apprehended at the beginning of the book. Eating his dinner in a café, a local man drinking beer with his buddies taunted him. Chigurh gestured for the man to follow him outside to the parking lot and when the guy did Chigurh promptly murdered him. He got in his car and drove away while the man's friends, thinking their pal merely unconscious, tried to revive him. An hour later a police officer picked Chigurh up outside of Sonora, Texas. Chigurh *allowed* himself to be cuffed and taken. "I'm not sure why I did this but I think I wanted to see if I could extricate myself by an act of will," he admits to Wells. "Because I believe that one can. That such a thing is possible" (McCarthy, 05: 174–175). Extricate himself from the situation he did, to devastating effect for the police officer and a passing motorist.

In hindsight, Chigurh recognizes this act of will as "a foolish thing to do. A vain thing to do" (McCarthy, 05: 175). But for the Nietzschean noble the risks—to life and limb—are not what they are to regular human beings. When Wells tells Chigurh "You think you're outside of everything…You're not outside of death", Chigurh answers that death "doesnt mean to me what it does to you" (McCarthy, 05: 177). Nietzsche's aphorism 262 in *The Gay Science*, prefaced with Spinoza's phrase "From the point of view of eternity", applies to Chigurh:

> –A: 'You are moving faster and faster from the living; soon they will strike your name from their rolls.' –B: 'There is only one way to participate in the privilege of the dead.' –A: 'What privilege?' –B: 'To die no more.' (74: 218)

The Nietzschean warrior noble does not fear death and nonexistence as we mortals do, for he embraces the eternal recurrence and a form of cosmic reincarnation that indeed does place him *outside* of death. Death becomes an object of curiosity for the noble and those approaching nobility. When Chigurh comes across the shoot-out he studies the bodies of the dead men and dog (McCarthy, 05: 60). Rambo, the Buddhist warrior, "noticed dead things more. Not in horror. Just in curiosity of how they had come to their end" (Morrell, 00: 15).

EMOTIONS, REASON AND THE ARISTOCRATIC WARRIOR

To call Anton Chigurh cool and calculated is an understatement. He is methodical and reasoned in his actions. He slips down a hallway in his sock feet and takes the

measure of a room before bursting into the one that is his target (McCarthy, 05: 103). The man rarely shows emotion in the novel. When Moss has him under the gun, Chigurh "didnt even look at him. He seemed oddly untroubled. As if this were all part of his day"; further, "The man didnt even seem to notice. His thoughts seemed elsewhere" (McCarthy, 05: 112). Unlike Rambo, who lets out seemingly random cries while strafing the enemy with a machine gun, Anton Chigurh stands stoicly in the street and trades gunshots with Mexican drug runners. When Chigurh suffers a compound fracture the two boys who come across him remember that "[t]here was a bone stickin out under the skin on his arm and he didn't pay no more attention to it than nothing" (McCarthy, 05: 293). Chigurh shows little emotion in the novel or film. When he is injured—shot, arm broken—his pain is obvious, but it is muted. And Chigurh, like Rambo, dresses his own wounds.

Chigurh reasons without emotion or remorse. Achilles, on the other hand, uses reason in the service of emotion. With the death of Patrocles, Achilles cycles through emotion and reason. With the return of Patrocles' body, Achilles scatters ash and dust on his head and face and "in the dust he stretched his giant length/ and tore his hair with both hands" (Homer, 74: 436). The Akhaians mourn Patrocles and Achilles "led them in their lamentation,/ laying those hands deadly to enemies/ upon the breast of his old friend, with groans/ at every breath…" (Homer, 74: 445). "Slaughter and blood are what I crave," he tells Agamemnon, "and groans of anguished men!" (Homer, 74: 463). Yet Achilles, consumed by grief and rage, does not rush out into battle immediately. He sees that Patrocles' body is bathed and wrapped; he fasts; and then he arms himself. When he and his men attack the Trojans, Homer describes that "No moderate temper/ no mild heart was in this man, but harsh/ and deadly purpose" (Homer, 74: 488). Achilles has vowed "not to call a halt…/ till I have made the Trojans sick of war!" (Homer, 74: 470).

A lack of emotion underscores the fact that Chigurh is not like Achilles, Llewelyn or Carla Jean, or even Wells, who admits to being "wary" of Chigurh (McCarthy, 05: 157). Nor is Chigurh is like Rambo or Conan. Chigurh is not like *us*. But Chigurh is not without thought or feeling. "Getting hurt changed me," he confesses to Wells, referring to gunshot wounds he incurred in a shootout with gangsters. "Changed my perspective. I've moved on, in a way. Some things have fallen into place that were not there before. I thought they were, but they werent. The best way I can put it is that I've sort of caught up with myself" (McCarthy, 05: 173). In a scene from the novel that did not make it to the screen, Chigurh, "dressed in suit and tie", takes the money to its owner and inquires about possible future employment (McCarthy, 05: 250).

The closest Chigurh comes to seeming human is in the scene when he confronts Carla Jean. Coming home from her mother's funeral, Carla Jean finds Chigurh seated in her bedroom. When she looks to her bedside table where her gun is stashed, Chigurh tells her it is no longer there. "You aim to kill me," Carla Jean surmises, to which Chigurh replies "I'm sorry" (McCarthy, 05: 256). He tries to reassure her: "You'll be all right. Try not to worry about it" (McCarthy, 05: 257). It isn't anything Carla Jean has done or didn't do, Chigurh explains to the woman: "It was bad luck" (McCarthy, 05: 257). He watched her process her impending death with his chin in

his hand and then offers her the coin toss, saying "This is the best I can do" (McCarthy, 05: 259). Chigurh makes Carla Jean call it and when she calls it incorrectly he apologizes to her a second time. "You make it like it was the coin" sealing her fate, Carla Jean confronts Chigurh, "But you're the one" (McCarthy, 05: 258). In line with the eternal recurrence and his role in it, Chigurh demurs: "I got here the same way the coin did….For things at a common destination there is a common path. Not always easy to see. But there" (McCarthy, 05: 258–259). After apologizing a third time, Chigurh shoots Carla Jean Moss.

Rambo had Trautman; Conan had Valeria and Subotai; Achilles had Patrocles. Anton Chigurh has no one. He is unfettered, unencumbered, loose in the world. His only known relationship is to Wells, who has "worked with him" in the past, and Wells dies by Chigurh's hands. Early on in the book it looks like Chigurh may break away from any semblance of interconnectedness when he pulls a burn and murders the men he is supposed to be working with in tracking down the money. By the end of the book he shows up for what he views as amounting to a job interview ("I'd say that the purpose of my visit is simply to establish my bonafides"), finding employ with a rival crime syndicate (McCarthy, 05: 251). This criminal organization will provide opportunities for Chigurh to do what he does best, to let this beast of prey loose in the wilderness. This most tenuous tie to humanity represents Chigurh's only connection to the species, a connection that proves fatal for most of those he meets.

Aristocratic morality implies service to something greater than the self, including the protection of other people. Anton Chigurh's aristocratic morality, like Nietzsche's noble mentality, is in service to the self, protecting no one. As Rambo, Conan and Achilles attest, with aristocracy comes responsibility, responsibility to gods, to others. Aristocratic responsibility often smacks of paternalism and may be rooted in condescension, but it has the very real world effect of keeping some other safe and well.

Chigurh stands alone by choice. Rambo, a rugged individualist from a land of individualists, is also an outcast, also self-exiled. But Rambo longs for ties to his fellow men and women. Of the four Rambo films and books there are only two major female characters. In *Part II*, Co Phuong Bo represents the warrior woman, fighting side by side with Rambo. Co, whom Rambo surmises is in her early thirties, is physically beautiful: "Gorgeous as almost every young Vietnamese woman was" (Morrell, 85: 65). *Co*, Rambo knows, translates to *virgin* in English (Morrell, 85: 66). She has a Masters degree in Economics and a twelve-year-old son living in the United States whom she hasn't seen for eight years (Morrell, 85: 80). She is Rambo's love interest, though their love is not consummated beyond a kiss. She rescues him from the prison camp and then gets nearly blown in half. From her dead body Rambo takes a good luck jade charm. She is the only woman we ever see Rambo have romantic feelings for.

In *Rambo* a much-younger Christian missionary gives Rambo a cross charm. When she is abducted with her fellow missionaries Rambo goes off to rescue them. The treatment of the white female missionary character raises the issue of the differential premium placed on white versus non-white life in the films. As mentioned earlier, the only person to die in the first movie was a state trooper whose death is accidental (again, the book was an entirely different matter). In the second, third,

and fourth films, the enemies are Vietnamese, Burmese, Afghani, and Russian and they are dispatched in droves. In *Rambo*, Rambo allows a Burmese boy to be sodomized so he can save the female missionary before *she* is raped (he later disembowels the officer responsible for the boy's rape). Three Burmese women are gang raped by the Burmese army while Rambo and the mercenaries effect an escape with the white female missionary.

Let us return to Rambo's relationship with Co and his character's feelings on sex. Morrell tells us that John Rambo remained a virgin until he was twenty-one years old and then had sex with a woman he thought he was going to marry (85: 68). When he returns from Vietnam after three years of service and imprisonment his beloved has married another man, "had two young sons and a daughter, and spoke to him as if they'd never been more than casual friends" (Morrell, Ibid). Instead of being heart-broken, Rambo is relieved. After the horrors he's endured, witnessed, and contributed to in the war, "sex had ceased to be an urge. He couldn't bear even the thought of getting that close to someone. Not just emotionally. Literally. Physically" (Morrell, 85: 69). War has warped John Rambo, nearly destroying a very natural human drive. Nearly but not completely; Morrell tells us Rambo does, occasionally, have wet dreams and masturbates (Ibid).

I mention Rambo's sex life or lack thereof for two reasons. The warrior male is often conceived as virile on and off the battlefield. Achilles' is gifted Briseis; enslaved as a gladiator, Conan is mated like a wild animal. Through four films and three novels, Rambo challenges this warrior-as-stud stereotype. In fact, the only characters in the Rambo franchise who are allowed to express any kind of sexual urges are the "bad guys," and usually their sexuality is somehow deviant from the norm. Above I mentioned the Burmese prison camp officer who sodomizes the young boy and his men who rape three prostitutes. Prostitution figure prominently in *Part II* as well, with Co disguising herself as a prostitute to break into the prison camp where Rambo is being tortured.

The Russian advisor in Part II, Lieutenant Podovsk, recognizes a kinship with Rambo. "To me," he tells the captured Rambo, "…you are a comrade similar to myself, but different, of course, opposed to me by a matter of politics and fate" (Morrell, 85: 155). *We're warriors*, *the both of us*, is Podovsk's message. Yet the Russian's sexuality betrays any perceived kinship. When Rambo is screaming in agony, electricity coursing through his body, Morrell describes Podovsk as "[screaming] with him. 'Yes!' He was sexually excited, his eyes wide, his groin bulging. 'Yes! You must scream! You must! There is no shame!" (85: 160). Podovsk gets off on violence, torture, and war, the very elements that have muted Rambo's sex drive.[8]

Neither of the four warriors discussed in this and the previous chapter are "intellectual warriors" in the sense meant by Joe Kincheloe. Certainly, each man is extremely intelligent in his own area of expertise; however Rambo, Achilles, Conan and Anton Chigurh are all indicative of a morality consonant with a warrior aristocracy. Chigurh's nobility is in service to his self and his place in the eternal recurrence of all things. Like Chigurh, Achilles, Rambo and Conan all kill, but unlike McCarthy's monstrous creation, these men kill to defend concrete others in the here-and-now. When the slaughter becomes solipsistic—as in the case of Achilles

and his degradation of Hector's body—it becomes fatal to the warrior. As attractive as an aristocratic morality and warrior mentality may be to some, it is far from democratic in its nature or potential. Nor is it particularly true to our nature as social beings. In the next chapter I will discuss an alternate ethical stance rooted in relationship and interconnection, an ethics that isn't absent in the characters of Rambo, Achilles or Conan, much as it isn't absent in our own daily lives that often seem to mitigate against it.

CHAPTER 3

DEMOCRACY, CARE AND THE HUMAN CONDITION

EDUCATION AND EMBODIED ETHICS

Critical pedagogies recognize that all education is political, that education—from what is taught in classrooms to the manner in which it is taught to the ways its reception is ascertained and measured—is never neutral. Critical pedagogies also recognize that education is ethical and moral, that our pedagogies are rooted in ethical visions though these ethical visions more often than not go unobserved and unappreciated. Paulo Freire stated that ethics were at the heart of his critical pedagogy and that the teaching of content was in no way separable from the ethical education of our students (98: 87). In this chapter I will argue that critical pedagogies reflect an ethical standpoint at loggerheads with much historical and contemporary ethical thought, that critical pedagogies are rooted in an ethic of care.

Traditionally ethics has been conceived as an exercise involving the human faculty for reason and abstract thought. Ethical exercises—like imaging what we would do if a train barreling down the tracks towards a family could be halted if we pushed an overweight man from an overpass into the train's path—are often highly theoretical and divorced from our lived experiences. In the defense of the people who devise these exercises, they are after the ethical underpinnings that guide our decision making and constitute the moral codes we live by and not meant to convey any actual situation we might find ourselves in. But that is part of the problem with the way ethics *is done*; the decisions reached in these exercises and conversations about ethical reasoning are disembodied and theoretical.

Ethics is a part of *who* we are and *how* we are. All political decisions—from whether we decide against funding aide for abortion access in foreign countries to voting for or against the local school budget—are rooted in an ethical stance. The choices we make in our schools and classrooms—will students sit in individual rows or in small groups? Will tests be administered to individuals or groups and if to individuals will students have the chance to make test corrections and increase their grade? Will the teacher factor effort into her grading? How will we respond when a student dismisses something as "gay" or uses other inappropriate language in class?—all these choices reflect our ethics. The choices made in our schools and communities that affect our classrooms—will the board of education reach a fair and equitable agreement in negotiations with the teachers' and civil service employees' union? Will student class size increase? Will certain courses be offered and certain books taught?—are ethical decisions. It's not that the political is reducible to the ethical or that education can be pared down to an undeniable moral core; it's that ethics suffuses all of our choices and informs our lives.

This chapter will argue that emotions play a large part in our ethical decision making and that our bodies, wellsprings of these emotions, cannot be separated

from any distinctly human moral apparatus. Briefly, we care and provide care with our bodies and our minds, and less we forget our minds are a part of our physical corporeality. Relationships between individuals constitute our persons and personalities. There is a visceral element to ethical decisions and actions; we often *feel* and *know* we made the right or wrong decision. Furthermore, most of our ethical decisions are made in real time, on the fly and on the spot, and not after prolonged reasoning and thought. Contemplation and deliberation often precede ethical quandries; however, most ethical dilemmas remain unknown to us until we find ourselves *in* them, at which point we often seek to justify our actions after the fact through reflection and reason.

When we do discuss ethics or morals in education we often have in mind things like character development and civics classes and prayer in school. The ethical curriculum is often highly theoretical and, in America at least, the idea that ethics can be separated from specifically religious instruction is an idea not accepted in all circles. Education across the curriculum is itself disembodied, largely estranged from our corporeality. Contemporary education models reify abstract reasoning and logic. Howard Gardner provides several "multiple intelligences" that individuals and students display, yet institutionalized education continues to reward verbal-linguitsic and logical-mathematical intelligence. In traditional classrooms students sit alone at their individual desks, textbook open before them, receiving transfers of information and knowledge directly from their teachers and the writers of their texts. While humans are beings of action and praxis and children thrive from play and directly interfacing with their environments, movement on the part of the student in the classroom is usually severely limited. The teacher herself often serves a disembodied role: he is a mere purveyor of accepted truths and a conduit of knowledge to students from the great books and great minds that reside elsewhere. In most classrooms students are divorced from the larger social milieu, from developing feelings of solidarity with their fellow students in educational settings that promote a nefarious conception of success based on zero-sum competition between individuals.

CARE AND DEMOCRACY

The idea of an ethic of care is usually traced back to Carol Gilligan and her seminal work, *In a Different Voice* (82). Gilligan was a graduate student of Lawrence Kohlberg and her ideas in *A Different Voice* were a challenge to her teacher. Kohlberg's view of morality (81), which owed much to Kant and Piaget, was an hierarchical, multistage model centered on the ability to reason about moral dilemmas. Kohlberg's early and longitudinal studies focused solely on male subjects and downplayed affective ties. Gilligan countered Kohlberg's moral reasoning model by drawing attention to our relationality and arguing that males and females make moral decisions in different ways; that women and girls moralized in a different voice.

The ethic of care, as it has developed in theory in the three decades since the initial Gilligan-Kohlberg debate, encompasses women and men without distinctly separate voices. It is worth noting that an ethic of care, and acting from an ethic of care, is not something that Gilligan or any theorist since "discovered". Care as a guide

to our lives, including our moral lives which are inseparable from all other aspects of our being, has always existed and always served as a guide for those who listened to their bodies and cherished their affective ties to others. What Gilligan and subsequent care ethics theorists have done so well and so importantly has been to draw attention to this innate human faculty and the many ways in which it has been downplayed and marginalized.

Virginia Held has written that "There is not yet anything close to agreement among those writing on care on what exactly we should take the meaning of this term to be" (06: 29). How is an ethic of care defined? Something worth considering is that the scholarship around this ethic employs an assortment of labels and terms: *Care*, *caring*, the *ethic of care*, *the ethics of care*, *care ethics*, all have been used by different authors and at times more than one is used by a single theorist. In a certain sense these terms are all compatible and often interchangeable.

An ethic of caring or care is marked by "a concern for care, responsiveness and taking responsibility in interpersonal relationships, and by a context-sensitive mode of deliberation that resists abstract formulations of moral problems" (Bowden, 97: 6). Diemet Bubeck speaks of care's "irreducibly social nature" and its "face-to-face interaction" (95: 138). Caring involves other people, but it also involves the self (Engster, 09). Further, care can extend to other, non-human animals, our environments, and our planet. Joan Tronto and Berenice Fisher define an ethic of care as "*a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible*," and they note that this "world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web" (93: 103).

Care is a praxis and involves action. Care is directly related to "the activity of caring" (Sevenhuijsen, 98: 83). We learn to care, in large part, by being cared for; we learn to care by caring. Nel Noddings notes that "[t]o develop the capacity to care, one must engage in care giving activities" (02: 19). The ethic of care's theoretical characteristics are only realized in action and reflection upon that action. Care "involves both thought and action," writes Tronto, explaining "that thought and action are interrelated, and that they are directed toward some end" (93: 108).

An ethic of care takes as its starting points individual human beings and their situations, what feminist political theory terms one's positionality or standpoint. This includes all the relationships one shares with other human beings, non-human animals, and the earth. Traditional moral models take as their starting point the human being as an abstract, disembodied entity capable of reason and transcending relational ties. It's not that traditional moral models—notably the deontic and consequentialist—think we do not have relationships with others; these models think it is very important for the moral agent to step back and practice morality as if it were possible to do so without these ties exerting any influence on us. Several of these models also view morality as something *out there*—either a utilitarian calculus or an abstract moral law—something accessible to reasoning human minds. An ethic of care views ethics as something *in here*, within us, as something human beings live and do.

Traditional moral models maintain what Joan Tronto calls a "moral boundary" between the moral and the political which are viewed as separable spheres of life.

Individuals are capable of ethical thinking and reasoning despite the political and social circumstances their bodies inhabit. So, for example, the right or good or ethical choice can be arrived at in a democracy or a totalitarian political system. Theorists in the emerging ethic of care tradition are arguing that an ethic of care depends on a democratic way of life—including a democratic political and economic system—to ensure that an ethic of care can be lived. For example, the activity of caring—for a patient by a doctor, a student by a teacher, a child by a parent—depends on democratic forms that allow for the equitable distribution of goods and caring labor to be allocated and supported in such a way that effective, responsive care can occur.

Care theorists are turning greater attention to democracy and what it means in itself and for an ethic of care. Several have been quite adamant that care depends on democracy and democracy depends on care. This conviction has led them to champion democratic economic arrangements and re-examine the ills of capitalism, an area where critical pedagogy has been long at work. Just as the critical pedagogies of Paulo Freire, John Dewey, Kathleen Wheeler, and others have struggled with greater or lesser success in our contemporary capitalist world, care and an ethic of care has fought for survival and realization. That we're all here and relatively healthy is a testament to the care we received and continue to receive from those around us, a not unremarkable fact of life given a totalitarian economic order that exhausts resources and individuals in an unquenchable and ultimately self-destructive drive after short term profit above all else.

John Dewey observed that we are *born* organic beings and *become* human beings. We become human beings through the interactions that accompany our relationships with other human beings. Helpless at birth and for several years following, our existence and survival is dependent on the care and nurturance of others. We are individuals capable of realizing our individuality only through the social, and the social is nothing more than an amalgamation of individuals. Political, economic and moral theories that believe the one can exist without the other are refuted by the history of our species and our individual ontologies.

Society is a union of distinct individuals, something more but nothing less. The individual is realized through social living and contributes to the social whole. However, contemporary educational praxis and models of morality offer us a different conception of the relationship of the part to the whole. Consider the mania for standardized testing that suffuses the American educational landscape these last several years. Students are pitted one against each other as they strive to achieve higher grades and show "mastery" as defined by these tests, which all too often present themselves as timed trivial pursuit contests. Let us set aside for the moment what these tests actually measure and how they are developed. The scores on these exams are used to reward and punish individual students, teachers, and schools (as discussed in chapter seven). Though cooperation between individuals is responsible for who we are and continues to play an extremely important part throughout our lives, reliance on these exams does not foster cooperation between students, classes, teachers, schools, and school districts.

Society contributes to the emotional and physical well-being of individuals by meeting her needs, helping her to meet her own needs, allowing her to contribute to

the society itself and recognizing and appreciating this contribution. Our sense of self, of *who* and *what* we are—our ontologies—are relational. The sense of self is mediated by group living. Group living is facilitated by verbal and nonverbal communication, reaching its apogee in democratic substance and forms wherein members express their points of view and reach a working consensus that allows the group and the individuals who compose it to flourish.

The ideas discussed in the paragraphs above are not new, nor are they the specific preserve of political progressives. But they are ideas that have yet to be pursued and nurtured to their logical conclusions and have faced adversity and competing models. Economic and political liberalism conceived of man (*he* was a man and usually a white property holder or citizen, which, more often than not, amounted to the same thing) as primarily a political and economic animal and not as a social animal. In the creation of the modern liberal tradition, women, slaves, children, and relationships in general were ignored. This liberalism—which championed the individual and *his* rights—was a reaction against oppressive government intrusion in the sphere of individual rights and responsibilities. When the social—relationship between king and subject, between feudal lord and peasant serf—was used as an excuse to keep people in their place, the social came in for a criticism it still has not recovered from. The champions of this tradition disconnected the individual from the social to make their theoretical case but somewhere along the way this temporary disconnect was accepted as a barrier best kept intact.

The revolutionary potential of democracy lies in democracy as a way of life, as a chance for all to be seen and heard, represented and respected, rather than a silencing of bodies and minds. Yet the modern liberal turn—towards individual rights and greater economic and political freedom—relegated democracy to a political sphere which soon proved stifling for democracy and the individuals who live it. Democracy—in its social, moral, and economic forms, as a way of life—was barely given a chance and today finds itself conjoined to an economic order that actively saps its vibrancy and potential.

Arguably, democracy is the natural human condition, or *should* be. That it has not been the historical norm does nothing to downplay this fact. The history of humanity as a species has been a history of struggle to realize greater democratic forms and ways of life. The march towards this goal has not always been steady, nor has it been straight, and there have been many who stood against it for personal and ideological gain. However, the underlying progression—progress in the sense of collectives of individual human beings *choosing* to pursue it and not some inevitable divine or cosmological teleological unfolding—is writ large in the history of our kind.

MUTUALITY AND HORIZONTAL RELATIONSHIPS

People communicate with one another with their bodies. People listen to their bodies and *feel* what is right or wrong. When ethical dilemmas present themselves they do so on the spot and are solved on the spot. Further, ethical dilemmas rarely involve the individual alone and their solution is often reached in concert with other individuals. Even in cases where an ethical dilemma squarely faces one individual in particular,

her solution to that dilemma will have an impact on others and her choices reflect a cognizance of this fact.

We rely on intuition and check it with our facility for logical thinking and reasoning. Intuition, like reason and logic, is a part of our moral repertoires and should not be denigrated. Intuition and gut feelings often provide the impetus to act or prod us in the direction of an answer. There is a visceral element to our moral faculty, as anyone who has ever done anything they know to be wrong can attest. Similarly, there is a certainty, an ease of body and mind that accompanies right action. Seemingly unfortunately, most of the decisions we make are neither absolutely right or wrong as right and wrong are often socially constructed. That said, this lack of certainty is what gives our agency meaning and highlights the importance of choice as a part of the human condition. Further, intuition cannot be our only guide and criteria when making and contemplating ethical decisions. Reason and logic serve to balance out intuition by allowing us to critically consider and analyze the course of action and decisions our guts "told us" were right.

Non-antagonistic dualisms surround us at the same time that we inhabit them. A recurring theme of this book is the non-antagonistic dualism between emotion and reason. Antagonisms develop when individuals and groups of individuals champion one over the other. Morality is not something "out there" that we tap into through contemplation, nor is it merely something that can be accessed solely through the three pounds of grey matter residing between our ears. Morality and the ethical life relies on a bridge between the body and the mind, on interactions between both of these.

Theorists working in the care ethic tradition recognize several values or properties of care that are germane to our lives and classrooms. Among these are attentiveness and sensitivity, compassion and empathy, protection and relationality, cooperation and the meeting of needs (Tronto, 93; Held, 06; Sevenhuijsen, 98). Freire is recognized as a seminal figure in critical pedagogy—if not *the* seminal figure—but it has not been until recently that the evidence for an ethic of care in his work has not been noted (Monchinski. 10). Freire's works, words, and life were suffused with a faith in the potential of his fellow human beings, and this faith, he maintained, was nourished by love (97: 70). He was adamant that progressive teachers be caring and loving of their students (98: 65).

Freire's "method", as his critical pedagogy is often misunderstood, exemplifies an ethic of care. Dialogue is central to a Freirian critical pedagogy because dialogue, maintained Freire, is central to who we are as individuals and as a species. Freire felt that the relationship between teacher and student should be a horizontal relationship between individuals who are both Subjects in the educational process that is life (97: 61). He railed against a system that posed the students' supposed ignorance to the teacher's omniscience. Freire did so in a way that did not denigrate the expertise a teacher brought with her to the classroom or educational setting, an expertise garnered from education and experiences. Teachers have much to teach students but the best teachers, in the critical sense, also realize they have much to learn *from* and *with* their students. This horizontal relationship of *teacher-student* and *student-teacher*, of teacher-student mutuality, is rooted in dialogue. In this championing of communication between student and teacher the values of care are evidenced.

Attention and attentiveness allow us to understand the needs, desires, and feelings of others. Freire spoke of "listening democratically", of the "discipline of silence" that is the "sine qua non of dialogical communication" (98: 104–107). A teacher is obliged to be a democratic listener if he wants to truly be attentive to his students. An "absence of will" on the part of the teacher allows one "to suspend one's own goals, ambitions, plans of life, and concerns, in order to recognize and be attentive to others," an initial stage of care (Tronto, 93: 128). This attention and listening extends from a students' individual mood on any given day to a students' understanding of a subject under study in the classroom. When a student cannot grasp an idea, the critical, caring teacher asks questions that help flesh out the students' lack of comprehenesion in regard to the issue; when the bottleneck is discovered it can be dismantled or bypassed by the student with the teacher. The teacher asks questions that are not solely about the answer but incorporate a search for the answer with the involvement of the student, empowering the student to feel a part of the process and not view education as a mere hit or miss opportunity (Noddings, 84).

Dialogue marked by democratic listening does not mean that all parties to the dialogue will agree on everything, nor should it. The important thing is to listen "connectedly", "without prejudice to what the other is saying" (Freire, 98: 107). This allows one to understand where the other is coming from, to comprehend the other's grasp of an issue. That said, one of the primary responsibilities of a caring teacher is to protect the process of pedagogy, to make sure that all students in her class feel safe and valued. There will be times when a teacher needs to wield her democratic authority to protect this process. Students come to class with all sorts of prejudices rampant in their homes and societies; though prejudicial views can be critically analyzed, prejudicial views that alienate other students and make them feel uncomfortable have no place in a critical, caring classroom. For example, it is one thing to discuss illegal immigration or gay marriage in a Government and Economics class; it is another to tolerate racial and homophobic epithets.

Nel Noddings feels that dialogue allows people to come into contact with one another and to meet the other and to care (84: 186). She opines that though we can disagree with what someone *says*, we can identify with what that person *feels*, and that the shared identity of feeling—even between those on opposite sides of an issue—serves to connect those involved (Ibid). I understand Noddings sentiment and I think there is something to it, but in my experience there will be times when *what* the other person feels needs to be silenced and the holder of these views may initially view the teacher who precludes his views negatively. For example, I do not allow racist, sexist or misogenistic remarks in my classroom. Ignorance often accompanies these remarks and my calling the transgressor on it can take the form of an exercise in critical pedagogy itself. For example, why do students feel *gay* is synonymous with *stupid*? Hate speech is not something we avoid only when someone who might be offended by it is around. Other times I have no recourse but to warn the transgressor that such language will not be tolerated in our classroom because I want everyone to feel comfortable, even if there are no gay students, girls, or non-whites in our classroom.

Discussion and dialogue, even when we strongly disagree with someone, represents what Dewey described as "cooperative undertakings in which both parties

learn" (98: 342). Dewey maintained that a hallmark of democracy is the potential for individual growth through the expression of conflicting opinions and ideas (98: 342). Differences need to be given "a chance to show themselves" so that we can all learn with and from one another, even in those instances where the legitimacy of a point of view is questioned (Ibid). For example, I have no doubt that biological evolution is the answer to how my species has reached its current stage of development, but that does not mean I want to shut up creationists and those favoring intelligent design. It is too easy to dismiss people we disagree with as ignorant, stupid and jejune. It is another thing to listen to people we disagree with and try to understand where they are coming from and why these ideas that they hold so firmly to are of such importance to them; further, it is very instructive to consider why their ideas effect us the way we do. That said, I do not think the proper place for the exploration of these views—disturbingly (in my opinion) popular in America—is in a biology classroom.

Dialogue is best understood as a "democratic relationship" that provides an opportunity for us and others to learn and grow by confronting our differences instead of acting like such differences do not exist (Freire, 92: 103). The important point is not that we always agree, but that we remain faithful to the democratic process of expressing points of view and listening democratically. We cannot—and should not—ignore the opinions and world views of those we disagree with. The better we understand opposing points of view, the better prepared we are to counter them. Dialogue, in the classroom or on the world stage, makes this a possibility.

PROTECTION AND LIMIT SITUATIONS

Democracy as the natural human condition faces checks imposed by others and our own selves. In American classrooms we pay homage to something called democracy and attempt to imbue our students with a sense of how important it is, yet we do so through largely undemocratic methods in undemocratic classroom and school settings. This is not to confuse democracy with a permissiveness devoid of limits. I speak to the constant praxis the critical teacher navigates and negotiates as she attempts to remain true to the democratic spirit and form while she covers content. For instance, local and state standards often serve as checks on the possibility of democratically negotiating the curriculum in the classroom. There are certain things students are expected to know by the end of a certain grade or level in their education. While we can critically analyze how this privileged knowledge is arrived upon, we would be remiss if we did not expose our students to it.

Ira Shor (97), for one, has written of negotiating the curriculum in his undergraduate and graduate classes. Negotiating the curriculum, deciding on the first day of class with students the directions in which a class will proceed, is one example of democracy at work in the institutional educational setting. As a high school teacher laboring under state standards and the presence of end-of-year exams like the New York State Regents exams, I find negotiating the curriculum very difficult if not impossible to do. Perhaps the limits to my own creativity are to blame, but I tend to think not. As Ira himself is first to point out, there is greater freedom in the

"privileged" setting of a graduate seminar where a dozen students work with their teacher versus a middle or high-school classroom where a teacher works with twenty-five to thirty students who are in various states of maturity.

Protection is one of the values or properties of an ethic of care that we find at work in the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire. Freire was clear that teachers must exercise their authority in the classroom for two reasons. One, teachers have trained and studied extensively in their fields and bring an authority over a subject with them to the classroom that their students lack. Teachers share their knowledge and experiences regarding particular subjects with students. Secondly, teachers' rely on their authority to protect the process of pedagogy in the classroom.

Freire conceived of a teachers' authority in his critical pedagogy as a democratic authority. He refused to view authority and freedom as antagonistic and argued that authority was an invention of freedom (04: 9; 96: 150). Freedom demands limits or it risks a permissiveness in which, to paraphrase the old man on the mount, Hassan I Sabbah, "[everything] is true, everything is permitted". The authority that delimits freedom is a democratic authority rooted in a teacher's humility and care for her students and subject. Wielding democratic authority, over subject matter or student bodies, does not mean a teacher is authoritarian. It means a teacher is dedicated to the process of democratic expression, the sharing of ideas, the critical evaluation and reinterpretation of subject matter.

Perhaps a couple of examples may prove illustrative. There are people who believe that the September 11th, 2001 attacks on the United States were somehow orchestrated by members of the Bush Administration. The way the Twin Towers collapsed, imploding straight down, these people hold, indicates explosive charges were planted within the buildings themselves before the planes hit. Look, I am and have been highly critical of our government and its policies (see for example, chapter four). Historically, under the banner of democracy and freedom, the American government has carried out egregious violations of democracy and freedom at home and abroad. That said, I recognize the difference between an institutional analysis of capitalism, of how it works and what behaviors it encourages and discourages, versus conspiracy theories like the one mentioned at the start of this paragraph. Conspiracy theories like the ones adhered to by the "9–11 Truth Movement" hold as much "truth" in my mind as the rumour that all the Jews who worked in the Twin Towers avoided showing up for work on the day of the attacks. In other words, none whatsoever.

Students come to my classroom having heard these rumors. Sometimes it comes up in class. I will acknowledge this view and invite the student to explicate it. More often than not they are unable to do so, therefore I have to briefly describe this conspiracy theory myself[9]. Having done so, I also let my students know there is no proof supporting this idea and that I myself find it untrue. I do not accept this idea as equal to other ideas in the teaching of history in our classroom. After all, which is more believable: the idea that the United States' foreign policy of armed aggression and economic sanctions and of supporting Israel and maintaining military bases in the Muslim holy land angered Osama bin Laden and his followers enough that nineteen of them gave their lives in an attempt to punish the United States? Or that, in a conspiracy rivaling anything seen on Fox's *24*, members of the United States

government arranged the destruction of a New York City landmark and the deaths of nearly 3,000 civilians? These ideas are not of equal merit and I am careful to convey this to my students.

Another example: One year I had a teacher's aide in an American History class I taught who approached me after class with an idea. Had I ever heard, he asked me, that at least five American presidents had been black? (This was before Barak Obama rose to prominence on the national scene). No, I hadn't. My aide, black himself, said he had a book that *proved* this and promised to bring it in, opining that we should teach this in class. He was true to his word and brought "the book" in. The book was actually a few dozen photocopied pages, rife with typos and historical inaccuracies, all stapled together. The "proof" that five American presidents was as convincing as the "evidence," such as a picture of Abe Lincoln and a black Abe Lincoln on the facing page. The whole thing was preposterous and in as nice a way as I could I explained to my teaching aide that I thought it such, that I wouldn't be introducing it into class because it lacked any merit. I know he wasn't happy but what can I say, I had to use my democratic authority to exclude purported knowledge that I thought would, at best, mislead or confuse our students.

The ways in which democratic authority is implemented enhances democracy and does not undermine it. Something that comes up a lot where I teach, especially among new 9th graders fresh out of middle school, is the use of inappropriate language. The words g*ay*, *fag*, and *bitch* are more commonly employed as hurtful terms from my experience than any of George Carlin's seven dirty words. When I correct the student—and I am *correcting* him in the sense that these words are wrong to use in a classroom setting—I try to make it clear that such words denigrate entire categories of people. This has led to some interesting discussions about hate speech in the classroom. My most obstinate students fail to see the similarity between a heterosexual dismissing someone or something as *gay* and a white person dismissing someone as a *nigger*. An argument that is unfolding is whether words like *bitch* or *gay* refer to something other than women or homosexual; as when rapper Eminem makes a distinction between being gay and being a faggot in *8 mile* (d. Hanson, 02). A similar argument is going on around the word *nigger* and whether it means one thing when whites say it versus when blacks use it. "Shut up! Fifty years ago we'd have you upside down with a fucking fork up you ass," white comedian Michael Richards screamed at an audience in 2006, "Throw his ass out. He's a nigger! He's a nigger! He's a nigger! Look there's a nigger!" Everyone knew what Richards was talking about and what he meant. Whatever. Its inappropriate language meant to hurt and express disdain and there are times I cannot broach a discussion about its appositeness and have to tell students such words are not acceptable in our classroom.

What I do not do is belittle or embarrass the student who uses these words in class. I always make it clear that what I disapprove of is a students' words or actions and not the student herself. The rules and expectations of the classroom are one thing; students are human beings and free to disagree with us. In most cases we can get them to stop using inappropriate language in our classrooms by ordering them to do so. This, however, relies solely on authoritarianism and tends to breed contempt and resentment on the part of the student, even if she keeps it under wraps. If we

can correct our students without making them feel small, without dehumanizing them, we stand a better chance of eventually winning them over to our point of view. It's not about being manipulative: I honestly feel a classroom free of hate speech is a desirable thing; I believe wielding my authority in a democratic versus autocratic manner helps me towards this goal. Even when "punishment" (detentions, referral to the deans or some higher authority in the school) is necessary, I try to make it clear to the student involved and any others who are privy to their peer's situation that this isn't about penalizing one individual per say, it's about fostering a certain kind of environment for all of us in the classroom and school and not letting one taint or poison that climate.

POSITIONALITY AND LEFT ESSENTIALISM

Critical pedagogies and an ethic of care are both responsive to the specific situations in which we find ourselves. Freire was clear that his critical pedagogy was no mere method transferable to one and all situations. Similarly, an ethic of care—while recognizing several universal humans needs—is responsive to individuals, their relationships and situations. In the language of feminist political theory—which, as a language of the oppressed is language of all and not just women or the marginalized—one's positionality reflects "the knower's specific position in any context, a position that is always defined by gender, race, class, and other socially significant dimensions" (Maher & Tetreault, 94: 22). Critical pedagogies and an ethic of care are context specific, recognizing the positionality of Subjects in relationships between individuals and their social settings.

One of the dangers of positionality is what Kincheloe and Steinberg (97) have labeled "left essentialism." This point of view holds that since I am *not* a black working class female I have no idea what the life of a black working class female is like and should therefore not deign to speak for—or even of (in extreme forms of left essentialism)—them. Left essentialism leads to a potentially debilitating form of "identity politics" wherein human differences prove divisive, often in an insurmountably competitive manner indicative of Freire's notion of "horizontal violence" (e.g., "Oh, you think you've got it so bad because you're old and female? Well I'm black and gay!"). Critical pedagogies and an ethic of care work to avoid left essentialism while celebrating difference and uniting those who are different across their differences in solidarity and caring relationships.

Grasping positionality is important for critical pedagogies and an ethic of care because positionality is a way of life. Traditionally that which has defined one particular positionality has been privileged over others. As Karen Warren explains, "Without the appropriate prefixes, a discipline such as philosophy masquerades as 'just philosophy,' inclusive philosophy, when it is not. It is Western philosophy, or dominant Western philosophy, or philosophy authored by White heterosexual bourgeois men of the Western world" (98: 46). Critical pedagogy and feminism itself have come in for similar criticism themselves from those within these movements; in the finest tradition critical pedagogy and feminism have to offer, these criticisms were taken as constructive and responded to.

Traditional ethical models are often labeled "universalistic", meaning they can apply to all people in different times. These models ignore the positionalities of the unique individuals who make moral choices. All are not equal in situation. These universalistic ethical models attempt to fix actual, concrete situations between distinctive individuals and personalities to abstract, universal rules and principles. An ethic of care proceeds in the opposite direction, from a theoretical appreciation of relationality and social embeddedness to concrete, actual relationships in which decisions are made, decisions which impact these relationships. Similarly, critical pedagogies start from an abstract commitment to human flourishing—what Freire called "humanization"—and tailor themselves to the people, their times, and their situations.

Being aware of one's own and one's students' positionalities puts a teacher in a better position to care for their students. Let me give an example. I have a student who recently started blowing off her resource room, which I teach. I know this kid has been through a lot: one of his parents committed suicide after a long illness a year ago; he doesn't get along with his father, who can be verbally abusive; questions about his residency have recently arisen and his future in our district is in question. One week on a Monday this student and I were talking about bagels and when I asked him what kind of bagels he liked best he said he lived everything-bagels. Wednesday of that week I picked up a baker's dozen and made sure I got a couple of everything-bagels. Third period came and the student didn't show up in class. After awhile I went looking for him, aware of what the kid had been going through and equally cognizant that I was probably unaware of much more.

I found him down in the commons talking to another student. He probably thought I was going to chew him out and demand he get back to our class immediately. Instead I walked up to him and his friend, excused myself for interrupting their conversation and—over his protestations that "You have no idea, I am having such a bad morning"—said, "You know it's funny, the day I bring in bagels is the day you decide to be late to class. I got you an everything-bagel too but someone ate it—there are other bagels upstairs though." The student's whole attitude and posture changed and he told me he'd be right up, and he was. I'm convinced my approach worked better than if I had just walked up to him and told him to get his butt to class or if I had alerted security and asked them to escort the student to our room. I'm also convinced this is a more humane and democratic way to deal with students. Of course, I'm not always able to leave a classroom and go looking for a student and there is a chance that my approach may not work. My experience with people, including students, has been that an authoritarian approach often draws resistance; a more humane approach is more likely to result in the outcome I desire. Again, it's not manipulative in a selfish way that benefits me: when the student is in class he completes assignments that he otherwise probably would not have done. Knowledge—even limited knowledge—of a student's positionality can help a teacher successfully approach and interact with that kid.

There are limits and boundaries between teachers and students and there need to be. However, these boundaries are negotiable and not static. There is the all too real chance that our own positionalities—everything from our family histories, our political views, our sexuality—could alienate students from us. For example, there are students

(usually the older, more mature ones) I can share details of my family or my own political views with, and then there are other students (usually the younger, less mature) I purposefully refrain from sharing too much information with. Janet Wright (98) discusses how she sees her coming out as a lesbian professor to her college students as a political and ethical act in the classroom. I think there's a time and a place for nearly everything, so I imagine Janet Wright knows what she's doing and that her example serves to make heterosexual students question their assumptions and provides a positive role model for gay students. That said, the topic of sexuality and sexual orientation is different at the high school versus the university level. There are teachers I work with who are gay. These men and women are not always open with their colleagues and many of them choose not to come out to their fourteen-, fifteen-, sixteen-, seventeen- and eighteen-year-old students. I cannot blame them. I imagine they struggle with the following dilemma: when you're fourteen years old and a freshman in an American high school, you've more than likely grown up in a society where heterosexuality is normalized, a society that continues to denigrate homosexuality. For many of these kids a teacher's sexuality is an inappropriate source of titillation, gossip, and innuendo; on the other hand, there are fourteen-year-old and younger students who know they're gay, so a teacher's sexual orientation can serve as a role model for these kids. My school has a gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender club that meets every week and is advised by staff members, heterosexual and homosexual.

I'm a heterosexual, white, middle class male, so my own sexuality usually doesn't come up as a topic of conversation with students, but here's an example where I balance my own positionality, political views, and reading of history as I interact with students. I'm a history teacher. Students learn about imperialism and the great empires in human history and inevitably I get the question, "Hey, what (Britain or Japan or Spain or some other historic empire) did was really bad. Does America do that kind of stuff?" Now, I have a very definite point of view when it comes to answering this question. Yes, the United States of America has done some terrible things in its history: from its treatment of the Native Americans to its internment of its Japanese citizens in the Second World War; from its enslavement of black people to its attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq in the last decade. There is no doubt that the United States is an imperial power: from the unprecedented number of military bases it maintains throughout the world; to its wars of aggression against Spain in 1898 and Vietnam in the 1960s and 70s; to its support of governments that violate human rights in Columbia, Israel and elsewhere; to its invasions of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and—most recently—Afghanistan and Iraq. The answer most students seem to be looking for is this, "Though the U.S. has done some things that might look like imperialism, the truth of the matter is…" with some justification proving American exceptionality following. Most are looking for an answer that will reassure them that they are on the right side of history. The truth, however, is a different matter entirely.

I do not try to hide these facts of American history from students. Depending on the maturity—intellectual and age—of the student I couch my explanation in the following manner. It is important, I explain to students, to be able to differentiate

between a people and their government. Governments often do things their people disagree with and even when the seeming majority of people agree with a government's actions, there are individuals and groups that dissent. It's not as simple as every other government in history has done bad deeds but the United States of America hasn't, or when it has it's been a well-intentioned mistake. It is important, I invite them to consider, how students in another country are taught a particular issue or the history of their own country. It is important to understand that a critical stance against one's government or its policies is a form of patriotism, that unquestionably accepting whatever one's government tells one, hook, line and sinker, is not what democracies call for. *Look*, I always tell my students, don't take my word for it: look this stuff up and read about it for yourself, mull it over and make up your own minds. Something I try to avoid in any history class is concentrating on the negatives at the expense of the positives. So, instead of a unit that explores the nefarious faces of American racism, I'd prefer to structure the unit around civil rights figures and their individual and collective struggles to overcome oppression. Again, the idea is not to compile a laundry list of ills; it's to show how people took a stand against these ills and tried to change the situations they found themselves in.

Freire warned against "cultural invasion," when a people's world view is ignored. For this reason alone I think it is important that teachers make it a point to keep up on youth culture. Take music. As I mentioned above, I'm a white, heterosexual, middle class male who grew up in the 1980s. Many of my friends who are white, heterosexual, middle class males and females who grew in the 80s listen to "classic rock" and classic rock alone. Very few have any idea what's going on with the music our students enjoy today. AC/DC, Aerosmith, Kiss, and U2 they've all heard of; many of them have no idea who lil Wayne, T.I., Wale, or Gucci Mane are. I consider myself lucky in that my tastes in music are still pretty much open; I grew up when rap was developing—and predicted to quickly disappear—and I really enjoyed it, so it's easier for me maybe to continue to follow hip hop and its evolution. But there are entire genres of music of which I am ignorant: The Jonas Brothers, Miley Cyrus, the Zac Brown Band. Music is just one example of a possible generational divide, if we let it be.

THE HEART OF AN ETHIC OF CARE

Relationships between individual human beings form the core of an ethic of care. That said, not all relationships are equal. "Perhaps the fundamental priority of the ethic of care should be understood as a commitment to *healthy* caring relationships," posits Grace Clement (96: 42). In the remainder of this chapter I would like to consider the place of care in the relationships of fictional characters drawn from two novels. The relationships under consideration are that of mother and child, a student to her peers and her school, and individual to self as exhibited in Saphire's *Push*; and the relationship between two friends, a man and his wife, and a group of men in George Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*.

Nel Noddings has come in for some criticism as a naturalist when it comes to care and as a champion of relationships in general without regard for the health of

these relationships. Noddings refers to motherhood as “probably the prototypical caring relation” and writes that “[T]he caring attitude, that attitude which expresses our earliest memories of being cared for and our growing store of memories of both caring and being cared for, is universally accessible” (84: 175 & 5). I was fortunate to have had and still have two caring parents who raised me and are there for me when I need them. But I recognize not everyone is as lucky. In the months that I wrote this book several stories of bad parenting unfolded in the media. A woman in Washington was sentenced to one hundred and twenty years in prison for killing her four daughters and living with their decomposing corpses for months (Urbina, 09). A woman in Texas said the devil made her dismember her three-and-a-half week old baby, chew his toes off, remove his face and eat his brains (Weber, 09). It may look like I am picking on mothers here but I am not; fathers have also inflicted terrible punishments and killed their children (see my discussion of Abraham in chapter five). Further, as I write, institutional “parents” like the New York State juvenile prison system is being described as a place where “young people battling mental illness or addiction [are] held alongside violent offenders in abysmal facilities where they receive little counseling, can be physically abused and rarely even get a basic education”; more children on the radar of the New York City child-welfare system died in 2008 than in any of the preceding twenty years (Confessore, 09; Bosman, 09). I am not trying to bash moms, but drawing attention to mothers because of Noddings’ assertion of motherhood as the “prototypical caring relation.”

Consider the relationship of Claireece “Precious” Jones and her mother in the novel *Push* by Sapphire. Precious is a sixteen year old ninth grader living in Harlem with an abusive mother who takes her welfare checks. Precious was twelve when she had her first child by her father; “Little Mongo” was born with “Down Sinder” (Down Syndrome) (Sapphire, 97: 34). Precious used to engage in self-injurious behavior and was a cutter (Sapphire, 97: 112). At the start of the novel, Precious is pregnant with her second baby by her father and will find out he has given her AIDS. “How cum I’m so young and feel so old,” she wonders, “So young like I don’t know nuffin’, so old like I know everything. A girl have her father’s dick in her mouth knows things the other girls don’t know but it’s not what you want to know” (Sapphire, 97: 129). Precious’ life is hell and as she puts it, “I do know what REALITY is and it’s a mutherfucker, lemme tell you” (Sapphire, 97: 83).

Precious, at “five feet nine-ten” weighs over two hundred pounds and knows she is an object of curiosity, ridicule, and scorn (Sapphire, 97: 6). She is physically large but her mother is more so. From Precious’ perspective, her mother “take up half the couch, her arms seem like giant arms, her legs which she always got cocked back open seem like ugly tree logs” and “She ain’ circus size yet but she getting there” (97: 20 & 56). Precious’ mother physically and sexually abuses her daughter and is complicit in the sexual abuse of her daughter by the girl’s father. Further, Precious’ mother beats her daughter with a skillet for sleeping with her man: “Fat cunt bucket slut! Nigger pig bitch! He done quit me! He done left me ‘cause of you” (Sapphire, 97: 19). Precious knows the relationship she has with her mother is not the type of relationship a young woman is supposed to have with her mother. She thinks back to the nurse in the hospital when her own daughter was born, how the nurse comforted

and held her, how she felt "warm kindness from her I never feel from Mama and I start to cry" (Sapphire, 97: 18). Precious worries that the reason her mother doesn't kill her is the arrival of the monthly welfare check: "My mama not getting no check for me, I think she be done killed me a long time ago" (Sapphire, 97: 64). By the end of the book when Precious has escaped from her life with her mother and is on the road to independence, she realizes that no matter how far one goes the ties that bind are always there. "No matter how fly my braids is, how I grease my skin, no matter how many jew'ries," she laments, "this is my mother" (Sapphire, 97: 85).

As bad a mother as Precious' mom is, at least the woman is a somewhat constant presence in her life—albeit a pernicious, abusive entity from which the girl will flee. Her father, Carl, on the other hand, comes and goes, and his arrival is as unexpected and unpleasant as a nightmare. Precious was in diapers when her father started to sexually abuse her in bed with her mother (Sapphire, 97: 135). "Daddy put his pee-pee smelling thing in my mouth, my pussy, but never hold me," Precious remembers. "I see me, first grade, pink dress dirty sperm stuffs on it. No one comb my hair. Second grade, third grade, fourth grade seem like one dark night. Carl is the night and I disappear in it" (Sapphire, 97: 18).

In Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, the orphaned Lennie Small is taken in and cared for by his Aunt Clara. Lennie is described as both child- and animal-like. Steinbeck depicts Lennie as more non-human animal than human, noting that at a pool of water Lennie "drank with long gulps, snorting into the water like a horse"; Steinbeck likens Lennie to "a terrier who doesn't want to bring a ball to its master"; when Lennie returns to the water at the end of the novella "he came as silently as a creeping bear moves" (Steinbeck, 86: 3, 9, 100). When Lennie eats meals, food drops out of his mouth (Steinbeck, 86: 15). Lennie is immensely strong, described as "[s]trong as a bull"; a farm hand who can "put up a four hundred pound bale"; (86: 22). Not knowing his own strength, Lennie is also potentially dangerous, and George admits "Lennie's strong and quick and Lennie don't know rules" (86: 27).

Lennie has significant cognitive disabilities and his best friend, travelling companion and protector George Milton lies at one point and tells the boss man on a ranch where they seek employ that Lennie is his cousin and was kicked in the head by a horse when he was a child (Steinbeck, 86: 22). When Lennie's Aunt Clara died, George stepped in and stepped up, taking care of Lennie and taking him along on their itinerant quest for work. A seemingly altruistic act, but is the relationship between George and Lennie a healthy relationship?

Familiarity can breed contempt and George is not without disdain at times for his gigantic friend. "If I was a relative of yours I'd shoot myself," George tells Lennie (Steinbeck, 86: 24). Other times, George mocks Lennie to Lennie's face (Steinbeck, 86: 11). On the ranch, George admits to Slim that he "[u]sed to play jokes on 'im [Lennie] 'cause he was too dumb to take care of 'imself. But he was too dumb even to know he had a joke played on him. I had fun…I've beat hell outta him, and he coulda bust every bone in my body jus' with his han's, but he never lifted a finger against me" (Steinbeck, 86: 40). George often laments to Lennie that "I could get along so easy and so nice if I didn't have you on my tail. I could live so easy and maybe have a girl" (Steinbeck, 86: 7). George can be mean to Lennie but when push

comes to shove he is Lennie's protector and friend. At the beginning of the story, they've been run out of the town of Weed because Lennie latched onto a woman's dress and didn't let go and she told the police he'd raped her (Steinbeck, 86: 42).

George is Lennie's friend and protector, almost a parent figure. Is their relationship healthy for George? A pertinent criticism of caring practice is that such practice requires a level of altruism that is harmful to the caregiver. Yet as Virginia Held explains, "[i]t is deficient social assistance that makes so many of the commitments of the relational person so burdensome and hard to fulfill" (06: 50). George and Lennie inhabit an America lacking an adequate social safety net that could care for Lennie or provide for George while he cares for Lennie. "[W]hen relationships are so entangling that they impede free agency, they are often the kind of relationship that is in need of revision," warns Held (06: 50). When George gets frustrated he reminds Lennie that "if I was alone I could live so easy. I could go get a job an' work, an' no trouble. No mess at all, and when the end of the month come I could take my fifty bucks and go into town and get whatever I want. Why, I could stay in a cat house all night" (Steinbeck, 86: 11).

Steinbeck makes it clear that George benefits from their relationship as much as Lennie does, albeit in a different way. George and Lennie are alone in the world but it is George who voices their loneliness most eloquently. "Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world," he confides to Lennie. "They got no family. They don't belong no place" (Steinbeck, 86: 13). Just as Lennie has George, George knows he had and depends on Lennie; their mantra holds "*...I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you*" (Steinbeck, 86: 14). Lennie recognizes George's stake in their friendship. After George chews him out, Lennie, who'd "sensed his advantage" reminds George, "If you don't want me, you only jus' got to say so, and I'll go off in those hills right there—right up in those hills and live by myself" (Steinbeck, 86: 13). George is put in the position of begging Lennie to stay with him, and meaning every word of it; "I want you to stay with me, Lennie," he says (Steinbeck, 86: 13).

"Since I am defined in relation," Nel Noddings writes, "I do not sacrifice myself when I move toward the other as one-caring. Caring is, thus, both self-serving and other-serving" (84: 99). Lennie and George's relationship, though not optimal, makes each man's life better than what they imagine each would be alone. In a world of anome and isolation, they have one another and their relationship is admired by other lonely men. "Ain't many guys travel together," Slim remarks to George. "I don't know why. Maybe ever' body in the whole damn world is scared of each other" (Steinbeck, 86: 35). George responds that "It's a lot nicer to go around with a guy you know" (Ibid). George and Lennie dream of getting some money together, buying a house on a piece of property, "An' live off the fatta the lan'" (Steinbeck, 86: 14). Candy, the one-armed swamper on the ranch, asks to get in on the dream, offering to put up some money (Steinbeck, 86: 59). Crooks, the black stable-hand who sleeps alone in the harness room and cannot play cards with the other men because of the color of his skin, confides in Lennie that "A guy needs somebody—to be near him…A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody. Don't make no difference who the guy is, long's he's with you.…I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick"

(Steinbeck, 86: 73). Crooks asks Lennie and Candy if he could come along and join them on their dream farm (Steinbeck, 86: 76).

"The world is not divided into carers and cared-fors as separate and permanent classes," posits Noddings. "We are all inevitably cared-fors at many times and, ideally, most of us are carers" (Noddings, 03: xiii). George and Lennie's relationship exemplifies this fact. But Lennie's persona—as big and as slow as he is—does as well in that he brings people together. When most of the other men on the ranch have gone into town to spend their wages on drink and prostitutes, Lennie wanders into the harness room. Despite his initial cantankerousness, Crooks warms to Lennie and soon Candy finds himself in the harness room. Candy notes, "I been here a long time…An' Crooks been here a long time. This's the first time I ever been in his room" (Steinbeck, 86: 75). Even Curley's lonely wife will come to join them in the harness room. When she starts harping on the men Candy will tell her off, noting of their dream, "We gotta house and chickens an' fruit trees an' a place a hundred times prettier than this. An' we got fren's, that's what we got" (Steinbeck, 86: 79).

Friendship and the kindness that can come with it also plays an important role for Precious in *Push*. She remembers fondly the Spanish EMS worker who helped her birth her first baby on the floor of her apartment's kitchen. "He coffee-cream color, good hair. I remember that. God. I think he was god. No man was never nice like that to me before" (Sapphire, 97: 11). Precious meets other girls at her pre-GED class and with these young ladies she forms a bond. "These girlz is my friends," she recognizes (Sapphire, 97: 95). One of the girls, Rita, who is also HIV positive, "go to her purse and get magazine call Body Positive say I got to join HIV community. Jezus! It's a community of them? Us, I mean" (Sapphire, 97: 96).

Precious' new friendships challenge her to see through her past prejudices and grow as an individual. For example, when Precious first meets the androgynous Jermaine in her class, her homophobia rears its head (Sapphire, 97: 44). On the wall of her bedroom in the apartment where she lives with her mother, Precious has a poster of Nation of Islam Minister Louis Farrakhan. She admires Farrakhan, "who is real man…. He say problem is not crack but the cracker! I go for that shit" (Sapphire, 97: 83). Ms. Blue Rain, her teacher, tells Precious that Farrakhan is a "jive anti-Semitic, homophobe fool" (Sapphire, 97: 74). When Ms. Rain comes out to her class Precious admits "I was shocked as shit. Then I jus' shut up. Too bad about Farrakhan" (Sapphire, 97: 81). Similarly, her new friendships make Precious rethink her contempt for drug addicts. "We hate dope addicts. We, me norml pepul," she remarks, noting at one point that "I hate crack addicts. They give the race a bad name" (Sapphire, 97: 105 & 14). After attending incest-survivor meetings with Rita, Precious admits to herself, "But what I confuse about is this. Itz so uglee dope addicks—dey teef, dey underwater walkin, steelin. Spread AIDS an heptietis./ But Rita was one of dese pepul an she is GOOD. I luv her" (Sapphire, 97: 106).

Noddings claims "that we are dependent on each other even in the quest for personal goodness. How good *I* can be is partly a function of how *you*—the other—receive and respond to me" (84: 6). This is clearly seen in the friendship George and Lennie share, as when both men dream aloud. It is also evident in the character of Precious and the mother that she is and tries to be to her own children. She is

described as a good mother who "seeks any and all information on child rearing" by her counselor, Ms. Weiss (Sapphire, 97: 119). Precious describes her newborn son, Adbul, as "a good baby. But he's not mine. I mean, he is mine. I push him out my pussy, but I didn't meet a boy 'n fall in love, sex up 'n have a baby" (Sapphire, 97: 68). No, Adbul is "a rapist's baby. But that's OK" (Ibid). Precious vows to raise her son as best she can and looks forward to the day when she can reclaim "Lil Mongo" from her grandmother and raise her on her own. Ms. Rain helps her understand that in the interim "[b]eing a good mother might mean letting your baby be raised by someone who is better able than you to meet the child's needs" (Sapphire, 97: 72).

If the human beings we encounter in real life and in the fiction of Steinbeck and Sapphire can bring out and add to the best in each of us, there is also the possibility that they can nourish less positive attributes. Consider, for example, the characters of Curley and his wife in *Of Mice and Men*. Curley is the rancher's son. A former boxer, who "got newspaper clippings about it", Curley is described by one of the ranch hands as "pretty handy" (Steinbeck, 86: 54 & 26). Curley is pugnacious and unlikable from the moment George and Lennie and we the reader meet him. His newlywed wife doesn't care for him either. "I don' *like* Curley. He ain't a nice fella," she confides to Lennie (Steinbeck, 86: 89). She's also happy Lennie broke Curley's hand and tells the big man, "I'm glad you bust up Curley a little bit. He got it comin' to him. Sometimes I'd like to bust him myself" (Steinbeck, 86: 81).

Why doesn't Curley's wife—who is never given a name—like her husband? Curley comes across as obstreperous and bossy and rubs everyone the wrong way. Perhaps he is not pleased with his station in life; the fact that he has newspaper clippings about his former greatness that he shows the ranch hands attests to this. His wife is definitely not pleased with where she has landed in life. She tells Lennie, Crooks, and Candy that she could have been a movie star because some man who claimed to be involved in the motion picture industry once showed interest in her. "An' what am I doin'?" she demands. "Standin' here talkin' to a bunch of bindle stiffs—a nigger an' a dum-dum and a lousy ol' sheep—an' likin' it because they ain't nobody else" (Steinbeck, 86: 78). Steinbeck presents readers with a ranch full of lonely, disaffected men in *Of Mice and Men*, and there is only one woman. When she comes into the harness room she confronts the men, telling them, "Think I don't like to talk to somebody ever' once in awhile? Think I like to stick in that house alla time?" (Steinbeck, 86: 77). Later she pleads with Lennie, shortly before he accidentally kills her, "Why can't I talk to you? I never get to talk to nobody. I get awful lonely" (Steinbeck, 86: 86).

Lennie doesn't mean to kill Curley's wife, just as he did not intend to kill the mice or the puppy, but there are times when killing may be permissible and in line with an ethic of care. "If the other is a clear and immediate danger to me or to my cared-fors, I must stop him, and I might need to kill him," explains Nel Noddings. "But I cannot kill in the name of principle or justice" (Noddings, 84: 101). I kill, to put it plainly, because I care. In *Of Mice and Men*, Candy is urged to kill his old dog and put it out of its misery. The canine is described as "[g]ot no teeth, damn near blind, can't eat" (Steinbeck, 86: 36). The ranch hands encourage Candy to put the dog down,

but Candy is hesitant, noting “I had ‘im ever since he was a pup. God, he was a good sheep dog when he was younger” (86: 24). Candy loves the dog and is reluctant to sever their bond, even when he is told “you ain’t bein’ kind to him keepin’ him alive” (Steinbeck, 86: 45). Candy finally allows Carlson to take his dog outside and end its life and it is after his dog is killed that Candy offers to buy into George and Lennie’s dream, offering to ante up on the initial stake. Candy is an old man and, without his dog, he is alone. His days on the ranch are numbered, which he recognizes when he remarks, “When they can me I wisht somebody’d shoot me. But they won’t do nothing like that. I won’t have no place to go, an’ I can’t get no more jobs” (Steinbeck, 86: 60).

One of the messages in *Of Mice and Men* is that, sometimes when you love someone or something, you have to kill them yourself. Candy regrets that he couldn’t bring himself to kill his old dog. “I ought to have shot that dog myself, George,” he remarks. “I shouldn’t ought to of let no stranger shoot my dog” (Steinbeck, 86: 61). With Candy’s words echoing in his mind, George will kill Lennie before other men can harm his gigantic friend. As George sees it, a bullet in the back of Lennie’s head is preferable to Curley shooting him in the stomach or Lennie being imprisoned and institutionalized (Steinbeck, 86: 97). Earlier in the novel George learned that Slim, a man he will come to greatly respect and admire, drowned several of his puppies because their mother cannot feed all of them (Steinbeck, 86: 35). After George kills Lennie, Slim reassures him, “You hadda, George. I swear you hadda” (Steinbeck, 86: 107). Lennie is George’s responsibility and Lennie hadn’t even wanted to stay on the ranch; George had convinced him to do so (Steinbeck, 86: 32).

Care encompasses the self, and in *Push* Precious’ love for herself has her ready to kill her abusive mother “‘cause I know from my hand in the dishwater holding the butcher knife, I am through being hit. I am going to stab her she ever hit Precious Jones again” (Sapphire, 97: 14). Noddings explains that “To remain one caring, I might have to kill” (84: 102). Precious notes that “I hate my muver sometimes” and is ready to do what she must to defend herself and her children (Sapphire, 97: 14). “Everyday I tell myself something gonna happen, some shit like on TV,” thinks Precious at the beginning of the novel. “I’m gonna break through or somebody gonna break through to me—I’m gonna learn, catch up, be normal, change my seat to the front of the class” (Sapphire, 97: 5). Ms. Rain, Precious’ teacher at the Each One Teach One alternative school is the person who breaks through to the girl. “You could do anything Precious but you gotta believe it,” Ms. Rain writes to her (Sapphire, 97: 73). Precious notes of Rain’s constant words of encouragement that “Most time it seem like hype, ‘cause she say it so much. But that why she say it—to reprogram us to love ourselves. I love me” (Sapphire, 97: 76). Rain fosters and nurtures Precious’ underlying sense of self-worth and self-regard, helping Precious transform it from a mere readiness-to-kill in order to protect herself to a commitment to her education and independence. “Ms Rain the one who put the chalk in my hand,” notes Precious, “make me queen of the ABCs” (Sapphire, 97: 81).

In the persons of Ms. Rain and her fellow students, school has become a caring setting for Precious. When she was a student at I.S. 146, Precious focused more on her crush on a male teacher than her education. Precious helped Mr. Wicher police

the unruly students in his class; as she puts it, “I keep law and order. I like him, I pretend he is my husband and we live together in Weschesser, wherever that is” (Sapphire, 97: 6). Precious “always did like school, jus’ school never did like me” (Sapphire, 97: 36). In Ms. Rain’s class, Precious learns to write fiction and poetry, develops a sense of self, and earns a literacy award. With time, Precious becomes an example for the newer girls who enroll in the program, noting “now I the one who say ‘keep on keepin’ on!’ to new girls” (Sapphire, 97: 94).

The ethics and “code” that guides a Rambo or Conan is much different than that which informs Precious or George. An ethic of care starts with individuals enmeshed in relationships. Not all of these relationships are chosen, and not all of them are healthy. Yet many of the relationships we will enjoy in our lives will be chosen and pursued of our own volition. We can rationalize friendship or the love a good parent has for his child, but these are relationships that draw on and reward affective ties and do not necessarily lend themselves to analytical discourse. We are surrounded by institutions and actors within these institutions who choose to ignore our caring relationships to one another, to other animals, to our planet, and to ourselves. They do so at their own, and our, peril. An ethic of care has always been there, within us and between us, because we care for ourselves and others as they care for us. It has not been crushed. Critical pedagogies must strive to foster positive relationships that benefit everyone involved and do not harm those not directly in the mix. Critical pedagogies, with their liberatory impulses towards greater humanization, are rooted in care ethics, a fact that is only now starting to gain greater attention.

CHAPTER 4

MISFITS, LOONEY TUNES, SQUALID CRIMINALS AND THE WARS ON TERRORISM

BLOWBACK AND SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

Blowback is a term coined by the American Central Intelligence Agency, a term which, according to former Agency "asset" Chalmers Johnson "refers to the unintended consequences of policies that were kept secret from the American people" (00: 8). Blowback has been described as a policy strategy that rebounds on its designers (Foden, 01: 2). As Jeff Somers explains on *ZNet.org*, "missions that are 'successful' create backlashes" (01: 1). Chalmers Johnson further elucidates that, "[i]n a sense, blowback is simply another way of saying that a nation reaps what it sows" (00: 17). The problem with blowback isn't that blowback is what happens when American foreign policy fails; as Johnson and Somers explain, it's what's to be *expected* when such policies succeed.

The terrorist attacks on America on September 11, 2001 did not occur in a vacuum. "This [September 11, 2001] is the same old war that came to a new battlefield," former FBI director James K. Kallstrom (01) noted, alluding to American government support of the Mujahideen against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Eqbal Ahmed, referring to Mujahideen terrorist activities in the United States and around the world before September 11, 2001, noted that "These are the chickens of the Afghanistan war coming home to roost" (01: 24). The events of that September morning—the new battlefields in Manhattan, Washington, D.C., and a field in Pennsylvania—are blowback from U.S. foreign policy in the 1980s.

In this chapter I will focus on blowback as a result of successful American foreign policies. Critical pedagogies in US History, Government and Economics and World History classes can explore these themes and examples with students. I will focus on three actors that illustrate the blowback concept. The three were chosen because they have all been accused of terrorist acts, of furthering terrorism and of supporting and/or harboring terrorists. All received support from the United States' government before eventually falling out of favor. This support was extended in the period leading up to and/or including the 1980s when the United States declared its first war on terrorism. While receiving American support, these actors were all guilty of crimes that would later be used as justification by the United States' government to remove or attempt to remove them from power. Their track records were well known before they got one dime of American tax payer money.

Writing this chapter agitates me. How much easier it would be if America were solely a victim in world affairs, how easier to hate the supposed bad guys who do ill to us. But when one studies history and learns that United States government policies sustained and supported wrong-doing in foreign countries and ultimately

provoked attacks on American targets, how can one not feel justified anger? Even more vexing is that policies continue—from the American wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to farming out "suspected" terrorists to friendly third parties who use torture to extract information—that will exacerbate the ill will much of the world feels towards America and make future attacks on the American people more likely. When our leaders pursue policies that place us all in imminent danger, speaking out and speaking up become patriotic acts of consciousness raising and calls to collective action.

In addition to agitating me, writing this chapter has been difficult. I often want to write "the United States" or "Americans" but what I mean is "the United States' government" or "American policy makers". Years of indoctrination convinces Americans that ours is a classless society. Nothing, in fact, could be further from the truth. Where I want to write "American interests" I have to write "American ruling class interests" if I am to be honest. Because the interests of the American ruling class are not the interests of the vast majority of the American people. The interests of Barak Obama and Hilary Clinton and Dick Cheney and Bill Gates and Warren Buffet are not my interests. Pissing off and pissing on the rest of the world is not what I was raised to think America was about and it's not what I anything I want to be a part of.

Perhaps more so than other chapters in this book, this one is extremely capricious in its choices of whom to consider. I will be discussing General Manuel Noriega of Panama, his narco-terrorism and the threat he posed to Panamanian democracy; Iraq's Saddam Hussein and his use of chemical and biological weapons; and the Mujahidden in Afghanistan—including Osama bin Laden—and their use of terrorism. I could have chosen from a host of others: from Trujillo in the Dominican Republic to the South Korean military dictators to Mobutu in Zaire. Noriega, Hussein and bin Laden have been chosen from many for a few reasons. First, I lived this history, during the times when these men came to power or were in power and were sustained and later deposed by the United States. Further, Noriega is an interesting case worthy of consideration because, as he physically languishes in a jail in Florida, the "war on drugs" and "narco-terror" continue with no end in sight. Similarly, though Saddam Hussein is dead and Osama bin Laden is on the loose, United States' government intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan shows no end in sight. I come back when and where I can throughout this chapter to current U.S. government policies, drawing parallels with contemporary transgressions and crimes against humanity, actions that leave the American people vulnerable in the long term while sating the short term gain of the avaricious few who have a monopoly on wealth and violence in this country.

THE WARS ON TERRORISM

George W. Bush's declaration of war on terrorism following the September 11, 2001 attacks, was actually a re-declaration of an earlier war begun in the 1980s by the Reagan Administration. The parallels between the wars on terrorism include similar rhetoric, tactics, and actors. In both 2001 and the 1980s, the Bush and Reagan Administrations fashioned themselves at "war" with "terrorists" and "terrorism".

In 1985, President Ronald Reagan announced "these terrorist states are now engaged in acts of war against the government and people of the United States" (85: A12). On September 13, 2001, President George Bush said that those behind the events of the eleventh had committed "…more than acts of terror. They were acts of war" (01b: A16).

Then and now, terrorism was viewed "as the greatest danger", not only to America, but "to the world" (81: 4). This danger, transcending mere politics, was "a monumental struggle of good versus evil" (01b: A16). The United States, it goes without saying in these analyses, is the side of the good, the leader of the free world. Bin Laden's Al Qaeda is viewed as an "umbrella organization" for numerous terrorist groups worldwide (Miller, Wesier & Blumenthal, 01: 18). Americans at the start of the twenty-first century were warned of an "Axis of Evil" comprising North Korea, Iran, and Iraq. President Reagan spoke of a "new international version of Murder, Inc." (85: A12). In the 1980s, the Soviet Union was held responsible for much international terrorism by proxy (Mohr, 81: A10). The Soviets may not have created all the terrorist groups in the world of the 80s; however, they were complicit in arming and training them (Ibid).

The official American interpretation of the terrorists' rationale in the '80s was as facile as the one offered today. The terrorists of the 1980s were "united by one simple, criminal phenomenon—their fanatical hatred of the United States, our people, our way of life, our international stature" (Reagan, 85: A12). President George H. Bush explained to a shocked nation in the aftermath of September 11th that terrorists "attacked America because we are freedom's home and defender", "the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world" (01c: A6; 01a: A4). The terrorists of today, this reasoning holds, like the terrorists of yesterday, are themselves unreasonable and jealous of America.

"This enemy attacked not just our people, but all freedom-loving people everywhere in the world," explained Bush (01b: A16). Therefore, it is as imperative today that all nations join together against terrorism as it was in the 1980s. Although he offered no specific course of action, Secretary of State Shultz voiced his opinion that "All nations must unite in decisive action to curb this threat" (85: A1). In the Cold War of the 1980s the United States could call Britain, France, West Germany, Japan and much of the rest of the world its allies. In the early twenty-first century, the United States' government called on a "coalition of the willing" to support its invasion of Iraq. Of forty-nine members, only four contributed troops to the invasion and 98% of the invasion force was American and British.

State support of terrorism was condemned by the United States' government in the 1980s and post-September 11th. The Reagan Administration spoke of dire consequences for states that practice or support terrorism (84: 13). The Bush II Administration spoke of "ending states" that support terrorism (01: A22). Bush the younger himself explained "we will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbored them" (01a: A4). Before September 11, 2001, Bush let the world know that if the United States thought a country could possibly pose a threat to its well-being somewhere down the road that America reserved the right to attack and end the perceived threat before it materialized. Instead of being

condemned as the pugnacious hubris it was, the American ruling class, its mandarins, and its propaganda arm in the mainstream media legitimated and dignified it with the name the Bush Doctrine and the term pre-emptive strike. Much of the rest of the world viewed Bush's declaration as a statement of terrorism itself.

For some time after September 11, 2001, there was no solid evidence linking Osama bin Laden to the attacks on America. Secretary of State Colin Powell cautioned that before bringing American military might to bear, "We've got to build a case first" (Schmitt & Shanker, 01: A15). When Secretary of State Alexander Haig accused the Soviet Union of supporting terrorists, the CIA released a report concluding that the Soviets had played no direct role in arming or training terrorists and that it had no master plan of fostering terrorism around the world (Taubman, 81: A36). The United States government supports repressive states, ranging from Israel to Pakistan to Columbia, to the tune of billions of dollars of hard earned taxpayer money a year. Saudi Arabia, from which 16 of the 19 September 11th hijackers hailed and where women and gays are treated as second class citizens, continues to enjoy good relationships with the American government.

Disinfomation came into play in both wars on terror. In the 1980s, the Soviet Union was planning to plant false information in order to deceive Western opinion (Mohr, 81a: A10). In 2002, the Pentagon briefly considered providing false information to foreign reporters. The American government regularly lies to the American people about the progress of the war and the facts on the ground. For several years there was a ban on the media presenting footage of returned coffins containing dead G.I.s. Former NFL player Pat Tilman was killed by friendly fire in Afghanistan but the details of his death were covered up and manipulated by the government to drum up support for the war. The rescue of Jessica Lynch in Iraq served a similar propaganda purpose. In the 1980s and today people who take civil liberties seriously feared that the wars on terror posed a "potential threat to punish political dissent and to erode civil liberties" (Mohr, 81b: B11; Cole, 02: 11).

Human Rights were trampled by the United States government in both wars on terror. Secretary Haig opined that "International terrorism will take the place of human rights in our concern because it is the ultimate abuse of human rights" (Taubman, 81: A36). Michael Ignatieff warned that the United States' attempt to re-establish its hegemony post-September 11th might "demote human rights in the hierarchy of America's foreign policy priorities" (02: A25). Prison guards at Abu Ghraib tortured "enemy combatants" and took pictures of it. "Suspected" terrorists were handed over to allied nations and flown to "black cites" to be tortured for information (Schmitt & Mazzetti, 09). Water boarding has become a common household phrase in American parlance.

United States' government and corporate connections to the terrorism of the 1980s and that of September 11th is extensive. A survey by the Center for Contemporary Studies in 1981 found that the U.S. was the world's largest arms supplier to terrorists through thefts from American armories and lax gun control laws (Reuters, 81: A3). America today continues to be the largest arms supplier in the world (Shanker, 01: A3). The United States government is relying on private industry as never before in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. American mercenaries, called independent contractors,

engage in fire fights in the crowded streets of both countries, murdering civilians, and then trying to buy off the families of those slain with bribes (Mazeeti & Risen, 09). Interestingly enough, early on in the Iraq war, images of four slain Americans paraded through the streets of Falluja and hung off a bridge enraged Americans at home watching on television, myself included (Gettleman, 04). The four were independent contractors employed as security by Blackwater Worldwide, now known as Xe Services (Mazzetti & Risen, 09). The U.S. government bombs suspected terrorist targets, often from unmanned "drones" operated half a world away in Virginia, only to have it turn out that civilians were the actual victims.

In the 1980s, as today, there was doubt as to whether military action would be the best answer to the threat posed by terrorism. Some argued that combating terrorism in the 1980s was a police problem (Taubman, 81: 36). Michael Howard, critical of the U.S. military response following September 11th, pointed out that "to declare war on terrorists…is at once to accord terrorists a status and dignity that they seek and that they do not deserve" (02: 8). The idea that the apprehension of Osama bin Laden was best handled as a police issue lost out to a full scale military invasion of his host country.

Both wars on terrorism began with a more or less successful American drive to gain world support, followed by a steady erosion of that support. The United States government will do what it wants, when it wants. When the World Court ordered the United States to "cease and refrain" in its hostilities against Nicaragua, the American government rejected the Court's verdict (Lewis, 86: A1). The American ruling class is so shortsighted that it squanders the good feelings and support lent our country by other countries and other peoples. By choosing to bomb Afghanistan, the U.S. began to lose the "immense moral ascendancy" garnered by the September 11th attacks (Howard, 02: 11).

The war on terrorism in the 1980s did not culminate in an epic battle. The Soviet Union collapsed, but terrorism continued, often supported surreptitiously by the American government. The wars on terror continue today, in Iraq, in Afghanistan—now being hailed as America's longest war—and as I write there really is no end in sight even as Obama speaks of gradual reductions in the troop presence in Afghanistan sometime in 2011. Sometimes life confronts you with problems and you must deal with those problems. Other times you contribute to the problems that come back to haunt you, problems that were very likely avoidable. It is to these later set of problems I now turn, starting first with the threat posed in the person of a pock-marked Third World dictator.

JUST *BE*CAUSE: NORE AND BLOWBACK

On December 20, 1989, the United States invaded Panama. I remember New York's 1010 WINS news—"You give us twenty two minutes, we'll give you the world"—reporting on the invasion as my fourteen-year-old brother and I drove in the car with our father. I was seventeen, a senior in high school, and the holiday vacation was only a few days away. Dad had picked us up from our respective schools and we were going somewhere; *where* I don't recall, but riding in the car and hearing of the invasion in Panama stands out clearly for me. I remember thinking *Panama?*

What did I know about the country? That's where the canal was; weren't some of the drug dealing bad guys on *Miami Vice*, which my family used to watch together every Friday night, from Panama? Anyway, I figured if the United States government had sent soliders into Panama they must have had good cause, because America was always in the right, right?

Wrong. The stated goals of Operation Just Cause involved removing General Manuel Noriega from power. Noriega was cited as a major figure in narco-trafficking and a threat to democracy in Panama (Bush, Sr., 89: A19). Noriega spent a considerable amount of time as America's only prisoner of war before "enemy combatants" started to be rounded up, incarcerated and tortured in the second war on terror following September 11, 2001. A consideration of Noriega's track record illustrates the blowback concept.

Manuel Noriega was a paid agent of the U.S. government in the 1970s and 80s. Officials in the American State Department called him a "rent-a-colonel" at the time (Weeks & Gunson, 91: 48). The Noriega of the 70s and 80s was guilty of the crimes that were the justifications for his final ouster in 1989.

In 1988, on the campaign trail, Presidential candidate George Bush, Sr. accused Noriega of involvement with narcotics. "Drug dealers are domestic terrorists," Bush Sr., explained. "I won't bargain with terrorists, and I won't bargain with drug dealers either, whether they're on U.S. or foreign soil" (Roberts, 88: A1). Yet Bush had already met with Noriega twice before: in December 1976, when Bush was director of the CIA; and in December 1983, when Bush and Noriega met to discuss support of the Contras (Buckley, 91: 267).

Noriega's ties to the drug trade were known since at least the 1970s. According to Senator Robert Dole in 1988, "We knew about [Noriega's drug connections] when we were debating the Panama Canal Treaty ten years ago…" (Weinraub, 88: B7). The Drug Enforcement Agency knew that Noriega was doing business with Columbia's Medellin drug cartel in the 1980s (Weeks & Gunson, 91: 52). This was tolerated because Noriega would occasionally inform for the DEA, providing officials with targets for arrest (Buckley, 91: 41). Despite the available evidence, Noriega would not be indicted on drug charges until February 1988 (Ibid: 268).

In 1989, Manuel Noriega was viewed as a threat to democracy because he stole that year's Panamanian presidential election. Indeed, he did annul the results of the election when his opposition won (Weeks & Gunson, 91: 13), an opposition which illegally received ten million dollars in U.S. funding (Buckley, 91: 174). However, Noriega also stole the 1984 Panamanian presidential election. Washington, D.C. knew that Noriega did it in 1984 and at the time had funded Noriega's pick for president, Nicolas Barletta (Dinges, 91: 195 & 198). When Noriega later supported the ouster of President Barletta, Washington was also aware. "Our relations are between governments, not individuals," a U.S. State Department statement explained, following Barletta's overthrow (Ibid: 229). As gangster rap group, The Geto Boys, rapped on their eponymous 1990 album, "Reagan and Bush were cutting tough for Noriega."

Noriega had *not* been a defender of democracy in the 70s and 80s when he received money from the U.S. government. In return for U.S. funding, Noriega spied on Panamanian military cadets, workers and students (Ibid: 40 & 81). Noriega passed

secret information to Washington on Panama's negotiating position during the Canal talks in the 70s (Shalom, 93: 180). Noriega met with Lt. Col. Oliver North to discuss assassination targets and terror attacks against select targets in Nicaragua (Buckley, 91: 60). When Noriega's political opponent, Hugo Spadafora, was murdered in 1985, the Reagan Administration opposed Congressional efforts to cut back support for Noriega even though he was suspected of ties to the murder (Shalom, 83: 180).

"Now let's go back to the past," rapped Scarface (a.k.a. Ak-Shun) on The Geto Boys' *City Under Siege* (90), "The motherfucker who needs to be tried is Ronald Reagan's ass/ Appointed Bush to the CIA/ That shit was cold/ Put Noriega on the payroll/All of a sudden shit changed/Right after '88/Yeah-Yeah-Yeah-Hmmm, ain't that strange?" One might well wonder, what went wrong with "our man in Panama" between the period of US support and his removal from power in 1989? One line of argument holds that while Noriega supported and abetted U.S. policies regarding the Contras in Nicaragua, Washington tolerated his unsavory characteristics. Then, in the late 1980s, when Noriega disagreed with the U.S. government over Contra actions, he was cast as an evil-doer. By the late 1980s, Noriega had lost many advocates in Washington. CIA director William Casey, a firm supporter, had died. According to Weeks and Gunnison, following the Iran-Contra hearings, officials in Washington wished to distance themselves from "sleazy allies in Central America" (91: 66). Noriega epitomized the essence of sleazy and ally.

Manuel Noriega believed the United States government wished to renege on the 1977 Panama Canal Treaty in order to regain control of the Canal via a subservient Panamanian government (97: 56). In 1987, he removed his probable successor, Diaz Herrara, from the line of succession. Washington viewed Herrara as a leftist (Weeks & Gunson, 91: 66). With Herrara gone, a U.S.-friendly president could replace Noriega (Dinges, 91: 302).

Manuel Noreiga illustrates three things about how those in power in the United States operate. First, the U.S. government will tolerate drugs and drug traffickers if it furthers U.S. ruling class interests. For example, Afghan President Hamid Karzai's brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, has been a paid CIA asset for close to a decade and is involved in the booming Afghan opium trade (Filkins, Mazzetti, & Risen, 09). Even with the American military presence, there is more opium being cultivated in Afghanistan today than under the Talbian and the crop yield is reaching record levels (Rohde, 07). Drugs, for that matter and despite the rhetoric and billions spent in a war ostensibly to curb their cultivation and use, are a part of American life. Then-presidential candidate George Bush II, a recovering alcoholic, dodged questions about his purported drug use as a younger man, stating that "when I was young and irresponsible I was young and irresponsible" (Mitchell, 99); Barak Obama has admitted to smoking marijuana and snorting cocaine as a high school student (Kovaleski, 08). American popular culture has a long history of lionizing drug users and drug culture, from the Hippies of the 1960s, to Al Pacino's Tony Montana in Brian DePalma's (1983) *Scarface* to rapper Nore (nee Victor Santiago Jr.) of the duo Capone and Noriega.

Secondly, the U.S. government will always attack a smaller, weaker country that, in its estimation, stands little chance against it. For example, when the United States

attacked Iraq in 2003, Vice President Dick Cheney predicted American troops would be greeted as liberators and that the American military action and presence would be wrapped up and removed quickly. Such estimates by those in power often prove misinformed and incorrect, as in the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan or Vietnam in the 1960s and 70s. Further, they lead to thousands of deaths of American citizens and hundreds of thousands to millions of deaths on the side of the country attacked. The United States government will never launch a conventional military strike against a country that stands a chance of beating it. So, for example, it is highly unlikely the United States will ever send troops into mainland China or North Korea with their million-man armies, because the chances of success there are so slim. This is the logic of the bully and again illustrates Thucydides' morality that the strong do what they can while the weak suffer what they must. But within the weak frustrations fester and anger grows and desperation has a way of leading the distraught to lash out. Perhaps a child from the slums of El Chorillo, which was razed to the ground by the US Military in Operation Just Cause, will return to haunt the United States.

Finally, American government aggression always takes the high ground and does not speak its name. Every U.S. attack on, bombing of, or dollar used to fund terrorist attacks by friendly states is done in the name of *democracy* and *freedom*. After all, democracy is a good and who can argue against it, right? And, true enough, the countries attacked have often made inroads against democracy and their people's civil rights. But democracy leads by example and not, except in certain circumstances, by force. Bullies very rarely admit they are bullies; they often justify their aggressive acts by citing self-defense. Hitler, for example, argued that Germany's invasions of the Sudentland and Poland were defensive measures. Governments maintain a monopoly on force in society and as such lend themselves to bullying. All governments, theirs and ours.

FRIENDS IN LOW PLACES: THE U.S. AND SADDAM HUSSEIN

Say what you will about Saddam Hussein—he was a thug and gangster and nasty human being—but he went out like a *g*. Led to the scaffold on December 30, 2006, the deposed dictator of Iraq never bowed his head or showed fear. His last words were defiant ones: "Down with the traitors, the Americans, the spies and the Persians" (Santora, 06). Hussein was executed by a newly trained unit of the Iraqi National police on an American military base in Iraq, a base appropriately mis-named "Camp Justice." Minutes before being hung, when asked if he felt any fear or remorse, Hussein replied, "No. I am a militant and I have no fear for myself. I have spent my life in jihad and fighting aggression. Anyone who takes this route should not be afraid" (Ibid).

When the United States government prepared to invade Hussein's Iraq in 2003 they cited stores of weapons of mass destruction as a reason for Hussein's ouster. Holy shit! Weapons of mass destruction—where'd they come from? Saddam Hussein and his purported nuclear, biological and chemical weapons—none have ever been found—are blowback from American government support in the 1980s and the end of the second Gulf War, which is known in America as Operation Desert Storm.

If Saddam Hussein had had weapons of mass destruction, his track record proves he would have more than likely used them. During the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, Hussein used weapons of mass destruction against Iranian troops. He employed chemical and biological weapons against the Kurds in Northern Iraq in February, 1984, and August, 1988 (Friedman, 93: 95; Saffire, 02: A19). Officials in Washington knew Hussein used these weapons. When Congress wanted to levy sanctions against Iraq after the gassing of the Kurds in 1988, Vice President George Bush resisted them (Friedman, 93: 134).

During the Iran-Iraq War in the 80s, Iraq was a Soviet client state. The United States secretly supported Iraq because Washington feared an Ayatollah-Khomeini-type Islamic fundamentalist would come to power should Iran succeed in the war. United States support for Hussein's Iraq was multi-faceted. Iraq was removed from the State Department's list of countries then believed to sponsor international terrorism (Ibid). This was done at a time when Abu Abbas, an Achille Lauro hijacker, and Abu Nidal were known by Washington insiders to be hiding in Baghdad (Friedman, 93: 26 & 134). The United States government is selective about whom it labels a state sponsor or supporter of terrorism. For example, Abu Nidal went on to sit out the second Gulf War as a guest of the Saudi government (Friedman, 93: 134). Known terrorists like Emmanuel Constant and Luis Posada Carriles call the United States itself home.

American support of Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War included the U.S. sharing intelligence with Iraq (Wines, 90: A1). This intelligence included satellite photos and information on Iranian troop movements (Friedman, 93: 96). The U.S. built a high tech annex in Baghdad to process satellite information (Ibid: 27). Vice President Bush advised Hussein through Egypt's Mubarak to make better use of his air force against Iranian soldiers (Ibid: 32). American military personnel were on the ground providing tactical advice to Iraqi forces in Iraq and Iran (Ibid: 38).

Directly and indirectly, the United States government armed Iraq. Direct arming included the provision of dual-use technology; for instance, the DuPont corporation supplied nuclear-grade vacuum pump oil to Iraq (Ibid: 152). CIA contractors sold arms to Iraq, brokered arms deals and reported back to Washington on their actions (Ibid: 96). The Department of Energy hosted two Iraqi nuclear scientists at a Portland, Oregon symposium on nuclear detonations (Ibid: 155).

Indirectly, weapons were sold to Iraq through third parties such as Jordan (Ibid: 171). Despite a U.S. arms embargo on Chile, Washington did not act while cluster bombs made in Chile (at factories bought in America, then dismantled and shipped to the South American country) were sold to Iraq (Ibid: 51 & 53). The man responsible for the Chilean cluster bombs, Carlos Cardoen, bought important cluster bomb ingredients such as metal zirconium from the United States (Ibid: 96).

Hussein's Iraq had good relationships with higher-ups in the American government. In 1983, then-Special Envoy to the Middle East, Donald Rumsfeld, went to Iraq with a handwritten letter from President Ronald Reagan for Hussein offering to renew diplomatic relations and expand military and business ties with Baghdad (Ibid: 28). National Security Document 26, passed in October 1989, aimed at securing U.S. interests in the Gulf region and increasing Washington's influence over

Baghdad (Ibid: 134). Vice President Bush personally interceded and placed a call to the Chairman of Eximbank seeking to assist Iraq in procuring loans (Ibid: 106). The Banca Nazionale del Lavaro (BNL) financed Iraqi loans with Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) credits (Ibid: 94). This meant that if Iraq reneged on its loans, the CCC would cover the loss; in other words, American taxpayers would foot the bill. The NSA was monitoring the daily telexes between BNL Atlanta (source of most of the loans) and Baghdad (Ibid: 110). By the end of the 1980s, America had approved $5 billion in loan guarantees to Iraq (Ibid: 104).

At the end of the second Gulf War, the United States of America left the man who was later to be called "the Butcher of Baghdad" in power. A civil war inside Iraq threatened American ruling class geopolitical interests in the region. By leaving Hussein on top, Washington officials hoped to bolster Iraq as a buffer state against Iranian expansion (Shalom, 93: 136). The United States' government lied to the American media, claiming that intervention in Iraq's internal governmental affairs was ruled out because America's Arab allies opposed such actions. However, the Saudis were all for the removal of Hussein from power, as was Turkey (Friedman, 93: 454 & 456). U.S. troops ignored Shiite accounts after the Gulf War of atrocities carried out by Hussein's men (Ibid: 449).

The name of the game in the Middle East, as far as American leaders are concerned, is oil. But *access* to the oil is more important than outright *control* of the land masses under which petroleum reserves reside (Chomsky, 08). In the twenty-first century, with better armed opponents, the ever-present threat of nuclear annihilation, and the domestic cost of unpopular military attacks, spheres of influence and protectorates have replaced outright the territorial conquests and hot wars of the nineteenth century's "old imperialism". That said, the United States government maintains military bases in over 130 other countries (Johnson, 04).

The men and women in power in the United States will never come out so crassly and say to its people "Iraq was about the oil," and it will not accept responsibility for the victims it incurs in the pursuit of its imperial ambitions. Traumatized veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are returning to substandard care in America. American soldiers were sent to these countries with less than adequate armor and other protective gear. The United States government still denies the reality of Gulf War Syndrome that sickened thousands of its troops in the second Gulf War in the early 90s. For that matter, it denies that the respiratory illnesses suffered by World Trade Center first responders are related to the toxic dust these brave, caring men and women inhaled. Depeleted uranium from American tank shells continues to poison the Middle East, Puerto Rico, and other parts of the world.

The United States' government has taken it upon itself throughout its history to promote and facilitate "regime change", often with disastrous consequences. The CIA organized and funded a coup that removed Iran's Prime Minister Mohammed Mosaddeq from power in 1953 after Mosaddeq came out in favor of nationalizing Iran's oil. The coup installed a repressively corrupt regime under monarch Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was himself overthrown in the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979. The consequences of overthrowing democratically elected leaders often leads to radicalization and anti-American sentiment. Che Guevara, for example,

was in Guatemala when its president was overthrown in a coup aided and abetted by the CIA and United Fruit.

OSAMA BIN LADEN: WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE

"Wanted: Dead or Alive", Osama bin Laden continues to elude U.S. capture though he is suspected possibly of hiding in the badlands of Pakistan. bin Laden declared holy war on the United States in 1998. His attacks against American targets include the bombing of the U.S.S. Cole in Yemen; the bombing of U.S. embassies in Africa; and September 11, 2001's terror attacks on U.S. soil (Miller & Wesier, 01: A18). bin Laden is probably the most infamous of the Mujahideen, men President Reagan once hailed as "freedom fighters." bin Laden is the prime example of the blowback concept.

In the 1980s the Mujahideen received training and supplies from the CIA (Gelb, 86: A7). Volunteers from throughout the Islamic world, the Mujahideen had converged in Afghanistan to combat the Soviet invasion. Zbigniew Brzezinski claims that CIA covert aid to the Mujahideen began in July 1979, six months *before* the Soviet invasion. Brzezinski felt that this aid helped draw the Soviets into an "Afghan trap" (Jauvert, 98: 76). The United States provided more than $3 billion in arms and aid to the Mujahideen (Everest, 01: 28).

Mujahideen tactics against the Soviets were described as terrorism by both Soviet and American reporters (Wicker, 85: A27). According to *The Washington Post*, the Mujahideen liked to "torture their victims by first cutting off their noses, ears and genitals, then removing one slice of skin after another" (79: A23). The Soviets lost more than 14,000 troops in their decade-long invasion of Afghanistan (Cooley, 00: 163). The Mujahideen's attacks extended inside the Soviet Union itself on occasion, bringing the U.S.S.R. and Pakistan close to war (Yousai, 92: 23). The Reagan White House supported the removal of Soviet forces in Afghanistan "by all means possible" (Gelb, 86: A7).

The Mujahideen, composed of several groups, were not a unified body. Washington viewed Islamic fundamentalist elements of the Mujahideen as militarily stronger than traditionalist groups (Weisman, 88: A10). Therefore, United States' aid went to the more fundamentalist elements of the groups, including bin Laden's and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's (Kamm, 88: A1). Hekmatyar made no secret of his intentions to bring an Islamic revolution, comparable to Iran's, to Afghanistan (Weisman, 88: A10). In the current war on terror, Hekmatyar finds himself on the receiving end of U.S. military might. Unmanned surveillance drones have unsuccessfully tried to kill Hekmatyar with missiles (Shanker, 02: A17). The United States government and military finds itself facing several different organizations grouped under the umbrella of Al Queda.

Osama bin Laden arrived in Afghanistan in 1980. He used his construction company to aid the struggle against the Soviets (Weiner, 98: A1 & 11). bin Laden organized funds and imported recruits. It is estimated that bin Laden was bringing in at least $50 million a year for the Mujahideen's struggle (Ibid).

When the Soviet Union collapsed and the war in Afghanistan ended, what became of the Mujahideen? These guys didn't all close up shop and head back home. The terrorist attacks of what William Blum calls the "Afghan Terrorist Alumni" continued (00: 33). This time, however, their target was America.

Two CIA employees were killed outside CIA headquarters in Virginia in 1993. Their murderer, of Pakistani origins, had ties to CIA-Pakistani intelligence operations in the Afghan war. The 1993 World Trade Center bombing included veterans of the Afghan war and was funded in part by a bin Laden brother-in-law (Miller, 02). In October, 1995, Sheik Omar Abdul Rahman and nine others were convicted of a plot to bomb U.S. targets. Rahman worked with the Mujahideen in Afghanistan and received a U.S. visa from a CIA agent in 1990 when he was already wanted by the Egyptian government on charges of terrorism (Blum, 00: 34–37).

In 1996, three men were convicted in New York of plotting to bomb twelve U.S. jumbo jets over the Pacific Ocean. One of the men, Ramzi Ahmed, the alleged mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, studied explosives with the Mujahideen in Afghanistan (Wesier, 98: A1).These are only crimes committed on American soil by former members of or actors with ties to the Majuahideen; other countries have also suffered at the hands of these former "freedom fighters."

America has a history of arming and training gangsters and hooligans while hailing them as "freedom fighters" for propaganda purposes at home and abroad. In the 1980s, the Contras in Nicaragua—armed and funded by the Reagan Administration—kidnapped and tortured civilians, targeted school teachers and health care workers for assassination, raped women and executed prisoners, including children. The School of the Americas (today renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) has been turning out thugs and murderers since 1946, including those who killed six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter in El Salvador in 1989. Manuel Noriega is a graduate of this esteemed institution.

American aggression in Iraq and Afghanistan has brought a new generation of Mujahideen to these countries, men and women who view the United States' as at war with Islam. It probably didn't help that up through early 2010 American assault rifles had biblical references embossed on their sites (Eckholm, 10). The CIA itself warned the American government that Iraq would serve as a magnet and effective training ground for radical Islamist fighters (Jehl, 05). Suicide bombers wiping out scores of civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan seem like almost daily occurrences from news reports. American soldiers continue to be killed and maimed by roadside bombs. Who knows how many Iraqi and Afghani civilians have died since the American invasions. Though US troops may enjoy some semblance of safety in their heavily fortified camps, the country seems mired down in Iraq and in what Brzezinski referred to as the "Afghan trap".

MISFITS, LOONEY TUNES, SQUALID CRIMINALS AND BLOWBACK

What went wrong with Osama bin Laden? He had accepted aid from the United States' government when he was battling the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. In a big way, he was "our" guy, deemed a freedom fighter, democracy's best chance. Even Rambo played buzkashi with the Mujahideen on the silver screen. bin Laden's goal now appears, in part, to be expelling the U.S. and its military from Saudi Arabia (Weiner, 98: A11). "His mission is to get American troops out of Saudi Arabia," explained Eqbal Ahmad in 1998. "His earlier mission was to get Russian troops out of Afghanistan." (01: 23).

Twelve years after driving in the car with my father and brother as a high school senior I was driving home in my own car on September 11, 2001. My ride from Westchester into Queens took me over the Whitestone Bridge. Though the toll booths were closed that day, traffic moved at a crawl. I had to sit on the span of the Whitestone and stare across the East River to a Manhattan marred by a plume of black smoke that rose to the sky hours after the towers had collapsed.

In the immediate aftermath of September 11th I, like many other Americans and New Yorkers, was shaken and scared. There was a very real feeling in the days and weeks afterwards of waiting for the other shoe to fall, that another attack was imminent. On my ride to and from work over the various bridges that connect Queens to the Bronx and other boroughs I warily eyed panel trucks and other vehicles around me, fearing car bombs.

My government's handling of the situation was not reassuring. President Bush talked about "smoking" bin Laden out of whatever cave he was hiding in, sounding like the worst sort of Hollywood Cowboy. Suddenly there was all sorts of talk about "the homeland" and "homeland defense." Americans and the U.S. government had never spoken like this before and it seemed ominous to me at the time, reminding me of what I had read of wartime Germany's appeal to the "fatherland." The USA PATRIOT Act passed and though it did much to piss off civil libertarians, I am not sure how much safer it made our country. The laughable acronym alone—*U*niting and *S*trengthening *A*merica by *P*roviding *A*ppropriate *T*ools *R*equired to *I*ntercept and *O*bstruct *T*errorism *Act* of 2001—invites ridicule. A "Department of Homeland Security" and a puerile "Homeland security color coded advisory system" was instituted. I am writing these words on a Sunday in December of 2009, when the "current threat level" on the Homeland Security website (www.dhs.gov) is "Elevated, or Yellow"; for domestic and international flights it is "High, or Orange". The date indicating these colors is the Friday two days past; perhaps the Department of Homeland Security takes the weekend off.

Early on many left-liberals were sympathetic to President Bush, arguing he was a simpleton pawn of Dick Cheney and other Hawks in his Administration. But I remember thinking, if Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Ashcroft are supposed to be the neocon brains of this outfit, just how scary is that? Ashcroft was the puritanical attorney general who had the Department of Justice spend $8,000 on drapes to cover up the topless "Spirit of Justice" statue in the DOJ's Great Hall; he spoke in tongues and composed songs with titles like "Let the Eagle Soar"; and he was head of the DOJ when it tried and convicted comedian and marijuana-pipe internet salesman Tommy Chong at the same time that the opium trade was reviving in Afghanistan. Bush took the rap as infamous mangler of spoken English, but did anyone really know what the hell Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was talking about when he let loose with things like "As you know, there are known knowns. There are things you know I know. You also know there are known unknowns. That is to say, you know there are some things I do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns, the ones you don't know I don't know. You'll probably figure those out pretty quickly." I haven't.

Even as the United States military was pounding the shit out of Afghanistan, government officials were paving the way for an invasion of Iraq. "The risks of

inaction" in Iraq, Vice President Dick Cheney warned, ''are far greater than the risk of action" (Bumiller & Dao, 02). Cheney and others in the Bush Administration tried to tie Iraq to the September 11th attacks when there was no connection. Even as the UN weapons inspectors reported that Hussein's Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction, there was a feeling of inevitability, as though the invasion would take place no matter what weapons inspectors found and despite whatever Hussein did. Secretary of State Colin Powell, viewed by many as a moderate voice in an immoderate administration, sold the war to the world in a 2002 speech at the United Nations, detailing an Iraqi weapons program that turned out to be nonexistent, a speech he now looks back on as a lasting "blot" on his record (Weisman, 05).

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have, as the CIA predicted, radicalized segments of the Muslim world and brought new holy warriors to the middle east. While George Bush was trying to reassure the Muslim world that the American military presence in Afghanistan and Iraq had nothing to do with squelching Islam, one of his generals, William Boykin, chalked up his victory over an Islamic Somali warlord to the fact that "I knew my God was bigger than his. I knew that my God was a real God and his was an idol" (Coooper, 03). Iraq never witnessed a suicide bomber until *after* the American invasion. President Bush will go down in history as the most unpopular president America has ever had. President Obama seems to be squandering the optimism that accompanied his election, sending greater numbers of American men and women to Afghanistan to kill and die.

And I'm still waiting for that other shoe to fall here at home. There are at least nine countries that harbor nuclear weapons in their military arsenals today. There are tens of thousands of nuclear missiles, enough to destroy every single human being and most other mammals on the earth several times over. The devastation one such weapon in the hands of a terrorist could wreak on the United States or any other country is horrifying. Its natural to worry about ones' enemies; we shouldn't have to worry about our supposed friends.

In 1985, President Ronald Reagan addressed the American Bar Association. He stated:

> The American people are not—I repeat, not—going to tolerate intimidation, terror and outright acts of war against this nation and its people. And we are especially not going to tolerate these attacks from outlaw states run by the strangest collection of misfits, Looney Tunes and squalid criminals since the advent of the Third Reich (85: A12).

The United States and its people should not tolerate intimidation, acts of war, or terror. But neither should it endorse, encourage or carry out such acts and intimidation. Though we cannot control the malevolent acts of foreign "misfits, Looney Tunes and squalid criminals", we do have some say over the acts of our fellow citizens. Noam Chomsky identifies certain basic "moral truisms" that a nation should follow in its interactions with other states. For one, people are responsible for the anticipated consequences of their choice of action or inaction, "a responsibility that extends to policy choices of one's own state to the extent that political community allows a degree of influence over policy formation"; secondly, if a country professes high

principles in the expectation that it will be taken seriously, “the principles must first and foremost be applied to oneself, not only to official enemies” (00: 8 & 9).

Presidents Bush and Reagan peppered their rhetoric with high principles. President Obama does so as well, albeit with a silver tongue. Given the degree of political freedom citizens of the United States enjoy, it is up to us to demand that our government not support future Noriegas, Husseins, or bin Ladens. It is up to us—organized in concerted political action on Main Street and in the halls of state and federal capitals—to demand that the American government act civilized and treat others the way we want to be treated. Blowback is a fact of life that has now come back to haunt American citizens in a way it never had before.

Will blowback rear its ugly head again? Though it is impossible to accurately predict what results will come from continued U.S. support of Israel in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, continued American support for repressive non-democratic regimes, and the ubiquitous American military presence on foreign soil, the future does not bode well for the safety and well being of the people of my country and my world. As Chalmers Johnson direly predicted before the September 11th, 2001 attacks, “It is likely that U.S. covert policies have helped create [discontent and resentment towards America]…and that we are simply waiting for the blowback to occur” (00: 13).

CHAPTER 5

NON-ANTAGONISTIC DUALISMS

Science, Religion and Developmental Systems

INCONCEIVABLE LEAPS: KNIGHTS OF FAITH AND LOT'S DAUGHTERS

This chapter begins with biblical stories of fathers' willingness to sacrifice their sons and daughters for the greater good and seeks to find how and if we can set aside the abhorrence these acts engender in the hopes of reconciling faith and science. When three angels visited Abraham and Sarah at the sacred trees of Mamre, Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah herself was old enough that she "had stopped having her monthly periods" (Genesis 18: 11). When the god of the Old Testament promises Abraham a son, through whom "[h]is descendants will become a great and mighty nation, and through him I will bless all nations", Abraham's wife Sarah doesn't believe the deity, for which her husband scolds her (Genesis 18: 18 & 15).

Nine months later Isaac is born, but a lot worth mentioning has happened in the ensuing time. The Lord's angels go down into Sodom and Gomorrah to investigate the accusations against the twin cities. Sure enough, the accusations turn out to be true: Sodom and Gomorrah are inhabited by aggressive homosexuals. The disguised angels, spending the night at Abraham's nephew Lot's house, are threatened by the men of Sodom, who yell out, "'Where are the men who came to stay with you tonight? Bring them out to us!' The men of Sodom wanted to have sex with them" (Genesis 19: 5). Lot implores the mob to take his daughters in lieu of his house guests. "Look, I have two daughters who are still virgins," Lot tells the hostile, horny crowd, "Let me bring them out to you, and you can do whatever you want with them. But don't do anything to these men; they are guests in my house, and I must protect them" (Genesis 19: 8).

Lot and his family flee before the Lord levels Sodom and Gomorrah with burning sulfur. Lot's wife is turned into a pillar of salt when she disregards the angels' instructions and looks back towards her burning home. Shortly thereafter, Lot and his two daughters are living in a cave, afraid to stay in the small town of Zoar, when the girls get to talking. "Our father is getting old, and there are no men in the whole world to marry us so that we can have children," the older daughter remarks to the younger. "Come on, let's get our father drunk, so that we can sleep with him and have children by him" (Genesis 19: 31–32). On two consecutive nights the girls get their father drunk and bed him down, leading, we are told in the Old Testament book of Genesis to the line of Moab, the Moabites, and Benammi, the Ammonites.

When Isaac is born, Sarah gets jealous thinking that Ishmael, the son of Abraham's slave, Hagar, will share in Abraham's inheritance. Sarah tells Abraham to send Hagar

and Ishmael away, and although Abraham is reluctant, "because Ishmael also was his son," he listens to his god's advice and banishes his slave and illegitimate child to the desert (Genesis 21: 11).

One day the god of the Old Testament decides to test Abraham. "'Take your son,' God said, 'your only son, Isaac, whom you love so much, and go to the land of Moriah. There on a mountain that I will show you, offer him as a sacrifice to me" (Genesis 22: 2). Abraham loads up his donkeys, takes along Isaac—whom he will make carry the wood for his own sacrifice—and a couple of slaves, and sets out on a three-day journey. Isaac has no idea what is going on and remarks to his father, "I see that you have the coals and the wood, but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" (Genesis 22: 7). Abraham tells Isaac not to worry, that their god will provide them with one.

When they get to the appointed spot, Abraham builds an altar, trusses Isaac up, places him on top of the wood and raises his arm, gripping a knife, ready to kill his son. Suddenly an angel appears to Abraham and tells him not to kill Isaac. "'Don't hurt the boy or do anything to him,' he said. 'Now I know that you honor and obey God, because you have not kept back your only son from him'" (Genesis 22: 12).

I have to be honest and say this sequence of events is one I find the most detestable in the entire "Good Book." There is just so much *wrong* with it on so many levels. As a father, I can imagine sacrificing *myself* for my children, but I cannot imagine sacrificing my kids for anything; I will return to this point and Abraham's readiness to sacrifice Isaac in particular in the following paragraphs. I was raised in the Roman Catholic Church, where we were taught that our god was all-knowing, all-powerful, and ever-present. When his god refers to Isaac as Abraham's "only son…whom you love so much", has the omniscient deity forgotten about Ishmael? Has this lord forgotten that he encouraged Abraham to banish Ishmael and his mother to please Sarah? Isaac and Ishmael are named, but not Lot's wife or his two daughters. If the god of the Old Testament is omniscient, why does he have to send a fact finding team of angels down into Sodom to find out if the rumors are true? How the heck do Abraham and Sarah bear a child at their age and how does Sarah live to be 127 and Abraham to 175? How *sick* is it that entire lineages are supposed to owe their existence to the incest of daughters' with their besotted father?

I know there are people who would advise me that these stories are best interpreted as inspirational and edifying allegories; they would say *don't take these stories literally*. But part of the problem is there are all too many people who do take these stories literally. In the United States, nine-in-ten Americans believe in the existence of a god or universal spirit; six-in-ten believe that this god is a person one can have a relationship with; seven-in-ten claim certainty of this god's existence; American Christians in particular view their bible as the word of their god and majorities of historically black and evangelical Protestant churches say the bible should be interpreted literally as the word of this god; eight-in-ten Americans agree that miracles are as prevalent today as they were in ancient times; seven-in-ten believe angels and demons are active in our world; 64% of Evangelical Protestant churches, 46% of historically black churches, 76% of Jehovah's Witnesses, and 61% of Muslims

feel that homosexuality is a way of life that should be discouraged by society, if not wiped out by sulphur rain, compared to 40% of the total American population (Pew Forum, 2008).

And I would have to ask anyone who advises that biblical tales are "just" allegories, exactly what kind of message should one take away from these stories? What moral guidance are we supposed to draw from a story about a father who offers his daughters up for a gang bang? Or from a deadbeat dad, who not only abandons his son and his son's mother, but expels them from his presence and is encouraged to do so by his spiritual guide?

Nineteenth-century Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard tried to make sense of Abraham's actions when the patriarch attempted to sacrifice his son. Abraham, in his willingness to forfeit his beloved Isaac, "transgressed the ethical altogether" and "is great because of a purely personal virtue. There is no higher expression for the ethical in Abraham's life than that the father shall love the son" (Kierkegaard, 00: 100). *Everything* Abraham knows and feels—what Kierkegaard refers to as the ethical universal—tells him that murdering his son is ghastly and wrong. Faith urges Abraham to ignore what Kierkegaard calls "social morality", this ethical universal, because "[f]aith is namely the paradox that the single individual is higher than the universal" (Kierkegaard, 00: 99). Kierkegaard argues that Abraham cannot justify killing Isaac in terms any human being would understand or agree with; yet, the Dane holds, Abraham's faith in his god assures him in the face of this "ordeal" that he will be reunited with Isaac and that Isaac will not be taken from him. His willingness to carry through the act is evidence of Abraham's absolute duty to his god, a duty that goes beyond any ethical discourse we can imagine. Kierkegaard would have us believe that Abraham's is a leap of faith, that because he believes deeply and fully in the justice of his Lord he is willing to bring the knife down on his son.

I take several issues with Kierkegaard's interpretation of Abraham's actions and thought process. Nowhere in the biblical renderings of this tale is there any evidence that Abraham thought he would emerge from his "temptation" with Isaac intact and well. Abraham's inner thoughts and psychology are not revealed in chapter twenty two of Genesis. Instead, we read about Abraham leaving his two slaves behind so that he can continue along to the mountain to kill Isaac. We read Abraham's assuring lies to his trusting son: "God himself will provide [a lamb for sacrifice]" (Genesis 22: 8). Setting aside Abraham's willingness to kill his boy, what kind of parental-figure would devise such a "test" for its loved ones? Why would an all-knowing and all-powerful deity need to conduct such an experiment? Perhaps most tellingly, nowhere is Isaac's point-of-view reflected or considered. Isaac is the trusting son who willingly goes along with his father. What was Isaac thinking as his father tied him up and made ready to slaughter him? Did the boy struggle? How was their relationship any different afterwards? As Richard Dawkins reflects on this sick story, "A modern moralist cannot help but wonder how a child could ever recover from such psychological trauma. By the standards of modern morality, this disgraceful story is an example simultaneously of child abuse, bullying in two asymmetrical power relationships, and the first recorded use of the Nuremberg defense: 'I was only obeying orders'" (06: 242).

In his willingness to kill Isaac, opines Kierkegaard, Abraham is "the single individual [who] became higher than the universal" (00: 101). The problem, for a "knight of faith" like Abraham, is that "he who walks the narrow road of faith has no one to advise him—no one understands him" (00: 101). It is a conundrum Kierkegaard fully understands. Another believer walked this narrow road of faith, and his road took him from Egypt to Germany to the Accelerated Pilot Program at Huffman Aviation in southern Florida, to Logan International Airport and a first class seat on American Airlines Flight 11, the first plane to hit the North Tower of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. The man was Mohamed Atta and, as we all know, he did not walk his road alone. And that is one of the problems with faiths like those embraced by Abraham and Atta: *anything* and *everything* is justifiable to those who believe they are guided by it, be it the murder of a son or the mass murder of thousands of civilians.

ATHEISM, DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM AND THE SPAGHETTI MONSTER

I cannot say I ever shared the faiths imputed to Abraham or Mohamed Atta. But I distinctly recall walking home from the seventh grade on crisp autumn days, *knowing* there was a god in his heaven watching over me and that all was well. I remember the sense of awe I felt stepping into our giant, ornate, incense-tinged churches replete with their elaborate alters, stained glass windows, and Christian iconography. I grew up in the Roman Catholic Church and underwent most of the sacraments—baptism, Holy Eucharist (communion), confirmation, and penance (confession). I attended St. Stanislaus Kostka RC Church in Maspeth, Queens, New York. I signed on to be an alter boy and served as best I could, even volunteering for the dreaded 6:45 A.M. weekday mass.

I was a different person at twelve than I would become in my early twenties and than I am now in my late thirties. Back then, I *believed*. I believed in God with a big-*G*, the god of the Old and New Testaments. I believed that his son Jesus Christ died for my sins and because of this I was assured a place in His heaven in the hereafter. I believed I was saved and that whatever troubles may face me in the future were mere tests of my belief and faith, that God would ultimately make and put all things right.

I believed in my God's omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. Looking back, some of the consequences of this make me laugh. I remember being very uncomfortable as a little boy sitting on the toilet going to the bathroom. If God was all-seeing, wasn't he watching me at that moment? *Gross*. It made me feel very self-conscious and probably constipated on more than one occasion. Again, funny now, albeit anxiety-provoking and downright uncomfortable back then. I remember I wasn't much troubled by the perplexities of theodicy, the problem of how God could be all-good and caring when so much terrible shit unfolded on His watch. I didn't need definitive answers; I had faith.

Yet one thing that separated my faith from Abraham or Atta's back in middle school is I would never harm anyone. Hurt someone and justify it through my faith? *Never*. That was an inconceivable to me. The bible I read and studied and was taught in religious classes by the nuns and the laity was full of stories of men and

women bearing the most terrible ordeals and visiting them on others, all in the name of their—*our*—faith, yet I didn't think these things would happen to or be asked of me.

Today I am an atheist. I view Abraham, if he really existed and if he really did the things Genesis recounts him doing, as a sick figure in the history of humanity, much as I view that mass murderer Mohamed Atta. I view a god that would test Abraham by baiting him with his own son as a sick figure unworthy of worship, much less fealty. I am an atheist but I am not alone. The percentage of Americans aged 18–25 who identify as atheist, agnostic, or non-believer has grown from 11% in 1986 to over 20% (Financial Times/Harris Poll, 06). Believers in gods are a minority in France, Britain, Germany, and Spain (Ibid). A very vocal group of "militant atheists" have had success in print in the last decade, with books by Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett, and others released to varying levels of public acclaim or vituperation.

I write these words but I cannot be assured that those reading them will understand what atheism means to me or to other atheists. I know, from personal experience, that there are people who get offended when I declare my lack of faith or belief in supernatural powers. For the record, I don't make these declarations out of the blue but in response to people's pointed questions. I'd like to spend a few paragraphs explaining what my atheism means to me before I discuss any differences I have with my so-called "militant atheist" brothers and sisters and my ultimate willingness to work with the religious-minded.

One of the biggest misconceptions I think people hold about atheists is that we don't believe in God. "Do you believe in God?" Invariably, the people who ask me this question in the United States seem to have the god of the bible in mind. Dawkins, who rubs some as intellectually arrogant at times, notes that "I have found it an amusing strategy, when asked whether I am an atheist, to point out that the questioner is also an atheist when considering Zeus, Apollo, Amon Ra, Mithras, Baal, Thor, Wotan, the Golden Calf and the Flying Spaghetti Monster. I just go one god further" (06: 53). I suspect that the inclusion of the Flying Spaghetti Monster in the above list is especially irksome to many believers.

Yet Dawkins' inclusion of this fantastical, gluten-laden divinity touches on an important point. Imagine I told you I believe in Fred. I talk with Fred in my head and Fred tells me what to do. I know that there is the popular thing to do and then there is what will make Fred happy, and I act so as to please Fred. Imagine I tell you that I know that Fred is watching over my daily actions, that he knows if I've been naughty or nice, and that he will reward or punish me when I shed this mortal coil, as he will you. Imagine I told you that Fred created the earth and everything in it and on it—including you and me—in, oh, I don't know, seventy three days (seven and three are my favorite numbers). Further, imagine I demanded that this creation account be included in the science curriculums of your children's schools. Imagine I told you that you really needed to believe in Fred as I do or you'd face an eternity of torment or nonexistence.

Now imagine I *really* believed in all this, that I *know* it to be true. You would probably write me off as psychotic and delusional. If I gathered a few fellow

Fred-worshippers around me we'd probably get labeled a cult. If the children of our faithful were brought up in this faith in Fred and made to dress differently than is typical or adopt bizarre hair growth patterns you'd probably shake your head in pity that we were doing this to our children. And if I started sleeping with the sixteen-year-old female Fred followers to increase our progeny you'd consider me a child molester and deviant.

Please understand that this is exactly how I and other atheists view religious people. When George W. Bush says his god told him to invade Iraq I hear pandering to the faithful at best and lunacy at worst. When I hear people talk about "God's plan" or "things always seem to work out the way they're supposed to" I detect a feeling of lack of agency in history, or worse, a willful shirking of responsibility. "If you reject his gift of salvation, then you know where you belong," an 11-th grade history teacher in New Jersey told his public high school class. "He did everything in his power to make sure that you could go to heaven, so much so that he took his sins on his own body, suffered your pains for you, and he's saying, 'Please, accept me, believe.' If you reject that, you belong in hell" (Kelley, 06). When I hear this I hear madness as such a teacher abuses his captive audience. Fortunately most people seem to agree with my assessment of the teacher; he was fired. President Bush, however, was elected to a second term in office.

Back to the question: *do you believe in God?* This is a loaded question. It presupposes the existence of a god one can either choose to believe in or not. "That is just the same as asking us if we believe there is a tree outside your window," explain Jon Murray and Madalyn O'Hair. "If there is a tree, what difference does it make if we say that we do or do not believe there is a tree there?....If you say there is a god and we have a choice of believing or not believing in the god, that does not affect that you have already premised there is a god…" (89: 10). Atheists like me think, based on the available evidence, that no such deity exists. Further, it's not on me or any other atheist to prove a deity does *not* exist; the burden of proof is on the believer to prove that one *does*.

Believe me, I wish a god existed so I could believe in Him or Her or It. In many ways it would be easier, and so much more reassuring, to be able to just believe. If there was a god or gods, I would believe in its existence, much as I "believe" in the existence of my parents and students, my wife and children, our car in the drive way, the tree outside your window, and the rotation of the earth. I try never to answer "No" to whether or not I believe in God when asked; I try to point out how the question itself is biased and I explain why this is so.

What is it that atheists *believe*? Well, I cannot deign to speak for all nonbelievers, but I find I share much common ground with Hitchens, Dawkins, O'Hair and Harris. I agree with Dawkins that "[a]n atheist in the sense of philosophical naturalist is somebody who believes there is nothing beyond the natural, physical world, no *super*natural creative intelligence lurking behind the observable universe, no soul that outlasts the body and no miracles" (06: 14). The idealist stance boils down to the notion that things exist outside our capacity to actually *know* them: there is a thing and then there is the thing-in-itself. For example, one can see a chair, what one perceives as a chair; but, out there somewhere in a realm usually inaccessible to the

human mind is the thing-in-itself, the actual entity one calls "chair," not as it is based on our limited grasp of the concept but as it *actually* is.

To idealism, Marx and Engels contrasted materialism. They thought the idea of a thing-in-itself was absurd, passing from the realm "of science into fantasy." Engels explained that in some abstract sense the thing-in-itself and idealism might seem plausible, "But suppose one applies it. What would one think of a zoologist who said: A dog *seems* to have four legs, but we do not know whether in reality it has four million legs or none at all?" (63: 144). For materialists like Marx and Engels, things simply do exist. One can view an object and reflect on it but if one were not around to do so the object would still be there. Materialists do not claim that their outlook allows them to understand every little intricacy of an object, but it will not attribute the sum total of a said object to some free-floating thing-in-itself beyond the comprehension of the human mind.

Materialism has developed since Marx and Engels' time, and today we can speak of individuals interacting with and enacting their environments, which I hope will become clear in the following section. Engels explained that with the advent of materialism over idealism a way is "found to explain man's consciousness by his being, instead of, as heretofore, his being by his consciousness" (63: 36). In short, Engel's materialism would refute the idealist's "I think, therefore I am" with the thought that "I am, therefore I think," or, as Marx wrote, "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life" (87: 190). Thinkers like Richard Lewontin, Susan Oyama and Richard Levins are bringing a more nuanced view to this materialism, showing that consciousness is not simply determined *by* life but helps *determines* life. That said, the materialism of the nineteenth or twenty-first centuries has no need of recourse to supernatural explanations handed down from on high.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND RELIGION

"Religion comes from the period of human prehistory where nobody…had the smallest idea what was going on," posits Christopher Hitchens. "It comes from the bawling and fearful infancy of our species, and is a babyish attempt to meet our inescapable demand for knowledge (as well as for comfort, reassurance, and other infantile needs)" (07: 64). Provocative words, no doubt, and for a couple of reasons. Hitchens' disdain for religion and its adherents is apparent in his diction: "babyish attempt" and the connotation of "infantile needs" express his contempt. I understand where Hitchens is coming from but cannot agree with him if he means that comfort and reassurance are "infantile" in a pejorative sense. Are comfort and reassurance too much to hope for in our own fleeting and tenuous lives, existences marked by uncertainty and doubt? Can't the quest for greater certainty and greater assurance give meaning to our lives and make them qualitatively more enjoyable?

Yet, ultimately, I have to agree with Hitchens that religion holds us back as a species. Like John Lennon, I long for a time when "there is no heaven" and we work together to more fully realize heaven here on earth. My major problem with religion today is how hegemonic it is, impinging on my life on a daily basis, structuring

what is considered real, good and possible. I have no problem with, for example, followers of Christ who choose to listen to their savior's advice that

> When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites! They love to stand up and pray in the houses of worship and on the street corners, so that everyone will see them. I assure you, they have already been paid in full. But when you pray, go to your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you] (Matthew, 6: 5 & 6).

But that's not what religion, as practiced in our world today and over the last few thousand years, is about. It's often imperialistic and dehumanizing, showy and gaudy "Christotainment" or whatever other brand is being championed (Kinclehoe & Steinberg, 09). As Hitchens notes, religion "*must* seek to interfere with the lives of nonbelievers, or heretics, or adherents of other faiths. It may speak about the bliss of the next world, but it wants power in this one" (07: 17).

Jews and Christians mutilate their sons' genitalia and African Muslims their daughters', all for their respective religious beliefs. "Honor killings" of women proliferate in the Middle East and elsewhere as Muslims uphold the sanctity of their patriarchical beliefs. Millions of Catholics practice a form of symbolic cannibalism at their masses as they eat "the flesh" and drink "the blood" of Christ through the "miracle" of transubstantiation. Billions of children are brought up in religions—labeled Muslim-children, Jewish-children, Christian-children—and taught not to question their faiths. They are also taught that their faiths are superior to others'. Richard Dawkins wonders, "isn't it always a form of child abuse to label children as possessors of beliefs that they are too young to have thought about?" (06: 315).

Against the real world barbarity of the religious, the non-religious extend civility and varying levels of respect. Hitchens notes that his own "particular atheism is a Protestant atheism" (07: 11). He explains. "When I go to the mosque, I take off my shoes. When I go to the synagogue, I cover my head" (Ibid). I think I share a similar form of atheism with Hitchens; I'm not here on earth to make other people's lives more difficult or to make a nuisance of myself. I might not believe what you believe but I will not belittle your beliefs. However, a persuasive argument "militant atheists" like Hitchens and Dawkins make is that secular liberal societies and moderate religious believers perpetuate a climate that allows extremists to flourish.

What I am about to say may sound, at first, like a very "conservative" thing to say; it might sound antithetical to critical pedagogy. But I have to agree with Sam Harris that in our civilized society, "criticizing a person's faith is currently taboo…. On this subject, liberals and conservatives have reached a rare consensus: religious beliefs are simply beyond the scope of rational discourse" (05: 13). If I said the way children were treated on the Branch Davidian compound in Texas by David Koresh and his followers was terrible I would probably be met by many agreeable nods. Koresh and his people were a small break-away religion, what most people refer disdainfully to as a cult. If I said that I felt bad for Amish children with their antiquated dress and Hasidic children with their peyos, there would be fewer agreeable nods and a few raised eyebrows. The Hasidic and Amish are small, long-standing religious groups; objects of curiosity and living proof of religious tolerance and

multiculturalism for the majority. And if I said I *felt bad* for Muslim children in their head garb and Christian children with their crucifixes, the nods would give way to a majority of shaking heads. *I* would be dismissed as the intolerant one with a problem.

The ideal of religious tolerance, one of the driving forces of the Enlightenment, has assumed a form of irrationality that threatens the survival of our species. The idea that ours will be a better world when we all just learn to respect the unjustified religious beliefs of everyone else is a mistaken, misguided idea. All ideas are *not* equal and to claim otherwise is to uphold a base relativism. As Dawkins notes, even "[t]he notion that religion is a proper *field*, in which one might claim *expertise*, is one that should not go unquestioned" (06: 16).

"They say you can rap about anything except for Jesus," rapped Kanye West in his 2004 song *Jesus Walks*. "That means guns, sex, lies, videotapes/ But if I talk about God my record won't get played huh?" West's complaint was disingenuous. *Jesus Walks* peaked at number eleven on the Billboard Hot 100 and won a Grammy for Best Rap Song. While everyone is expected to be tolerant of the religious in our secular, liberal society, many religious people are not tolerant of the nonreligious. Atheists are rejected more so than other stigmatized groups in America, including blacks, gays, and Muslims immediately after September 11th (Edgell, et. al., 06). Wendy Kaminer (10) notes that "hostility toward atheism is a threat to freedoms of conscience and religion that all of us share." Atheists in the American military are targets of contempt, discrimination and reprisals from their fellow soldiers and officers (Banerjee, 08).

If religious beliefs and practices were purely individual, the believer in her room with the door closed, suppliant before her god, I would have no problem with them. However, by and large, religion does not manifest itself this way and the only time it has is when a cult or splinter-group breaks away from a larger religious body and depends on secrecy for its survival. The United States of America, where I live and teach and raise my family, is gripped by a fervent religious climate that impacts people's lives on a daily basis. The United States has had forty-four Presidents; most of them—with the exception of the deists—have been Christian and of those only one has been Roman Catholic. A black man is in office as I write and I suspect we'll see women in the office in my lifetime, but I am also fairly certain we *won't* see a non-believer in the oval office unless there is a radical change in the zeitgeist of the country.

Religion has come in for a bad rap, and I'd say, mostly rightfully so. Looking around it's easy to see religion's misuse as a tool of domination and control. Be it Islamic fundamentalists who strap on suicide-bomb vests, Christian fundamentalists who execute abortion doctors, Israel's exclusionary and segregationist policies towards its non-Jewish population, the unfair tax breaks religious institutions receive in the U.S., or the discrimination faced by women and homosexuals, there are a lot of reasons to dislike religion. Much of the evidence lends credence to Hitchens' assessment that religion is holding back the human species. But can I fully agree with Hitchens and Dawkins that the world would be a better place *without* religion?

As one who considers himself something of a "militant atheist," I cannot. I cannot ignore the fact that religion has provided succor and inspiration to human beings

for millennia. People I have admired and learned from have been firm in their various beliefs. "I am a profoundly Jesus-loving free black man who bears witness to truth and justice until the day I die," said Cornel West (Buckley, 10). I first started to read Paulo Freire in the mid-90s. Little of what I read that was being published then made clear Freire's indebtedness to his Roman Catholicism. But Freire's Christianity was extremely important to him and he needs to be viewed in light of the Latin American Liberation Theology movement. The men and women of this movement viewed Jesus Christ as a revolutionary and the Church as an agent of social change in the eradication of oppression.

The Liberation Theology Movement, it should be noted, was not accepted by the Catholic power structure. As Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI warned that liberation theology was "a fundamental threat to the faith of the church" (Rohter, 07: A1). His predecessor in the papacy, John Paul II noted that "[t]his conception of Christ as a political figure, a revolutionary, as the subversive of Nazareth, does not tally with the church's catechism" (Rohter, 07: A8). The image of Christ as radical revolutionary championing the poor and oppressed continues to find adherents today, inside and outside the Church. For example, Ajinbayo Akinsiku's says the Christ of his manga Bible is "a hard guy, seeking revolution and revolt, a tough guy" (Banerjee, 08: 18).

"I just feel passionately, corporately, physically, with all my being," Freire wrote, "that my stance is a Christian one because it is 100 percent revolutionary and human and liberating, and hence committed and utopian…" (quoted in Schipani, 84: 54). John Elias (76) shows how Freire's religion served as a major inspiration in his commitment to the oppressed and in his writings. Denis E. Collins writes that "[t]he tradition of Freire is the tradition of the Old Testament prophets and of Christ, who presented thorny questions such as the hunger, thirst, and nakedness of one's neighbors in terms that rule out indifference on the part of the disciples" (77: 33). Freire expanded on the concept of limit situations which he found in Christian theologian philosopher Karl Jaspers (Elias, 77: 25). I have immense respect for Paulo Freire, his life, works and words; his religion informed and guided his corpus and I cannot ignore or minimize this.

DIALECTICS, SCIENCE AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Various criticisms of nonbelievers are leveled by their detractors. Some charge that atheists have no moral compass, are hostile to all religion, and make a religion of science for themselves. Let me address each of these briefly. Religions often provide moral guidance and an ethical code to live by, but religion and morality are not synonymous. Religious systems do not have a monopoly on morality and ethics. In fact, most holy books and religious teachings contain their fair share of amoral and immoral messages that no one should follow today. Although I ultimately feel there is no supernatural presence in the universe and that people created gods and not the other way around, I have no hostility towards religious *people*. If someone wants to believe in Jesus Christ, Allah, Vishnu, Jaweh, the Earth Mother or whomever, that's fine by me. All I insist is that their personal beliefs not intrude into social policy

that affects or shapes my life or the lives of my children. If my children, whom my wife and I are raising without any religion, grow up to adopt a faith, that is fine by me.

Though science is our best bet at this time to explain our worlds and our selves, science in itself is no religion. Again, Dawkins makes the point clearly and concisely, writing of evolution that "[w]e believe in evolution because the evidence supports it, and we would abandon it overnight if new evidence arose to disprove it. No real fundamentalist would ever say anything like that" (06: 283). Religious faith means just that, *faith* when all else tells you otherwise; hence Abraham's willingness to go all the way and kill his boy. Faith abides; the tenets of faith are the rock believers count on. The laws and theories of science, on the other hand, accept flux and develop through time and labor.

One thing immoderates on either side of the spectrum—from Dawkins and Hitchens to the Mullahs, Popes, and televangelists–have fostered is antagonistic dualisms between religion and science, between faith and reason, between rationality and emotion. Val Plumwood (93) has argued that dualisms themselves are problematic because of the way in which they are conceived. Dualisms, she posits, are "formed by domination and subordination and constructed as oppositional and exclusive" (Plumwood, 93: 31). Selma Sevenhuijsen further warns that when we view the divergent concepts of a dualism as "mutually exclusive opposites," the concepts then serve as "mechanisms of exclusion" in which one item—usually the first of the proffered pair—is considered superior to the second (98: 47). The remainder of this chapter will argue that religion and science, emotion and reason, faith and rationality must all learn to co-exist, that we are not engaged in a zero-sum, either-or game.

Science is not without its own antagonistic dualisms. Evolutionary psychology and its forerunner sociobiology are often maligned by figures in the sciences who profess progressive political views, yet I have read and drawn from the works of Richard Dawkins, Edward O. Wilson and others. When I discuss developmental systems theory below, the ideas and works of Susan Oyama, Richard Lewontin, Lev Vygotsky, Humberto Maturana, Stephen Jay Gould, Francisco Varela and their colleagues will all figure prominently, and these are men and women who would and do take Dawkins, Wilson and others to task. Yet I cannot help but thinking that the works of these men and women are reconcilable and have the potential to strengthen each other.

I think recent theorizing in science helps us understand that the apparently implacable oppositions facing us aren't as irreconcilable as they may first appear. Much of the rest of this chapter will discuss Developmental System Theory (DST), an emerging paradigm of science that challenges conventional wisdom in the natural, physical, and social sciences. DST has been called a form of "constructivist interactionism" or "dialectical causes" (Lewontin in Oyama, 00A: xv). "Dialectical" in this sense has a very specific political and philosophical meaning worth clarifying before continuing.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the revelation of the ills perpetrated in that block as well as in China, North Korea and Cuba, Marxism in particular and socialism in general have suffered discredit. In the middle of the twentieth century, before the names and excesses of Stalin, Mao, and Kim Il Sung became synonymous

in some circles with a bearded German philosopher, Marxism was an attractive intellectual position viewed as a challenge to capitalist hegemony and imperialism. Though Marx once remarked to his closest friend and collaborator Friedrich Engels that he (Marx) knew he himself was no Marxist, Marxism itself failed to heed its namesake's warning. The label itself was slapped on some of the most atrocious human rights violations in history by the perpetrators of these ill deeds. Marxist "science" was used as a propaganda tool in the Soviet Union and other totalitarian regimes and good science by scientists who considered themselves Marxists, like Lev Vygotsky, was suppressed and discredited.

Marxist dialectics is worth revisiting briefly because its similarity to developmental systems theory is pronounced. The main emphasis in Marxist dialectics is change and interaction. "Nothing is eternal but eternally changing, eternally moving matter and the laws according to which it moves and changes," wrote Engels (87: 94). The dialectic "reveals the transitory character of everything and in everything; nothing can endure before it except the uninterrupted process of becoming and passing away" (87: 98). Engels identified three "laws" of dialectics, and though I think *law* might be a misleading term, I believe one of these will be seen strongly at play in the discussion of developmental systems below. "The law of the transformation of quantity into quality and *vice versa*" holds that "qualitative changes can only occur by the quantitative addition or subtraction of matter or motion" (Engels, 87: 123–124). Engels uses the example of taking a body apart down to its molecules: what we are left with is *not* a body, and the body itself was not a simple matter of joining molecules together. A *qualitative* change occurred along the lines of development, such that molecules interacted to become something more and something less than an agglomeration of mere component parts. Adding drops of water to drops of water eventually results in a puddle, a lake, an ocean. Similarly, any teacher recognizes that in the classroom, a qualitative change in the mood or tone of the classroom takes place when students are continually added to the classroom; a class of five students is qualitatively *different* than a class or fifteen or a class of thirty.

DST holds that development is a form of interactive emergence through time (Oyama, 00B: 2). A developmental system is "a heterogeneous and causally complex mix of interacting entities and influences that produces the life cycle of an organism" and "includes the changing organism itself, because an organism contributes to its own future" (Lewontin, 00: 1). DST posits that development is best conceived as form of construction and not the printout of a pre-existing code or the interplay of nature and nurture; hence, DST is perhaps best understood by contrasting it to popular contemporary models of development.

DST: NEITER NATURE, NURTURE, NOR REDUCTIONISM

Contemporary science and social thought places a premium on genes and the nature-nurture dichotomy, with genes subsumed under the *nature* category of the dualism. Because controlled experiments in laboratories allow scientists to induce major genetic changes in organisms, the view that genes determine development is reinforced (Lewontin, 00: 99). Part of the problem with this is that the various components of

developmental systems in the real world are rarely as stable as they are under laboratory conditions, making it much more difficult to determine *what* actually influenced what. Richard Lewontin argues further that biologists "have a simplistic notion of causes and effects. If A and B are causally connected, they think, then either A is the cause and B the effect or vice versa" (in Oyama, 00A: viii). In a laboratory environment this fallacy is easily perpetuated. Genes and the genotype—the genetic constitution of an individual—are more often than not viewed as *the cause* of an emergent trait. Specifically, "the genotype frequently plays the role of an enduring essence insulated from change, the unmoved mover that both *embodies* a plan for an organism and *executes* it" (Oyama, 00b: 103). Lewontin cites the long-standing and much-studied and replicated example of mutations among fruit flies as lending credibility to the idea that genotypes specify phenotypes—the actual observed properties and characteristics of an organism (00: 30).

So, what is it exactly that genes *do* and do *not* do according to DST? Biologists who liken genes to computer programs or blueprints ignore the fact that an organism's attributes are not pre-programmed in its genes, that "the organism is not specified by its genes, but is a unique outcome of an ontogenetic process contingent on the sequence of events in which it occurs" (Lewontin, 00: 17). Noting how specific genes have been tied to certain diseases, Oyama makes the important point that one can inherit a particular gene or genes but it may not be apparent if one has not inherited the *other* conditions for a disease (00a: 148). If the other conditions—the unique developmental system—have not been inherited, the disease may never manifest itself. Similarly, a question such as, "Which genotype resulted in the best growth?" is moot unless it takes into account the environment in which the growth took place (Lewontin, 00: 17).

Environment is not synonymous with surroundings. Environment must be understood as encompassing an organism's "way of life" within which "the activity of the organism sets the stage for its own evolution" (Levins & Lewontin, 85: 58). Oyama provides an example that compares biological inheritance to property inheritance:

> A family usually passes on its wealth *and* the means for its maintenance and exploitation, including education, social position, and connections, and an appropriate ethic as well…one might say that all those things together constitute the family's wealth. Offspring receiving only part of the complex do not as reliably perpetuate the family fortunes" (Oyama, 00a: 148).

Lewontin, Oyama and other theorists in the DST-mold do not argue against the importance of genes, but they do argue against reifying genes. "Development and evolution *are* linked by the differential passing on (availability to the next generation) of that which is responsible for development," notes Oyama, "but the genes…do not exhaustively define this category" (00a: 145). Genes as blueprints or computer programs are popular models in part because many humans—ourselves creators—have difficulty comprehending how we could be here *without* the mediation of an agentive-creator, be it a god *above* us or genes bearing pre-specified developmental instructions *within* us (Oyama, 00a: 158).

Genetic explanations often smack of preformationism, the notion that information is dormant, existing *before* it is used or expressed. In the case of genetic explanations

this information is viewed as adhering within the genes or genotypes or the DNA within these. DNA, however, determines nothing alone. As Lewontin posits, "DNA is not self-replicating….it makes nothing…[and] organisms are not determined by it" (00: 141). DNA is one ingredient in a complex interaction within a specific developmental system. Therefore understanding how a human being or any other animal works is not as easy as deciphering its DNA. Lewontin makes the case that fetishizing the role of DNA and genes "is the transfer onto biology of the belief in the superiority of mental labor over the merely physical, of the planner and designer over the unskilled operative on the assembly line" (00: 144).

If genes or DNA alone are not enough to explain development, it is equally as important to understand the error behind the nature-nurture paradigm. It *isn't* the case that genes contribute 45% and environment 55% (or whatever numbers) to an organism's development, or even that genes are sometimes more predominant than environment and vice versa. Despite the prevalence of interactionist views, they too, according to DST, are equally as misguided as genetic determinist explanations. Oyama speaks of "the canon of enlightened 'interactionism'", the modern-day nature-nurture explanation, marked by "the habit of thinking about phylogeny [the evolutionary history of a species] and ontogeny [the origin and development of an organism] as *alternative processes whereby information enters the organism*" (Oyama, 00a: 15). However, any information in the genes or in the environment is not relevant until it is rendered meaningful by its developmental system in phenotypic processes (Ibid). Random processes determine an organism. These random processes occur at the level of the organism: *within* the organism and *outside* the organism, as the organism reacts and interacts with its environment and its own internal components.

Molecular biology and heredity are not areas of my expertise, however, I am a big fan of bodybuilding. I bring muscle building into this because I think it illustrates the idea of a developmental system and the fallacies behind gene-centered and nature/nurture explanations. Why do bodybuilders *look* the way they do? For many years as I trained with weights and failed to look like the bodybuilders I admired in the magazines I read I thought the answer was drugs. I was convinced of this because no matter how hard or heavy I trained, no matter how well I ate or what supplements I took, I wasn't looking like Arnold Schwarzenegger. Bodybuilders, I was sure, are hyper-muscular because of the steroids, growth hormone, insulin and other muscle-building substances they ingest and inject. However, through my tenure in the sport—years ago as a teenage competitor, today as a writer and photographer for the magazine *MuscleMag International*—I learned I was wrong.

Drugs alone do not make bodybuilders look like bodybuilders. Training alone does not make a bodybuilder look like a bodybuilder and no matter how many biceps curls you do you are not going to have biceps like inaugural Mr. Olympia Larry Scott in his hey-day. Bodybuilders look the way they do because of a combination of the intensity of their training, their nutrition and recuperation, the supplements—including any illegal ones—they use, the equipment available to them, and a host of other factors, all part of their developmental systems. Individual genetic influences are a part of this total package, but a part that cannot be easily corralled or segmented from all the others just mentioned, as none of those can be either.

If I did the exact same drugs as any professional bodybuilder, I would not look like that bodybuilder. If I trained just like Mr. Olympia Jay Cutler, ate like him, got the same amount of sleep as he did—heck, if I moved in with him and mirrored his daily routine, I would *not* look like him. And it's not *only* because Jay and I have unique genotypes. All that said, it is true that if we removed drugs from the picture, bodybuilders *wouldn't* look the way they do, and the ones who do not use muscle-building substances really have no certainty of how they would look if they did.

DEVELOPMENTAL PATHWAYS: THE WAY TO SAN JOSE

I hope my example of bodybuilding and the unique confluence of factors that results in a certain look helps to highlight the importance of variability and change in a developmental system. For those who don't follow bodybuilding, bodybuilders may all look the same—*gross*! Only kidding (though I have heard this said). To an eye that does not discern, there may not appear to be much difference between the hyper-muscular physiques of Ronnie Coleman, Dexter Jackson and Jay Cutler; however, the knowing gaze of cognoscenti will immediately be drawn to Coleman's detailed and separated back, to Jackson's razor-sharp conditioning, and to the zipper-like striations running up and down Cutler's thighs. That said, there seems to be quite a bit of certainty in outcomes among organisms. For instance, most of us are born with two arms attached to our shoulders, an eye more or less symmetrically positioned on either side of our nose, and ten toes. If development is contingent on unique developmental systems, as DST holds, how is such seeming uniformity possible?

The first thing DST theorists would argue is that such apparent uniformity should not be taken for granted or assumed. Look close enough—as with the three aforementioned Mr. Olympias—and variations are apparent. Lewontin has pointed out that the fingerprints of identical twins are not identical, that "[t]heir temperaments, mental processes, abilities, life choices, disease histories, and deaths certainly differ despite the determined efforts of many parents to enforce as great a similarity as possible" (00: 279). Secondly, the "[s]tability of species characteristics is the result of stable developmental systems" (Oyama, 00b: 70). Developmental pathways are taken for granted because they are regular, as is seen in the case of dog breeders and laboratory researchers who control conditions for consecutive generations (Oyama, 00b: 94). Is it asking the imagination to stretch too far in imaging how the phenotype of a lineage of human beings evolving amidst a Martian spacecamp might differ from another underwater or our own here on terrestrial Earth? Finally, there's more than one way to get to San Jose, so even should Dionne Warwick "go wrong and lose my way" she could still wind up in California's third-largest city. In other words, there are *multiple* pathways to similar outcomes. "The point is that every genotype has many possible developmental pathways, many leading to the normal range," explains Oyama, "and some of them not, and that often a given phenotype may be reached via many different sets of genotype-environment relationships" (00b: 37).

DST theorists charge that most contemporary thinkers and workers who study evolution, natural selection, and heredity misunderstand what is actually happening to organisms that change over time. As has been argued, it *isn't* the case that

development is centrally controlled and predetermined at the level of the genes or genotype (Oyama, 00b: 44). Likewise, adaptation isn't a process in which natural selection "molds organisms to fit an established environmental 'template'" (Laland, et. al., in Oyama, et. al., 01: 117). Lewontin warns against a "vulgar Darwinism… which sees all aspects of the shape, function, and behavior of all organisms as having been molded in exquisite detail by natural selection—the greater survival and reproduction of those organisms whose traits make them 'adapted' for the struggle for existence" (00: 52). In some circles of science, such as evolutionary psychology, a guiding question is exactly that: *what evolutionary advantage did a certain trait impart to an organism's ancestors*?

"I define evolution as change in the distribution and constitution of developmental (organism-environment) systems," writes Oyama (00b: 77). Evolution, explains Lewontin, "is not an unfolding but an historically contingent wandering pathway through the space of possibilities" (00: 88). Despite the apparent stability in phenotypic outcomes, development is best viewed as systems of contingency (Oyama, 00b: 117). Heredity involves the passing on of all developmental conditions and is not to be conceived of as a solely gene-centered event (Oyama, 00a: 43). Developmental influences are transmitted; entire developmental systems are inherited and passed on even as they change and the organism at the center of them changes and effects change upon them. The developmental means that are transmitted include "genes, the cellular machinery necessary for their functioning, and the larger developmental context, which may include a maternal reproductive system, parental care, or other action with conspecifics, as well as relations with other aspects of the animate and inanimate worlds" (Oyama, 00b: 29). Lewontin speaks of "the relations of genes, organisms, and environments" as being "reciprocal relations in which all three elements are both cause and effect. Genes and environments are both causes of organisms, which are, in turn, causes of environments, so that genes become causes of environments as mediated by the organism" (00: 101). Nature and nurture themselves are best conceptualized not as alternative causes but as product and process each (Oyama, 00a: 148).

IN THE SOUP: INTERACTION AND ENACTIVISM

We human beings are not above the fray; we are not stationed in an objective, neutral position in either the social or natural sciences. We are, to paraphrase Sartre, in the soup, and our position or where we choose to position ourselves will often dictate *what* we observe. In other words, the level of analysis will often dictate where we start to look at an organism and where we start to look at an organism will dictate the level of analysis (Oyama, 00a: 39). For instance, if we start at the level of the gene, it may appear that the gene is initiating a series of events when in fact the gene is part of a larger developmental context of which we are—willfully or not—ignorant. Lewontin speaks of "the dialectical relationship between parts and wholes" and notes that at the level of the individual organism, the "opposition between the individual molecule and the whole organism as the appropriate level of observation and explanation is a false one" (00: 76). "Thus we find that a gene has different effects in different tissues at different times," explains Oyama, noting that

> a stimulus calls out different responses, including no response, at different times or in different creatures, and an observation that is meaningless or anomalous at one stage of an investigation or to one person becomes definitive under other circumstances. A difference that makes a difference at one level of analysis, may or may not make a difference at another (00a: 162).

I would like to briefly consider illustrations of developmental systems at three levels: at the level of the individual organism and its internal processes; at the level of the individual human organism interacting with its inanimate environment; and at the level of the human organism interacting with other human beings. I think these examples are illustrative for critical pedagogies and an ethic of care that holds we are relational beings who find meaning in our ties to others, our worlds, and ourselves.

Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela speak of *autopoiesis*, the process whereby an organization produces and reproduces itself. Lewontin posits that "organisms are internally heterogeneous open systems" and gives the example of cells, noting that "[o]nce cell layers are formed, they can enter into higher-level morpho-genetic interactions, which in turn may bring about further changes in cell activity" (00: 114 & 134). Cells are a part of the tissue they create but are also controlled by this tissue. Again, genes do not dictate cell development although cell development would not be possible without genetic input and cell development reflects back on genotype. The concept of autopoiesis is a relevant one to developmental systems theory and critical pedagogy because it highlights the importance of the individual organism as a source of perturbation and change; individual organisms don't just react to internal or external stimuli but merge relevant stimuli and in turn effect the environments from which these stimuli originate.

The organism does not and could not occupy a vacuum. Individual organisms and their autopoietic processes interact with their larger environments in what Varela and Maturana refer to as *structural coupling*. They note that such structural coupling is always mutually constitutive and cite as an example how early living beings gave off oxygen, which led to major changes in the Earth's atmosphere and "the presence of oxygen in the atmosphere may have selected structural variations in many lineages of living beings which throughout their phylogeny led to the stabilization of forms that function as oxygen-breathing beings" (Maturana & Varela, 92: 102). Noting that "[o]xygen is a very toxic substance for most constituents of cells," Levins and Lewontin explain that "some organisms dealt with oxygen by detoxifying it, allowing (indeed promoting) it to interact with some organic substances in the cell" such that today oxygen plays a necessary part in the survival of various organisms and oxygen-deprivation itself presents dangers (85: 41).

Human organisms interact with our environments in ways that give our lives as human beings meaning and substance. For example, our sense of a color spectrum—which *does not* exist in an external world apart from us—results from a complex back-and-forth interaction between the color cones in our retinas, the neural circuitry of our three-pound brains, electromagnetic radiation, and the reflective properties of objects (Lakoff & Johnson, 99: 24). "A living organism at any moment in its life is the unique consequence of a developmental history that results from the interaction of and determination by internal and external forces," explains Lewontin,

"The external forces, what we usually think of as 'environment,' are themselves partly a consequence of the activities of the organism itself as it produces and consumes the conditions of its own existence" (00: 148). Other animals interact with their environments in equally meaningful ways. Laland, Odling-Smee, and Feldman show how niche construction and natural selection interact and function in parallel. By niche they refer "to the 'occupation' of an organism, for example, to the ways in which an organism obtains its resources or defends itself in its environment" (Laland, et. al., in Oyama, et. al., 01: 118). They use the example of beavers, who build dams and

> its dam sets up a host of selection pressures that feed back to act not only on the genes that underlies dam building, but also on other genes that may influence the expression of other traits in beavers such as their teeth, tail, feeding behavior, their susceptibility to predation or disease, their social system, and… probably…the building of lodges by beavers in the lakes they create by their dams (Laland, et. al., in Oyama, et. al., 01: 119).

Beaver dam construction can go on to influence future generations of beavers that inhabit the dam and river and other organisms that live in this world (Ibid). Other animals play a role in enacting their niches and environments. Human beings generate a layer of higher density air from the tops of their heads that envelops our bodies and partially shields us from the external environment, prodding Lewontin to note that "Organisms do not find the world in which they develop. They make it" (00: 54 & 148).

As the example of color vision in human beings attests, one "cannot clearly separate thought from its objects or the world from the way we construe it" (Oyama, 00a: 183). The developmental system includes the human organism interacting with other human beings. Recall that developmental influences are transmitted. Human culture is part of this developmental context. Barbara Rogoff recognizes the individual's place in a developmental system that includes culture and other people when she writes that "development involves individual effort or tendencies as well as the sociocultural context in which the individual is embedded and has been since before conception. Biology and culture are not alternative influences but inseparable aspects of a system within which individuals develop" (90: 28).

Children learn a "cultural curriculum" through "guided participation" by the adults and mores of their particular societies. "Children enter the world embedded in an interpersonal system involving their caregivers and others who are already involved with societal institutions and technologies," explains Rogoff. "Through guided participation with others, children come to understand and participate in the skilled activities of their culture" (90: 191). As children learn and develop they are enmeshed in relationships with people and social conventions that channel their development, leading Rogoff to characterize children and people as "interdependent" (90: 21).

Individual cognitive functioning, including consciousness, is built from the outside-in through relations with others. Lev Vygotsky used the example of socialized speech leading to inner speech and thought. Vygotsky argued that children initially begin speaking by imitating the adults around them. When a child in an adult's arms reaches for an item on a table and the adult retrieves the item, saying, "Here's the pacifier",

the child learns to distinguish an item (the pacifier) from its environment. This form of socially mediated attention will develop "into the child's more independent and voluntary attention, which she will use to classify her surroundings" (Vygotsky, 78: 128). The path from object to child and from child to object passes through another individual (Vygotsky, 78: 30).

The languaging child transforms her words from mere communication with others in her environment to internal speech and a form of organization for her own mental functioning. Early speech accompanies a child's actions and later speech *precedes* the action. As children play with their blocks, adults say, "Oh, Honalee is playing with her blocks" and Honalee babbles some variation of "Honalee plays with her blocks." In time, little Honalee will think about what she is doing quietly in her head with the language she has internalized. Hence Vygotsky's contention that social speech leads to the development of ego centric speech which leads to the development of inner speech.

Further, the human intellect is tied to the technologies that exist to support and extend it. Only with specific technologies—like writing or navigational systems—do cognitive processes operate (Rogoff, 90: 49). We shape the tools of human culture as they shape us. This is why intelligence testing is so problematic. "Intelligence" doesn't exist outside of human beings and the tests we devise to measure it. However, intelligence testing has traditionally been developed around the idea of intelligence as some entity fixed and quantifiable in individual minds. The idea of intelligence itself "is a historically contingent mental concept" (Lewontin, 00: 32). Echoing Gould's (96) trenchant criticisms of g as a purported measure of intelligence, Lewontin explains how we can measure a person's height and then measure the heights of ten people and average them, but that this average isn't attributable to any real object. "There is no person with such a height, nor does it characterize the height of the collection of individuals since a collection of people does not have a height," writes Lewontin. "The average is not even a height. It is simply the sum of a lot of measurements divided by the number of measurements. It is a mental construction. To assert that it is a real attribute of a real thing is an act of reification" (00: 30). Numbers that purport to measure intelligence are guilty of a similar fallacy. Vygotsky, for his part, argued that learning precedes development. Supposed standardized, objective tests—from measures of intelligence to SATs—can be studied for, greatly influencing the score on the assessment.

SCIENCE, RELIGION AND HUMAN AGENCY

There are certain implications inherent in developmental systems theory for human agency and critical pedagogy. All too often the idea that genes or our upbringings control us or predispose us to certain outcomes/actions is used as an excuse for bad behaviors or to justify dehumanizing conditions. If human beings contain certain DNA sequences on their genotype then maybe they can't control their addictive behavior. If human beings are naturally selfish and self-interested then free market capitalism is a reflection of the human condition writ large on society and its institutions. If our genes or nurturing control and determine us, what then of our agency

and responsibility in history? "When genes and environment compete for center stage," warns Oyama, "the person tends to be pushed into the wings. Insofar as biology stands in for fate and necessity, it can also be used to delimit responsibility" (00b: 176).

Developmental systems theory sees potential itself and the potential *for potential* as contingent and ever in flux. We must "see potential itself, in the sense of possibilities for further alterations in a given structure, as having a developmental history," cautions Oyama. "It is multiply, progressively determined, with new varieties of causes and consequences emerging at different hierarchical levels and with time" (00a: 135). Again, the promise and responsibility of the individual as purposive-agent is driven home.

There are also, I believe, lessons to be learned from the developmental systems theory paradigm for the divide between religion and science, reason and emotion, rationality and faith. Less we forget, religions are responsible for some terrible things. In a one-month period as I wrote this chapter the following stories were reported: Atheist Raleigh City Councilman Cecil Bothwell faced a possible lawsuit over his lack of faith because North Carolina's state constitution "disqualifies officeholders 'who shall deny the being of Almighty God'" (AP, 09); America's "most influential conservative Christian thinker", Robert P. George, urged bishops at a conference to concentrate their authority on "'moral social' issues like abortion, embryonic stem-cell research and same-sex marriage" and not advocate specific measures to address social justice causes like poverty (Kirkpatrick, 09); A Danish artist survived *another* attack by a Muslim fanatic who broke into the artists' house—the attacker was incensed by the artist's 2005 newspaper caricatures of the prophet Muhammad (Lyall, 10); After a suicide bomber/double-agent murdered CIA operatives in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda in Afghanistan released a statement praising the bomber for detonating "his fine, astonishing and well-designed explosive device, which was unseen by the eyes of those who do not believe in the hereafter" (Stolberg & Mazzetti, 10); After a visit by evangelical American Christian missionaries who "discussed how to make gay people straight, how gay men often sodomized teenage boys, and how 'the gay movement is an evil institution'", Uganda passed the Anti-Homosexuality Bill of 2009 which called for hanging gays (Gettleman, 10). And after an earthquake leveled much of Port-Au-Prince, Pat Robertson told his *700 Club* audience this was "a blessing in disguise" and "reminded" his viewers that the Haitians "swore a pact to the devil. They said 'we will serve you if you will get us free from the French'…so the Devil said 'O.K., it's a deal.' and….ever since they've been cursed by one thing after the other" (Wood, 10).

Even if science doesn't interest you—and I'd argue it *should*—perhaps the most important thing to take away from developmental systems theory is the idea that it is never a situation of *either or*. All too often we conceptualize in antagonistic dualisms; it has to be emotion *or* rationality; its science or religion but it *cannot* be both; its reason *versus* faith. DST is showing that the development of individual organisms, their environments, and their worlds does not adhere to any such simplistic dichotomies. I think religion and science themselves have much to learn from this paradigm emerging in the natural and social sciences. While I think there are serious

issues stemming from faith and the varieties of religious experience in general, I do not look down on the religious or bash their beliefs.

Are religion and science ultimately reconcilable? Yes and no. Stephen Jay Gould applies the acronym NOMA (for *non-overlapping magisteria*) to an idea he admits has been in circulation for hundreds of years. Gould champions two claims behind the relationship of science and religion as NOMA:

> first, that these two domains hold equal worth and necessary status for any complete human life; and second, that they remain logically distinct and fully separate in styles of inquiry, however much and however tightly we must integrate the insights of both magisteria to build the rich and full view of life traditionally designated as wisdom (99: 58–59)

I personally would not agree with Gould that the domain of religion holds equal worth with that of science. But I realize that this is a conviction of my own and that there are religious people out there for whom the opposite is true. I don't need religion, religious insights or any variety of spirituality to complete my life. But I agree with Gould that the two "remain logically distinct and fully separate in styles of inquiry" and would argue they *must*.

The problem, from my point of view and for any critical pedagogy and an ethic of care, is when religious adherents get aggressive in the promulgation of their faith, an aggression that often seeks to challenge and usurp science. I'm not religious now, but when I was I accepted the laws and facts of science. I felt that the god I believed in had created a world where these were possible. He must have necessarily meant them to be used by us to live better, more comfortable, more complete lives. I never viewed science as a threat to my god's suzerainty and I don't remember questioning my faith on the grounds of any scientific advance.

Richard Dawkins challenged Stephen Jay Gould in life and death (Gould passed away from lung cancer that spread to his brain in 2002). In life, their most famous quarrel was over the rate at which evolution occurred (Sterelny, 01). In death, Dawkins criticizes Gould for carrying "the art of bending over backwards to positively supine lengths" so as not to offend the religious (06: 55). Dawkins doesn't accept the idea "that Gould could possibly have meant much of what he wrote [about NOMA]. As I say, we have all been guilty of bending over backwards to be nice to an unworthy but powerful opponent, and I can only think that this is what Gould was doing" (06: 57). Though I agree with Dawkins that we nonbelievers all too often go out of our way *not* to offend the believers, I disagree with his assessment of Gould's intentions. Having read Gould through the years, I honestly believe the late, great paleontologist accepted the idea of two areas of teaching that did not overlap but from which one could learn much.

That said, the problem isn't that Gould believed what he did, but that others do not. I am speaking of a certain strand of the religious here. In *Rock of Ages,* Gould speaks of "some militant atheists whose blinkered concept of religion grasps none of the subtlety or diversity [of religious belief]" (06: 69). Though I suppose some of these do exist, I know for a fact they are outnumbered by the legions of fundamentalist zealots who want to impose their religious beliefs on everyone else. Again, the

answer isn't to extirpate religion or persecute the religious, but to ensure true religious freedom and freedom *from* religion for all and to guard against the persecution of those of varying- and no-faiths.

Unfortunately we live in a world where religion gets away with murder, literally and figuratively. In the United States, for instance, religious organizations and institutions receive millions of dollars for projects like youth mentoring and building roads that service private religious universities; certain states exempt religious day care services from state licensing requirements; workers who have faith-based employers lack the protections afforded workers in other workplaces; clergy members receive tax breaks on their housing; and public school students pledge allegiance to a flag "under God". (Henriques, 06a–d)

Science is our best bet to understand who we are and how we got here, to comprehend our world and the ways it works, and to make sense of our place in the universe. But the prescriptive power of science is limited. "[S]cience can say nothing about the morality of morals," noted Gould,

> That is, the potential discovery by anthropologists that murder, infanticide, genocide, and xenophobia may have characterized many human societies, may have arisen preferentially in certain social situations, and may even be adaptively beneficial in certain contexts, offers no support whatever for the moral proposition that we ought to behave in such a manner (Gould, 99: 66)

Gould is correct. As science helps us understand our malleable natures as biological creatures we need to make sure the explanations provided are not used as excuses for behaviors that may have had survival value on the African savannah hundreds of thousands of years ago but are downright anti-social and dehumanizing today. "To ask biology to tell us what is *desirable*," warns Susan Oyama, "is to ask science to do our moral work for us" (00: 139). Biology should not encumber announcing and denouncing; it should not impede prophetic or utopian thinking. The "natural" is not necessarily the desirable, nor is it the inevitable, and, if developmental systems theory teaches us anything it teaches us that the natural itself isn't natural in some a-historical, fixed manner. "We must decide what kind of world we want, and why," counsels Oyama,

> We won't necessarily succeed in bringing it about, but we shouldn't be deterred prematurely from trying because of biological evidence of whatever variety. That is, we shouldn't simply leap to the conclusion that matters are hopeless, either because we believe the biological, in any of its senses, is fixed, or because we believe it is dangerous to tamper with what is 'natural'(00: 139).

Amen, sister. As Oyama, Lewontin, Gould, Levins, Hitchens and Dawkins would argue, each in their own way, biology is not destiny. Science and religion, each in its own way, must be used to advance the human condition, not to hold it back.

CHAPTER 6

TO TAKE OPTIONS

Prophetic Thinking and Dystopian Literature

CONDITIONING AND THE REALIZATION OF UTOPIA

"One of the things that pleases me most about being a person," explained Paulo Freire, "is knowing that the history that shapes me and which I shape is about possibilities, not determinism" (96: 164). History is written *after* the fact; history is made and lived in the *present* by people. History, in the sense of the events and times that shape our worlds and give meaning to our lives, is made, created, and crafted. Looking back we are sometimes tempted to say "things turned out the way they were supposed to"; this, however, is a post-facto justification, which we oftentimes mouth when we feel history happened *to us*, that we lacked agency in the course of time. Unlike the notion of history as "unfolding" or history as some kind of preordained eternal recurrence, human history is about possibility and potentiality. Looking back, we need to realize that what *was* was not necessarily all that could have been; looking forward, we need to realize choices we make—as individuals with others—matter and give shape to our tomorrows.

Paulo Freire understood history in this way. Understanding that we, as individuals, and our history, as a record of past events, is not written in stone before the fact means that we are actors who must make decisions. Sartre spoke of the "anxiety" that comes from constantly having to choose and knowing we have to choose, when not choosing itself constitutes a choice (Gerassi, 09: 128). "People as beings 'in a situation,'" wrote Freire, "find themselves rooted in temporal-spatial conditions which mark them and which they also mark" (97: 90). Easier for many to be led, to be told what to do and think. People "will tend to reflect on their own 'situationality' to the extent that they are challenged to act upon it" (Freire, Ibid). The implications of our agency in history are enormous and not the least overwhelming should we allow it to be so. Yet our ability to choose, to make ethical decisions, implies tremendous freedom and nearly endless possibility. "Human beings *are* because they *are in* a situation," explained Freire, "And they *will be more* the more they not only critically reflect upon their existence but critically act upon it" (Ibid).

Freire spoke of we humans as "unfinished beings, conscious of our unfinishedness" (98: 57). The human condition is one of constant evolution because we are not determined—by historical circumstances, material conditions, or individual ontology—although it may at times seem as if we are. Our "incompleteness implies for us a permanent movement of search" (Freire, 98: 57). We are actively looking for ways to be more human, to more thoroughly enjoy our lives and to make our lives more enjoyable (which, not incidentally, is not the same goal). Critical pedagogies

recognize the importance of democracy as a human condition, both social and individual. Our futures depend on our input; we create the road by walking (Horton & Freire, 90). “My role in the world,” remarked Freire, “is not simply that of someone who registers what occurs but of someone who has an input into what happens” (98: 73). In our search we are not like a blind person groping about an unfamiliar room. We have some idea of “where” we would like to be; of what “being more” would mean; of what constitutes “humanization.” Freire spoke of “revolutionary futurity”, of “prophetic” or utopian thinking as the genesis of this vision (97: 65).

Our historical unfinishedness, the fact that we are conditioned and not determined, explains why we are ethical beings. “Being unfinished and therefore historical, conscious of our unfinishedness, we are necessarily ethical because we have to decide,” explained Freire, “To take options. Our historical unfinishedness demands it” (98: 101). We make choices, we *must* make choices, and those choices define us and our stance towards other human beings, non-human animals, and the earth itself. “To the extent that the future is problematic and not inexorable, the human praxis… requires decisions, severance, and choice. It requires ethics” (Freire, 96: 164). Freire made clear the direction of his choices and options, *annoucing* that “My utopian dream has to do with a society that is less unjust, less cruel, more democratic, less discriminatory, less racist, less sexist” (93: 115). It was not inevitable that Freire chose these as his goals. We are “ethical beings who in [our] ethicality are capable of being unethical” (Freire, 98: 115). I could choose to embrace Nietzsche’s *ubermensch* or eternal recurrence; I could choose to worry only about my family and my own personal self aggrandizement; and so could you. We live in societies and a world that make this very easy to do and very tempting to do so.

Revolutionary futurity or “propethetic thought, which is also utopian, implies *denouncing* how we are living and *announcing* how we could live” (Freire, 04: 105). In a certain sense denouncing is easier than announcing, because it is easier to come to understand what has been done to you than to conceive what could become of you. Yet prophetic thought encourages us to imagine a better tomorrow which will then guide us on our collective search to realize this better tomorrow. Merely conceiving a future without trying to realize it is a form of individual escapism, at best a type of rebellion, which does no harm to the systemic institutional factors that condition and dehumanize us.

Like most of you reading this, I was born in the twentieth century and find myself living in the twenty-first. I grew up in the end of a century marked by prophetic thinking that manifested itself in dystopian literature. The dystopian works I would like to discuss in this chapter have many themes in common, themes that critical pedagogies take issue with. For example, future governments in dystopian novels are often totalitarian and centralized whereas critical pedagogies tend to champion various forms of decentralized, participatory democracy. Language is often a tool of control in dystopian literature, whereas critical pedagogies recognize language as an existential necessity that unites human beings. In dystopian literature, the body and emotions are manipulated and channeled in service of humanity’s dehumanization. Social stratification in the future societies of dystopian novels is highly developed, regimented and hierarchical; critical pedagogies strive for classless societies free of oppressors

and oppressed. Social engineering in the dystopian future—from infanticide to eugenics to euthanasia—is complex and all encompassing; critical pedagogies place a premium on individual liberty. Humanity's social nature is blamed for dystopian living conditions or serves as an excuse for authoritarian rulers to justify their rule; yet many dystopian novels contradict themselves in that the struggles for freedom they detail is usually conceived as a collective struggle of individuals. Children are *abused* in dystopian novels: they are portrayed as innately savage and often set against one another in brutal games of violence.

The works I will discuss below include George Orwell's *1984*; Koushun Takami's *Battle Royale*; Nevil Shute's *On the Beach*; Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange*; *The Running Man* and *The Long Walk*, both by Stephen King; Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*; Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game*; Philip K. Dick's *The Minority Report* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*; Ayn Rand's *Anthem*; Lois Lowry's *The Giver*; Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and *The Children of Men* by P.D. James. Many of these books have been made into movies, and some of them I have really enjoyed, even when they strayed greatly from the original source material (as in the case of Cuaron's 2007 *Children of Men* and *Bladerunner*, Ridley Scott's take on Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*). However, I will center the following discussion on the novels and not the filmed versions. The list is capricious; these are books I was drawn to or were recommended to me for one reason or another. Undoubtably there are many other books written in the twentieth century that are truly utopian and not dystopian. Yet the proliferation of dystopian literature in the mid-to-late 1900s—much of it centered in or around England—concerns me for what it said about prophetic thinking at that moment in time.

TOTALITARIAN GOVERNMENT AND TECHNOLOGY VERSUS INDIVIDUAL AGENCY

Dystopian novels have many points in common. A familiar theme in this literature is the nature of government in the future: the governing apparatus of tomorrow is, almost inevitably, totalitarian and authoritarian in nature. In P.D. James' *Children of Men* a director and Warden of England, Xan Lyppiatt, rules. Miniscule trappings of parliamentary democracy still exist in James' dystopic future: for example, the Warden is advised by a Council of Four and a Parliament, which neither debates bills nor passes legislation, meets once a year. "The system has the merit of simplicity and gives the illusion of democracy to people who no longer have the energy to care how or by whom they are governed," explains James, "as long as they get what the Warden has promised: freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom from boredom" (92: 89). There is even a king, though in a world where people have inexplicably lost the ability to reproduce, even a monarch is but "an unemployable archaic reminder of what we have lost" (James, 92: 89).

In Ayn Rand's *Anthem*, those chosen to be leaders move into the "Home of the Leaders," which, not incidentally, "is the greatest house in the city", where they live and study "so that they may become candidates and be elected to the City Council and the State Council and the World Council—by a free and general vote of all men" (64: 25). The future society of Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (93) is ruled by "the

Elders of the Community" who watch and monitor community members. Aldous Huxley's future England is ruled by Mustapha Mond, who bears the title "Resident Controller for Western Europe," one of the ten most powerful men in the world (05). Where the pontiff in contemporary Roman Catholicism is believed by his followers to have papal infallibility, in Huxley's *Brave New World*, where Henry Ford is revered as a deity, words from Mond's mouth are seen as "[s]traight from the mouth of Ford himself" (Huxley, Ibid). George Orwell's future England in *1984* is ruled by a totalitarian party. In a society where "nothing was illegal, since there were no longer any laws," people are regularly carted off in the night to their deaths or to forced labor camps (Orwell, 49: 19).

What has led to these totalitarian governments of the future? A recurring theme throughout these novels is the idea that the unique individual has been subsumed by some all-encompassing, stifling collective. Like *The Blob* (ds. Yeaworth & Doughten, 58), the more individuals this mass consumes the larger it becomes and the more difficult it becomes to escape it. The hero of Ayn Rand's *Anthem*, Equality 7-2521 lives in a grossly collectivist society where "[t]he laws say that none among men may be alone, ever and at any time, for this is the great transgression and the root of all evil" (64: 17). Equality's world is one in which "We strive to be like all our brother men, for all men must be alike" (Rand, 64: 19); where the words inscribed over the portals of the Palace of the World Council read "There are no men but only the great WE, One, indivisible and forever" (Ibid); a world in which "men may wish nothing for themselves" (Rand, 64: 24).

In the dystopian England of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, "every one belongs to every one else," and each knows this as it has literally been repeated sixty two thousand times to each person in their sleep as they grew up (Huxley, 05: 46). Despite stark caste differences, "[a]ll men are physico-chemically equal" and "every one works for every one else," from the highest World Controllers to the lowliest "Epsilon-Minus Semi-Moron" elevator operator (Huxley, 05: 76, 77, 64). The character of Bernard Marx is viewed with suspicion because of his "mania…for doing things in private. Which meant, in practice, not doing anything at all. For what was there that one *could* do in private[?]" (Huxley, 05: 88). Huxley's *Brave New World* is a one where "[W]hen the individual feels, the community reels"; a world of such engineered conformity that "two thousand million inhabitants of the planet had only ten thousand names between them"; a planet controlled by a World State (05: 92, 42, 58).

In *1984*'s Newspeak, *Ownlife*, meaning individualism and eccentricity, is a bad thing as one is always expected to be engaged in some Party or community activity (Orwell, 49: 69). *The Giver's* Jonas grows up in a society where little kids wear jackets "that fastened down the back so that they would have to help each other dress and would learn interdependence"; his is a community where it "was considered rude to call attention to things that were unsettling or different about individuals"; where "release" (i.e., *death*) from the community "was a final decision, a terrible punishment, an overwhelming statement of failure" (Lowry, 93: 40, 20 & 2).

Is this championing of the whole against the sum of its parts the cause of totalitarian government or a form of control totalitarian governments use to maintain their

power? For libertarian ideologues like Ayn Rand it is the former; for many of the other authors and works under consideration here the relationship is more nebulous. When Equality 7-2521 presents his dynamo to the white-robed "World Council"—with members baring names like Collective 0-0009, International 1-5537, Similarity 5-0305, Unanimity 2-9913 and Democracy 4-6998—they are aghast. They berate this inventive individual, telling him he will be punished because "[w]hat is not done collectively cannot be good"; that "[w]hat is not thought by all men cannot be true"; and when Equality argues that the generator will save labor he is told "then it is a great evil, for men have no cause to exist save in toiling for other men" (Rand, 64: 74). Contrast this attitude towards the collective with the motivation of Orwell's rulers in *1984*. "The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake," O'Brien tells Winston Smith. "We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power. Not wealth or luxury or long life or happiness: only power, pure power…. Power is not a means, it is an end" (Orwell, 49: 211). In pursuit of power the Party will reduce all men and women to servitude, in service of the state (which *is* the Party), under the watchful, omniscent eye of Big Brother. The party exists for its own sake, grinding individuals into oblivion: "If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—for ever" (Orwell, 49: 215).

Future dystopian governments often hawk how free their societies are while they go to elaborate lengths to maintain complex apparatuses of control. In *1984* the image of Big Brother—the face of the totalitarian state—is everywhere. Big Brother, who may very well be a fictional creation of the authoritarian government with no basis in physical corporeality, is depicted in paintings and posters as "an enormous face: the face of a man of about forty-five, with a heavy black moustache and ruggedly handsome features" (Orwell, 49: 5). His pictures are "so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU," the caption beneath the pictures read (Orwell, Ibid). As ubiquitous as the images of Big Brother are the telescreens, which serve the dual purpose of diseminating state propaganda and spying on the populace. The ultimate surveillance system, telescreens—which can be dimmed but never shut off—are even installed in people's apartments. In *1984*, as in many of the dystopian societies discussed here, one must live with the assumption of continual sureveillance, of panopticonism. In the community of *The Giver* there are speakers all over the place through which people can hear and be heard. The speakers cannot be turned off. P.D. James speaks of the "perpetual surveillance" of the Warden's England in *Children of Men* (92: 11).

Throughout dystopian literature we are reminded that technology need not make our lives easier. Totalitarian societies use technology to control the individual. Andrew "Ender" Wiggin has a monitor surgically implanted in the back of his head for three years in Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game*. "We were connected directly to your brain" Ender is told (Card, 91: 23).When he turns six, doctors remove the monitor from Ender, a dangerous procedure in itself. "We could have unplugged his brain for all time," a harried doctor admits to his nurse (Card, 91: 4).

The technology of control in the dystopian future often goes beyond skin, bone, and membranes to one's inner thoughts, desires, and hopes. It is a constraint which extends to the depths of human psychology. In Philp K. Dick's short story,

The Minority Report, potential criminals are arrested before they can commit crime; “In our society we have no major crimes,” notes Precrime Commisioner John A. Anderton, “but we do have a detention camp full of would-be criminals” (Dick, 87: 324). “Deformed and retarded” “precogs” housed in the police department contemplate the future and an analysis of their babblings reveals the crimes of the coming two weeks, allowing for the apprehension of individuals *before* they can commit their misdeeds (Dick, 87: 325). In *A Clockwork Orange*, the state conditions fifteen-year-old Alex to feel sick when he contemplates violence. Alex is hooked up to machines—“they put like clips on the skin of my forehead, so that my top glazzies [eye lids] were pulled up and up and I could not shut my glazzies [eyes] no matter how hard I tried”—fed drugs that sicken him, and forced to watch state-made snuff films while listening to his beloved classical music (Burgess, 68: 117).

The state in *A Clockwork Orange* seeks to make Alex good, to “[k]ill the criminal reflex” in him (Burgess, 68: 106). “You are being made sane,” he is told as he is subjected to the Ludovico Technique, “you are being made healthy” (Burgess, 68: 124). The state in *The Minority Report* witnesses no murders, rapes, or other major crimes, despite “[t]he basic legalistic drawback to precrime methodology…[that] [w]e’re taking in individuals who have broken no law” (Dick, 87: 324). Alex recognizes that “…you can’t run a country with every chelloveck [person] comporting himself in my manner” (Burgess, 68: 46). “The heresy of an age of reason,” Dr. Brodsky explains to Alex, is “I see what is right and approve, but I do what is wrong. No, no, my boy, you must leave it all to us” (Burgess, 68: 134). Dr. Brodsky and the state are going to rob Alex of the very thing that allows him to be ethical: his capacity to be unethical, his agency. “Does God want goodness or the choice of goodness?” the prison chaplain muses after Alex comes to him asking to volunteer for the Ludovico Technique. “Is a man who chooses the bad perhaps in some way better than a man who has the good imposed on him?” (Burgess, 68: 110). The chaplain tells Alex that “Goodness comes from within…Goodness is something chosen. When a man cannot choose he ceases to be a man” (Burgess, 68: 96). After his “treatment”, Alex is presented to an audience in an exhibition; the mere thought of violence sickens him. Thus “[h]e ceases to be a wrongdoer,” voices the chaplain from amidst the spectators. “He ceases also to be a creature capable of moral choice.” To which Dr. Brodsky replies, “These are subtleties….We are not concerned with motive, with the higher ethics. We are concerned only with cutting down crime” (Burgess, 68: 145).

“[T]o alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects,” felt Freire, and Alex’s treatment by the state and then the dissident group opposed to this state is that of an object (Freire, 97: 66). Alex, stripped of his agency in the commission of wrong-doing, has been objectified. “I think you can be used, poor boy,” the writer F. Alexander, who also doesn’t care about Alex as a human being, muses, “ I think that you can help to dislodge this overbearing Government” (Burgess, 68: 180). F. Alexander and his co-conspirators write an article critical of the government from Alex’s point of view which they expect Alex to sign (Burgess, 68: 184). In the end the state uses Alex again, deconditioning him, providing him a job, and parading him around in the public as proof of the

government's humaneness. "You are helping us," the Prime Minister tells Alex (Burgess, 68: 204).

"[I]t is only because we are ethical that we can also be unethical," explains Freire (98: 57). We can choose the good but we can also choose the bad. Being conditioned and not determined, nothing compels us to the good. Hence Sartre's notion that men and women are "condemned to be free," to choose and be responsible for those choices. Our "capacity to intervene [in the world], to compare, to judge, to decide, to choose, to desist makes [us] capable of acts of greatness, of dignity," notes Freire, "and, at the same time, of the unthinkable in terms of indignity" (98: 53). The state in *A Clockwork Orange* has made Alex something less than a human being; a similar state of affairs prevails in *The Minority Report*.

PANOPTICONISM AND THE DYSTOPIAN FUTURE

Language is often a tool of control and domination in dystopian societies. Language in *1984* is perverted by "doublethink" and "Newspeak". Much like the United States' Department of Defense—formerly and more honestly known as the War Department—concerns itself with aggression, in Orwell's *1984* "[t]he Ministry of Peace concerns itself with war, the Ministry of Truth with lies, the Ministry of Love with torture, and the Ministry of Plenty with starvation" (49: 172). The protagonist of *1984*, Winston Smith, has a friend, Syme, who works in the Research Department of the Ministry of Truth. "You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words," Syme confides to Winston. "But not a bit of it! We're destroying words—scores of them, hundreds of them, every day. We're cutting the language down to the bone" with the goal of narrowing the range of thought (Orwell, 49: 44–45).

The "learning of precise speech" is of utmost importance in the society of *The Giver*. Once, before lunch in school, Jonas had said, "'I am starving.'/ Immediately he had been taken aside for a private lesson in language precision. He was not starving, it was pointed out. He was *hungry*" (Lowry, 93: 70). When Jonas asks his parents if they "love" him they lecture him on the precision of language, saying, "…you used a very generalized word, so meaningless that it's become almost obsolete. You could ask, 'Do you enjoy me?' The answer is 'Yes'" (Lowry, 93: 127). One of Jonas' three-year-old friends who repeatedly fumbles his words is physically beaten with the "discipline wand" to the point that the kid stops talking altogether for awhile (Lowry, 93: 55). In Equality 7-2521's world, the words "I" and "Me" do not exist, only "We" (Rand, 64: 24).

It is not surprising that totalitarian societies place such a premium on controlling language and human expression. "Human existence cannot be silent," writes Freire, "Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection" (97: 69). Dialogue, the use of language between human beings, is "an existential necessity" because it is "the way by which [we] achieve significance as human beings" (Freire, 97: 69). The precogs in *The Minority Report* do not dialogue with each other or other human beings; hooked up to machines, they jabber to themselves. The precogs are not looked upon as fully human by Anderton or others. Freire warned that dialogue "is an act of creation" between human beings, that "it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person by another" (97: 70).

The totalitarian state of the dystopian future uses language to dominate its population, whether through language precision as in *The Giver* or Newspeak in *1984*.

For the totalitarian state—with its jack-booted thugs and armed presence, with its various and sundry apparatus' of surveillance and means of repression—the ultimate frontier left for usurpation is the individual mind. "[P]ower is power over human beings," O'Brien tells Winston. "Over the body—but, above all, over the mind" (Orwell, 49: 213). If the state can interpose itself in the individual's psychology—as it does in *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Minority Report,* and *Brave New World*—it can control one's thoughts, beliefs, and actions. This is the ultimate goal of the totalitarian state in a number of dystopian novels, which vary only in the extent to which this control is complete. For instance, in *Anthem* "[i]t is forbidden, not to be happy" (yet no one is happy) (Rand, 64: 45); whereas in *1984*, "Thoughtcrime" is recognized as "the essential crime that contained all others in itself" (Orwell, 49: 19).

To control the individual, her thoughts and desires, to be able to determine and not merely condition humanity to embrace their servitude, oppression and dehumanization: this is the ultimate mark of success for any propaganda system. Throughout dystopian novels, authoritarian regimes attempt this over and over. In the community of *The Giver* a morning anthem is chanted by community members (Lowry, 93: 3). In Equality 7-2521's world one is sent to the Home of Students at age five for a period of ten years. Before turning in for the night, students and their teachers recite the following "prayer": "We are nothing. Mankind is all. By the grace of our brothers we are allowed to live. We exist through, by and for our brothers who are the State. Amen" (Rand, 64: 21).

Education and history are manipulated to shape individuals in totalitarian societies of the dystopian future. "'Who controls the past, ran the Party slogan, 'controls the future: who controls the present controls the past'" (Orwell, 49: 31). Winston works at the Ministry of Truth, which concerns itself with lies and propaganda, which is euphemistically called *MiniTrue* in Newspeak. When Winston alters a document to meet the needs of the Party at that particular moment he takes the original and deposits it in the "memory hole", where hot air currents carry it to a furnace. "This process of continuous alteration was applied not only to newspapers, but to books, periodicals, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, films, sound-tracks, cartoons, photographs," explains Orwell. "Day by day and almost minute by minute the past was brought up to date. In this way every prediction made by the Party could be shown by documentary evidence to have been correct…" (49: 35).

Equality 7-2521 exists in a world where the remnants of "the Unmentionable Times" have been eradicated save for what is left in an "Unchartered Forest" "about which men must not think" and are never to visit (Rand, 64: 37). Books—with knowledge of the past, knowledge that is potentially subversive to the current regime—are only available to the Home of the Scholars. Equality 7-2521 has been taught about "the great fighting" in which "the Evil Ones" had been destroyed in a great fire, "the fire which is called the Dawn of the Great Rebirth, was the Script Fire where all the scripts of the Evil Ones were burned, and with them all the words of the Evil Ones" (Rand, 64: 48–49). In Huxley's *Brave New World*, children are conditioned to "grow up with what psychologists used to call an 'instinctive' hatred

of books" (05: 30); books are viewed as impediments to consumption; books are viewed as potentially dangerous because "Words can be like X-rays, if you use them properly—they'll go through anything. You read and you're pierced"; all books published before A.F. (After Ford) 150 are banned and only books with titles like *The Chemical and Bacteriological Conditioning of the Embryo. Practical Instructions for Beta Embryo-Store Workers* are still extant (Huxley, 05: 30, 56, 73, 121). F. Alexander has written a subversive book called *A Clockwork Orange* in the novel of the same name (Burgess, 88: 203).

Recalcitrant individuals are broken and conditioned by torture. Equality 7-2521 is taken to the Stone Room under the Palace of Corrective Detention, a room with no windows, empty except for an iron post to which he will be tied and lashed by two Judges, "naked but for leather aprons and leather hoods over their faces" (Rand, 64: 64). In Room 101 in the Ministry of Love, where Winston is tortured, O'Brien tells him, "Only the disciplined mind can see reality, Winston....Reality exists in the human mind....Not in the individual mind, which can make mistakes... only in the mind of the Party, which is collective and immortal. Whatever the Party holds to be truth, *is* truth" (Orwell, 49: 200).

Through a combination of drugs and operant conditioning, Alex is made to become physically sick when he merely considers acts of violence in the "reclamation process" of Ludovico's treatment (Burgess, 68). The doctors responsible for his "treatment" seem oddly unaffected by Alex's suffering and assure him "You are being made sane, you are being made healthy" (Burgess, 68: 124). Questioned and beaten, Winston Smith succumbs and his "sole concern was to find out what they wanted him to confess, and then confess it quickly, before the bullying started anew. He confessed to the assassination of Party members, the distribution of seditious pamphlets, embezzlement of public funds, sale of military secrets, sabotage of every kind" (Orwell, 49: 194). Winston even admits to being a "sexual pervert" (Ibid).

The torture and conditioning meted out Alex, Winston, Equality and other protagonists in dystopian literature is not meant to merely punish. Its role is to shape and inform, to create and determine. "The command of the old despotisms was 'Thou shall not,'" O'Brien tells Winston in Room 101. "The command of the totalitarians was 'Thou shalt.' Our command is 'Thou art'" (Orwell, 49: 205). "He will be your true Christian," Dr. Brodsky tells an assembled audience that watches Alex get physically sick when he contemplates wrong-doing, "ready to turn the other cheek, ready to be crucified rather than crucify, sick to the very heart at the thought even of killing a fly", which, indeed, Alex is (Burgess, 68: 148). "'They can't get inside you,' she had said," thinks Winston, "'But they could get inside you. 'What happens to you here [in Room 101] is *for ever*,' O'Brien had said" (Orwell, 49: 233). Winston emerges from Room 101 and the Ministry of Love realizing "that if you want to keep a secret you must also hide it from yourself....From now onwards he must not only think right; he must feel right, dream right" (Orwell, 49: 225–226).

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN THE DYSTOPIAN FUTURE

Future dystopian worlds are segmented by stark social stratification reinforced by sophisticated social engineering. *1984*'s Oceania is a society of Big Brother, the

Inner Party, the Outer Party, and the Low, the dumb masses, who comprise 85% of the population (Orwell, 49: 167 & 59). Alex's working class parents—his "Pee" [father], who labors at a dye works, and "em" [mother], who works at a state-run supermarket—live in "the flats of Municipal Flatblock 18A", much different than the suburban single family homes in which intellectuals and others live (Burgess, 68: 37). "We need our snobberies," notes Theo of his future England in *Children of Men*. "Equality is a political theory not a practical policy, even in Xan's egalitarian Britain" (James, 92: 7). The Sojourners are foreigners in Theo's England, immigrants who come to "clean the sewers, clear away the rubbish, look after the incontinent, the aged", to do the dirty work of society (James, 92: 58). The Omegas, the last generation of humanity, stand outside of Theo's society, "a race apart, indulged, propitiated, feared, regarded with a half-superstitious awe" (James, 92: 10).

In the England of Huxley's *Brave New World*, human beings are predestined and conditioned. The Social Predestination Room turns out various classes of human beings, from Alphas, who wear grey and are tall and have the cushiest position in society, to Epsilons, who "don't need human intelligence" and wear black (Huxley, 05: 25). Alpha Bernard Marx doesn't fit in with his fellow Alphas for a number of reasons, but like every other Alpha he looks down on the lower castes. Because Bernard is "eight centimeters short of the standard Alpha height" he is forced to look lower-caste khaki-clad Deltas in the eye and feels humiliated for doing so (Huxley, 05: 69).

The poisoned earth of Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is a socially stratified planet. Able-bodied and able-minded human beings have already left for the colonies; others, like bounty hunter Rick Deckard, find that their jobs keep them on the ruined planet. People like J.S. Isidore, who have deteriorated mentally from the toxicity of earth, are referred to as "specials" or "chicken heads" and considered "biologically unacceptable, a menace to the pristine heredity of the race" (Dick, 68: 16). Specials cannot marry or emigrate and "ceased, in effect, to be part of mankind" (Dick, 68: 70 & 16). Beneath the chickenheads are the enslaved androids themselves, forbidden entry to earth. "It's a chance anyway, breaking free and coming here to Earth," android Garland tells Rick, "where we're not even considered animals. Where every worm and wood louse is considered more desirable than all of us put together" (Dick, 68: 122). Rick feels that the Nexus-6 androids, "had from a sort of rough, pragmatic, no-nonsense standpoint evolved beyond a major—but inferior—segment of mankind", namely the specials (Dick, 68: 30).

Social engineering from birth to the grave is the norm in these societies. In *Anthem*, children are taken from their mothers and raised in a "Home of the Infants" until they are five years old, never getting to know their birth parents (Rand, 64). A "Council of Vocations" prescribes careers; though Equality 7-2521 would like to be assigned to the Council of Scholars, he is made a street sweeper and lives in the "Home of the Street Sweepers" (Rand, 64: 27). At a "Ceremony of Twelve" in *The Giver*, "the most important" of a series of ceremonies in Jonas' community, children are assigned a job (Lowry, 93: 14). Jonas and the other children are lucky to make it to the Ceremony of Twelve. "Newchildren" who don't fit with the community—i.e., if they don't grow fast enough, don't sleep soundly enough—are

"released" from the community; that is, given a lethal injection (Lowry, 93: 8). Education in Oceania is viewed as "a problem of continuously moulding the consciousnesses" (Orwell, 49: 166).

Motherhood is an obscenity in a *Brave New World* where children are produced in Hatcheries and Conditioning Centers and the motto is "Community, Identity, Stability" (Huxley, 05: 18). The sight of a woman breast-feeding sickens inhabitants of a dystopian future England where children are encouraged to engage in "erotic play" and adults who chew "sex-hormone chewing gum" attend "the feelies" for entertainment (Huxley, 05: 106, 38, 66). From embryo on, individuals are exposed to Hypnopaedia—"the greatest moralizing and socializing force of all time" (Huxley, 05: 36). Hypnopaedic proverbs like "everyone belongs to everyone else" and hypnopaedic lessons "in hygiene and sociability, in class-consciousness and the toddler's love life" are repeated ad nauseum over the course of a person's growth (Huxley, 05: 46; 137). In addition to the unconscious and subliminal messages, *Brave New World*'s society is one of extensive state propaganda and "[t]he various Bureaux of Propaganda and the College of Emotional Engineering were housed in a single sixty-story building" (Huxley, 05: 70).

In Equality's world there is a "City Palace of Mating" in which "all men older than twenty and all the women older than eighteen are sent for one night" (Rand, 64: 41). Spouses are matched in *The Giver* and "[a]ll of the factors—disposition, energy level, intelligence, and interests—had to correspond and to interact perfectly" (Lowry, 93: 48). Promiscuity is compulsory in *Brave New World*, where long-term relationships between individual men and women are not allowed and one character reassures another, "Don't imagine…that I'd had any indecorous relation with that girl. Nothing emotional, nothing longdrawn" (Huxley, 05: 95). Though Bernard Marx is disgusted by the way women have bought into their conditioning—"She thinks of herself that way. She doesn't mind being meat" he realizes of Lenina—he takes advantage of their acquiescence when he gains some fame (Huxley, 05: 92).

The old fare no better than the young in dystopian societies. When you are forty you are sent to a "Home of the Useless for the Old Ones" in *Anthem* (Rand, 64). At forty-five you're considered an "Ancient One" (Rand, 64: 20). The "Quietus" is the forced mass suicide of the old in Theo's England. Theo visits a Quietus to see what happens for himself. Old women are lined up on a beach in their white robes, "carrying a small posy of flowers so that they looked like a bevy of disheveled bridesmaids" (James, 92: 73). A band plays cheerful songs as the old women are shackled, weighted down at the ankles, and loaded onto a boat that will be sunk at sea (James, 92). In *Brave New World* people eventually die, and "death conditioning", where "[e]very tot spends two mornings a week in a Hospital for the Dying" "begins at eighteen months", and no one is allowed to age naturally (Huxley, 05: 151). Bernard explains to Lenina that, in their England, "We preserve [people] from diseases. We keep the internal secretions artificially balanced at a youthful equilibrium. We don't permit their magnesium-calcium ratio to fall below what it was at thirty. We give them transfusions of young blood. We keep their metabolisms permanently stimulated" (Huxley, 05: 106).

The societies of the dystopian future are themselves often terrible places to live. People are afraid to go out at night because of roving bands of wilding youth in Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* (68: 57). Club-wielding Omegas with painted faces and torches terrorize the countryside in *Children of Men*. Prisons are overcrowded in *A Clockwork Orange* as it is and "[s]oon we may be needing all our prison space for political offenders" (Burgess, 68: 105). The Isle of Man has been transformed into a penal colony in P.D. James' *The Children of Men*. In Dick's *Do Androids Dream…*, "garbage collecting and trash disposal had, since the war, become one of Earth's important industries" as "[t]he entire planet had begun to disintegrate into junk, and to keep the planet habitable for the remaining population the junk had to be hauled away occasionally" (68: 87). Thugs like Alex's one-time friend Dim, who makes it a point to defecate on the rugs of homes they rob, go on to become police officers (Burgess, 68: 171).

Following the suicide epidemics of 2008, self-destruction is outlawed in James' England and the Warden imposes fines on the nearest living relations of the suiciders (92: 9). Abortion is illegal on Philip K. Dick's earth where "the population is small enough now [that] everyone, sooner or later, runs into a random checkpoint" (68: 50 & 53). Rock music is prohibited in *Battle Royale*'s Republic of Greater East Asia and playing the guitar is an "unpatriotic" activity (Takami, 03: 29 & 22). The "squads" come and get you at night in Stephen King's *The Long Walk*. Jet bombers are ever present in the skies above Guy Montag's house, "going over, going over, going over, one two, one two, one two, six of them, nine of them, twelve of them, one and one and one and another and another and another…" (Bradbury, 91: 14). Montag lives in a country that has "started and won two atomic wars since 1990" (Bradbury, 91: 73). Ben Richards' world in *The Running Man* is one "of limited legalized murder, germ warfare in Egypt and South America, and the notorious have-one-kill-one law Nevada abortion law" (King, 82: 152).

The corporate and consummerist imprint is oppressive in the dystopian future. Billboards in Guy Montag's world are two-hundred feet in length, the better to be seen while speeding by on air-propelled trains (Bradbury, 91: 9). The Network Games building is the tallest skyscraper in Ben Richards' world, looming over all much as the Games Federation does "with their huge and potent communications link to the whole world" (King, 82: 158). "The manufacture of androids" by the private Rosen Corporation in *Do Androids Dream…* "has become so linked to the colonization effort" by the world's governments "that if one dropped into ruin, so would the other in time" (Dick, 68: 45). Starting with the fetus, hypnopeadic conditioning instills consumerism in the people of *Brave New World*, with messages such as "I love new clothes, I love new clothes, I love…" (Huxley, 05: 58). Mending, not incidentally, is considered anti-social in a world of rampant consumerism. The production date of Henry Ford's Model T is the "opening date of the new era," *AF*, after Ford (Huxley, 05: 57). People make the sign of the T instead of the sign of the cross and use *Ford* in place of *god* in phrases like "Oh my Ford" and "Thank Ford." As Controller Mustapha Mond explains, "industrial civilization is only possible when there's no self-denial" (Huxley, 05: 212). Hence the World Controllers "won't approve of any new game unless it can be shown that it requires at least as much apparatus

as the most complicated of existing games", apparatus that must be purchased and constantly upgraded (Huxley, 05: 37–38).

Material want and deprivation are often facts of daily life in the dystopian future. Sheila Richards prostitutes herself to earn money to help care for her sick daughter in *The Running Man* (King, 82: 2). The apartments in Oceania are shabby and in constant need of repair. Orwell describes "Victory Mansions" as "old flats…falling to pieces. The plaster flaked constantly from ceilings and walls, the pipes burst in every hard frost, the roof leaked whenever there was snow, the heating system was usually running at half steam when it was not closed down altogether…" and repairs "had to be sanctioned by remote committees which were liable to hold up even the mending of a window-pane for two years" (Orwell, 49: 20).

BREAD, CIRCUSES AND CHILDREN IN THE DYSTOPIAN FUTURE

Totalitarian governments of the dystopian future often rely on showy displays of public entertainment to distract their populaces. The equivalent of television programming features heavily in these societies. The "Buster Friendly Show" is a mainstay of Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, "telecast and broadcast over all Earth via satellite, [and] also poured down on the emigrants of the colony planets" (68: 74). Buster Friendly also has a radio program, "which, like the TV version, continued twenty-three unbroken warm hours a day…the additional one hour being a religious sign-off, ten minutes of silence, and then a religious sign-on" (Dick, 68: 73). For many of the human beings who watch and listen to his shows, which are based on senseless entertainment gossip and weather forecasts, "Buster is the most important human being alive"—though none suspect he is actually an android (Dick, 68: 71).

In Stephen King's *The Running Man*, it's the law that every home has a "Free-Vee" (82: 1). It is still legal to turn off the "Free-Vee" as "the Compulsory Benefit Bill of 2021 had failed to get the required two-thirds majority by six votes" (King, Ibid). The telescreens of Winston Smith's Oceania, however, can never be turned off and even when not showing an image play strident "military music" (Orwell, 49: 10). In Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, entire walls are taken up by expensive "parlor wall" television screens. Guy Montag has three in his living room, each costing a third of his firefighter salary, and his wife can't wait until they purchase a fourth (Bradbury, 91: 20). The parlor walls broadcast mindless blather around the clock. Guy's wife considers the actors and actresses on her shows "my family"; Guy sees a "gibbering pack of tree apes that said nothing, nothing, nothing and said it loud, loud, loud" (Bradbury, 91: 49 & 44).

Orwell details the bread and circuses of his dystopic Oceania in detail. Everyone drinks Victory Gin, a disgusting liquor that makes the world begin to look more cheerful (Orwell, 49: 8). The cigarettes are crap; you have to hold them upright or the tobacco falls out of them. Prisoners of war are hung once a month, always "a popular spectacle," and "[c]hildren clamored to be taken to see it" (Orwell, 49: 22). Public executions, by burning, also figure in Rand's *Anthem*. In Oceania, a special type of literature is produced for the proletariat: "rubbishly newspapers containing almost nothing except sport, crime, and astrology, sensational five-cent novelettes,

films oozing with sex, and sentimental songs which were composed entirely by mechanical means of a special kaleidoscope known as a versificator" (Orwell, 49: 38). *Pornosec* churns out the "lowest kind of pornography, which was sent out in sealed packets…" (Orwell, 49: 38). Government-run porn shops also figure in the England of *Children of Men*, with Xan telling his cousin Theo, "There's nothing like keeping the body occupied and the mind quiescent" (James, 92: 103). In the dystopian future America of Stephen King's *The Running Man*, to be seen with a book is to court suspicion; "pervert mags were safer" (82: 15). In a world where humanity has witnessed the birth of its last generation, Xan further explains that he wears the [trappings] of the head of state for the benefit of the masses: "The people need their baubles," he says of his Coronation Ring, which P.D. James describes as "a great sapphire surrounded with diamonds and surmounted with a cross of rubies" (92: 92).

Games figure heavily in these future societies. The firefighters in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* amuse themselves by setting their eight-legged mechanical hound—the dystopian firehouse's answer to the dalmation—loose on rats, chickens and cats (78: 24–25). In Orwell's Oceania, the lottery "was the one public event to which the proles paid serious attention"; it being "their delight, their folly, their anodyne, their intellectual stimulant"; and it was "probable that there were some millions of proles for whom the Lottery was the principal if not the only reason for remaining alive" (49: 72). Of course only small prizes were ever paid out, "the winners of the big prizes being non-existent persons" (Orwell, Ibid).

Not all future games, however, are as innocuous as the Lottery in Orwell's *1984*. In *The Running Man*, Stephen King gives us "the Games", televised reality entertainment such as *Treadmill to Bucks* which puts heart patients and cripples on treadmills and awards them ten dollars for every minute they stay on (King, 82: 2). The titles of other games give us some idea of what is involved—*Dig Your Grave*, *How Hot Can You Take It*, *Swim the Crocodiles*, and *Run For Your Guns*. In the titular game, contestants must outrun heavily armed "Hunters". For every hour a contestant remains on the lam, his family receives one hundred "New Dollars"; if one survives thirty days of being hunted he wins the grand prize, one billion New Dollars (King, 82: 51).

Children come in for much abuse in the dystopian future. They are often pitted against one another in blood sport, games that bring out the worst in them. In Koushun Takami's *Battle Royale*, forty-two Japanese middle school students "are forced to fight until one survivor is left" (03: 40). Drugged and kidnapped on a class trip, they are transported to a deserted island, where, under guard from heavily armed and merciless soldiers, they are each forced to wear a collar and given a backpack. Each backpack contains a different weapon—varying from a bow to a submachine gun—and the collars are programmed to explode if anyone attempts to remove theirs and if more than one child is left alive at the end. "The students had to kill each other, competing for the throne of survivor," writes Takami, "It was the most terrifying version of musical chairs imaginable" (03: 43). The students are part of "Battle Experiment No. 68", "the Program", justified by the authoritarian government as "a conscription program unique to this country", as "a research program" (Takami, 03: 40 & 41).

In King's *The Long Walk*, one hundred teenage boys compete against one another in a game where only one can emerge victorious and from which only one will walk away alive. They walk as long and as far as they can, and as they drop from exhaustion they are dispatched by the soldiers who accompany them. They are cheered on by spectators along the route, people who pull for local favorites and place bets on the walk and its participants (King, 79: 116). Unlike the children in *Battle Royale*, these boys have *volunteered* for the "game" they "play." However, they are children and whether or not they truly comprehend the game they have signed on for is questionable. "…I don't think I ever realized the real gut truth of what this is," McVries tells Garraty. "I think I had the idea that when the first guy got so he couldn't cut it anymore they'd aim the guns at him and pull the triggers and little pieces of paper with the word BANG printed on them would…would…and the Major would say April Fool and we'd all go home" (King, 79: 109).

Even when children aren't pitted against one another for the amusement of adults, there remains an instrumental quality to their use and abuse. The military authorities in *Ender's Game* are betting that Ender's "peak of military brilliance [will] coincide with the arrival of our fleet at the bugger homeworlds…" (Card, 91: 98). The fleet is on its way; Ender, unknowingly—he thinks it is all a sophisticated game at Battle School—will control and command them. "I like the kid. I think we're going to screw him up," the unseen controllers remark of Ender early on. "Of course we are. It's our job. We're the wicked witch. We promise gingerbread, but we eat the little bastards alive" (Card, 91: 10). Graff, the Administrator of Battle School, tells Ender, "Individual human beings are all tools that the others use to help us all survive" (91: 35). Further, explains Graff, "Human beings are free except when humanity needs them. Maybe humanity needs you….We might both do despicable things, Ender, but if humankind survives, then we were good tools" (Card, 91: 35).

Children figure prominently in much endearing literature. Adolescent and teenage angst on the rocky road to adulthood are the subjects of such canonical texts as *Catcher in the Rye*, *Ordinary People*, and *A Separate Peace*. Though children are usually presented as vulnerable and innocent, they do not fare well in future dystopian societies. They're bred through extensive eugenics programs like those in *Anthem* and *Brave New World*. Ender Wiggin is "a third", a third child, all but unheard of in his society; his parents needed permission from the state to have him (Card, 91). Children are encouraged to spy on their parents and neighbors and friends in the totalitarian state of the dystopian future. The man next door to Winston Smith in Oceania is turned in by his own kids (Orwell, 49: 23).

The image of children as innocents is challenged by works like *A Clockwork Orange*. Alex is a murderer and rapist and he is only fifteen. His victims are the old and the young, the weak and the strong. He and his friends stop a gang from raping a ten-year-old girl, not out of any concern for the girl's well-being, but because their gangs are rivals (Burgess, 68: 19 & 29). Alex himself later picks up a pair of ten-year-olds at a record shop, lures them back to his apartment, and rapes them (Burgess, 68: 51). He dreams of "vecks and ptitsas [guys and girls], both young and starry [old], lying on the ground screaming for mercy, and I was smecking all over my rot [smiling] and grinding my boot in their litsos [faces]"; he dreams of being a Roman

soldier and crucifying Christ; he looks at the stars in the skies and imagines other worlds where "[t]here'll be life like down here most likely, with some getting knifed and others doing the knifing" (Burgess, 68: 39, 92 & 22). Others are confused and disconcerted by Alex and his behavior. 'You've got a good home here, good loving parents, you've got not too bad of a brain," P.R. Deltoid, Alex's probation officer, says to the boy, "Is it some devil that crawls inside you?" (Burgess, 68: 45). Dr. Brodsky opines of Alex *to* Alex, "You've just got this violence thing, haven't you?" (Burgess, 68: 131).

Alex doesn't understand why there is such a concern over the causes of his behavior. "They don't go into what is the cause of *goodness*, so why of the other shop?" (Burgess, 68: 46–47). Alex rhapsodizes to himself about the role of the rebel individual in society: "…badness is of the self, the one, the you or me on our knockies [own]…But the not-self cannot have the bad, meaning they of the government and the judges and the schools cannot allow the bad because they cannot allow the self. And is not our modern history, my brothers, the story of brave maleky [little] selves fighting these machines?" (Burgess, 68: 47). Ultimately, Alex is not concerned over any underlying reason for his [bad] behavior. He knows why he does what he does: "…what I do I do because I like to do" (Burgess, Ibid). At the end of the book, in the twenty-first chapter, Alex feels he is growing up and chalks his evil ways up to youth itself (Burgess, 68: 218). He wants to be a father even though he feels his progeny will continue much as he had, that his son "would do all the vesches [things] I had done…and I would not really be able to stop him. And nor would he be able to stop his own son, brothers. And so it would itty on to like the end of the world, round and round and round…" (Ibid).

"You have to fight on your own alone. But that's how the game of life is anyway," instructor Kinpatsu Sakamochi tells the boys and girls of *Battle Royale* (Takami, 03: 61). Despite the machinations of seemingly heartless adults to turn children against one another, the kids in these books often bond and show solidarity, even when this solidarity promises nothing but death. In *Battle Royale* small groups of children stick together in an attempt to game the system and survive. Shuya, Noriko, and Shogo, who was the sole survivor of a past edition of the Program, band together against a game where there can only be one winner. The boys on the long walk talk to one another and trade tall tales as they walk each other into the ground (King, 79: 102). When death comes, some boys face it alone and Garraty notices that some of the boys suffer "[c]omplete withdrawal from everything and everyone around them. Everything but the road. They stared at the road with a kind of horrid fascination, as if it were a tightrope they had to walk over an endless, bottomless chasm" (King, 79: 121). Others choose to face death together. Mike the Hopi Indian boy and another kid named Scramm disregard the three warnings they are given and proffer their middle fingers to the soldiers before they "sat down together, crosslegged, and began to talk calmly" even though they "did not seem to be talking in the same language" (King, 79: 278). They die in a volley of gunfire.

In Battle School, Ender is careful to protect the soldiers serving under him and does not take needless risks with their lives. He himself is used by Graff and Mazer Rackham as an unwitting tool in the execution of "xenocide" against the buggers,

destroying the aliens' home planet. Visiting a colony after the third and final bugger war, Ender discovers a fertilized queen bugger egg which was placed purposefully for him. The boy, who has come to understand that the buggers had no intention of attacking the humans again and only fought a defensive battle to protect themselves and their world, takes the egg. Ender vows to "go from world to world until I find a time and a place where you can come awake in safety. And I'll tell your story to my people, so that perhaps in time they can forgive you, too. The way that you've forgiven me" (Card, 91: 321).

As I write this chapter, kidnapped children are forced to serve in African armies and take part in atrocities (Jal, 09). Reality television programs, which are cheaper to produce than hour long prime time dramas, continue to gain in popularity in the United States and worldwide. These shows feature everyone from washed-up rock stars ostensibly looking for romance (VHI's *Rock of Love*) to overweight people competing against one another to lose weight (NBC's *The Biggest Loser*); from older women seeking younger men (TV Land's *The Couger*) to people "stranded" in exotic locals and forced to live somewhat Spartan lives for several weeks (CBS' *Survivor*); from bounty hunters tracking down petty criminals (A&E's *Dog the Bounty Hunter*) to police officers on the job (FOX's *Cops*). CBS' *Kid Nation*, a reality television show featuring children living on their own, was criticized as too much a real-life *Lord of the Flies* and lasted one season. Dysfunctional American families themselves are the entertainment behind the scenes on shows like TLC's *Jon and Kate Plus 8* and on camera in such "classics" as MTV's *The Osbornes* and a show being produced starring single mother Nadya "*Octomom*" Suleman and her fourteen children. Stern disciplinarians move in to some of these people's homes and try to help them raise their children on shows like CMT's *Nanny 911* and ABC's *SuperNanny*.

The reality television craze leads people to do crazy things; in a one-month period as I write, a couple faked their son's disappearance in a hot air balloon and another couple infiltrated a White House event, all in bids to gain reality television fame (Stelter, 09; Cooper & Stelter, 09). These programs are fascinating because they often focus on down-on-their-luck human beings who humiliate and debase themselves. The shows are disturbing for this very reason, because they focus on human train wrecks and offer up their bad behavior week-in and week-out for viewers' consumption. In *The Running Man* Games host Dan Killian tells contestant Ben Richards that people watching the show "want to see you wiped out, and they'll help if they can. The more messy the better" (King, 82:51).

As entertaining as these programs can be, we do well to ask ourselves what is so entertaining about them? Why do we enjoy watching people make bad decisions? If the networks offered us programs where people made good decisions and lived decent lives where they took care of one another would we watch? I tend to think we would. People watched and enjoyed shows like *Leave It To Beaver*, *Happy Days*, *The Munsters* and *The Cosby Show* even if their own family situations weren't like the Huxtables, the Munsters, the Cunninghams or the Cleavers. If FOX or CBS aired a program where professional killers tracked down and killed game show contestants, I have no doubt they'd draw an audience. Extreme reality sports shows like *Sasuke* (aired in America on G4 as *Ninja Warrior*) and the revived though now-defunct

American Gladiators had their rabid following. Mixed Martial Arts, decried by critics as human cock fighting, is one of the fastest growing sports in the United States and *UFC* pay-per-view events are extremely popular. That doesn't mean such shows should be encouraged and continually produced.

ESTRANGED LABOR, DEHUMANIZATION, AND ANDROIDS

Dystopian novels make us question our basic assumptions regarding children and the relationships between men and women. Dystopian societies have an insidious ability to work their claws into our psyches and personas, turning us against ourselves in a myriad of ways. *What* are you? When you answer this question, was your answer an occupation? Ask several people this question and see how they answer and I think the more likely answers would be something along the lines of teacher, doctor, Wal-Mart associate or barrista, rather than mother, Christian, German, or gay. Marx and Engels argued that "the productive life is the life of the species….The whole character of a species—its species character—is contained in the character of its life-activity, and free, conscious activity is man's species character" (78: 76). What we do largely defines who we are. Our work, our labor, lends us a sense of identify and gives us meaning. Unfortunately, as Marx and Engels argued, much work of the modern era is not "free, conscious activity"; in Joe Kincheloe's term, much of the work we do is not "good work." Hence, our labor often stands against us as something enervating and foreign from our intrinsic sense of self.

Many of us work jobs where our labor is alienated from our essence, from who we are. I am fortunate to be writing from a postion where I have a job—high school teacher—that I can honestly say I really enjoy. I look forward to getting up and going to work in the morning, and as much as I enjoy the two month vacation the job affords me every summer, by the end of August I am ready to get back to work and the kids. That said, I have also had jobs that I did not enjoy, jobs that did not add to me as a human being. One of the toughest jobs I ever had was a stint as a UPS worker, loading and unloading the big brown trucks from midnight until 3 or 4 in the morning. Always under the watchful eye of clock-wielding, tie-wearing supervisors who watched to make sure each package was placed just so, a form of Taylorism or "scientific management" (although at the time I don't think I knew what Taylorism was). Every shift was like a four hour cardio session and my co-workers and I would emerge from the trucks drenched in sweat and quaffing water from our gallon coolers. It wasn't the toughness of the work that bothered me; the work itself was mindless, repetitive, and boring.

Alienated labor, as Marx and Engels explained, "does not belong to [the worker's] essential being…in his work he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself" (78: 74). Much contemporary labor is alienated labor, though there are those of us privileged enough to have been steered by knowledgeable others or to have attained the education necessary to secure a job that is less alienating than others. Unfortunately, alienated labor seems to be the norm in the dystopian future.

In some dystopian visions of the future there is a dearth of labor to be performed. With less than a year to go before a toxic cloud of radioactive fall out reaches them, Australian Lieutenant Commander Peter Holmes is eager for a naval assignment in Nevil Shute's *On the Beach*. Those who are lucky enough to have jobs in Stephen King's *The Running Man* work seven day weeks; protagonist Ben Richards has been fired "a total of six times for such things as insubordination, insulting superiors, and abusive criticism of authority" and he refuses "to sign the Union Oath of Fealty and the Wage Control Articles" (82: 49). In other dystopian novels the labor available is compulsory. Alex's parents in *A Clockwork Orange* must work, "there being this law for everybody not a child nor with child nor ill to go out rabbiting [working]" (Burgess, 68: 42). Their jobs are far from fulfilling.

Much of the labor performed and services provided in the dystopian future actively dehumanize the laborers and others while perpetuating the system. We have considered Winston Smith's job rewriting history in the Ministry of Truth. We have also discussed how *Anthem*'s Equality 7-2521 is forced to be a street sweeper, a job that does not allow him to satisfy his scientific and industrial aspirations. The scientists who work to "fix" Alex in *A Clockwork Orange* enjoy his suffering and torment, laughing at him when he begs them to stop his "treatment" (Burgess, 68: 121). I'd like to consider in a bit more detail four jobs from four different dystopian novels and the effects these jobs have on the men who work them as well as their larger societies. The characters I will consider are The Giver from the eponymous novel; *1984*'s Jewish revolutionary Emmanuel Goldstein; firefighter Guy Montag from *Fahrenheit 451*; and *Do Androids Dream…*'s bounty hunter, Rick Deckard.

When Jonas is selected as the "next Receiver of Memory" he finds the rules that apply to everyone else do not apply to himself (Lowry, 93: 60). He is exempted from rules governing rudeness and can ask anyone any question he wants; he is not allowed to tell his dreams in a society where families awake in the morning and share their dreams; he cannot ask for medication related to his training; he cannot apply for release and leave the community; and he is allowed to lie (Lowry, 93: 68). Jonas will be trained to be an "Elder of the Community", specifically the "Receiver", the most important of the Elders (Lowry, 93: 14). He is apprenticed to the current Receiver, the Giver of the title, an old man who will impart all the memories of a time past to the boy. The community members do not know pain: they have chosen to deposit their memories in the Receiver of Memories, to get away from the bad ones but in the process forfeiting the good ones as well. When he gives a memory to Jonas, the Giver himself loses it for good; it is no longer his, but Jonas'. The rules that apply to the Giver are unlike the rules that govern the rest of the community. The Giver can come and go, travelling freely from community to community; he has books; the speaker in his quarters is one of a kind and has an off-switch.

The Giver shares memories with Jonas and not all of the memories are pleasant. He shows Jonas death and destruction. Jonas comes to understand the toll the job has taken on the Giver. "I am not, actually, as old as I look," the old man tells Jonas, "This job has aged me" (Lowry, 93: 76). The Giver tells Jonas of the "receiver-in-training" prior to him, a girl named Rosemary. She was the Giver's daughter and he loved her and he tells Jonas she ran away from the community after experiencing

the memories of poverty, hunger, and terror. In fact, Rosemary asked for release and was granted it; the community had to at that time for anyone, including a receiver-in-training, could request release. Letting her go meant euthanasia and Rosemary asked that she be allowed to inject herself, a final request granted. Jonas is only twelve and has a lifetime of such dehumanization ahead of him as Receiver.

The Giver laments to Jonas of their community, "there are so many things I could tell them; things I wish they would change. But they don't want change. Life here is so orderly, so predictable—so painless. It's what they've chosen" (Lowry, 93: 103). It's what they've *chosen* and it's what they've—the omnipresent, ominous *they* of much dystopian literature—*forced* upon all new and current members of their community. In a memory imparted by the Giver, Jonas "had seen a birthday party, with one child singled out and celebrated on his day, so that now he understood the joy of being an individual, special and unique and proud" (Lowry, 93: 121). Again, a familiar theme of twentieth century dystopian literature: the individual is feted against the controlling, stifling collective.

As much as he appreciates his new found sense of individualism, when Jonas decides to flee his community it is to save another. Gabe is a baby Jonas' father has brought home from where he works as "nurturer" to the "newchildren" (Lowry, 93:7). Gabe is a colicky baby and will only sleep in Jonas' room. When Jonas learns that Gabe is to be "released" and views a video of his father presiding over the release (i.e., euthanasia) of a newchild, he takes the baby and bicycles away from the community. Jonas soon reaches places no one in the community has ever been and staggers up a snowy hill; he is tempted to lie down and die peacefully in the cold snow with Gabe in his arms but struggles to the top. Clutching Gabe, Jonas sleds down the hill into the pleasant, peaceful memories that the Giver has shared with him of warm homes and families at holiday dinners and love. Do Jonas and the baby die? That isn't the point; the point is that Jonas' final thoughts—the final thoughts Lowry shares with readers—are communal and social in nature and not reifications of the atomic individual.

Emmanuel Goldstein is "official Enemy of the People" in Orwell's Oceania (49: 13). He is the purported author of *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*, a history of the struggle against the Party. Goldstein, government propaganda holds, like a Leon Trotsky or Snowball from *Animal Farm*, "was the renegade and backslider who once (how long ago, nobody quite remembered), had once been one of the leading figures of the Party, almost on a level with Big Brother himself, and then had engaged in counter-revolutionary activities, had been condemned to death, and had mysteriously escaped and disappeared" (Orwell, 49: 13). Goldstein is a convenient target for every ill, real and perceived, plaguing Oceainia. "All subsequent crimes against the Party, all treacheries, acts of sabotage, heresies, deviations, sprang directly from his teaching" (Orwell, Ibid).

If Goldstein as a flesh and blood person ever existed, it is unlikely he still does. Instead, Emmanuel Goldstein serves as a potent tool for Oceania's authoritarian government to whip the populace into hysteria and unite them in fear. Goldstein, with his "lean Jewish face", and his different manner of speech from Party members, is the object of the daily Two Minutes Hate (Orwell, 49: 13 & 14). Goldstein's "crimes"

include “denouncing the dictatorship of the Party…demanding the immediate conclusion of peace with Eurasia…advocating freedom of speech, freedom of the Press, freedom of assembly, freedom of thought” (Orwell, 49: 14).

Goldstein is believed to command the Brotherhood, “a vast shadow army, an underground network of conspirators dedicated to the overthrow of the State”, an organization Winston and Julia come to join (Orwell, 49: 14). The mystique of Goldstein and his Brotherhood are perpetuated by the State to root out anti-government sympathizers and critics, co-called thought-criminals. Winston and Julia come to O’Brien, not knowing he works for the Party, believing him to be a member of the Brotherhood. O’Brien makes them take an oath to swear them into the Brotherhood. You must pledge, O’Brien instructs Winston and Julia,

> to give your lives…to commit murder…to commit such acts of sabotage which may cause the death of hundreds of innocent people…to betray your country to foreign powers…to cheat, to forge, to blackmail, to corrupt the minds of children, to distribute habit-forming drugs, to encourage prostitution, to disseminate venereal diseases—to do anything which is likely to cause demoralization and weaken the power of the Party…[including, if necessary] to throw sulpheric acid in a child’s face (Orwell, 49: 141).

It is an indication of the bleakness of their own lives that Winston and Julia *agree* to these terms. The only condition Julia refuses to agree to is the one that stipulates that she and Winston may have to separate and never see one another again.

The Brotherhood is no revolutionary organization anyone in their right mind would want to join. The only thing holding it together, O’Brien explains, is “an idea which is indestructible” (Orwell, 49: 143). Winston and Julia will receive no material or emotional succor, only what they themselves can draw from this idea itself. “When finally you are caught, you will get no help,” O’Brien explains, “We never help our members” (Orwell, Ibid). O’Brien promises them that even though they dedicate their lives to the Brotherhood and the overthrow of the State they will see no progress in their lifetimes, which will assuredly end with imprisonment, forced confession, and death. Yet Winston and Julia agree to join. In the true struggle against oppression the oppressed fight not to install themselves as the new oppressors, but to dismantle the political, economic and social institutions that allow for oppression in the first place. Julia and Winston, living frightened, anxious lives, agree to the further dehumanization of their lives in the name of a revolution they do not understand.

“I heard once that a long time ago houses used to burn by accident and they needed firemen to *stop* the flames,” seventeen-year-old Clarisse McClellan remarks to thirty-year-old Guy Montag, and Montag laughs (Bradbury, 78: 8). Montag’s work as a firefighter—burning books, burning libraries, burning homes with books—bolsters the repressive government apparatus in *Fahrenheit 451*. Guy Montag has been on the job for a decade, burning books and magazines and not thinking twice about it. The very first sentence of the book describes his job as a “pleasure” and he tells Clarisse that kerosene “is nothing but perfume to me” (Bradbury, 78: 3 & 6).

Books are dangerous in Anthony Burgess’ dystopian future and flame-thrower wielding firefighters are feared. The firehouse wall at Montag’s work has a list of

"a million forbidden books" (Bradbury, 78: 34). *Books are useless*, Fire Chief Beatty tells Montag, even worse. "They're about nonexistent people, figments of imagination, if they're fiction," he explains. "And if they're nonfiction, it's worse, one professor calling another an idiot, one philosopher screaming down another's gullet. All of them running about, putting out the stars and extinguishing the sun. You come away lost" (Bradbury, 78: 62). Better to watch the wall-TV and listen to what the government has to tell you.

Again, a nefarious collectivism permeates this dystopian world. "We must all be alike," explains Captain Beatty, "Not everyone born free and equal, as the Constitution says, but everyone *made* equal. Each man the image of every other: then all are happy…" (Bradbury, 78: 58). Books pose a threat because they incite the individual's imagination and may lead her to question the status quo, the first step in attempting to alter the established state of affairs: "Who knows who might be the target of the well-read man?" (Bradbury, Ibid). Clarisse is a threat because she is so different than everyone else and her dissimilarity attracts Guy and makes him consider his own life.

Montag's world is one in which people are disconnected and miserable. "People don't talk about anything," Clarisse says, pointing out to Guy that most conversations are about superficialities. "They name a lot of cars or clothes or swimming pools mostly and say how swell! But they all say the same things and nobody says anything different from anyone else" (Bradbury, 78: 31). "There are too many of us," thinks Guy. "There are billions of us and that's too many. Nobody knows anyone" (Bradbury, 78: 16). It is a society where people have forgotten how to care for one another. "No one has time any more for anyone else," notes Clarisse (Bradbury, 78: 23). It is a world where the relationships that should matter most have been stripped of meaning. Bradbury describes the bedroom Guy shares with his wife, Mildred, as Guy enters it as "like coming into the cold marbled room of a mausoleum after the moon has set" (Bradbury, 78: 11). They sleep in separate beds and neither Guy nor Mildred cann remember how they met (Bradbury, 78: 43). Mildred attempts suicide by overdosing on pills at the beginning of the novel. Guy "remembered thinking then that if she died, he was certain he wouldn't cry. For it would be the dying of an unknown, a street face, a newspaper image…" (Bradbury, 78: 44). The paramedic sent to their house to pump Mildred's stomach and clean her blood tells Guy, "We get these cases [attempted suicides] nine or ten a night" (Bradbury, 78: 15).

Talking with Clarisse helps Guy Montag recognize that he is definitely not happy with his life. He steals a book from a home he is immolating and secrets it at home, adding to his collection over time. When Mildred reports him, Captain Beatty drives Guy to his own house to burn it. Montag incinerates Beatty instead and is forced to flee. The government manufactures a story of Montag's capture and death by mechanical hound for the public. Guy joins up with a group of peripatetics, "bums on the outside, libraries inside" (Bradbury, 78: 153). Each man has a book or part of a book memorized. They form a loose, decentralized network of stored knowledge awaiting the overthrow of the repressive government. Montag realizes a sense of belonging and purpose with this group that was absent his previous life. They store the knowledge of books within their persons with the promise that one day this knowledge will be brought forth and implemented, added to and recreated.

"I'm not a peace officer," Rick Deckard announces at one point in Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?* "I'm a bounty hunter" (68: 46). "You're a murderer hired by those cops," Iran Deckard tells her husband (Dick, 68: 4). Like Guy and Mildred Montag in *Fahrenheit 451*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*'s Rick and Iran Deckard sleep in separate beds. Like Guy, Rick is a civil servant of sorts. Unlike Mildred Montag, who turned her nascent bibliophilic husband in to the authorities, Iran Deckard will not betray her man. Instead, Rick will be the transgressor in their loveless marriage, sleeping with another woman (albeit an android). And nonhuman androids will teach Rick Deckard what it means to be human.

Deckard is a bounty hunter and his targets are androids in San Francisco. Androids were designed to help human beings colonize space after humanity had made the world uninhabitable. The androids in Philip K. Dick's novel look like us but are much stronger and faster. The sophisticated Nexus-6 model is nearly indistinguishable from a human being; bone marrow tests are the only sure indication of an android's identity (Dick, 68: 113). Androids are forbidden from visiting earth and any that does is hunted down and "retired" by bounty hunters like Rick Deckard.

What motivates Rick? His job keeps him earth-bound after all other able-bodied and able-minded men and women have emigrated to the colonies in space. Rick's earth is one seemingly devoid of hope, epitomized by his musings on Mozart as he watches a rehearsal of *The Magic Flute*. "This rehearsal will end," thinks Rick, "This performance will end, the singers will die, eventually the last score of the music will be destroyed in one way or another; finally the name 'Mozart' will vanish, the dust will have won. If not on this planet then another. We can evade it awhile", but the same fate awaits each and every one of us (Dick, 68: 98). Rick, like most of his fellow human beings in the novel, immerses himself in religion and crass commercialism. He dreams of being able to afford a real animal to keep on his roof for his neighbors to see, but real animals are a rare commodity in Rick's poisoned world and their price is dear. For each android he retires he earns one thousand dollars above his low base salary. With six androids to track down and destroy, Rick stands to see a good pay day.

Rick comes to the realization that his job dehumanizes him and in the course of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. The quality that separates androids from human beings is empathy. Bounty hunters like Rick Deckard and Phil Resch are trained to administer tests that measure empathic responses. At the beginning of the novel, when Iran calls him a murderer, Rick is able to justify what he does because he does not consider androids as anything like himself or Iran. He conceives of the android as "a solitary predator….Rick liked to think of them that way; it made his job palatable" (Dick, 68: 31). "Do you think of them as 'it'?" Phil Resch asks Deckard, to which Rick replies, "I did at one time. When my conscience bothered me about the work I had to do; I protected myself by thinking of them that way, but now I no longer find it necessary" (Dick, 68: 125).

Rick changes over the course of the day that the novel encompasses as he comes to recognize the "humanity" of the androids and the inhumanity of what he does and who he is. When Luba Luft, one of the Nexus-6 androids Rick and Phil hunt, thanks Rick for buying her a book of Munch's artwork with his own money in the minutes

before she knows she will be retired by them, she notes, “There’s something very strange and touching about humans. An android would never have done that” (Dick, 68: 133). Luba posits that she considers human beings “superior life-forms” (Dick, 68: 134). When Phil shoots her, Luba screams in agony until Rick ends her existence with a blast from his own laser tube.

Immediately afterwards, Rick inquires of Phil, “Do you think androids have souls?” and declares that he will leave their profession as soon as he has retired the remaining androids at large (Dick, 68: 135). Luba Luft was an android but she was also an opera singer. “She was a wonderful singer,” says Rick. “The planet could have used her. This is insane” (Dick, 68: 136). Rick realizes that as much as Luba’s presence on earth was touted as a threat to the human race, she added to whatever meager enjoyment of life people clung to. “I don’t get it,” he confesses to Resch, “how can a talent like that be a liability to our society?” (Dick, 68: 137). Rick begins to empathize with androids and it is this empathy that stands to save him.

“[W]hat a job I have to do, thought Rick. I’m a scourge, like famine or plague” (Dick, 68: 226). Rick’s labor is alienated from himself—killing androids imparts no measurable good to his life other than a fat paycheck—and alienates him from himself. “But what I’ve done, he thought; that’s become alien to me. In fact, everything about me has become unnatural; I’ve become an unnatural self” (Dick, 68: 230). At one point Luba Luft asks Rick if he himself might not be an artificial life form given his lack of empathy for androids.

For the most part, Rick works alone. His teaming with Phil Resch is temporary and ends when Rick ascertains that Resch himself is not an android in need of retirement. Humans in Rick’s world rely on artificial “empathy boxes” to impart a sense of their shared humanity, which they realize by merging with the person of Mercer, a religious figure. “Penfield mood organs” allow the user to dial in a channel which stimulates the brain into various dispositions, from “the desire to watch TV, no matter what’s on it” to “pleased acknowledgement of husband’s superior wisdom in all matters” to “awareness of the manifold possibilities open to me in the future” (Dick, 68: 6 & 7). Rick has no friends and does not love his wife. “I wish I had gotten rid of her two years ago when we were considering splitting up,” he muses (Dick, 68: 94). The great shortcoming of androids in Philip Dick’s novel is that they are supposed to *not* feel empathy, yet humans like Rick, his wife and co-workers are more mechanical and unfeeling in certain ways than the androids forbidden passage to Earth.

The androids, who hole up together in an abandoned apartment complex when Rick comes hunting them, show greater solidarity than the human beings. When Rick shoots Irmgard Baty, her husband, Roy, “let out a cry of anguish” (Dick, 68: 223). Androids are supposed to lack empathy and not care about other androids, a point made throughout the novel. “An android,” Rick tells Luba Luft, “doesn’t care what happens to another android. That’s one of the indications we look for” (Dick, 68: 101). Throughout the novel, Rick is ready to retire anyone and everyone who might in fact be an android.

With a pre-programmed expiration date of four years following production, the Nexus-6 androids are evolving. Their emotional repertoire now includes empathy.

Roy Baty is described by android Rachael as “a wonderful, spiritual man” (Dick, 68: 198). Rachael admits to Rick that “I care whether I get nailed….Christ, I’m empathic about myself” (Dick, 68: 191). Rachael, who has had sex with Rick and other human bounty hunters, tells him, “I love you. If I entered a room and found a sofa covered with your hide I’d score very high on the Voight-Kampf test” of empathy (Dick, 68: 194). Nevertheless, the androids continue to engage in behaviors no human being can understand or accept, such as when Roy and Irmgard Baty pull the legs off a spider J.S. Isidore has found to prove it can get about on four legs alone.

Humans, in turn, in the person of Rick Deckard and J.R. Isidore, are evolving to be sympathetic to androids… “You realize what this would do,” Phil Resch explains to Rick. “If we included androids in our range of empathic identification, as we do animals.” Rick gets it: “We couldn’t protect ourselves” (Dick, 68: 141). Phil and the society that employs him views bounty hunters like himself and Rick as the final line of defense between human beings and a series of androids that is so highly developed to be nearly impossible to differentiate from humans. They also view the androids as a threat to the existence of human kind, though it becomes clear in the course of the novel that the androids are not about usurping humanity. Consigned to Mars and other planets off Earth in the solar system, “[w]e came back because nobody should have to live there” android Pris tells J.S. Isidore (Dick, 68: 150). Life on Mars stinks for androids, a glorified slave-labor caste. Pris admits she got hooked on synthetic painkillers to help her cope with her existential angst. “The androids” on Mars, like the humans there, says Pris, “are lonely too” (Dick, 68: 150). “Do androids dream?” Rick ponders, “Evidently; that’s why they occasionally kill their employers and flee here. A better life, without servitude” (Dick, 68; 184).

The androids also show solidarity with the outcast human who cares for them. J.R. Isidore, a special, a “chicken-head”, an untouchable among his fellow humans, finds meaning in his life when he cares for the androids that hide in his apartment complex (Dick, 68: 203). Even after they pull the legs off his spider and he feels betrayed by them, Isidore will not give up their location to bounty hunter Rick Deckard. Isidore empathizes with the androids so greatly that he envisions a human bounty hunter as “somethimg merciless that carried a printed list and a gun, that moved machine-like through the flat, bureaucratic job of killing. A thing without emotion or even face; a thing that if killed got replaced immediately by another resembling it” (Dick, 68: 158). Isidore isn’t far off in his conception. Rick Deckard has been assigned to the hunt after the senior bounty hunter in San Francisco is shot down on the job. J.R. Isidore’s conception of a bounty hunter is exactly how Rick Deckard has come to view Phil Resch and why he (Rick) wants to get out of the job. Yet when Isidore finally meets Rick, he is surprised that the bounty hunter is “a medium man, not impressive. Round face and hairless, smooth features; like a clerk in a bureaucratic office. Methodical but informal. Not demi-god in shape…” (Dick, 68: 218).

Early in the book, Rick’s empathy for androids and his lust have him wondering what it would be like to have sex with a female android. By the end of the book he has slept with Rachael and offered to marry her (Dick, 68: 198). When Rachael admits that she has slept with bounty hunters before and that each one has been

unable to continue his job afterwards (with the exception of Phil Resch), Rick feels completely numb, hurt (Dick, 68: 198). He is jealous and his jealousy turns to anger which he uses to allow him to complete his task of hunting down and executing the remaining androids, even Pris, whose Nexus-6 model is based on Rachael's prototype and therefore looks *exactly* like the android Rick loves. Rachael is jealous in her own way: "You love that goat more than me. More than you love your wife, probably. First the goat, then your wife, then last of all—[me]" (Dick, 68: 202). After Rick kills the androids, Rachael tosses his precious goat off the roof while Iran Deckard watches.

Unlike any sophisticated electronic machine, Rick is a broken man at the end of the novel. He recognizes the meaninglessness of his life but seems ill-equipped to deal with that meaninglessness. Because of alienated labor, Marx wrote, the worker "no longer feels himself to be freely active in any but his animal functions—eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc." (Marx & Engels, 78:74). Marx was clear that "[c]ertainly eating, drinking, procreating, etc., are also genuinely human functions. But in the abstraction which separates them from the sphere of all other human activity and turns them into sole and ultimate ends, they are animal" (Ibid).

These "animal functions" figure prominently in dystopian novels. Dressing-up is important to many of these characters. Alex and his droogs take care to dress "in the heighth of fashion, which in those days was a pair of black very tight tights", not unlike the "skinny jeans" movement popular in hip-hop culture as I write (Burgess, 68: 4). Cod pieces are very popular in the dystopian future. Rick Deckard wears an "Ajax model Mountebank Lead Codpiece" (Dick, 68: 7). Alex and his friends wear their own: "I had one in the shape of a spider, Pete had a rooker (a hand, that is), Georgie had a very fancy one with a flower, and poor old Dim had a very hound-and-horny one of a clown's litso (face, that is)" (Burgess, 68: 4).

Despite their cost, wall TVs are in much demand in Guy Montag's world and fads continue to come and go in P.D. James' *Children of Men*. As humanity lives out its last generations; highly colored socks are the latest craze in Theo's world (James, 92: 39). "Victory gin", a disgusting liquor which makes the world look more cheerful, is a beverage prevalent in *1984* (Orwell, 49: 8). Milkbars, which serve "milk plus vellocet and synthemesc and drencrom and other veshches [things] which take you far far far away from this wicked and real world and into the land to viddy Bog [see God] And All His Holy Angels And Saints", figure prominently in Alex's life (Burgess, 68: 206). Rick Deckard partakes of "Specific No. 1 snuff" while the androids "experimented with…various mind-fusing drugs" (Dick, 68: 84, 185). On an earth where animals are largely extinct, a form of conspicuous consumption leads people to pen animals on their roofs for their neighbors to see. Most of the animals are fake because the cost of a live animal is prohibitive. "Owning and maintaining a fraud had a way of gradually demoralizing one," writes Dick, "and yet from a social standpoint it had to be done…" (68: 9). In this world, the worst breach of manners is "[t]o say, 'Is your sheep genuine?'" (Dick, 68: 8). People like Rick Deckard walk around with a *Sidney's* animal-price guide in their pockets; stare longingly into pet shops; and dream of upgrading to a more expensive ersatz animal or—dream of

dreams—owning a *real* live animal. When Rick purchases a goat, Iran describes it as "the most important decision" they'll ever make, and is upset Rick has not consulted her (Dick, 68: 171). When one's life is meaningless, seemingly meaningless things take on great importance.

ABOLISHING THE ORGASM: THE BODY AND EMOTIONS AS SUSPECT IN DYSTOPIA

Dystopian societies turn men and women against one another and themselves in a number of ways. The body and emotions are not to be trusted. Equality 7-2521, at six foot in height, is taller than his fellow human beings, "and this is a burden, for there are not many men who are six feet tall"; the teachers and leaders have singled him out and told him that "[t]here is evil in your bones…for your body has grown beyond the bodies of your brothers" (Rand, 64: 20). In *Brave New World* each caste is "decanted" to be a certain height and physique-type. The totalitarian state seeks to control what is *seen* and what is *felt*; Emotions are channeled for the narrow interests of the state. The daily two-minutes hate in Oceania is described as "a hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces in with a sledge-hammer"; and the "rage that one felt was an abstract, undirected emotion which could be switched from one object to another like the flame of a blowlamp" (Orwell, 49: 15).

Friendships are strained or nonexistent in the dystopian future. "You did not have friends nowadays," considers Winston in *1984*. "You had comrades: but there were some comrades whose society was pleasanter than that of others" (49: 42). Winston will be betrayed by everyone he ever trusted, from the shop owner whose room he rents to O'Brien. Alex is tricked and beaten by his "droogs" and in turn rats them out (Burgess, 68: 81). Many of the boys on *The Long Walk* bond, despite the fact that the game will only end when one remains standing. Similarly, in *Battle Royal*, children are encouraged to kill one another until only one is left alive.

Men are forbidden to take notice of women in *Anthem* (Rand, 64: 38). Men and women are encouraged to engage in transient, meaningless sexual relationships and monogamous long-term romances are not allowed in Huxley's *Brave New World*. Lenina is described as "a popular girl" among the males in the Alpha Changing Room, "and, at one time or another, had spent a night with almost all of them" (Huxley, 05: 63). At the daily Two-Minutes Hate session in Oceania, Winston starts to notice a dark-haired girl who sits behind him. He hates her because "he wanted to go to bed with her and would never do so"—she is a member of the Junior Anti-Sex League, "which advocated complete celibacy for both sexes" (Orwell, 49: 16 & 56). When they finally become lovers, Winston admits to Julia, "I hate the sight of you… I wanted to rape you and then murder you afterwards. Two weeks ago I thought seriously of smashing your head in with a cobblestone…" (Orwell, 49: 99). Winston was convinced that Julia was a test, a trap set for him by the Thought Police.

The Party in Oceania looks to remove all pleasure from sex. "We shall abolish the orgasm," O'Brien explains, "Our neurologists are at work upon it now" (Orwell, 49: 215). If Party members want to marry they need permission from the Party;

if they are at all sexually and physically attracted to one another permission is denied (Orwell, 49: 56). Sexual relationships between human beings are viewed as a threat by the totalitarian state, which demands absolute fealty. Winston understands that "[t]he sexual act, successfully performed, was rebellion. Desire was a thoughtcrime" (Orwell, 49: 58). In the dystopian future, sex becomes an act of insurgence against absolutist governments that seek to control people's bodies and emotions. "Their embrace had been a battle," a battle because "[n]o emotion was pure…everything was mixed up with fear and hatred", and their "climax a victory. It was a blow struck against the Party. It was a political act" (Orwell, 49: 104). Julia understands that the "sexual Puritanism" of the Party is aimed at instilling hysteria, "which was desirable because it could be transformed into war-fever and leader-worship"; Winston realizes there is "a direct intimate connection between chastity and political orthodoxy" (Orwell, 49: 109). "The more men you've had, the more I love you," Winston tells Julia after they've made love. "I hate purity, I hate goodness…. I want everyone to be corrupt to the bones" (Orwell, 49: 103).

The Golden One comes looking for Equality in the Forest, "and that night we knew that to hold the body of women in our arms is neither ugly nor shameful, but the one ecstasy granted to the race of men" (Rand, 64: 84). All emotions, not just lust and desire, are suspect to the totalitarian state. The Giver explains to Jonas that his friend Fiona is very efficient at her job of releasing (i.e., killing) because "Feelings are not part of the life she's learned" (Lowry, 93: 153). Dystopian novels show how torture can force one to be disloyal to that which means the most to one. The state succeeds in turning Winston against Julia in *1984*. After innumerous torture sessions, O'Brien goes to place a cage filled with ravenous rats on Winston's head. O'Brien does not suggest any particular way for Winston to avoid this torture, but Winston figures it out for himself. He screams for O'Brien to use the cage on Julia in his stead, thereby betraying his love (Orwell, 49: 227–230).

Sex and emotions are dangerous to the suzerainty of the totalitarian state because sex and emotions can unite people. Sex unites Winston and Julia, though Winston recognizes that younger people like Julia are not "rebelling against its [the Party's] authority but simply evading it, as a rabbit dodges a dog" (Orwell, Ibid). "You're only a rebel from the waist downwards," he tells Julia (Orwell, 49: 127). The all-powerful state can make room for individualist rebellion, but social action, *true* revolution, is a threat to its existence.

Social action gives meaning to people's lives and this creation of meaning carries with it the implied threat of destruction of the status quo. Before joining the conspirators, *Children of Men*'s Theo goes through his routines, prepares his dinner, uncorks his wine, and makes his salad dressing. He keeps busy, yet "[E]ven as his hands were at the familiar business of preparation his mind told him it was all supremely unimportant" (James, 92: 142). Theo finds meaning when he joins the conspirators, writing in his diary that "I have never felt so much at ease with other human beings as I have been today with these four strangers to whom I am now… committed and one of whom I am learning to love"; he looks back on the self of his earlier diary entries as a "self-regarding, sardonic and solitary man" (James, 92: 176 & 177).

Given that many of them were written as the horrors of Soviet "communism" were unfolding or finally being exposed, many dystopian novels protest against a leveling collectivism that robs the individual of her autonomy and uniqueness. "What disaster took their reason away from men?" wonders Equality 7-2521 in *Anthem*. "The worship of the word 'We'" (Rand, 64: 102). The protagonists in these novels usually develop a strong sense of individualism which they realize is being stifled by their societies and governments. They stand up to their state to ill or good effect. *Anthem*'s Equality and *Fahrenheit 451*'s Guy Montag flee their cities, vowing to return again and fight the oppressive conditions they escaped; *Children of Men*'s Theo kills his cousin Xan and affixes the ring of England to his own finger, becoming—temporarily, he assures Julian—Warden of England (James, 92: 241). Winston Smith is broken by the Party and released back into society, "[b]ut it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother" (Orwell, 49: 239). Ben Richards hijacks a plane and commits suicide by crashing it into the Network's corporate sky scraper in *The Running Man* (King, 82).

A misleading theme in many of these works is that the individual can stand up to the state alone. "I don't believe in self-liberation," opined Freire, "Liberation is a social act" (87: 109). Similarly, Sartre voiced the idea that "there is no escape for any of us, except that we find our fulfillment…fighting together" (Gerassi, 09: 81). The individual is capable of rebellion, but rebellion is not revolution because revolution is collective. Several characters in dystopian novels keep journals and journaling is an expression of rebellious individualism in these books. Theo keeps his diary locked in a drawer because writing in it would be "pointless if he had to censor, to leave out, if he had to deceive and not illumine" (James, 92: 128). Winston Smith has a nook in his apartment outside the view of the telescreen. In this alcove he sits and writes in his diary. If he is caught keeping a journal Winston knows "it would be punished by death, or at least twenty-five years in a forced-labour camp" (Orwell, 49: 9). An empty notebook alone in Winston's Oceania "was a compromising possession" (Ibid). In *Anthem* one cannot write without the permission of the Council of Vocations because "[i]t is a sin to write…It is a sin to think words no others think and to put them down upon a paper no others are to see" (Rand, 64: 17). Equality's growing sense of individualism impels him to write: "we must…write, for—may the Council have mercy upon us!—we wish to speak for once to no ears but our own" (Rand, 64: 18). Journaling in these novels is an example of the individual talking *to* and *for* herself; revolutionary transformation of the material conditions of one's society is not possible without dialogue *between* people.

"Even when you individually feel yourself *most* free," warned Freire, "if this feeling is not a *social* feeling, if you are not able to use your *recent* freedom to help others by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment or freedom" (Freire, 87: 109). For *1984*'s Julia, "[a]ny kind of organized revolt against the Party, which was bound to failure, [was] stupid. The clever thing was to break the rules and stay alive all the same" (Orwell, 49: 108). Julia will "not accept it as a law of nature that the individual is

always defeated" (Orwell, 49: 111). When Winston Smith rents his and Julia's love nest above the shop where he purchased his journal, it is not an act of revolution but an act of individual rebelliousness times two.

Sartre made a distinction between joy and happiness that bears on Freire's notion of true freedom as a *social* feeling. The individual, Sartre felt, was capable of feeling joy, but not happiness, which he saw as "objective and communal" (Gerassi, 09: 30). The quest for individual happiness, argued Sartre, is reactionary because it involves the individual conforming to an unjust milieu. The goal of revolution, on the other hand, is not to make everyone feel happy, but "to make everyone free and unalienated while dependent on one another", which may very well leave people happy (Gerassi, 09: 28).

Rebellion can lead to revolution "only when that spirit of communality dominates the rebellion" (Gerassi, 09: 28). Theo bands with other men and women and they succeed in overthrowing the Warden of England, and, possibly, if Theo is true to his word and relinquishes power, the form of totalitarian government. Equality 7-2521 vows to return to the city and bring his friends back to the Unchartered Forest from which, together, they can combat the evil collectivist society (Rand, 64: 100). Guy Montag escapes the city, hooks up with an organization of like-minded individuals, and awaits the day after the war when they can all return triumphantly to the city (Bradbury, 78).

Announcing a possible future, utopian thinking or prophetic futurity, depends on the human faculty of hopefulness. Freire spoke of hope an "an ontological dimension of our human condition", "an indispensable seasoning in our human, historical experience" (98: 58 & 69). Hope is "indispensable to our existence…it is impossible to exist without it" (Freire, 03: 77). Since we are not determined but condemned to be free in the sense that we must make choices and take responsibility for those choices, hope allows us to conceive of varying futures we wish to realize. Freire spoke of "the radical nature of hope", that "though I know that things can get worse, I also know that I am able to intervene to improve them" (98: 53). Hope "does not consist in crossing one's arms and waiting" (Freire: 97: 73). Hope demands action for realization, for ontological fulfillment, with fulfillment understood as a process and not a destination (Freire, 92: 2). And the action must be collective in nature, because realizing what one hopes for is "a search which can be carried out only in communion with others" (Freire, 97: 72).

A nuclear war has destroyed the northern hemisphere in Nevil Shute's *On The Beach* and a radioactive cloud makes its way south. Survivors in Australia spend the last few months of their lives going about their daily routines, awaiting the arrival of the cloud in September, the onset of radiation sickness, and their eventual deaths. *On The Beach* is a book that seemingly lacks hope. Some characters, like Moira Davidson, lose themselves in drink; the American submarine commander, Dwight Towers, looks forward to "going home" to Mystic, Connecticut (i.e., joining his family in death); others hope against hope that somehow they will be spared. Those who are lucky enough to still have employment continue their jobs up until the end.

The Australian government has readied pills that will be distributed free of charge to the population, pills people can take that will end their lives. For children and

pets injections have been prepared. Royal Australian Navy Lieutenant Commander Peter Holmes is slated for one last submarine mission and worries that while he is gone his wife, Mary, and their infant daughter, Jennifer, may get sick. He tries to discuss with Mary what must be done in that event if he has not returned. "It's the end of everything for all of us," Peter tells Mary, "We're going to lose most of the years of life that we've looked forward to, and Jennifer's going to lose all of them. But it doesn't have to be too painful for her. When things are hopeless, you can make it easy for her. It's going to take a bit of courage on your part, but you've got that" (Shute, 57: 140).

As bleak as *On The Beach* reads, it contains, arguably, an optimistic strain. With the clock running down on humanity and humans knowing as much, people still seek each other out, form relationships, and attempt to enjoy their lives. "…I couldn't bear to—to just stop doing things and do nothing," says Mary Holmes; if one were to give up one "might as well die now and get it over" (Shute, 57: 181). She and Peter plan the work they will be doing in their garden in the fall and the future, a future that will not arrive (Shute, 57: 100). Moira Davidson gives up her drinking and enrolls in stenographers school, knowing she will never graduate. She and Dwight Towers begin a relationship that neither will consummate out of respect to Dwight's family "back in Connecticut"; Moira helps Dwight buy gifts for his children knowing Dwight's wife and kids are long dead. Others attempt to find hope in their known expiration date. "The trouble always has been that you're never ready, because you don't know when it's coming," rationalizes Dwight Towers. "Well, now we do know, and there's nothing to be done about it. I kind of like that…" (Shute, 57: 118). "You've always known that you were going to die," notes scientist John Osborne. "Well, now you know when. That's all….Just make the most of what you've got left" (Shute, 57: 79). In the face of an extinction-level event, humans prepare a history of the war that ended their existence for whomever or whatever may come after them (Shute, 57: 105).

Gripped by radiation sickness, John Osborne's mother takes her suicide pill while her son is in town; he arrives home to find her dead in bed. Many of the characters in *On The Beach* choose to face death on their own, though their last thoughts are of the wellbeing of others. Osborne's mother, for one, leaves a note in which she writes "It's quite absurd that I should spoil the last days of your life by hanging on to mine…" and worrying about her dog, Ming, for whom she is "so very, very sorry…but I can do nothing" (Shute, 57: 256). Many other characters face their ends together. Peter gives their daughter Jennifer the final, fatal injection before climbing into bed with Mary. They take their pills and thank each other for the happiest years of their short lives, then drift off to sleep and nonexistence. Dwight Towers and his submarine crew take the submersible out to sea to sink it and themselves. Moira bids Dwight farewell on shore and then drives to a spot where she can espy the sea and the submarine heading out into it, wanting to be "very near him when he started home" (Shute, 57: 275). Such acts of solidarity in the face of oblivion rendered in fiction remind me of the couple who leaped, hand in hand, from the burning Twin Towers on September 11, 2001; that anonymous couples' was an act of ultimate unity and transcendant beauty in the face of unthinkable terror and unspeakable despair.

Shute's *On The Beach* is a beautiful, disturbing vision. As a father and a husband, I cannot imagine a more horrible existential situation than having to consider prodding one's loved ones into nonexistence. Unlike other dystopian works, which were thinly veiled criticisms of totalitarian communism in countries like the Soviet Union and China, *On the Beach* deals with a threat—the nuclear annihilation of the human race—that is still current and does not seem like it will be going away anytime soon. I have to believe that the apocalyptic vision of this novel is not inevitable, that concerted action can alter a feared future course of history. This action will be rooted in hope and collective in nature as individuals come together to choose and take options.

Hope is mitigated against in dystopian societies but can never be abolished. Even for Winston Smith, who tells his beloved Julia "we can't win" and harbors a very bleak vision of the possible future, "[t]o hang on from day to day and from week to week, spinning out a present that had no future, seemed an unconquerable instinct, just as one's lungs always draw the next breath so long as there is air available" (Orwell, 49: 124). Dystopian novels provide us with frightening visions of the future, but these visions are inevitable. Dystopian works are useful at denouncing what we wish to avoid and helping us conceive what we want to achieve.

CHAPTER 7

ENGAGED PEDAGOGY, ENRAGED PEDAGOGY

THE ASSAULT ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

Agents in history, we are temporally and socially situated. We occupy, maintain, and sustain certain positions whether we are cognizant of these or not. We also influence and change our circumstances as they work on and are expressed by and through us. Human beings are not mere reflections of our conditions and locations; we are also sustainers and destroyers of these spaces and places. We are capable of action and reflection upon that action; we make choices and respond to the consequences of these choices. We are with the world and in the world. We actively choose sides or accept the status quo by shrugging off the responsibility to choose. My own positioning and subjectivity lead me to a commitment fueled, in part, by anger and outrage. My commitment is to my students and public education, to my union and organized labor, to my family and my own humanization. My anger stems from the assault on public education and labor through which I am living.

The assault on public education assumes various guises. Public education is maligned as broken and unfixable; or, if repairable, only through private measures that eviscerate public schooling. Increasing numbers of parents are choosing to homeschool their children and virtual schooling—taking classes on computers and not in a traditional public school—is growing in popularity (Maker, 07; Dillon, 08) Americans are repeatedly told how badly our schools are failing our children. International comparisons leave us looking dumb (Norris, 04). Various reasons are given for the problems deemed inherent in public education, from the intellectual and professional qualities of students and teachers to the idea that anything government tries to do—including teach kids—is bound to failure.

The opponents of public education are often ideologically motivated. Aside from favoring privatization, they often have financial ties to privately-run education companies. So, for example, one member of my own district's board of education—who has remarked in the past that a school teacher should not earn over a hundred thousand dollars—is a former president of the Princeton Review and current president and chief operating officer of a company that offers data-driven software packages that promise to monitor student progress and teacher quality.

The testing craze is upon us. Because of *No Child Left Behind*, since 2006, all students from third to eighth grade and one high school grade will sit for standardized state exams (Winerip, 06). States like my own, New York, subject students to even more tests. Standardized tests are promised measures of tracking progress and accountability. We are told standardized exams will test what students *should* know and if students fare poorly on these exams they will be held accountable and held back, forced to repeat a course or grade. Various merit-pay schemes seek to tie teacher

renumeration to student performance on standardized tests (Dillon, 07). As a special education teacher, I work with some students who do not do well on standardized exams. If my salary were directly correlated to my students' scores on state tests I might not be able to feed my family.

Proponents of standardized tests and the standards movement like to drag science to their defense. The tests are touted as "scientific" measures of what students actually know and don't know; we are told that the tests are objective and not biased. Certain reading and math programs aimed at fostering better scores on these tests are themselves advertised as "scientifically-proven." Educational data management has become a huge industry, with software manufacturers marketing expensive bundles of programs to school districts that track everything from student attendance to performance on state and local exams. Companies like eSchool Data and Schoolnet promise "No Facts Left Behind" and hawk software that supposedly "increases student achievement, teacher quality and operational efficiency" (www.eschooldata.com; www.schoolnet.com). Data becomes fetishized and science abused as both are used to threaten and punish children and teachers.

When he was running for president, Barak Obama was calling for a reduced federal role in education and less of an emphasis on standardized tests. The president has gone on to disappoint a lot of people. When he came into office in January 2009, 79% of Americans were optimistic about Obama's presidency; by November of that year his approval rating had fallen to less than fifty percent in some polls (Nagourney & Connelly, 09; Nagourney, 09). Obama's $4.3 billion Race to the Top education grant program encourages states to rewrite education laws to favor an increase in charter schools and tying teacher pay to student performance on standardized exams, all to get more money from the federal government (Dillon, 09).

The over-reliance on test data produces a Catch-22 for students, teachers, and schools. If our livelihoods depend on it, we teachers are going to increasingly teach to the tests our students are expected to do well on. As a teacher, I know all too well that tests can be prepared for, that students can be coached, that test taking strategies can go far in making up for lack of content knowledge. But when students do in fact do well, the bar is set higher. For example, when most New York City public schools earned A's and B's on the Big Apple's "progress reports", the city's Education Department said "that they expected to adjust the grading system, in effect ensuring that more schools would receive lower grades" in the future (Medina, 09). "Failing" schools have been closed and broken down into smaller schools (Schemo, 07b). Since Mayor Mike Bloomberg took control of the city's schools in 2002, 91 schools have been shut (Otterman, 10). Damned if you do; damned if you don't.

Certain interests are well served by this emphasis on test results as carrot and stick for students, teachers, and schools. The federally-financed tutoring industry is blossoming, with tutors paid almost $2,000 per student (Saulny, 05). The president of Harcourt Educational Management, Eugene Paslov, noted that the proliferation in high-stakes exams "caught us somewhat by surprise" (Henriques & Steinberg, 01). Testing companies cannot turn out enough exams fast enough, let alone grade them. As test companies raced at break neck speed to supply tests to states demanding them, errors became more apparent, leading testing company Measured Progress president

Stuart Kahl to note that if states "want faster, better and cheaper—and we often tell them, pick two out of the three, because you can't have all three" (Henriques, 03).

There are over 45 million state tests now being graded annually (Winerip, 06). The testing industry is unregulated and errors in scoring have been cropping up (Arenson, 06). Who scores many of these exams, like the SAT and statewide reading comprehension and math exams? "[P]retty much people off the street, like me," notes Todd Farley (09), who emerged from "[t]he years I spent assessing [exams]… convinced…that large-scale assessment was mostly a mad scramble to score tests, meet deadlines and rake in cash." Errors in test construction and scoring have real world consequences for schools and kids. 9,000 New York City public school students had to attend summer school in 1999 when CTB/McGraw Hill erred in computing their scores on a reading test (Steinberg & Henriques, 01). When NCS Pearson scored exams incorrectly, 47,000 students in Minnesota were told they had scored lower than they actually did (Henriques & Steinberg, 01). Because there is no federal oversight of the educational testing industry, it is up to individual testing companies to disclose testing and scoring errors.

Testing mania promotes competition between students, teachers, schools and districts and dumbs-down education. A student's advancement to the next grade and graduation from school increasingly hinges on standardized state exams. Students are awarded everything from fast food gift certificates to cold hard cash to increase their test scores (Belluck, 06). Teachers, schools, and districts are pressured to turn out rosier numbers each year that supposedly prove the quality of education their students are receiving. Aside from spending greater amounts of time teaching to these tests, schools and districts have been fudging their numbers and watering down the exams. Many students who show "mastery" and "proficiency" on state exams bomb on the federal educational assessment, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (Lewin, 07). Reading test scores go up while reading skills stagnate (Schemo, 07). In teachers' colleges and educational theory much is made of multiple intelligences and instructional differentiation, but the standardized tests students face in individual districts and states are increasingly one and the same for all.

What does education become when schooling is reduced to test prep? When I was a student in high school, Mr. Hawley sparked my love of History and Mr. Sankat that of science. We had Regents exams to take but these were optional when I went to high school in New York State in the late '80s. As a former student I know the pain these exams and their emphasis can bring. Though a Regents diploma was optional in my day, my parents insisted I pass all the exams I needed to earn one. I spent three summers sweating it out in summer school because I had failed three consecutive math Regents. I'd pass the courses but fail the Regents, usually by three to five points, and then I'd put myself through the heat and torpor of summer school because I knew there was no way I could just show up in August, retake the exam and pass it.

I suspect that schooling becomes less enjoyable for students as business-like models of efficiency and accountability suffuse school halls and classrooms. The best teachers I ever had made challenging subject matter something fun that we explored together and emerged from stronger and more skillful. Classrooms don't have to be austere, anti-democratic sites bereft of joy and laughter. But what is a student to

make of education when staff members in his school refer to him not by name but as a "2" or "3," his score on a standardized exam (Kozol, 05)? When the last five to eight weeks of a course is devoted to test prep?

You don't fix public education by destroying it. Despite their promise, charter schools are emerging as a threat to public education. They siphon the top-standardized test scoring students away from public schools, leaving the lower performing students behind and further damning the public school (Casey, 00). Charter schools are often staffed by inexperienced, unqualified teachers (Rimer, 03). Though they receive public funds, many charter schools are religiously based or serve specific religious communities (Goodnough, 07). And though test scores shouldn't be used to hurt students and schools, it is worth noting that standardized test scores are lower in charter schools than in public schools (Schemo, 06). Obama's Race to the Top education grants encourage the growth of charter schools. Some charter schools seek to make a profit from public education (Dingerson, et. al., 08). Charter schools can often brag wealthy patrons from Wall Street, especially hedge fund managers (Hass, 09). New York State sought to double the number of its charter schools in 2009 (Otterman & Peters, 10). In Harlem, New York alone, there are 24 charter schools (Hernandez, 09).

The attack on public education from outside should not compel us to ignore the issues that plague schooling from within; I am equally concerned about the structure and function of public schooling and what is happening there. Decades after Freire leveled his critique of a banking system of education, this continues to be the prevalent model in our classrooms. I think there are a few reasons for this. First, but not necessarily foremost, teachers have been trained and bring their various levels of expertise to a classroom and to students who lack this expertise. There are things we have to teach students, and co-creating a syllabus or creating knowledge with our students should not keep us from teaching students things they should know and are expected to know.

Teachers labor under external impositions—department, district and state curriculums—that often tell them what they need to teach. For example, the U.S. History teachers in my high school create a common mid-term assessment. By the end of January it's pretty much expected that, whatever's been emphasized or covered in each individual class, students across the 11th grade should pretty much be up to the Civil War. The midterm is going to ask questions through this point in American History, and individual teachers who haven't brought their classes this far are leaving them stranded and unprepared on the day of the exam.

I think class size itself reinforces a banking system of education. When a teacher has twenty five or thirty five students in her class, classroom management becomes her primary concern. Because there is a qualitative difference between five students and thirty students shifting around in their seats or getting up to walk around the classroom when they might need to, classrooms come to be marked by rigid seating arrangements and teachers as keepers of order and, often, enforcers of student silence. Such a classroom, usually marked by students sitting at individual desks in aligned rows, does not lend itself to conversation and dialogue but almost begs for one-way transfers of information indicative of a banking system of education. In such classroom arrangements, the teacher is often the focus of attention and his body is

the only one that is granted seemingly limitless freedom; he walks around the classroom and his physical proximity is often enough to deter off-task and potentially disruptive student behavior. How teachers continue to sit behind desks in classes of twenty and thirty students, I have no idea. I always feel a kind of nervous energy when I am teaching and move around the classroom, which only reinforces for me an understanding of how difficult it must be for my students—so much younger and with so much energy than myself—to sit still for forty minutes. The teacher's body is the center of attention in the classroom and enjoys a unique freedom other bodies are denied.

I would never ignore the idea that there are teachers with issues who should not be in our classrooms. Any industry or business has people in it who do not belong. I remember when I was a grammar school student it seemed like a lot of the teachers I had left teaching and went into real estate. Thing was, these people tended to linger on in the classroom for several years before eventually leaving the profession. Today, as an executive in my own local teacher's union, I see lots of great, dedicated teaching staff. I also see people who are obviously burnt out or no longer enjoy being in a classroom with kids. I do what I can to help these folks rekindle their pedagogical fires, but when push comes to shove I also do what I can to police our union. Bad teachers make all teachers look bad.

Let me clarify what I mean by a bad teacher. I don't expect any teacher—myself, my children's, or the ones I had in school—to have an exhaustive knowledge of their field. What I do expect is that the teacher in her classroom will be humane and will be able to wield a democratic authority so as to protect the process of pedagogy and be able to teach. From my experience, it's not always the "smartest" person who makes the best classroom teacher, much like it's not always the best player who goes on to make the bets coach. It's the man or woman who can control a classroom effectively enough, who can channel student energies into the task at hand, and isn't afraid to admit when they don't know something but then go on to find out the answer. If you can't control a classroom, you can't teach, no matter how knowledgeable in a topic you may be. If you're openly contemptuous of students, you're a bad teacher. If you're inhumane, you don't need to be working with vulnerable young human beings who are forced, by law, to be in your classroom.

That said, much is made of teacher's unions, teacher's contracts, and tenure as obstacles to removing bad teachers from the classroom. A teacher's contract exists to spell out the agreed-upon terms and conditions of the profession and a teacher's union and its representatives exist to protect the contract. A contract protects labor from potentially capricious administrators, boards of education, and political climates. What stops a board of education from firing one teaching making eighty thousand dollars and replacing her with two teachers making forty thousand each? The contract and tenure. That said, no teacher's union wants to protect teachers who make the entire profession look bad. But the onus really falls on the school and district administration to work at correcting the situation—which can mean anything from giving the teacher in question constructive criticism to step up her game to removing her from the school—and ensuring that people who do not deserve tenure do not receive it to begin with.

What are kids in school *for*? In my district, for example, the superintendent charges us with preparing "every single student, every single day" for college. While I think all students in America, like students in Cuba and some western European countries, should have access to federally-subsidized higher education, I think we have to be careful about why we're promoting college for all. If it's to encourage the all-around growth of our young men and women, to encourage a life-long engagement in education as a betterment of the self, that is a laudable. But if it's to prepare students for future employment, it's misguided. The United States Government predicts that the fastest growing number of jobs in America through 2018 will require short-, moderate-, and long-term on-the-job training, far outnumbering the number of jobs that will require bachelor's degrees (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 09).

I spent thirty years in school. I had the pleasure of working with teachers who helped me forge a meaning and purpose in my own life; I had the displeasure of sitting through my own share of mind-numbing class sessions and lectures delivered by intellectual half-wits and burnt-out teachers. I found that things got better as I went along; there was more freedom at each successive higher level. That said, I could never shake the feeling that I was a little dog in the circus jumping through hoops, doing what was expected of me to achieve the grades I needed. Some of it was hard but I could see the value in it; for much of it I rolled up my sleeves, did what I had to do, and kept my eye on the bigger picture. For example, there were a couple of times in graduate school when I was earning my Ph.D. that I wanted to just quit. It wasn't about the difficulty of courses—I did well in my classes—but the feeling that I was a man in my thirties paying other people to pass judgment on me.

In thirty years of institutionalized education, I learned that there were certain behaviors expected of a student. For example, the field I earned my doctorate in, Political Science, kids itself that it is a science, that it can be objective and neutral. Political Science in the United States has moved away from political economy and theory and towards more sophisticated quantitative models and formulas. Political Science as a field does not question capitalism; it takes it for granted. One of my professors at the City University of New York, which is known for its left-liberal teaching staff, noted that one scholar we were studying was a "'political' political scientist," as if a political viewpoint and stance were absent from everyone else in the field except this one. Scholars in Political Science strive for a type of writing that is dry, detached, and just plain bad. Outside of my theory classes with Marshall Berman and Joan Tronto, we were encouraged to write in the third person, to leave ourselves and our experiences out of it, as though we spoke and wrote from an objective position above everything. We were taught that certain sources were okay to quote and others not. For example, you wouldn't believe how many times I was corrected for citing Noam Chomsky in papers for Political Science classes. From my experience, Chomsky citations came in for more flack than those of Karl Marx or even Lenin. And, again, this was at the City University of New York, not the University of Chicago.

The culture wars in America have not gone away. Religious conservatives continue to seek to have "intelligent design" and other variations of creationism taught in public school science classes. Some of them are already in the schools doing so.

As I write, a $500,000-plus pre-termination hearing involving an 8th grade Ohio public school science teacher, John Freshwater, continues. Freshwater has been charged with teaching creationism and burning crosses into the arms of students. Teachers in his department have had to re-teach evolution to students from Freshwater's classes and Freshwater has been reported as saying that "Science is wrong because the Bible states that homosexuality is a sin, and so anyone who is gay chooses to be gay and is therefore a sinner" (Urbina, 10). A 2005 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life poll found that almost two-thirds of Americans asked want creationism taught alongside evolution in public school (Goodstein, 05). Under the Bush II Administration, fewer than half of the states in America mandated sex education, and those that did stressed abstinence (Freedman, 06). Problem is, abstinence-only sex education didn't and doesn't work (Beil, 07). The pregnancy rate among girls aged fifteen to nineteen increased from 2005 to 2006, as did the teenage abortion rate (Lewin, 10). As children transition to adulthood, they shouldn't be taught that their bodies and emotions are a source of sin, and their health classes shouldn't ignore contraception in favor of promoting abstinence (Brooks, 05). Instead, they should be encouraged to make healthy choices, to enjoy their bodies while protecting themselves.

We live in a society that represses youth sexuality at the same time the mass media encourages it. The sexualization of youth encompasses everything from pseudo-pornographic Calvin Klein advertisements to Brittany Spears dancing seductively dressed up as a high school girl in her "Baby, One More Time" video. Males who have many sexual partners are called *playboys* and *playas*, while girls who have many sex partners get labeled *slut* and *whore* and worse. Now that I'm a dad I see a different side of this; I want both my children to enjoy their lives and their bodies in respectful ways that do not harm their emotionally well-being.

ORGANIZED LABOR UNDER ATTACK

I have long understood and agreed with Paulo Freire that work in schools alone is not going to change society. There is valuable work to be done in schools, with our students, our colleagues and our communities, but lasting social change requires a movement. Writing books that college or graduate students will read or occasional letters-to-the-editor of local newspapers isn't going to change the world. Though I appreciate the opportunities individuals like Joe and Shirley Kincheloe and institutions like Springer afford me being able to create a book such as this one, I can never shake an ever-present nagging voice in the back of my head. The voice isn't any god, nor is it John Beluski's Blutarsky character from *Animal House*. The point isn't to interpret the world, this voice tells me, the point is to change it. And I know change is only possible through concerted action with others. But for too long I have felt I haven't been involved in concerted action with others.

In the last few years I have gotten involved in my union at work. As a boy growing up in New York City in the 1980s, unionism conjured up images of corruption, of mobsters and bosses and embezzlement and other shenanigans. Many of the workers I knew—including my father—were union men and women, and though some

sported union jackets or hats I understood little of what the union did or meant to them. Today I am a proud member of the Bedford Teachers Association which represents some four hundred and forty-plus members (teachers, psychologists, social workers, guidance counselors) in the Bedford Central School District. For the last year I have been union vice president of my building, equivalent to a steward in other labor organizations. I'm the guy members come to when they have issues with administration, the school climate, or the parking situation.

I work in a district in one of the wealthiest counties in New York State and the country. The Bedford Central School District comprises two of the most affluent neighborhoods in Westchester County, Bedford Hills and Pound Ridge. Of the communities that comprise the BCSD, these two have the lowest union membership and always seem to come out against the proposed school budget. The *Record-Review*, the local Bedford/Pound Ridge weekly newspaper, often prints vituperative letters and editorials railing against our teachers union. The BTA is accused of being unreasonable as we negotiate a labor contract; we are called insensitive to the economic realities facing the communities and tax payers.

No teacher or guidance counselor or social worker I know went into pubic education thinking we were going to become rich. Teaching is called a profession, yet the median pay of a teacher (ranging from $47,100 to $51,180) compared to the median pay of another profession with similar educational requirements—for example, a medical doctor ($186,044 for a primary care physician) or lawyer ($110,590)—is much less. I'm not complaining: I love teaching, I really like working in my school district, and at the same time, my salary affords me what would be a middle class lifestyle anywhere else than in Westchester. Like other teachers I know, I work other jobs and summer vacation is more accurately viewed as summer unemployment.

Organized labor helped build the United States of America but throughout the country, labor is on the defensive. Only 12% of American workers are union members, down from 20% in 1983 (Greenhouse, 10). 37.4% of public sector workers belong to labor organizations compared to 7.2% of private industry workers (Ibid). It's hard to remember this sometimes in New York, a state with about two million unionized workers, the highest union membership (24.9%) in the country. Union members enjoy better salaries, benefits and working conditions than non-union members (Yates, 09). These benefits spill over to non-union members in workplaces where there are unions. Charter schools—the number of which is set to double in New York State—are notoriously hostile to union labor.

Ten years ago when I was hired to work in Bedford, I heard much of the supposed "culture of Bedford." Bedford parents were demanding but with their demands came respect for a job well done. The Bedford Central School District was willing to pay for the best professional staff money could buy so that the district's children received the best education. Public education has never been about short-term profits and the fact is a good education costs money. Teachers help turn out knowledgeable, intellectually-curious students who go on to become good citizens, good workers and employers, and good tax payers. How do you quantify what a kindergarten student today will go on to contribute to her community and country twenty or thirty years down the road and compare it to per-pupil costs now?

The economic downturn of the last few years has caused great distress for the people in our communities and country. When folks are feeling the heat they start looking for answers; some start looking for scapegoats. The rich get bailouts; teachers get bagged on. Because workers in education have the highest unionization rates among local government employees, teachers and teacher unions present convenient target. Taxpayers cannot see how much of their money is going to Wall Street banks or wars in the Middle East; what they do see is their money going to operate their local school system. I have always felt support and gratitude from the families of the students I have had the pleasure and honor of teaching in Bedford and elsewhere. These people have invited me into their homes; to their children's graduation parties; they've thought enough of me to ask me to write recommendation letters to help their kids get into college.

My experience—and I think the historical record bears me out—has been that the most vocal and organized opponents of teachers and teacher's unions are not blue-collar working class people but the wealthy. I have taught in rural North Carolina, South Korea, the Caribbean and Westchester, New York. Overwhelmingly, the parents I come to know have been supportive of my work in the classroom with their children. On the local level, the most vociferous critics of my teacher's union have been individuals who have made their fortunes in the financial industry and commercial real estate. One frequent *Record Review* letter writer likens our union to Al Queda and Somali pirates (Offit, 10). Another, who never tires of disparaging teachers and our union, owns a 2.5 million dollar home. On a national level, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation are funding state-level initiatives that will challenge the ways in which teachers are granted tenure and evaluated (Dillon, 09).

My own board of education is not supportive of teachers. If asked, they'd probably say they support their teachers wholeheartedly; it's the teacher's union that they have issues with. It seems at almost every board of education meeting the president of the board talks about repealing the Taylor Law (New York State's Public Employees Fair Employment Act). Because of the Taylor Law, teachers in my district continue to get paid and move up a step on the salary schedule even as we work without—at this time of writing—a new contract. Because of the Taylor Law, teachers and other public employees in the Empire State cannot strike. Actually we can strike, but if we did so we would be fined two days pay for each day we are out of work. Our board seeks to differentiate between teachers and the teachers union when we are one and the same. In my district, every teacher is a union man or woman, as is every school psychologist, social worker, secretary, administrative assistant, maintenance worker, and administrator (though we belong to different unions).

A major problem with education in the United States is that it is largely funded through the local property-tax base. Rich neighborhoods are going to get good schools and poor neighborhoods are going to get crappy schools. Westchester's tony Scarsdale neighborhood spends over $24,500 per student. Less than twenty minutes south, New York City spends $13,755 per-pupil, which is less than the State average (Chan, 07). Overall, American public schools spend $8,701 per student. The lowest per pupil spending is in Utah ($5,257), Arizona ($6,261), Idaho ($6,283) and Mississippi ($6,575) (Ibid). Not surprisingly, test scores are directly correlated to per-pupil spending and

family income. In Scarsdale, where 99% of students graduate, SAT scores were 655 in math, 617 in critical reading and 644 in writing. In New York City, 462 is the average math score and 441 is the average score in reading (Einhorn, 07). SAT scores in the city have been falling the last few years (Gootman & Gebeloff, 09).

Because local property-tax assessments fund local public schools, boards of education become very powerful. School board members are volunteers and the position is time consuming. Hence school board membership favors the wealthy, those with enough resources to finance the time necessary to serve on a board of education. Mainstream American society ignores class interests, but in a voluntary position where you basically have to pay to play, the rich and powerful make sure their interests and viewpoints are represented and implemented. If the federal government fully funded public education, boards of education could be abolished, with stewardship of schools handed over to councils of community members, students, school faculty, and local officials.

The last couple years in America have witnessed the rising popularity of the tax pac and "Tea Party" movements. Property tax caps place a limit on the maximum amount of taxes a person will have to pay. One alternative to tax caps, outside of uniform federal funding, is a so-called "circuit breaker" approach which limits property taxes to a percentage of household income. Many Americans express disdain for paying taxes but when asked if they want good roads and schools and other positives taxes pay for they agree they do. Unfortunately, our tax dollars are appropriated for causes many do not support. In 2009, a series of nationally coordinated grassroots "Tea Party" protests swept America (Robbins, 09). Though its tempting to write "Tea Party Patriots" off as conservative zealots, the truth is many different peoples and opinions were subsumed under the Tea Party umbrella, including folks opposed to President Obama's stimulus package, federal support for the automobile manufacturers, and the growing national debt.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AMERICAN EDUCATION

When we are led to believe that schools are not doing what we think they should be doing, scapegoats are sought. Traditionally, the two biggest perpetrators have been identified as teachers—individually and collectively in our unions—and the students themselves. This blaming-the-victim mentality is a smoke screen diverting attention from the fundamental fact that public education as it exists and has existed is failing our children and will continue to do so.

Critics and pundits who study tests scores act as if education takes place in a vacuum. The political, economic, and social forces that shape education are rarely directly addressed. In a corporate-dominated society like the United States, the role of education is to reproduce a pliable workforce and citizenry. Everyone "knows" we go to school to one day get a good job. Being able to sit still in a chair for seven hours a day, walk in orderly fashion down the right side of the hallway and mindlessly repeat and regurgitate the correct questions and answers helps foster an obedient, compliant, conformist citizen/workers who is alienated from education and dehumanized.

John Dewey spoke of the aims of education, aims we assume involve learning and personal growth. Dewey warned of aims which "belong within the process [but are]

set up from without." He opined that "the later state of affairs must obtain when social relationships are not equitably balanced." Social relationships, shaped by economic and political forces, provide the framework within which schooling takes place in America. I live in a country where the top 20% of households own 85% of all private wealth; the top 1% alone own 34.6% (Domhoff, 09). The top 1% of Americans own 42% of financial wealth (net worth minus the value of your home) while the bottom 80% own a mere 7% (Ibid). I live in an America where 38.3% of stocks are in the hands in the top 1% of the population; the next 19% own 52.8% of stocks (Ibid). In America the ratio of CEO pay to factory worker pay is 411 to 1 (Ibid). 37 million Americans live below the poverty line (Eckholm, 07). 1 in 5 American children lives in poverty and child poverty costs the U.S. $500 billion a year because poor children grow up to be less productive, earn less money and commit more crimes (Ibid). 1 in 8 adult Americans and 1 in 4 children use food stamps to supplement their diets (DeParle & Gebeloff, 09). The United States military budget for 2010 is $680 billion, with an additional $40–$50 billion supplement expected for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (Tiron, 09). The American military budget is almost as much as the rest of the world's defense spending combined. I live in a country where 46 million people lack health insurance. I live in a world where 1.4 billion people live on less than $1.25 a day (Reuters, 08).

The cost of living—from the price of a gallon of milk to a gallon of gasoline—is rising. Our economy has moved from a base in manufacturing to an ever-increasing service sector with a commensurate drop in wages and benefits for employees. While downsizing and poverty are taken as givens and not as crimes against working class people, corporations accrues more and more freedoms once accorded to individual flesh-and-blood human beings. In a quest for "accountability," teachers, students and schools don't need to be impugned. A just, caring economy able to provide a decent standard of living for all via meaningful employment, good work, instead of unrestrained success for a few, is paramount. Our military budget is indefensible and goes towards programs and initiatives that make us less safe in an increasingly hostile world. What would education and other social programs look like if we channeled some or all of the $680 billion military budget into our people and schools?

Education occurs in a political and economic milieu. But to pose the economy as the problem is to blame the system itself. To speak of an American ruling class is to court laughter in some sectors and puzzled looks from many others. As it is now, rehabilitation of the system is sought by blaming students and teachers for personal failures, when the malfunction is institutional and systemic across the capitalist world system. Critical pedagogies pose the economy as a problem and seek ways to address the ills that leave so few with so much and so many with so little, ills that leave us all less. Critical pedagogies, fueled by our righteous anger, use reason and rational thought to plan and act. Critical pedagogies look to science and faith for humanization, not domination. We are here on earth for a short time, and we must struggle collectively to make our lives more just, caring, and enjoyable.

ENDNOTES

[1] I suspect because the torso tends to thicken as men get older, something I am learning about. Growth hormone use can also lead to the growth of visceral fat, the fat around internal organs, lending a distended look to even the leanest bodybuilder. I know bodybuilders who abused GH and now are not fat but have abdomins that protrude past their chests (not to mention elongated feet). Stallone, one might recall, was busted in Australia during the filming of the movie for GH possession.

[2] Today these are occasional indulged in paint ball games.

[3] In the novelization of *Rambo First Blood Part II*, David Morrell tells us that John Rambo is the recipient of "[t]wo Silver Stars, four Bronze Stars, two Soldier's Crosses, four Vietnamese Crosses of Gallantry…. a handful of purple hearts" and the Congressional Medal of Honor (85: 11). When Troutman recruits Rambo for his return mission to Vietnam, Rambo disposes of his many medals in the toilet of his cell (Morrell, 85: 16).

[4] Interestingly enough, for trivia buffs, Malcolm McDowell was twenty eight when he portrayed 15 year old Alex in Stanley Kubrick's filmed version of *A Clockwork Orange*. And Arthur Rambaud is a poet Alex will read when he is 18 and reforming himself (Burgess, 68: 217).

[5] There is an alternate ending to the filmed version in which Troutman does kill Rambo.

[6] Like his Zarathustra, who heralds the *Ubermesnch*, Nietzshce was no superman himself. In fact, reading Nietzsche and reading *about* Nietzsche one is struck with the sense of frustration Nietzsche must have felt knowing he was not destined to be an overman, not to mention the frustration engendered by lackluster sales of his books during his lifetime. In a quote that he no doubt realized applied to himself as much as to any man he mentions in it, Nietzsche writes, "The truth of the matter is that if he *were* that thing, he would be unable to imagine or express it: Homer would not have created Achilles, nor Goethe Faust, if Homer had been an Achilles or Goethe a Faust" (56: 235).

[7] McCarthy affects a certain style in his prose—he does not use quotation marks, doesn't use aporstraphes in all his contractions, and doesn't capitalize all proper nouns—that on first read may leave readers think he lacks a grasp of the rudimentary rules of standard grammar.

[8] Sexual "deviancy"—a troubling term itself which calls into question the assumptions we have of what is "normal" and "allowable" sexual activity—among "bad guys" is a larger phenomena than the Rambo films. So, for example, Thulsa Doom oversees a hedonistic orgy while Conan has sex with one woman at a time in the missionary position.

[9] Which brings up the point that if we are to fully understand our own positions we must understand the positions of those who disagree with. It is easy to reject Jesse Ventura's views on 9–11, creationists, or free market apostles in knee-jerk fashion; however, our arguments against them are stronger if we fully comprehend their arguments.

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INDEX

1984, 107–109, 111–113, 118, 123, 130–133

A

Abraham and Isaac, 59, 83–87, 93
Achilles, 9, 25–31, 33, 35–37, 40–43
A Clockwork Orange, 107, 110–113, 116, 119, 123, 149*n4*
Afghanistan, 5, 21, 24, 30, 57, 67–68, 70, 71, 73, 74, 76–80, 102, 145
Agamemnon, 26–28, 40
Alienated/estranged labor, 122–131
Al Qaeda, 69, 102
Anthem, 107, 108, 112, 114, 115, 117, 119, 123, 131, 133
Aristocratic warrior, 25, 30, 36, 39–43
Atheism, 86–91
Authority and democratic authority, 28, 32, 51, 53–55, 102, 123, 132, 141

B

Battle Royale, 107, 116, 118–120, 131
Bin Laden, O., 13, 53, 68–71, 77–79, 81
Blowback, 67–68, 71–74, 77–81
Bodybuilding, 4, 32, 96, 97
Bradbury, R. *See Fahrenheit 451*
Brave New World, 107, 108, 112, 114–116, 119, 131
Bubeck, D., 47
Burgess, A. *See A Clockwork Orange*
Bush, G.W., 69, 72, 73, 75, 80

C

Care
  and democracy, 12, 45–65
  and dialogue, 50, 51
  and positionality, standpoint, 45, 47, 55–58
  as praxis, 47
  values & properties of, 50, 53
Cheney, D., 68, 73–74, 79–80
Chigurh, A. *See No Country For Old Men*
Children of Men, 107, 109, 114, 116, 118, 130, 132, 133
City University of New York (CUNY), 8, 12, 14–16, 142
Clement, G., 58
Conan the Barbarian, 1–4, 9, 11, 19, 30, 33
Cord, O.S. *See Ender's Game*
Critical pedagogy
  and religion, 89–93, 101
CUNY. *See* City University of New York

D

Dawkins, R., 85, 87, 88, 90, 91, 93, 103, 104
Developmental pathways, 97–98
Developmental systems theory (DST) and Marxist dialectics, 94
Dewey, J.
  on aims of education, 146
Dialectical materialism, 86–89
Dialogue. *See also* Care, and dialogue
  and democracy, 50–52
Dick, P.K. *See Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*; *The Minority Report*
Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, 107, 114, 117, 127
Dystopian future
  the aged in, 114
  the body & emotions, 106, 131, 132
  child abuse as entertainment, 107, 118, 119
  child raising in, 114, 121
  corporations & consumerism, 116

and hope, 109
and marriage, 127
and panopticonism, 111–113
society in, 111, 113–115, 119, 131

E
Emotions & ethics, 45–46
Ender's Game, 107, 109, 119
Engels, F., 6, 89, 94, 122, 130
Estranged labor. *See* Alienated/estranged labor
Eternal recurrence, 36–39, 41, 105, 106
Ethic of care, 12–13, 25, 45–48, 50, 53, 55, 56, 58–65, 99, 103
Ethics, 4, 12–13, 25, 29, 43, 45–48, 50, 53, 55, 56, 58–65, 92, 95, 99, 103, 106, 110

F
Fahrenheit 451, 107, 117, 118, 123, 125, 127, 133
Freire, P., 3, 6, 7, 13, 45, 48, 53, 92, 105, 143

G
Genetic reductionism, 94–97
Geto Boys, 72, 73
Gilligan, C., 46–47
Gould, S.J., 93, 103, 104
Graduate Center. *See* City University of New York (CUNY)
Growth hormone, 96, 149*n1*. *See also* Steroids

H
Hegemony, 6, 7, 9, 12, 70, 89–90, 93–94
Held, V., 8, 47, 50, 61
Hitchens, C., 87–91, 93, 104
Homer, 26–28, 33, 40, 149*n6*. *See also* Achilles
Hope, 3, 12–14, 20–21, 76, 83, 89, 97, 109, 127, 134–136
Hussein, S., 13, 68, 74–77, 80, 81
Huxley, A. *See Brave New World*

I
Intellectual warrior, 4–8, 42
Iraq, 5, 57, 67–71, 73–76, 78–80, 88, 147

J
James, P.D. *See Children of Men*

K
Kabat, C., 7
Kierkegaard, S., 85, 86
Kincheloe, J., 4, 7–9, 11, 12, 14–17, 42, 55, 122, 143
King, S., 11, 26, 107, 116–121, 123, 133. *See also The Long Walk; The Running Man*

L
Lewontin, R., 89, 93–101, 104
Liberation theology movement, 7–8, 92
Lot and his daughters, 83, 84
Lowry, L. *See The Giver*

M
Maturana, H., 93, 99
McCarthy, C., 12, 33–42, 149*n7*
Militarization, 2, 77
Mujahideen, 13, 24, 67, 77, 78

N
Nietzsche, F., 29–31, 33–39, 41, 106, 149*n6*
No Country for Old Men, 12, 33, 37
Noddings, N., 47, 51, 58–59, 61–64
Non-antagonistic dualisms, 13, 50, 83–104
Noriega, M., 13, 68, 72–73, 78, 81

O
Obama, B., 54, 68, 71, 73, 80, 81, 138, 140, 146
Of Mice and Men, 58, 60, 63, 64

On the Beach, 117, 123, 134–136
Orwell, G., 107–109, 111–115, 117–119, 124–125, 130–134, 136
Oyama, S., 89, 93–98, 100–102, 104

P
Panopticonism, 109, 111–113
Plumwood, V., 93
Positionality
  & left essentialism, 55–58
Precious Jones. *See Push*
Propaganda, 69–70, 78, 94, 109, 112, 115, 124
Public education, 5, 13, 16, 17, 137–144, 146
Push, 58, 59, 62, 64

R
Rambo, J., 9, 12, 19–43, 65, 78, 149*n3*, 149*n5*, 149*n8*
Rand, A., 107–109, 111–115, 117, 131–134
Reagan, R., 2, 21, 24–25, 68, 69, 72, 73, 75, 77, 78, 80, 81
Reality television, 121
Rebellion
  vs. revolution, 132–136
Rimbaud, A., 19, 23

S
Sapphire. *See Push*
School funding in United States, 45, 140, 145, 146
Schwarzenegger, A., 2, 3, 12, 19, 22, 23, 27, 96
Shor, I., 6–8, 13, 52
Shute, N. *See On the Beach*
Stallone, S., 2, 12, 19–25, 27, 32, 149*n1*
Standardized testing, 5, 17, 48, 101, 137–140
Steinbeck, J. *See Of Mice and Men*
Steinberg, S., 4, 7, 14, 55, 90, 138, 139
Steroids, 3, 11, 96

T
Takami, K. *See Battle Royale*
Taylor Law, 145
Teachers unions, 144, 145
The Giver, 107–109, 111–112, 114, 115, 123, 124, 132
The Long Walk, 107, 116, 119, 131
The Minority Report, 107, 110–112
The Running Man, 107, 116–118, 121, 123, 133
Tronto, J., 47, 50, 51, 142
Troutman, 19, 23, 26, 28–31, 149*n3*, 149*n5*

U
Utopian thinking, 13, 104, 106, 134

V
Varela, F., 93, 99

W
Weapons of mass destruction, 74–75, 80