

TORRES, ERIC D., Ph.D. *We Know Who You Are! Connecting Education, Identity, and National Security.* (2010)
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This dissertation is a critical analysis of the way in which individuality is socially constructed and of the pattern in which the majority of the population is socially integrated, mobilized, and immobilized during the process of systemic reproduction. Assessing that the political project contained in the U.S. National Security strategy models coercion in service of individual self-assertion as it seeks to open societies and favors an expansion towards a new frontier, this study examines the pedagogical experience embedded in such a war scenario, the various discourses of security, and the implications of the confiscation of our moral responsibility, extrapolating its consequences into curriculum theory. The main problem explored is to what extent the state should be allowed, as state, to intervene in the process of interpretation through which each of us is supposed to build an identity. The educational, ethical, and political questions related to this shaping process are: What kind of personal identities can this kind of blueprint generate? What kind of impact does this social engineering experiment have on our experience as autonomous individuals? And finally, is there any possibility of unhinging questioning or dialogical space?

Bricolage is used to explore the issues at hand, de-center our thoughts, and de-center the way we think. By juxtaposing multiples frames of inquiry and understanding of the social, cultural, political, psychological, and educational domains attention is drawn toward processes, relationships, and interconnections among phenomena using hermeneutics, semiotics, media analysis, historical and literary analysis, technological

and theoretical analysis, psychoanalysis, vignettes, and currere as an invitation to connect the pieces of a multidimensional puzzle in a pedagogical effort to redescribe reality and confront the linearity of objectivity.

The understanding of curriculum as a process of social construction results here in the validation of the use of the study of limits as an effective strategy to get at the unmarked criteria that work to dismiss as irrelevant or valorize as relevant a particular mode of thought, field of study, or insistence upon the real. It also works as a powerful methodology to challenge our ability to represent and self-represent and as a generator of democratic treats for an educated citizenry. This study concludes with a consideration of how unhinging questioning belongs to Education and Schools of Education, how they legitimate particular beliefs while delegitimizing others, and a call for educators to facilitate a democratic, self-limiting, and morally responsive experience of schooling.

WE KNOW WHO YOU ARE! CONNECTING
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NATIONAL SECURITY

by

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To Ronda and Sebastian

APPROVAL PAGE

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when my duties as a teacher or an administrator overlapped my duties as a graduate student. My gratitude goes to all my Spanish students as well. Their curiosity and willingness to participate in our experiential education projects made each of our sessions a learning and highly rewarding experience for me.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A Hermeneutical Crossroad

Eighteen years ago, during the winter of 1992, Frederick Herzog, professor of Systematic Theology at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, hosted an encounter and a series of dialogue sessions between the faculty of the Duke Divinity School and the *Comunidad Bíblico Teológica Wescelao Bahamonde*, also a Methodist related seminary in Lima, Peru, with which I was associated in a rather unofficial way. I was not part of the faculty but attended it, upon Fred's insistence, as a church liaison. They were the continuation of a North-South dialogue that had started over a year before in Lima, when Dean Russell Ritchie and Professors Mary McClintock-Fulkerson, William Turner, and Ted Campbell, with the auspices of Methodist Bishops C. P. Minnick of the North Carolina Conference and Marco Ochoa of the Methodist Church in Peru, made their long journey to Lima despite the recommendations of the Department of State not to do it. At that time Peru had already been fighting over a period of more than ten years a deadly War on Terror against the *Partido Comunista del Perú Sendero Luminoso*, where the abuse of a State of Emergency regime had been the organic response of the Peruvian state to the turmoil and civil unrest caused by a ruthless and politically subversive violence generated by *Sendero Luminoso* since 1980.

Interestingly, the faculty at Duke was, at that time, trying to discern its theological agenda for the 21st century and Fred considered important for the Divinity School to hear the voices of the other coming from the periphery. A periphery -disturbed and unhinging- upon which he had been systematically reflecting. As I recall it now, through dialogue and a theology that was embedded in mutual accountability, following the Wesleyan tradition, Fred hoped that the faculty could become somehow affected in ways that inspired an alternative theological response to an all overriding globalization discourse that was permeating the academy. And so were we, overridden, but from the opposite perspective. Trapped in the middle of a violent crossfire, we were trying to figure out how to *act* hope. We explained over and over that our reality could no longer be read through the dichotomy of left and right, and described how the aftertaste of the cold war had already been displaced by another, an unyielding, unmerciful and more sinister one, a battle between fanaticism and modernity. Our concerns were, of course, how to get rid of an out of date and certainly anachronistic gasp of a pre-1989 world and the pernicious activity of the School of the Americas spreading the U.S. National Security doctrine throughout the continent; but most importantly, how to generate and deliver new understandings of our own selves and inscribe them in a new scenario where violent responses were not part of the picture. The dialogue continued over the next few years, became somehow organic through student and faculty exchanges, but, I am afraid, key parts of it were lost in the translation, until it eventually faded after Fred's sudden death following a heated Faculty meeting and the censorship and closing of the Methodist Seminary, ironically, by the Methodist Church in Peru.

Time has passed, inexorable, but now that memories of terrorism in Peru and how it was organically and privately assumed come alive in the new context of a U.S. led global War on Terror, I am wondering how I am supposed to read -or continue read- that encounter, the ironies it generated, and the ways it failed (or not). More specifically, how to think about the similitude of disparate spatial and temporal registers of history in which a highly localized terrorism –self avowed as the last Maoist guerrilla war- comes face to face with a new and growing international terrorist network -which forces us to think about the world and how we act in it in a different way-. For now, here, I just want to think about it as a hermeneutical crossroad, but I shall return to this point later.

Deborah Poole and Gerardo Rénique (2003), though, in *Terror and the Privatized State: A Peruvian Parable*, provide a comprehensive as well as challenging historical understanding, which constitutes a glimpse of what this juncture could mean:

For many people in the world, the terrorist acts of September 11, although shocking for their magnitude, did not constitute a paradigm shattering event. Many Peruvians, Colombians, Guatemalans, and Argentines, for example, reacted to the disaster with a muted sense of irony. ‘At last,’ they reflected, ‘Americans will understand what we’ve been through.’ Seen from their perspective, fear and uncertainty were nothing new. Moreover, all of the antidemocratic measures invoked to fight this terrorism –such as suspension of *habeas corpus*, special military tribunals, sanctioned racial profiling, heightened surveillance, homeland security, military checkpoints, unrestricted wiretapping, and censorship- were hauntingly familiar to Latin Americans. While U.S. liberals react with alarm to such dramatic changes in their country’s democratic culture and constitutional regime, many Latin Americans credit the United States with fostering similar measures in their own countries. (p 151)

Poole and Rénique (2003) argue, and I think they do it convincingly, that from a regional perspective, it is not difficult to see that the U.S. began experimenting with such

procedures on another September 11, thirty eight years ago, when in a C.I.A. covert action the U.S. sponsored a coup that brought an end to the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile, and ushered an era of neoliberal governance in Latin America. With the serene perspective of historical distance, their assertion reminds me now of what Bauman (1995) says about society: it is “a massive cover-up operation,” (p. 14) that pretends to put some order, he says. A convenient order. It also reminds me of what Britzman (2006) thinks about what brews underground: “One of the most perplexing problems for a pedagogy that engages the work of social repair concerns the status of the external world in our inner world, not from the vantage of attitudinal change or new epistemologies standpoint theories but from the ways the inner world can even be imagined” (p. 46). It is true that the Chileans themselves acted against Allende in 1973, but as David P. Forsythe (1992) assesses in *Democracy, War, and Covert Action*:

The Nixon team had made it clear that anti-Allende violence had U.S. support and that a new military government would be quickly rewarded with diplomatic recognition and foreign assistance. Despite Kissinger’s protestations of innocence, one cannot meet clandestinely with military officials and urge them to use force against an elected President, then credibly disclaim any responsibility for the subsequent violent coup, even though it was carried out by others (...) Covert violent action to overthrow a government may assume a leading or supporting form. When it takes the latter, it is still intervention. (p. 390)

Since that time, Poole and Rénique (2003) conclude, the wars in Argentina, Central America, Colombia, and Peru had served as virtual laboratories for U.S. regional experimentation with the idea of market development through “permanent states of exception” (p. 152). Drawing from this historical perspective and trying to build a parallel with the current nation building efforts in the Middle East, I wonder to what

extent it is legitimate for a state to intervene in the process of interpretation through which each of us is supposed to build an identity. There are a few educational, ethical, and political questions connected to this very particular concern. What kind of personal identities can this kind of blueprint generate? What kind of impact does this social engineering experiment have on our experience as autonomous individuals? And finally, is there any possibility of unhinging questioning or dialogical space?

The Social Location

Allow me now to make a disclosure before I go back to Herzog, the theologian, and to the notion of hermeneutical crossroad. I do not pretend to do theology here. At least, not an orthodox one. But who knows what goes underground! I embrace the postmodern trend that believes that a text, and text here may be understood in a broad sense, can be theologically read. Modern schooling, says Slattery (1995) has enshrined the written word as a historical artifact to be memorized, comprehended, and regurgitated on a standardized test. In contrast to this dominant view, “postmodernity views the text as a phenomenological encounter between the word and the reader” (p. 77). In this sense, I can say, Herzog (1974) had a strong sense of irony. He always refused to live within the boundaries of contemporaneity. In a practical and systematic critique to his peers he usually encouraged his students, both in Durham and in Lima, to develop a critical understanding of their own performance in the world. His analysis, which resonated very much with the understandings of Latin American Theology of Liberation at that time, and Paulo Freire’s (1985) domesticating and liberating modes of education, always started

“with the pain and the hurt of suffering humans on the borders of life.” (p. 319). It is precisely the endurance to the resistance that Herzog (1974) experienced, documented, and I witnessed to his notion of *borders of life* -squared up by the fact that the poor, the outcast, do not appear at the laying of the hermeneutical foundations of Systematic Theology- and the paradigm shift that it implied –switching the focus from the large, endogamous group of educated people to the oppressed as the starting point of theology- that caused a lasting impression on me. I think that hermeneutical crossroad that he created opened hopeful possibilities for contrastive analysis, change in focus, and shifts in paradigm.

Herzog (1988) continued to develop his notion of *borders of life* and masterfully explained it in his book *God-Walk, Liberation Shaping Dogmatics* in a very simple and yet radical way:

The preacher starts with theology and then works it into examples of real-life situations. It is the other way around. Christian thought needs to grow out of real life. Ministers as well as lay persons need to reflect on real-life situations as they focus sharply on *social location*. It is never a matter of just single-issue dilemmas. We have to start where we are located in terms of the total situation. That may be a cotton mill. But the challenge expands right away from the difficulties of the cotton mill to world peace, for example. (p. 126) [The emphasis is mine]

Herzog (1988) embodied the deepest meaning of Easter, as Freire (1985) would say. He was first a teacher, then a theologian, and always whole. During our multiple encounters I was profoundly impressed with his consistent and empathetic effort to put limits to the self and walk with, describe, and redescribe those *on the borders of life* to the point where, precisely during the walk, description, and redescription, thoughts

transgressed orthodox boundaries and dared to reach the orthodox unthinkable. In his own words:

Formerly, with Freud, we thought that consciousness was a wide-ranging dimension of our lives with subconsciousness as a relatively small area of a strange 'underworld.' Now psychologists assume that this underworld morass is the major part of our psychic life and consciousness only a thin veneer on top of it. Our underworld occupies us most of the time. That is why we are so much asleep, not really alert to reality. Repentance is basically this waking up from sleep, the awakening of conscience, seeing the full picture –if only for moments at time. We usually don't grasp how things hang together in our lives. Open your eyes that you may see –that is what repentance means. (p. 191)

To return to the opening question, then, one way to think about the similitude of these two disparate spatial and temporal registers of history is to ask: To what extent the state should be allowed, as state, to intervene in the process of interpretation through which each of us is supposed to build an identity? The educational, ethical, and political questions related to this shaping process are: What kind of personal identities can this kind of blueprint generate? What kind of impact does this social engineering experiment have on our experience as autonomous individuals? And finally, is there any possibility of unhinging questioning or dialogical space? To describe this hermeneutical crossroad as a social location I draw from Kwame Anthony Appiah's (2005) *The Ethics of Identity*:

As you'd expect, public schools already maintain a gingerly reticence about the more salient identity claims. In the United States, public school students will be instructed in arithmetic and science and history, but teachers will not promulgate views about God's existence or Christ's benevolence; and given the thinness of our 'civic religion,' this suits most people just fine. Many identity groups that make thicker claims are resigned at odds with the official curriculum. Where they are not, the concern for the child's prospective autonomy does nave a bite. The proposal we've discussed has as a consequence that if intolerance of other identities is built into an identity, or if learning the views of others except as

shameful error is one of their norms, we will be seeking, in public education, to reshape those identities so as to exclude this feature. (p. 211)

Interestingly, at a macro level, the National Security strategy of the United States of America has inscribed education within the frame of National Security doctrine. Education has openly become one of nine foreign policy strategies designed to expand what President George W. Bush (2002) described as a “circle of development” (p. 23) in a promising vision delivered to the world almost one year after the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington D.C. in 2001. Within that vision, literacy and learning were considered the “foundation of democracy” (p.23). An analysis of two of the main official documents that regulate national security policy making, *The National Security Strategy of the United States, Washington, The White House, September 2002*; and *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, Washington, The White House, March 2006* reveals, nevertheless, from the perspective of critical pedagogy, not only that literacy and learning have been foreshorten to unpretentious functions played within a neutral structure, but confirms that education has been seamlessly articulated to a larger political agenda: “to open societies” (p. 21). The implications and challenges that this vision carries, though, have not been sufficiently discussed in pedagogical terms. What does it mean to open societies? I draw from Zygmunt Bauman’s (1995) philosophical focus about the confiscation of our individual moral responsibility in *Life in Fragments* to both address the question and advance the pedagogical process:

The overall effect of all this is another case of the by-now familiar tendency to expropriate the individual’s moral responsibility. It is now the community, or rather the self-proclaimed wardens of its purity, who draw the boundaries of

moral obligations, divide good and evil, and for better or worse dictate the definition of moral conduct. The paramount concern of their moral legislation is to keep the ‘us’ and ‘them’ watertight; not so much the promotion of moral standards, as the installation of double standards (...) –one for ‘us’, another reserved for the treatment of “them.” (p. 277)

I propose that the political project contained in the U.S. National Security Strategy models coercion in service of individual self-assertion as it favors expansion of the market towards a new frontier. Justified as a moral imperative by President Bush (2002) in the first document on National Security issued after September 11, it has clearly anchored its educational rationale in a particular interpretation of history at the end of the cold war: “The militant visions of class, nation, and race which promised utopia and delivered misery have been defeated and discredited;” as it stoutly ascertains that there is only one “sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy and free enterprise.” (p. 1)

The Method

I follow Herzog (1988), Appiah (2005), and Bauman (1995) both philosophically and methodologically. But they are not the only ones. I also engage in what Joe Kincheloe (2005) calls *bricolage*. As I explore the issues at hand, I embed myself in a complex and multilogical form of inquiry of the social, cultural, political, psychological, and educational domains; identifying webs of relationships instead of isolated things-in-themselves. In this process, I purposefully draw attention toward processes, relationships, and interconnections among phenomena using hermeneutics, semiotics, media analysis, historical and textual analysis, technological and theoretical analysis,

psychoanalysis, vignettes, and currere to connect the pieces of a multidimensional puzzle in a pedagogical effort to redescribe reality and confront the linearity of objectivity.

In this sense my writing is an experimental journey as well. First, I do not necessarily think in English. When I switched from a Spanish dominant to an English dominant environment my brain slipped into a survival mode. That was my little state of emergency. I stopped thinking words and started thinking images. I have always been more comfortable writing than speaking. But this sort of transhumance experience (I am no backpacker, I do bring heavy luggage) has made it obvious to me that meaning itself does not only reside in the rhythm of syncopated words, sentences, and paragraphs but also in their collapse. Joan Didion (2005) in *The Year of Magical Thinking* describes a similar experience:

The way I write is who I am, or have become, yet this is a case in which I wish I had instead of words and their rhythms a cutting room, equipped with an Avid, a digital editing system on which I could touch a key and collapse the sequence of time, show you simultaneously all the frames of memory that come to me now, let you pick the takes, the marginally different expressions, the variant readings of the same lines. This is a case in which I need more than words to find the meaning. This is a case in which I need whatever it is I think or believe to be penetrable, if only for myself. (p. 8)

My experimental journey begins with the depiction of a real soldier, Medic Joseph Patrick Dwyer, a veteran of the war in Afghanistan. Why? Because if I am going to claim verisimilitude and credibility there is no other starting point but reality itself. Though, while this depiction does not pretend to be representative of all soldiers, I must make another disclosure: it isn't randomly chosen either. It was, indeed, one of those rare circumstances when, unexpectedly, the personal intersects the historical: we, the soldier

and I, happened to live in the same community. But we were at odds: I did not support the war, he embodied it. Nevertheless, I did not select this singular story according to that circumstance. I am not interested in building a construct on top of an oppositional dichotomy. I selected it according to an ingenuous and rather unsophisticated principle: I could certainly not start thinking about education, identity, and national security apart from people like him, people, in one way or another, displaced to the *borders of life*. I bring Patrick Slattery (1995) in to explain like he does in *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era*, that “it is important to make curriculum theory accessible and inspirational for educators and students throughout the field.” (p. 11) But in focusing in the soldier’s story I have found Slattery’s (1995) methodology even more important:

In effect, the curriculum will seek to understand history contextually rather than delineate a coherent metanarrative of selective events and artifacts. Just as the curriculum is affected by social conditions and values, so too can curriculum help to reshape or preserve those conditions and values. The relationship between society and the curriculum is reciprocal. (p. 36)

Additionally, I have found Slattery’s (1995) examination of the history of curriculum development in the context of his own educational autobiography very appealing in order to establish a participatory perspective and also a contrast, hopefully empathetic, between one’s perspective and that of others. This narrative is, then, consequently, a pedagogical attempt to de-center our thought. Here I have found Deborah Britzman’s (2006) considerations on creativity and compliance in *Novel Education, Psychoanalytic Studies of Learning and Not Learning* very helpful:

Psychoanalysis should not be promoting knowledge as a consolation prize for injustice. I take this to mean that however elegant our explanations may be on designs and structures of our inner world, however much we invest in the therapeutic action of understanding, indeed, of ‘finding neurosis,’ and working through it, knowledge of these processes cannot be a substitute for transforming injustice in the real world. On the other hand, identifying this limit cannot be the end of the story because thinking with others is the only means for the self to transform itself. It, too, is a mode of freedom, a means for mourning, a possibility beyond oppressive love, the grounds for symbolization, and an expression of singularity.” (p.58)

But the story of Medic Joseph Patrick Dwyer is not the only one depicted here.

Otherness as embodied by Matina Dwyer, his wife; Ewan Macdougall, a grand strategy student; Warren Zinn, a photographer; Ali Sattar, a war injured boy, Mark Zuckerberg, an entrepreneur; Steven Dale Green, a soldier pushing the limits join in as well in -it is my intention-, surprisingly unforeseen ways. Otherness is also portrayed through characters embodying fiery affects in literature and films. Dominic Matei, a professor of Linguistics in search security; Ofelia, an orphan in search of identity; Mercedes, a woman in search of both, and Capitán Vidal, an embodiment of evil distributing them at leisure contribute to add texture. It is a deliberate juxtaposition of narratives, real and fictional, alongside with more formal comments and depictions of reality. My writing is, then, also, for that reason, a pedagogical attempt to de-center the way we think, with the aim of opening possibilities for a liberating pedagogical experience free from modern dichotomies. Here I honor my own Freirean traditions, but I also follow Britzman (2006) when she explains how representing learning creates a “fictitious space”, not because learning is unreal but because learning leans on affect and desire which, in turn, spellbinds our representation:

Representing conflicts in learning is akin to writing a novel because the concern is with constructing a psychology of emotional reality; there we really do personify knowledge and make of its objects noisy creatures. From the theatrics of language we create metaphors of likeness; from emotional reality, composite words that refer us to wishes, and regrets, and to phantasies of being. Through the freedom of imagination and in dreams, we can conceptualize what is not seen yet still exerts the force of absence. Through the unconscious we are affected by what consciousness cannot imagine. These events and the ways in which they conjugate perception with desire capture experiences of our being affected before knowing in advance meaning's migrations. (p. 5)

My writing is an experimental journey in an additional sense. It is like a walk where I know the destination but cannot anticipate the implications of, or the complications for each single step. Here I am inscribing my writing in what Howard Zinn (2007) calls the optimism of uncertainty:

Revolutionary change does not come as one cataclysmic moment (beware of such moments!) but as an endless succession of surprises, moving zigzag toward a more decent society. We don't have to engage in grand heroic actions to participate in the process of change. Small acts, when multiplied by millions of people, can quietly become a power no government can suppress, a power that can transform the world. (...) And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory" (p. 270)

For that reason, I must warn you that I do not necessarily make here a linear argument or advance a set of propositions toward a conclusion devised to bind your consent by the force of its logic. In all seriousness, I make a playful and optimistic argument in the sense we talk about the argument of a performance. I venture for affect and understanding more than agreement. I position myself between an already and a not yet, but hopefully... At the end, everything will come to a full circle but, neither I nor you will be in the same

place. By juxtaposing apparently disparate frames, I sincerely hope to create an opportunity for your critical and creative response thinking about what a thought cannot think. It may not work (like at Duke). But that is, in all honesty, the curricular issue at hand: *does it work? How to chronicle what a thought cannot think?* And not whether it is right or wrong. Here I follow what Britzman (1998) so interestingly calls the study of limits:

The study of limits is, in a sense, a problem of where thought stops, a problem of thinkability. It begins with the question, ‘what makes something thinkable?’ as opposed to explaining how someone thinks. The strategy attempts to get at the unmarked criteria that work to dismiss as irrelevant or valorize as relevant a particular mode of thought, field of study, or insistence upon the real. (p. 216)

Finally, a performance that works, let’s say, requires the same discipline of its author as that of an argument that prevails, but it requires something else, substantially different, from the audience. It asks for trust, or, like in a peace negotiation process, at least a provisional suspension of disbelief. In this sense, I must say, my experiment may fall outside the range of more familiar and orthodox curriculum scholarship, but as a philosophical approach to curricular studies and as a cultural study itself, it is, I believe, a legitimate inquiry into the historical, personal, and political relationships embedded in Education. My writing is, in this sense, done more *toward* than *from* an understanding. So instead of arguing that criticality and all its implications are relevant to Education, as I walk and write, I am just being an educator that performs its relevance or fails to do so. I have engaged myself in the pedagogical experience of studying my own limits, and I gladly invite you to join in.

The Multiple Frames

I begin this journey in Chapter II with what I want to call the vignettes of life of four individuals who having so much in common yet responded in significantly different ways to September 11 and the call for war that followed. These vignettes are, of course, transient, fragmentary, and incomplete sketches made based on what was mediated and belongs to the public domain. They are a sort of snapshots that, together with their negatives, capture something about their identities understood as, like Appiah (2006) suggests, “interpretive responses” to the circumstances of life. I place them first because I want to put an emphasis on people and what they decide to do or do not do. They have their individual, complete value which I honor quite apart from any interpretation I might practice or suggest on their performance as citizens. It is in this chapter that I introduce what Bauman (1995) calls a tendency to adiaphorization, which means:

[T]o declare that most things which members of organizations are expected to do when in service are exempt from moral evaluation –are, so to speak, ethically indifferent, neither good or bad; only correct or incorrect. This does not mean contesting commonly held moral opinions- but to declare, bluntly, that categories of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ are neither here nor there when it comes to implementation of organizational duties. The sole standards by which such duties can be judged are those of *procedural correctness*; if they pass this muster, there is no other test left to which they could conceivably be put. (p. 261)

This is a key concept because it helps to understand the overall effect of “insensitization” to cruelty which Bauman (1995) attributes to both an unprecedentedly huge volume of exposure to the images of human suffering and to the increasing distance between the perpetrators of cruelty and their victims. I also raise the question about how memory is historically constructed and the political, psychological, and mental health

connotations when moral sentiments are forced to go on exile. I tentatively explore the process of identification and the ego's capacity to think over instinctual conflict and develop its ethical responsibility as embodied by Matina Dwyer. I inscribe the notion of "plausible deniability" within that construct and, following Britzman (2006), ascertain that the unconscious knows no time, no negation, and tolerates contradiction:

Regardless of whether one conceptualizes the self as seeking pleasure or as seeking relations, its most unknown motivation is the unconscious. Here is 'the logic of emotions' in all its glory. (...) The unconscious may be described metaphysically as the development of development. To understand the work of symbolization from this vantage and its importance for becoming a subject with agency is to speculate on the ways in which the human comes to give up wishful and omnipotent thinking, mourns losses, tolerates new representations, respects the difference between internal and external reality, and grasps, indeed, makes pleasure from the actuality of others as separate from the self. (p 48)

Finally this is where I situate curriculum as a process of social construction to defy a simplistic definition too often reduced to a script that simply tells teachers what to do and when. By situating it as a social construct I redirect its focus to examine the intersections of history, politics, identity, ethics, and curriculum. It is at once political theory, curriculum theory, and sociology. I propose that, if we are to understand Education, we must recognize that curriculum often sets the parameters of pedagogical practice and of possibility. In this context, following Slattery's (1995) recommendations, I introduce Illich's (2002) concepts of pedagogical warfare and rituals to redirect the curriculum debate to the understanding of curriculum in various contexts, establish a metaphoric relation between the language of war and the language of Education, and reflect in the modern capacity to pursue incongruous goals:

The dissonance which characterizes many of the young today is not so much cognitive as a matter of attitudes –a feeling about what a tolerable society cannot be like. What is surprising about this dissonance is the ability of a very large number of people to tolerate it. (p. 51)

Chapter III, in many ways, is an afterword. It begins with another vignette, but this one was captured in the film *Youth Without Youth* directed by Francis Ford Coppola (2007), based on Mircea Eliade's (1988) novel with the same title. Here I follow Richard Rorty's (1989) assessment of the role that literature, ethnography, and journalism have in moral debate:

[P]ain is nonlinguistic: It is what we human beings have that tie us to the nonlanguage-using beasts. So victims of cruelty, people who are suffering, do not have much in the way of language. That is why there is no such things as the 'voice of the oppressed' or the 'language of the victims.' The language that victims once used is not working anymore, and they are suffering too much to put new words together. So the job of putting their situation into language is going to have to be done for them by somebody else. The liberal novelist, poet, or journalist is good at that. The liberal theorist is usually not. (p. 94)

This chapter creates one of those fictitious spaces described by Britzman (2006) in the previous chapter in order to scrutinize and contrast a film which both explores the role of fear in our confrontation with Otherness and describes our ambivalence about might, force, and coercion with the reading of two National Security Strategy documents published by The White House in 2002 and 2006 which, as a matter of fact, are, well, about the same. Here I investigate what Rorty (1989) understands as "contingency of selfhood":

By seeing every human being as consciously or unconsciously acting out an idiosyncratic fantasy, we can see the distinctively human, as opposed to animal,

portion of each human life as the use for symbolic purposes of every particular person, object, situation, event, and word encountered in later life. This process amounts to redescribing them, thereby saying of them all, ‘Thus I willed it’” (p. 36)

Within this framework, in order to problematize our search of security, I inscribe a philosophical digression between Truth and truthfulness, the notion of fear as a cultural codifier and decodifier of values, the modern pretention and illusion to be ahead of time, and the notion of “frontier civilization” all of them as embodied by Coppola’s (2007) *Dominic Matei*. In a hermeneutical contrastive parallel I explore the concepts of threat, threat inflation, individual self-assertion, terror, and terrorism and their prescriptive relevance. My reflection is then correlated to the concepts of “sedimentation of democratic values” drawn from Cornell West (2004), “superpower syndrome” as defined by Robert Jay Lifton (2003), and “cynical realism” developed by Michael Lerner (2007) in order to describe the ability to self-represent in dominant North American culture. Finally I connect this thread of thought with Zinn’s (2007) notion of “educated citizenry” and its critical role to counter Bauman’s (1995) concept of “ordering activity.” As a corollary I embed President Obama’s (2009) discourse about the “new era of responsibility” within the texture created by the combination of these concepts to finally describe the weakness of traditional language to capture new realities, and most importantly, establish the pedagogical dissonance expressed by concepts such as “corporate warriors” developed by Peter Singer (2003), “man-caused disasters” introduced by Secretary Janet Napolitano (2009) and the no longer fictional realities of

Unmanned Aircraft Systems. I follow Matt McDonald (2002) to understand the quandary implied in the concept of security:

Security is not chosen by policy makers to apply to all issues coming within its definition. One definition of security never captures an actor's approach to security in totality, nor does the conception of security employed by an actor remain static. Rather, security discourses choose as much as are chosen. They frame actors in profound ways, constraining the choices of actors through the powerful sociological influence of issues such as history, culture and identity as well as conceptions of interests. Even given this framing of actors, however, security conceptions are in a state of constant flux, being continuously constructed by the application of security in particular contexts, through interaction with other actors, through the changing normative contexts in which actors find themselves and through ever-changing conceptions of the self, related to both internal and external factors. (p. 295)

Chapter IV is like a large footnote to the afterword, an additional comment to our ability to represent and self represent. Here I use another set of vignettes of life captured in another film, Guillermo del Toro's (2006) Pan's *Labyrinth*, as hospitable text to structure an understanding of our search of identity. The fictional characters of this film address or embody Hanna Arendt's banality of evil, but also the encounter with the Other, and the encounter with our own Otherness. This chapter unfolds the concept of hermeneutical crossroad and foresees the possibility of it becoming a site of hermeneutical conflict. I continue exploring the tensions between the conscious and the unconscious and, drawing from Britzman's (2006) notion of "intrigues of meaning," I make a connection to the concept of the aesthetic sublime. Rorty's (1989) notion of "moral progress," his concepts of "contingency and solidarity," and del Toro's (2006) notion of "restraining mood" are intertwined here and inscribed within Zinn's (2007) notion of history as a "redeeming transgression." Here is where I assess the contribution

of popular culture as historically and philosophically relevant as it allows for an expansion of the sense of “us” and as it embeds the language of possibility. Finally, I introduce the notion of an abluent self moving in a certain space of questions and ascertain again the role of criticality in Education as a hermeneutical juncture which makes future hopeful and possible. In so doing I follow Zinn (2004) in his autobiography *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*:

To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places--and there are so many--where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of the world in a different direction.

Chapter V starts with my own vignette. This a historical and aesthetical account of how I feel connected to the previous vignettes and the identities they developed in response to their own capacities and circumstances. The purpose of this chapter is to give autobiographical meaning to the notion of state of emergency and embed it in the hermeneutical crossroad described throughout the previous chapters. It is in this context that I introduce the notions of “ironic reversal” and “chronicle of surprise” to describe what I understand as a pedagogical experience and the role that unhinging questioning plays in it. I appeal to the Freirean concept of “conscientization” and use aesthetic deliberation to suggest the need to redescribe the concept of security and creatively inscribe threats in non violent scenarios. For this account I continue to follow Slattery (1995):

The postmodern vision of reading instruction is rooted in another understanding of education from the Latin words *educere*, ‘to draw or lead forth,’ and *ruminere*, ‘to think things over.’ Reading is a phenomenological and bodily activity that comes from deep within the human person. It is a mystical experience of the passions of the human spirit. Authentic reading instruction allows students to explore the nooks and crannies of their psyche and look forward to the journey within. Like the ruminants (...), students should also ruminate and masticate books and stories. They must leisurely graze in quiet corners, on active playgrounds, and in open fields and then return to the formal places of schooling to create their own books, write their own stories, and explore their own imaginative life stories. (p. 165)

Here I also explore the dynamics of Facebook understood as a privatized dimension of meaning and the role that security and insecurity play in the control of signs, symbols, language, and images. I use Mark Zuckerberg’s vignette of life to describe his subversive repositioning in the market and, in an extrapolation, introduce Britzman’s (1999) notion of “reading practices” to identify the gaps between signifiers and signified, think critically through ideological structures that use coercion in service of self-assertion and, finally, explain how to chronicle what a thought cannot think.

The final chapter is, methodologically, a new beginning. The first five chapters were a kaleidoscopic display of images, five simultaneous frames of understanding of how Education connects to the processes of construction of identity and security. The sixth chapter is an effort to read them all together, a sort of bridge to metaphorically facilitate what Bauman (1995) identifies as a much needed communicative process:

The dismantling of the collective, institutionalized and centralized frames of identity-building, whether accomplished by design or by default, whether welcomed or bewailed, has had this effect, that (...) the site from which an intervention on behalf of common interests capable of overriding localized animosities could be undertaken, previously held by the state, is seen as non-existent or empty. What is needed is a communicative process about what it is

that various social groups... have in common under current social practices, and to find out whether they have to commonly regulate the impacts of these practices. This need, however, is seeking anchorage in vain, because of (...) the emptiness of political space. The void is filled by neo-tribal would be communities, and if it is not filled by them, then it stays wide open, densely populated by the individuals lost in the hubbub of conflicting noises, with a lot of opportunity for violence and little, perhaps none, for argument. (p.161)

While this final chapter is an historical account of how to, in words of Illich (2002), “break a spell and build a new cosmos,” it is also a spirited effort to describe how language can keep us prisoners of dangerous ways to see the world. Here I use the script written by Sidonie-Grabrielle Collette (1917) for the Ravel’s (1925) opera *L’Enfant et les Sortilèges*, to make a parallel interpretation of reality. To begin closing the circle, I return to Bauman (1995):

Society, we might say, is a massive and continuous cover-up operation. And yet the best escape ever succeeds in coming up with is a thin film of order that is continuously pierced, torn apart and folded up by the Chaos over which it stretches: that Chaos is constantly invading alleged immanence –the given, the familiar, the apparently domesticated. (p. 14)

In this chapter I look at the vignettes in motion, how they evolve in their own context and also in contrast to an alternative one. I also explore Zinn’s take on the descriptive power of images after September 11 and echo his wondering about their truncated possibilities during the war in Afghanistan. Immediately after that I connect Bauman’s (1995) concept of adiaphorization to the nostalgia embedded in Singer’s (2009) concept of “virtueless war.” This is also where I look at President Obama’s (2009) discourse on security, identify his hermeneutical gaps, and start to explore, following Amin Maaluf (2000), an uncharted territory: the recognition of our multiple allegiances as a way to achieve

solidarity. Finally, Following Kincheloe (1993), I conclude with a consideration of how unhinging questioning belongs to Education and Schools of Education: “On a daily basis teachers choose to include some forms of knowledge while excluding others from the curriculum, they legitimate particular beliefs while delegitimizing others” (p. 39). And, finally share a moment of vision: the time calls for a teacher able and willing to help students to reinterpret their own lives and uncover new talents as a result of an encounter with a democratic and self-limiting experience of schooling, where thinking about thinking and exploring the inner world of psychological experience inform an empathic sense of pedagogy, bringing the *borders of life* back to the center.

CHAPTER II

PEDAGOGICAL WARFARE

“At Peace Now”

That was the sublime headline for the front page of *The Pilot*, my hometown local newspaper on Wednesday, July 2, 2008, headed by “*Soldier Made Famous by Photo Dies in Pinehurst*,” a rather discrete subtitle that sounded like a whisper in a town that takes pride in its dignified and manicured celebrations. A noticeably downsized version of the Army Times copyrighted picture of medic Joseph Patrick Dwyer carrying an injured Iraqi boy, authored by photographer Warren Zinn, was strategically placed on the upper right side to illustrate the story. Dwyer, originally from New York, had signed up “to fight for his country” immediately after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, according to the source. “He felt like it was something he had to do,” said Matina Dwyer, his wife, to senior writers Matthew Moriarty and John Chappell. I immediately remembered the image from the time it was widely showcased by the national media to build up public support for the war in Iraq in 2003. It is a great picture indeed. One of those that make history: Dwyer, in full battle gear, runs as he holds a barefoot half naked young boy, who looks at the camera while holding his stomach with his right hand, and his right knee with his left hand; revealing pain through a half open mouth, and horror through a tense facial expression and wide opened eyes. Dwyer does not look at the camera. Breathing through his mouth, he reveals exhaustion. A slight inclination forward

denotes hurried but careful movement and direction. He seems to be focused on the ground, ready for the next step. The 45° angle formed by the lines suggested by his body and his eyesight, though, reveals that he is ready for the next step only. The firmness of his right arm holding the boy informs of resolution, and the delicate touch of his left hand on the boy's hurting leg informs of compassion. The fact that he is married is highlighted by the projection of a line suggested by his wedding ring finger, which intersects, right in the middle, the projection of another line suggested, in the opposite direction, by the automatic rifle that heavily hangs from his right shoulder, creating, thus, a visual balance for his paradoxical commitments. Dwyer stands tall. But that harsh vertical line is softened by a diagonal suggested by the way the frightened boy lays on his arms, with his head at a higher level than his feet. It conveys the idea of power and mercy.

Dwyer's image became an icon right at the beginning of the war and the picture, unsurprisingly, acquired a life of its own, separated from the life of the man. Two summers ago, though, the picture was not the focus of the news. Neither was the man. It was the soldier made famous by the picture. In a perverse way, the picture outlived the man. The picture was well, alive, and, ironically, still in the larger picture. How to report that a decorated hero has committed suicide? How to spell out the political investment on his image? How to explain his disenfranchisement? What meaning does a story like this have and how does it become history? How is our collective memory constructed? Why was the town crier whispering?

Rationalizing the pain of the man, the press in general reported the fatal event as another case of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and, without further discussion,

quietly justified it and moved on to cover the next crisis. Warren Zinn, the photographer, did something else. He immediately returned to the place of the original photo shooting but, this time, with a CNN crew. Zinn was looking for the kid “to make sure he was alive and to show what happens to the people after the U.S. comes to places like this.”

According to Christian Lowe (2003) from the Marine Corps Time, Zinn said that that image was very important to him because it was one of the first ones he had ever taken “that showed raw human emotion.” When he found the boy, he gave him a copy of the famous picture. CNN, in its turn, reported that the boy was in fact alive, and through this made for the media recollection, not only reproduced the meaning of the picture, but reinforced it creating the picture of the boy holding the picture of the soldier holding the same boy, in a flagrantly vicious manipulation of hermeneutics.

Why flagrant? Why vicious? Because I am under the powerful impression that in front of us a very important element has been surreptitiously removed, limiting the scope of meaning of the picture, and reducing the possibilities to understand the larger situation from which it had been excised. Zygmunt Bauman (1995), in his book *Life in Fragments*, very appealingly explains the ways and means to separate deeds and morals in modern society, and suggests that the principal tool for that severance --as I argue it is the case in this case-, is what he calls *adiaphorization*:

Making certain actions, or certain objects of action, morally neutral or irrelevant – exempt from the category of phenomena suitable for moral evaluation. The effect of adiaphorization is achieved by excluding some categories of people from the realm of moral subjects, or through covering up the link between partial action and the ultimate effect of co-ordinated moves, or through enthrone procedural discipline and personal loyalty in the role of all-overriding criterion of moral performance. (p. 149)

Within this framework of understanding bodily weakness, for example, or insufficient ability to submit and to fit, like in the specific case of Joseph Patrick Dwyer, the man, are exclusively seen as symptoms of ill health, and as such medicalized or articulated as cases for psychiatric treatment. As a socially constructed description of a human condition, then, PTSD only responds to the declared main general purpose of the war, the war in Iraq in this case: to free people and save lives. This paradox of “creative destruction” (p. 152), says Bauman, explains and justifies the suffering of a few as a low prize to be paid for the happiness of the many.

Ali Sattar, the Iraqi boy, was alive indeed. According to the same Army Times report only one of the two holes on the walls of his home, produced by the indiscriminate U.S. bombing of their neighborhood, was visibly repaired. The repaired and un-repaired holes, together with a big scar along his leg and a pronounced and still painful limp were most likely, constant reminders of something that somehow had already been internalized but, obviously, insufficiently understood, because neither he nor his father, according to the same source, seemed to be able to comprehend Zinn’s visit. Not even at face value. Their lives went on and continue to go on in a different frame, which CNN could not co-opt for its coverage.

Back in town, I have to say, I was saddened by the tragedy of a man that lived in my community. But as the story unfolded, I was sorry for his wife too. She was not at home when it happened. Reportedly, she had left the family home taking their daughter some time before the incident occurred. But I was appalled by the pressure put on her to explain what had happened, as if she had any explaining to do. “He was just never the

same when he came back; because of all the things he saw”, said Matina Dwyer to Michael Moriarty (2008). What he saw she did not specify. “He never regretted going over there, doing what he did,” she said very clearly for the record. What he did she did not specify either. She expressed frustration for the insufficient avenues and resources to help returning soldiers, as well as hope that her husband’s death would bring attention to this issue. And, finally, in the stern tone of those who hurt, heightened by the eloquence that only an awareness of both her husband’s human ordeal, and her own vulnerable condition as a military widow talking to an audience which included the military can afford, she passed along the following message: “He couldn’t actually come home. He was still there in his mind” (p. 11). Is this the voice of her ego defending itself against an anxiety for the loss of love, and her symbolization –“he couldn’t come home”, ergo *it must have not happened*- a lighter way to carry the conflict with the world of others –the military world from which she depends-, thus identifying with her aggressor? Or is there an implicit criticism in her choice of words saying that, since “he was still there in his mind”, and something reproachable happened, then it must have happened over there – before his mind devoured and spiritually vacant body returned to her- and not here, where she was expected to deal with it all by herself; entering into the metaphorical and interpretative world of *plausible deniability*, as they call it in Washington?

I really do not know and I must admit that it upsets me. But what upsets me is not being unable to know whether it is fear of loss or threat to loose what informs her saying. That would just be a very selfish and intellectually vane pursuit. Maybe it is both, or, for that matter, perhaps, none of the above, as I have also heard they often say in

Washington, and I really missed the point! What upsets me is, precisely, that whatever it is, however it may be described, I know it is wrong. And that knowledge, as any other knowledge, should never work as a substitute for transforming unjust situations in our midst. Awareness calls for a response: she still lives in my community and I really do not know what to do.

That unintended summer awareness and the deep feeling of empathy it generated remind me now of the unintended qualities of learning that Alice Balint so well describes and Deborah Britzman (2006) in *Novel Education* quotes:

Learning and its symbolization (...) is composed of a radical and original uncertainty and a promise. Not knowing but still needing to respond can make one nervous (...) mistakes and misunderstandings are not the outside of education but rather are constitutive of its very possibility (p. 43).

Britzman (2006) convincingly argues, from a psychoanalytical perspective, that understanding our own acts as beyond and even in contradiction to our consciousness is part of an educational process about us and about us in relation to others. Through it “we are entering the space of thinking about thinking, an exploration, however uncertain, of how one feels in the world of others and what this intimate knowledge may mean.” That exploration, she suggests, is like a commentary to our ability to self-represent. If you agree with her, as I do, then you may want to look at it in the same way you look at democracy as a political process, “it allows people to speak, give voice to their concerns, be as difficult as they can be, and be heard” (p. 59).

I situate curriculum as a process of social construction in an effort to theorize how the U.S. National Security doctrine informs curriculum, and discern how this scenario

becomes a pedagogical warfare. Following Patrick Slattery's (2006) recommendations in *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era*, I decided to embed my initial reflection in a real life situation, one that could not only honor the tension between ideas and emotions that configure and sustain our condition as human beings in all its complexity, but one that could also allow the personal and more subjective inform a process of construction of meaning that welcomes but is certainly not limited to an autobiographical tone, in order to emphasize the belief that knowledge is created "in a context that necessarily reflects human interests, values, and actions" (p. 36). I propose to understand curriculum as a hermeneutical process and to differentiate it from its commodified version, one that can be passed along to others just like the famous photo of a soldier holding a boy, as a linear fact that pretends to be free of pretensions. A way to achieve this, explains Slattery (2006) is appealing to a "holistic perspective that allows for the emergence of compassion, optimal learning environments, nonviolent conflict resolution, just relationships, and ecological sustainability." (p. 171). Kincheloe (2005) has developed a similar notion in what he calls *bricolage*:

The system of knowledge production, with its epistemological blinders that developed and expanded across the centuries, shackled human agency to the gospel of so-called natural law and scientific procedures. In the name of an ethnocentric notion of scientific progress, it attempted to keep individuals ignorant of their potentials and confused cultural difference with deficiency. This procedure-bound science did not do a very good job of addressing questions involving what it means to be human, what it might mean to live in a good and just society, and the worthiness of those who live in cultures and locales different from the West. This is why bricoleurs ascribe such importance to the critical and hermeneutic traditions and their concern with such human questions. Drawing on these traditions, combining them with forms of paradigmatic and textual analyses, bricoleurs struggle to connect the research act to the emotion and heart of lived human experience. (p. 348)

While the development of social control in order to build a cohesive American community continues to have many proponents, Slattery (2006) insists that schooling must transcend linear structures and dissolve the artificial boundary between the outside community and the classroom. “Postmodern teaching celebrates the interconnectedness of knowledge, learning experiences, international communities, the natural world, and life itself,” he concludes (p. 175). In the hopeful spirit of social justice, I argue that curriculum can be understood also as the attribute of unhinging questioning. This is the ability to make questions that include the perspective of the Other, and a practical effort to respond to them as we understand the experience from the point of view of the self in contrast to the perception of the experience of self in relation to others. Here I follow Slattery (2006):

Crises in Education and society are reflected in the debate about the role of schools in advancing social issues, democratic themes, and utopian values. Should education, as Dewey asked, be a function of society, or should society be a function of education? In other words, should schools participate in the process of reproducing the knowledge, interests, and values of the dominant society, or should schools advance democracy while promoting an emancipatory approach to knowledge and learning so as to re-create a just and compassionate society? (p. 195)

The Official Story

In his book *Surprise, Security and the American Experience*, Yale History Professor John Lewis Gaddis (2004) knowledgeably inscribes the U.S. grand strategy on National Security within the larger context of American history. It is a very good attempt to understand the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in the context of the process of American political and economical expansionism, and an also good attempt to speculate

about its consequences in terms of security and defense. Whether you agree with his conclusion or not is a different story. I mention this book because it is in itself a very powerful example of curriculum as a social construction. At the beginning, Gaddis (2004) makes an interesting and very honest disclosure of the limits of his endeavor: the events are too recent. For that reason, he admits, the accuracy of his historical writing is diminished by both its own shortness of perspective and access to rather fewer resources. It is, in his own words, “a premature effort to treat as history an event that remains inescapably part of our present” (p. 4). For the same reasons, though, Gaddis (2004) says that his writing acquires relevance: however imperfect the exercise may be, he argues, “an incomplete map is better than no map at all” (p. 5). Later on, in an autobiographical mood, he quotes Ewan Macdougall, one of his undergraduate students at Yale, probably the same age as Joseph Patrick Dwyer, saying one evening shortly after the terrorist attacks, and, probably about the same time as when Dwyer decided that fighting the war was something he had to do:

I love this country. I love this place. I love what we are doing here tonight. I love it so much that I'm prepared to defend our right to do it, which is why I'm joining the Marines. It's people like me who make it possible for people like you to be here doing what you're doing” (p. 116).

To which a consenting Gaddis (2004) interestingly added: “Our ability as a democracy to question all values depends upon our faith in and our determination to defend *certain* values” [the emphasis is his]; because, he argues, “they are the bedrock beliefs that make it possible for *us* to be here and for so many *others* to wish to be” [the emphasis is mine]. For Gaddis (2004), even if they are “social constructions”, it is more

important that “it’s *our society that constructed them*” [again, the emphasis is his]; and “*that* [*here*, the emphasis is mine] is what makes them worth fighting for, as so many others have done before us” (p. 116). The language of his methodological disclosure, despite its scientific aim, cannot unveil what comes veiled by default, and cannot but continue to hide both the split into good and bad of his reasoning, and the gap between the self and the other that informs his writing. Split and gap are automatically transferred to all other dichotomies of analytical relations: you and I, us and them. And, yet, he claims that “Americans have the opportunity once again to do so much designing [in the world]” (p. 113). By deciding to reduce his account to an immediate relation of cause and effect, its self assessed sense of relevance, in fact, not only forecloses any possibility for empathy to generate any significant knowledge; but , most importantly, his semantic structure indicates that it is not just a current conjuncture but, as a matter of fact, the confirmation of a historical pattern, where the confirmation of a historical pattern is not as relevant as the as-a-matter-of-fact tone with which it is assessed.

Gaddis (2004) concludes his historical account in the same autobiographical tone, quoting Schuyler Schouten, another undergraduate student of his at Yale when he asked “in the dark and fearful days that followed September 11th,” if it “would be OK now for us to be patriotic?” To which Gaddis (2004) straightforwardly responded: “Yes, I think it would” (p. 118), assuming the whole situation as something that needed to be explained rather than interpreted. Semantic, here, is working like a dark room, it allows you to say and not say; suggest and suggest not; explain, veil, and imply in such a convincing way that it is hard to imagine that what is being said, described, or redescribed could be

otherwise. That is, precisely, the power of semantic, and, for that matter, of the semantic of power.

The understanding of curriculum as a process of social construction, then, should help us to systematically identify the assumptions that form and inform our reflection, even subconsciously. In this sense, I could argue for example that Zinn, the photographer, and Gaddis, the historiographer, have something in common: while they connect logic and emotion to deliberately reduce the boundaries of imagination in the larger picture they secure themselves in an ideological lockdown to cope with the fears they happen to share; instead of making that same connection to stretch those boundaries and negotiate alternative meanings allowing their perception to be openly affected, gain more understanding and move on.

In order to counterbalance the tendency of simply building on top of assumptions, a more comprehensive as well as challenging vision for curriculum and curriculum development is needed. The curricular question here should not inquire about specific contents about what happened, but, as Kwame Anthony Appiah (2005) points out in *The Ethics of Identity*: “the real debates (...) are about in what narratives we will embed them; they are about which of the many true stories we will tell” (p. 207). Patrick Slattery (2006) has articulated what he calls a kaleidoscopic vision in that respect: “Curriculum development in the postmodern era –he says- will challenge the traditional approach of modern logical positivism to the study of history as a linear timeline of events, (...) It will encourage autobiographical reflection, narrative inquiry, revisionist interpretation, and contextual understanding” (p. 36). It is precisely within this kaleidoscopic framework

that I explore the possibility of reading the two National Security Strategy documents published by The White House in 2002 and 2006, documents that contain and explain the National Security Strategy of the United States of America as an authentic expression of modern logical positivism and as conveyors of a curriculum designed as a linear projection to the future of a desired history, expressed both through a grand vision, and a continually updated matching timeline of events that logs concrete accomplishments and challenges within a preconfigured grand strategy towards that vision.

The Green Zone

March marks the seventh anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. On March 19, 2003, the United States began dropping bombs on Baghdad as thousands of U.S. forces poured across Iraq's borders, Medic Joseph Patrick Dwyer included. Seven years later, the occupation continues. In that time, according to *Honor The Fallen*, a website created to keep an updated register of those who died in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, and maintained in a conjunct effort by the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Times, the number of American soldiers who have been killed is 5,382 up to March 19, 2010. Many thousands more have been wounded. Dwyer does not appear in this record. According to www.democracynow.org, as many as 650,000 Iraqis have been killed, with the number of wounded unknown. Meanwhile, Iraq is suffering the worst refugee crisis in the world today. According to the United Nations, more than 4.2 million Iraqis have fled the country, many of them to neighboring Jordan and Syria. Another 1.9 million are internally displaced.

Seven years after the invasion, the U.S. occupation of Iraq continues. On February 16, 2010, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, General Raymond T. Odierno, told the Washington based *Institute for the Study of War* during a public conversation held at the Army and Navy Club, as posted in their website, that:

“We have a relationship with the Government of Iraq that gives us an opportunity to develop a democratic Iraq that has a long-term partnership with the United States and I don't know if we'll have that opportunity again. (...) So I think it's important that we understand we (...) have to take advantage of that opportunity.”
(www.understandingwar.org/webcast_0315/2010)

He also said that the U.S. is preparing contingency plans to delay the withdrawal of all combat forces in Iraq if violence or political instability increases in the aftermath of this month's parliamentary elections. Under President Obama's current administration, the U.S. has vowed to cut the number of troops in Iraq in half, to 50,000, by August. A full withdrawal is formally scheduled to occur by the end of 2011.

To introduce a level of dissonance to official discourse, allow me now to turn to the borders of life and bring a perspective completely ignored by the U.S. media: an Iraqi woman living in Baghdad; Yanar Mohammed, president of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq. This is an excerpt of the telephone interview she recently gave to journalist Amy Goodman (2010):

The situation now, after the end of seven years of invasion, is at a point where we have many questions at hand. The first one is we are waiting now every day for the final result of the elections. And there is some competition between the Prime Minister's list and Iyad Allawi's and other groups. But mainly they are mostly the same groups that had started off in the first place.

The other side of the issue, which not many people are talking about, is the economic agenda in Iraq, the privatization, the heavy privatization, that's happened in Iraq in the last two years, where tens of thousands of workers have been laid off, with no work to go to, with no social insurance to support them, while in the same time there is an economic agenda of supporting foreign investment in a way where there is protection for foreign investment, but there is no labor law, no unemployment insurance for people. And in the same time, we are being surprised by the Ministry of Finance telling the Iraqis that we need to have a loan from the World Bank, which will put the Iraq policies under such pressure, and it is a surprise to everybody because the revenues of oil are so high that we do not really need a loan from the World Bank. So, economically, it's a rollercoaster here in Iraq—privatization, no security for the working class, much investment for multinational countries, and, in the same time, a democracy which has brought forward groups which are transformations of the first political forces that started off with militias, but now they are politicians and they are sitting in the Green Zone. (...)

There is a quota for ethnicities, according to ethnic groups, some for Christians, some for other religions, for Assyrians. And this was a message to the Iraqis that representations are upon religions, upon sectarian lines and upon ethnicities, and not upon political affiliations. So it's finally, after eight years, the Bush's agenda of representing the Iraqis upon very backward representations has become a reality. And it's a very bad form of democracy that we have to live in Iraq. The ethnicities have grouped us all upon ethnic lines, and it only—such a situation needs only a little bit of sparking to start a civil war anytime, could happen anytime. (www.democracynow.org 03/19/2010)

The scenario that Yanar Mohammed describes is certainly strange and greatly at odds with what General Odierno has said about opportunities, sounding more like the opportunities that Gaddis (2004) was talking about. Is that what the Green Zone represents? Is that what the Green Zone is brewing underground? Is the Green Zone an accurate picture of an effort to open a society? Not only she clearly describes the institutionalization of a sectarian and conflictive conception of the world, but the high levels of poverty of the population, especially amongst women, and notably amid the

widows and orphans of war who do not have an economic system or social program to support them. Further more:

The Constitution has established a state of inequality for women. There is an article in the Constitution, Article number 41, which has cancelled, almost cancelled for good, the civil rights, the minimal civil rights which women had under Saddam, under what was called the personal status law. And it is these civil rights that are being substituted with Islamic sharia and other religious laws that are of minorities in Iraq.

We just want to have some relative security *to us* to organize our ranks for the coming times. And we are optimistic that if the American—if the U.S. Army leaves us, we may be able to have the *dynamics of the people* and to make the wheels go the other way around to the way that will help us have—claim our resources again, our oil again, and our lives again. [Emphasis is mine] (www.democracynow.org 03/19/2010)

Her reference to “security to us” and the longing for what she calls a “dynamics of people” as conditions for democratic development, reminds me of the Peruvian War on Terror and the frustration that came with the circumstance of being trapped in a violent crossfire, but in a larger scale. I address them in the Chapter 4. For now, I will just say that the series of world events from Berlin to New York during the transition to the new millennium seems to represent not only a detour from what Kant originally described as the “cosmopolitan condition” of “perpetual peace” at the end of the eighteenth century, but a real shortcut to a competing alternative destination that challenges law as an appropriate medium to reach the declared goals of achieving peace and international security through international organizations and the constitutionalization of international laws. Kant argued in 1795 that “the natural evolution of world politics and economics would drive mankind inexorably toward peace by means of a widening of the pacific

union of liberal republican states.” This would occur through two mechanisms. One, societies would be driven into forming liberal republics from the pressures of external and internal war. And two, republics would create commercial ties of mutual advantage that would cause them to be pacific towards each other. Eventually, once the entire world consisted of such pacific, liberal regimes, mankind would attain perpetual peace.

Habermas (2006) explains, though, in *The Divided West* that the network of global society that was indeed working towards a more normative expression of what it means to lose autonomy, gain interdependence, and be part of a post national, and post modern constellation of political entities has been severed. The end of the bipolar world order and the emergence of the U.S. as a pre-eminent world power seem to raise the question that virtually underscores most of the dichotomies drawn for this dissertation: “is the juridification of international relations going to be superseded by a moralization of international politics grounded in the ethos of a superpower?” (p. 35)

In September of 2002, George Bush announced a new security doctrine in which he reserved a self-defined discretionary right to launch pre-emptive strikes. I still remember his State of the Union address in January of 2003, when he solemnly declared that if the Security Council did not ultimately agree to military action against Iraq, he would, if necessary, act contrary to the prohibitions on the use of violence of the U.N. Charter. Habermas (2006) believes that these two actions together represent “indicators of a rupture with a legal tradition that no previous American government had ever explicitly questioned before.” (p. 182)

From the Political Science theoretical grounds, Michael Doyle (1996) argues in *Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs* that while liberalism has created international peace amongst liberal states, it has failed to successfully guide the foreign policy of liberal states towards non-liberal states. What does this failure mean in the context of the new developments in Afghanistan and Iraq? I think Doyle's (1996) notion of "imprudent vehemence" is applicable to full extent:

"Confusion, drift, costly crusades, spasmodic imperialism are the contrasting record of liberal foreign policy outside the liberal world. A failure to negotiate with the powerful and a failure to create stable clients among the weak are its legacies" (p. 31)

This failure is caused by the fact that "the very constitutional restraint, shared commercial interests, and international concern for individual rights that promotes peace among liberal societies" can exacerbate conflicts in relations between liberal and non-liberal regimes. This is because according to liberal principles, non-liberal regimes – which do not respect the individual rights of their citizens-, are illegitimate. This leads to "an extreme lack of public respect and trust" on the part of liberal regimes towards non-liberal states. In addition liberal regimes assume that non-liberal regimes "do not respect the political independence and territorial integrity of other states." This lack of trust, he explains, leads to less than optimal rational, realist behavior.

No country lives strictly according to its political ideology and few liberal states are as hegemonically liberal as the U.S. But Doyle (1996) ascertains that even in the U.S.

certain interests and domestic actors derive their sense of legitimacy from sources other than liberalism:

The state's national security bureaucracy reflects an approach to politics among nations that focuses on other states, particularly threatening states. Its policies, correspondently, tend to fall into the Realist, *national interest* frame of reference. (...) But in the United States, and in other liberal states to a lesser degree, public policy derives its legitimacy from its concordance with liberal principles. Policies not rooted in liberal principles generally fail to sustain long term public support.” (p.49)

In this sense Markus Fischer (2000) in *The Liberal Peace* calls for a distinction between the need to promote democracy for the sake of peace, and the need to promote democracy for the sake of liberalism, suggesting that there is a conflation that needs to be deconstructed. Fischer describes an asymmetric relation between democracy and liberalism: liberalism implies democratic institutions to a large degree, whereas democracy entails liberal rights only to a minimal extent.” (p. 5) Most importantly, even though he argues that liberal peace rests on the fact that most people value preservation and commercial prosperity more highly than glory and domination and consider the reduction of human beings to mere means to be morally wrong, he acknowledges that contemporary Western culture takes these attitudes for granted, “but they really are historically contingent.” (p. 20) It is precisely this contingent character of history that opens a different perspective that allows an understanding of the new scenario beyond the strictures of the modern age to admit the “growing disenchantment with modernity in Western societies suggests that there are aspects of the human soul that liberalism fails to reach.” (p. 27)

The Original Uncertainty

Like any other citizen, you and I are already expected to create a life, consciously or not, with the materials that history gives us as the American experience. According to Appiah (2005), to create a life is fundamentally a hermeneutical process that ends up configuring what he calls a person's ethical self:

Your character, your circumstances, your psychological constitution, including the beliefs and preferences generated by the interaction of your innate endowments and your experience: all these need to be taken into account in shaping a life. They are not constraints on that shaping; they are its materials. As we come to maturity, the identities we make, our individualities, are interpretive responses to our talents and disabilities, and the changing social, semantic, and material contexts we enter at birth; and we develop our identities dialectically with our capacities and circumstances, because the latter are in part the product of what our identities lead us to do. (p. 163)

But how are we supposed to create a life tied to the preconfiguration of a desired future? Notice that the subject has been surreptitiously changed: it would not be just like asking Joseph Patrick Dwyer to look at the picture, but to ask him to continue to look like the picture regardless of his circumstances. Signifier and signified have, let's say, switched roles. What kind of personal identities could this kind of blueprint generate? What kind of impact will this social engineering experiment have on our experience as autonomous individuals? Will there be any possibility of unhinging questioning or dialogical space? Is this the kind of uncertainty with which Martina Dwyer was struggling, and, thus, her powerfully sublime existential appeal to look at the context? I really don't know. But an awareness of this radical and original uncertainty looks like a new beginning and a promise to me. Deborah Britzman (2006) puts it this way: "The capacity

to think well about injustice and justice belongs to beginnings and now to education, which, after all, is the ego's second chance" (p. 58). So, looking for a second chance, one could revisit the marketplace of ideas and once there, it could be reasonably argued that if the famous picture of the soldier holding a boy conveyed the idea of power and mercy, then, Matina Dwyer's quotation conveys the idea of agency and grace, argument which could potentially lead to a healthy, necessary, and insightful gender consideration, but the bottom line would remain the same: the unquestionable need to understand the power dynamic between autonomy and collective identities. I follow Appiah (2005) for this analysis:

Autonomy, we know, is conventionally described as an ideal of self-authorship. But the metaphor should remind us that we write in a language we did not ourselves made. If we are authors of ourselves, it is the state and society that provide us with the tools and the contexts of our authorship; we may shape our selves, but others shape our shaping. And so, if the state cannot but affect our souls, we can fairly ask both how it does and how it *should* do so [the emphasis is his]. (p. 157)

Figuring out how things work as opposed to how they should work is, in this case, an important digression that comes from what Appiah himself calls his rooted liberal cosmopolitanism. But it is also a Critical Pedagogy interest, which Slattery (2006) synthesizes as rooted in the premises that oppression is based in the reproduction of privileged knowledge codes and practices; that facts and values are inseparable and inscribed by ideology; that language is a key element in the formation of subjectivities, and, thus, critical literacy --the ability to negotiate passages through social systems and structures- is more important than functional literacy --the ability to decode and compute-

(p. 193). Within this framework one could legitimately ask, for example, what kind of risks the U.S. National Security doctrine could pose to critical pedagogy. Peter McLaren (2007) in *Pedagogy and Praxis in the Age of Empire* responds in this way: “proponents and practitioners of critical pedagogy have long feared being cast into the pit of academic hell for being perceived not only as dangerously irrelevant (sic) [irreverent] to United States democracy but also as politically treasonous,” (p. 33) mainly because critical pedagogy earned an early reputation as a fierce critic of U.S. imperialism and capitalist exploitation. But according to McLaren (2007) himself, things have changed. Today critical educators have become “so absorbed by the cosmopolitanized liberalism of the post-modernized left” that critical pedagogy “no longer serves as a trenchant challenge to capital and U.S. economic and military hegemony.” (p. 33) He insists, in a militant tone, that “what is needed as a major step towards social justice is a transformation of the social relations of production. Perhaps it is the militant lens he uses what prevents him from fully assaying the power of re-description. I believe that the pedagogical exposure of the contradictions of the free market system continues to be a valid alternative and a valid response that summons us to return to the radical and original uncertainty and promise that Education offers and that, as Britzman (2006) reminds us, is constitutive of its very possibility.

Nevertheless, McLaren (2007) is absolutely right when he asserts that tolerance must become a liberating rather than a repressive force. As such, “pure tolerance of ‘free’ speech must be challenged when it impedes the chances of creating a context in which people can live free of fear and violence” (p. 52). So it is not just a matter of being

tolerant, but a matter of creating an alternative frame of counter hegemonic meaning. Persisting in a language that scorns the other does not advance this kind of creativity. Consequently, understanding education as the ego's second chance, and trying to understand the blue print embedded in the U.S. National Security Strategy, it is only fair to ask to what extent the state should be allowed, as state, to intervene in the process of interpretation through which each of us is supposed to build an identity. In this sense, one thing is clear for McLaren (2007): "critical educators need to consider citizenship outside of a narrowly nationalist sense in a manner that situates them in a larger practice of global citizenship and solidarity" (p. 86). In a resembling way, Gaddis (2004) gives us an important lead, which is to acknowledge the moral ambiguity of our history: "we got to where we are by means that we cannot today, in their entirety, comfortably endorse" (p. 33). I argue that Appiah's (2005) rooted cosmopolitanism and Slattery's (2006) critical theory offer a useful framework to understand education as part of a very complex mechanism to secure a generational transfer of ideology. Here I join them to understand education as part of a complex mechanism to secure global ideological transfer and to redescribe warfare as pedagogy.

Warfare as Pedagogy

As an educator, I have always been interested in understanding the effects of war on children who survive it. Because of its horrendous effects there is no greater human disaster. The physical, mental, moral, and spiritual marks that it produces have no comparison because they not only affect concrete individuals, they affect generations.

Consequently, the drama is not only each suffering child. That would be, in fact, just the tip of the iceberg, an atrocious starting point. The challenge comes with the understanding of the pedagogical process it triggers and especially with the efforts to comprehend its effects in its multiple levels of complexity. My interest in the effects of war on children who survive it is not limited though to those who are targeted in acts of war. It is about children in general, including those who suffer the effects of war from the *winner's* side, if there is such a thing. I believe everyone loses in a war. I am interested in knowing how warfare is used as pedagogy in the American experience.

Back in the seventies, in the midst of an ongoing ideological warfare -whose victorious end was claimed by former President George W. Bush in the presentation of his National Security Strategy-, Ivan Illich (1970), properly so, argued that in a schooled society, just like ours, war making always finds an educational rationale. I believe that his is still a valid assertion because, regardless of its content, an educational rationale has the potential to acquire a life in itself and soon, if not systematically challenged, may acquire a symbolic value that has the potential to profusely permeate the collective memory of any given historical community. The U.S. National Security Strategy's educational rationale was clearly stated by President Bush: "Today our enemies have seen the results of what civilized nations can, and will, do against regimes that harbor, support, and use terrorism to achieve their political goals." (p. 8). I borrow Illich's expression *pedagogical warfare* to establish a connection between the language of war and the language of education.

War, as an annihilating phenomenon, is an expression of cultural and social disconnectedness. As educators we know that dissonance inevitably precedes the emergence of a new cognitive paradigm. But when we deal with war what emerges from that dissonance is not a new cognitive paradigm, but a commodified version of knowledge dressed up as a ritual. I use the word ritual in the same sense Peter McLaren (1999) defines it in *Schooling as a Ritual Performance*: “they form the warp on which the tapestry of culture is woven, thereby, *creating* the world for the social actor. They grow conjuncturally out of the cultural and political mediations that shape the contours of groups and institutions, serving as agencies of socialization” (p.38). Illich (1970) reminds us that rituals can hide the discrepancies and conflicts between social principles and social organizations, and “as long as an individual is not explicitly conscious of the ritual character of the process through which he was initiated to the forces which shape his cosmos, he cannot break the spell and shape a new cosmos.” (p. 51). I define pedagogical warfare as a critical scenario to produce systematic pedagogical dissonance.

Rituals frequently serve normative functions. Such is the case of, amongst many others, the notions of patriotism and national pride. They are governed by beliefs rooted in psychic structures established through a continuous process of socialization. As part of a strategically increasing military presence in all high school campuses, I have found a very interesting example of recruitment propaganda contained in a brochure that is made available to all students: “*MARINES. THE FEW. THE PROUD*”. Its direct text and distinct imagery mutually reinforce each other in an unambiguous message: war can be embedded in education, and education can be embedded in war. Making use of powerful

marketing techniques, it effectively conveys the core of a philosophy of life making it sound attractive:

“Time and time again, the Marines have been called into service to protect our nation’s interests. We operate around the world as America’s quick strike expeditionary force, ready at the moment’s notice to effectively insert our warriors into any situation that calls for it. We are proud to be America’s shining tip of the spear, and we are ready for the next victory. Maybe you can be one of us.”

But depending on how you look at it, the brochure could also be disconcerting and appalling. Its downright language unabashedly describes both the curriculum and the philosophy of education that supports it:

“No one simply joins the Marines, because the title must be earned. Marine Corps Recruit Training is where the separation begins: the weak from the strong, the child from the adult, the civilian from the Marine. The 13 weeks will break away all the things that bind you to the excesses of the past. And in the end, you will become a confident member of the finest warrior force in the world. You’ll be a United States Marine.”

I argue that this is not just a marketing product. It represents a philosophy that abruptly assumes that we are all enmeshed in a sacred commonality of interests and that those interests need to be protected. It assumes that those interests admit no limits and that its protection does not recognize any sovereign barrier in the world. It assumes that warfare has its own logic and that it can be imposed anywhere at the moment needed. It assumes war as a cultural trait and that only warriors express the fullness of its human condition. Finally, it assumes military supremacy as the lead and structuring value and that education is just a natural selection process.

H. E. Goemans (2000) in *War & Punishment* has developed an interesting theory about war and war termination that is widely accepted amongst and used by both public policy makers and political science academic circles. I find it extremely interesting because it is coincidentally a very sophisticated version of the brochure. Goemans redescribes war and war termination as learning processes: “War makes agreement possible because war provides information” (p. 27). “Once a war starts, and the belligerents spend some time fighting each other, they acquire new information about their own as well as their adversaries’ capabilities and the costs of war. They also begin to learn more about both side’s resolve. Specifically, continuous combat will tell both sides all sorts of things about the final outcome on the battlefield that they can never know before the war” (p. 28). As war progresses, he explains, at least one side must discover that its original estimate was wrong. The resolve to go to war expressed by former President Bush (2002) may be better understood in the light of this strategic learning theory. But it also sheds light over its limitations and contradictions, since the U.S. is no longer dealing with traditional warfare but with something different. As he explains, “we will disrupt and destroy terrorist organizations by defending the United States, the American people, and our interests at home and abroad by identifying and destroying the threat before it reaches our borders. (...) we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right to self defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists” (p. 6). In this pedagogical warfare, what are the pedagogical practices that will enable us to unlearn bad lessons well learned in the past? What are the questions that will bring the discussion back to the educational field and reconnect it to democracy as “site

of struggle” in Henry Giroux’s (2005) words? Ivan Illich (2002) says that our modern time is characterized by an extreme disjunction between cultural and social structures, “the one being devoted to apocalyptic attitudes, the other to technocratic decision-making.” This is certainly true, he asserts, for many educational reformers who feel impelled to condemn almost everything which characterizes modern schools and at the same time propose new schools. He continues:

In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn argues that such dissonance inevitably precedes the emergence of a new cognitive paradigm. The facts reported by those who observed free fall, by those who returned from the other side of the earth, and by those who used the new telescope did not fit the Ptolemaic world view. Quite suddenly, the Newtonian paradigm was accepted. The dissonance which characterizes many of the young today is not so much cognitive as a matter of attitudes –a feeling about what a tolerable society cannot be like. What is surprising about this dissonance is the ability of a very large number of people to tolerate it.” (p. 51)

From the perspective of Education I argue with Illich (2002) that dissonance generates new knowledge. From the perspective of Political Science I argue that war is a negative sum game. From the intersection of both, hereon, I argue that a sense of criticality for the open examination of culture and society, is essential to democratic citizenry.

CHAPTER III

IN SEARCH OF SECURITY

The recent financial crisis in the U.S. has reminded us in a rather dramatic way that in our contemporary world, if you are not in control, it is prudent –if not wise- not to make long term plans. Just look at the bubble of the mortgage and housing markets. The distant future is not profitable. Not only that, either the unemployment rates or your plans to keep climbing the consumer ladder suggest that you better not get tied down to any particular place or neighbor. Uncertainty plays an important role when it comes to today's choices. If you can't control the future, you should not mortgage it either. To commit or avoid commitment seems to be the ethos. The consequences in terms of moral choices are enormous because it denies the moral significance of any human interrelation. We become insensible to the pain and suffering of others and engage in deceiving rituals. It adiaphorizes the part of our humanity that adiaphorizing mechanisms of bureaucracy could not reach. And yet we long for security, or maybe we are made to think we do.

A Site for Pedagogical Struggle

Francis Ford Coppola's (2007) visual rendition of Mircea Eliade's (1988) novel "Youth Without Youth" is a significant event in postmodern Western filmography. Its gist and validity, of course, cannot -and should not- be assessed through the lenses with which more commercial films would normally be scrutinized to evaluate their quality and

estimate their profitability. This film introduces an alternative and compelling set of criteria which allows for the generation of a very sophisticated combination of elements which, at its own time, urgently calls for the projection of our deepest and most archetypal imagination. Masterfully enhanced by a sort of chiasmus of the poetic mind and a dialectical exposure of the political consciousness, the texture of the film carries its own meaning and creates a paradoxical scenario where the act of carefully watching dramatically overlaps with the condition of being observed. Coppola's proposal not only deals with the contemporary issues of awareness and surveillance, but with a more fundamental and problematic challenge: how is historical memory created? I strongly believe that this film not only represents a radical reassessment of aesthetics and a departure from the egotism and self-centeredness of modern North American culture but, in fact, conveys a complex musing of otherness. It is a thoughtful consideration of the moral choice between good and evil and, in this sense, represents the configuration of a meaningful site for criticality and pedagogical struggle with hopeful implications for popular culture.

Coppola's (2007) film narrates the story of Dominic Matei, a bright professor of linguistics in Romania who, having devoted his entire life to understanding the origin of consciousness and to discern how language shapes the notions of time and space, at 70, depressed, aware of the impending catastrophe in Europe in 1939, has not been able to arrive to a conclusion and write *the* final work which would round up his unique findings and make him unquestionably known. Resolved to commit suicide, away from home, and stripped from everything that, once dead, would reveal his identity, he is unexpectedly

struck by a lightning. From that point on, in a rather psychoanalytical fashion, and with intense alter-ego dialogues embellished with oneiric reminiscences, Dominic's existence intriguingly roams and provocatively transgresses the boundaries between the sacred and the profane:

- Double: [Assertive] Good, you're behaving as you should in order to create the necessary confusion.
- Dominic: [Resigned] The double. He always answers the questions I'm ready to ask. Like a true guardian angel.
- Double: [Socratic] Now, that's a correct and useful formula!
- Dominic: [Puzzled] Are there others?
- Double: [Resolved] Many.
- Dominic: [Curious] For example?
- Double: [Paused] Along with angels, and guardian angels, there are powers: archangel, seraphim, cherubim. Intermediary beings par excellence...
- Dominic: [Interrupting anxiously] Intermediary beings between consciousness and unconsciousness?
- Double: [In as a matter of fact tone] Well, of course! But also between nature and man, man and the divine, reason and Eros. Feminine and masculine, darkness and light, matter and spirit. [*Italics are mine.*]

But it is the film in itself, gracefully pregnant with visual metaphors in its portrayal of Dominic, the post-historic man, as the embodiment of a search and as the embeddedness of a paradox, what has called my attention. If Dominic Matei is, let's say, in search of an objective manifestation of a truth with which he could identify to give meaning and closure to his life, the film mirrors the process in its multiple and much more complex levels exposing his witty dark side, revealing his sublimated fear of loss, and confessing the ambiguity of his very human condition: "I live in fear, dreading what

awaits in the alleyways (...) Nothing is as it seems. I am the proof of that. I trust no more.”

In the film Matei’s mirrors are not in sync with what they mirror. It is as if they lacked the force to force competing processes to arrive to a state which would be considered *safe* if the system for which they were designed were to crash. They are, rather, burst centers where the forces that make things look different are exposed, where their pretensions of being always one step ahead of reality inevitably lay bare:

- Dominic: [*Assertive*] But I can’t believe in the objectivity of the person with whom I am conversing. I can only think of him as my double.
- Double: [*Compelling*] Well, in a sense, that’s what he is, but... that doesn’t mean that he doesn’t exist in an objective way, independently.
- Dominic: [*Intrigued*] Oh... I’d like to be convinced!
- Double: [*Philosophically*] In metaphysical controversies, empirical proofs lose its value, but... wouldn’t you enjoy receiving a few fresh roses picked from the garden?
- Dominic: [*Emotionally touched*] I’ve always liked roses.
- Double: [*Devilishly mischievous*] Well, where would you like me to put them?
- Dominic: [*Yielding*] Not in the vase. One right here [*extends hand*], in my hand [*almost whispering*], as I am holding it now [*red rose appears, Dominic smiles astonished.*] And another one on my knee? [*Rose appears.*]
- Double: [*Urging*] The third rose. Where do you want me to put the third rose? [*Italics are mine.*]

In a rather subliminal way, the film challenges not only the objectivity of Matei’s search, but objectivity in itself as it visually portrays what Zygmunt Bauman (1995) has poignantly described as “our modern ambivalence about might, force, and coercion” (p. 139). This is precisely the postmodern gist of the film: one person’s enabling and spawning process is another person’s cogent hindrance. Clearly, a great deal of power is

absolutely essential to crease and disjoint things in Coppola's (2007) mirrors so that what they reflect may be perceived as expected or desired, or even as right or better, if you will. Coppola's version of Dominic Matei is Bauman's version of modernity: "a frontier civilization, which re-creates itself and rejuvenates through a constant supply of lands to conquer and ever new invitations to, or pretexts for, transgression" (p. 140). Jürgen Habermas (2006) has ascertained with solid authority, I believe, that the only image that a pretend unipolar world can accurately mirror is that of an existing asymmetrical distribution of political power:

However, it is misleading because the complexity of a world society that is not just economically decentered can no longer be mastered from a center. Conflict between cultures and major religions can no more be controlled exclusively by military means than crises on world markets can be by political means." (p. 148)

I find Coppola's visual language fascinating and profoundly relevant in an era of insecurity such as ours, where unrealistic images are blatantly used for ideological management. Ushering a time of fear, not too long ago, former President George W. Bush (2002) strongly argued in the aftermath of unprecedented terrorist attacks in North American soil, that "our enemies have openly declared that they are seeking weapons of mass destruction, and evidence indicates that they are doing so with determination" (p. 4). Up to this day, more than eight years later, even though that evidence has been proved wrong, and even fabricated, and as President Obama switches the American berserker focus of his administration back to *Al Qaeda* and Afghanistan in the Middle East, the rationale seems to be the same. Notwithstanding the increasingly negative perception of war by the public opinion, it continues to inform the debate and determine threat

inflation, as it besets the continued failure of the marketplace of ideas through the power of redescription.

From the War on Poverty to the War on Terror

During the 1960s, when civil rights and poverty were national concerns, the federal government made education part of a national campaign against poverty. Joel Spring (2005) identified and clearly described a permanently increasing interest of the corporate liberal state in the cultivation and management of human resources “for the benefit of the industrial and corporate leaders” (p. 376) as the main characteristic of that period in the history of education. The shortcomings of such a policy, in his view, were that schools failed to prepare students to exercise and protect their political, social, and economic rights:

Within the theoretical framework of the War on Poverty, the social and economic system that had created poverty and allowed it to continue was not considered the problem; the problem was the culture of the poor. Indeed, the overall strategy was to integrate the poor into the existing social and economic system. Very simply, this can be called blaming the victim –placing full responsibility for poverty on the shoulders of the poor. They –not the economic system that had produced poverty- were expected to change. (p. 394)

At the beginning of the 21st century, national security has acquired urgent and exceptional relevance. The U.S. National Security Strategy inscribes education within the frame of national security doctrine and has strategically situated its domestic effects under the umbrella of homeland security policy. Education, in no uncertain terms, became one of nine general foreign policy strategies designed to expand what former

President George W. Bush (2002) so intriguingly called a “circle of development”, process which was, hole-and-corner, engrained within another one, more powerful, identified as War on Terror.

In a promising vision, delivered to the world almost one year after the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington D.C. in 2001, President Bush considered literacy and learning as the “foundation of democracy” (p.23). Obviously, no one could ever disagree with an assertion of the sort. But a careful reading and analysis of the official documentation that defined national security and regulated its policy making, nevertheless, reveals not only that literacy and learning had been obstreperously foreshorten to unpretentious functions played within an innocuous structure, but confirms that this notion of education was seamlessly articulated to a larger political agenda: “to open societies” (p. 21). The implications and challenges that this vision continues to carry have not been sufficiently discussed in pedagogical terms. What does it mean to open societies? What does it mean to open societies in a context of terror? I argue that the political project contained in the U.S. National Security Strategy, read as curriculum, models coercion in service of individual self-assertion.

Both political project and curriculum have ostensibly anchored its fundamental belief in a particular interpretation of history at the end of the cold war: “The militant visions of class, nation, and race which promised utopia and delivered misery have been defeated and discredited,” said President Bush (2002) and he stoutly ascertained that there is only one “sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy and free enterprise” (p. 1). I strongly believe in democracy and adhere to democratic principles

but, precisely, because of that, I think it is neither possible nor plausible to pretend to conflate those three concepts and make them work as if they were one. Benesetto Fontana (2002) explains:

The notion of the state as ‘educator’ and the formation of a socio-cultural ‘personality’ bring us back to the notion of hegemony, in this case specifically construed as the movement from feeling to knowledge, from desire/appetite to reason, and from the economic to the political. In other words, hegemony is precisely described by the movement from a particular (or pre-political) to a universal (or political) consciousness. (p. 161)

I follow Jeffrey Weeks as cited by Bauman (1995) to frame an alternative argument:

“humanity is not an essence to be realized, but a pragmatic construction, a perspective, to be developed through the articulation of a variety of individual projects, of differences, which constitute our humanity in the broadest sense” (p. 162). Habermas (2006) speaks to the same possibility but from a different perspective:

The sanctioning of states whose governments provide a haven for, or actively support, the new international terror requires neither the erosion of the narrowly defined right of self-defense nor the suspension of key provisions of the Geneva Convention. Nor does effectively combating the new terror at the domestic level call for restrictions on basic rights that amount virtually to their destruction. Of course, this specter could vanish with a change in administration in the United States. Nevertheless, the image of a superpower that uses its military, technological, and economic superiority to create a global order in accordance with its own religiously colored notions of good and evil and its geostrategic goals suggests a heuristically useful alternative, namely, one between a progressive constitutionalization of international law and its substitution by the liberal ethics of a superpower. (p. 128)

A Threat to Democracy

As I have been reflecting on those two National Security documents made available online by The Bush White House and discerning the way the notions of democracy, freedom, and security are described and inscribed in it, many complex questions have come to my mind constituting altogether a multidimensional imaginary puzzle. What constitutes a threat to democracy? What constitutes a threat to a democratic state? What is the repertoire of legal responses to a threat against a democratic state? Is there any difference between a legal and a legitimate response? Does the subjectivity involved in the perception of a threat play any role in the legitimacy and or the legality of the response of a democratic state? Do responses to perceived threats challenge, dispute or contest the concepts and institutions of democracy and of a democratic state as we understand them now? I have even been wondering whether we actually share such an understanding. Beyond academic definitions, how is democracy experienced under real life exceptional circumstances? In short, putting forward definitions of threat to democracy or security for the consideration of academics and policy practitioners, or assessing discourses of security and democracy on the basis of their implementation, appears divorced from the operation of security in the everyday of political practice. It is, for the most part, classified secret. This does not mean that those in academia interested in questions of threats and security should avoid seeking policy prescription or the application of their ideas to political processes. Rather, they should acknowledge that elaborating alternative conceptions of threat or security, or defending existing conceptions and practices, is a profoundly political project. As Matt McDonald (2010)

explains, it is political in the sense of serving to affect (for better or worse) the context in which actors find themselves, which is the central determinant of actors' use of security or how they feel threatened. And it is political in serving to address the core reason of state, whose legitimacy is, as we know, derived primarily through its claim to provide security" (p. 278). But after careful consideration, I must say, there is still one idea against which I have not yet been persuaded: a liberal democracy may roll back during a period of perceived threat. Just listen again to President Obama (2009) inaugural speech:

As for our common defense, we reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals. Our Founding Fathers, faced with perils we can scarcely imagine, drafted a charter to assure the rule of law and the rights of man, a charter expanded by the blood of generations. Those ideals still light the world, and we will not give them up for expedience's sake. (p. 4)

For expedience sake... Such a unique phenomenon may not only be interesting because of its political implications, but it certainly acquires dramatic philosophical tones because it operates through a sequence of sublime mechanisms where language and images play a main role. Let's just look at the mainstream media or, better yet, a simple school textbook. The expressions force, violence, extremism, terror, and terrorist violence are used in a sort of exchangeable way to describe an undesirable situation, essentially in contrast to the notions of law enforcement and order, bolstering the modern conceit that they belong to two different categories. Bauman (1995) points out that what this verbal distinction hides is that, in fact, the former --condemned as illegitimate, gratuitous, and harmful-, is also about certain ordering, "but not the one which the makers of the distinction had in mind" (p.141). This means that the distinction is, in point of fact, being

made between the desired order and all the rest. Consequently, aware of the power of language, it would be a significant pedagogical experience just to ask for the role that coercion plays in this language puzzle.

Jennifer Holmes (2001), for example, in an interesting essay on *Terrorism and Democratic Stability* affirms, correctly, -I believe-, that “to understand the consequences of violence on democratic stability, violence coming from terrorist groups and violence emanating from the state must be studied together” (p. 10). Which coincides with what I am trying to explain from the beginning: each concept calls for its excluded other. What she implies is that, instead of just asking what unleashes violence one should also ask for the consequences of violent responses. Normally, she explains, democracies combine repression and reform, depending on the nature of the threat. For example, Western European democracies confronting terrorism saw a growth in power of state security institutions. West German and Italian governments also upgraded intelligence-gathering and surveillance functions, bringing the government into a more intrusive role in society. In West Germany, Spain, Italy, and the United Kingdom, anti-terrorist legislation restricted civil liberties. Within a more comprehensive perspective, she asserts, “violence can be observed as cause of further instability, instead of merely a manifestation of a preexisting conflict”. Her inclusive approach helps us to avoid a traditional assessment of the state in terms of law and order and encourages us to look at the larger, more complex, and dynamic picture drawn by its fundamental constitutional role.

Terror as a phenomenon of political violence and the way we understand it from a democratic perspective, depends heavily on the historical, political, social, and economic

context in which we inscribe it, as well as on how the groups and individuals who participate *in* or respond *to* the actions we call *terror* relate to the world in which they act. I grew up and lived my young adult life in the midst of a situation like that and -not without fear- survived the bloody crossfire. Seventy thousand people didn't, and I am still troubled by that. The violent scenario comes back to my mind but now in global dimensions.

An important lesson learned from the past about warfare as pedagogy is that the context for terrorism does not consist entirely of objective historical factors. Equally important to understanding terrorism is its symbolic context. Patricio Silva (1999) in *Collective Memories, Fears, and Consensus* warns us that “how it is perceived determines its subjective conditions” (p. 178). The power of using the term, he argues, resides in its symbolic appeal and, most importantly, in its capacity to outlast short-term strategic failures. If you agree with him, as I happen to do, it is easy to understand why it persists, almost ineluctably, despite negative outcomes: “*Terrorism* projects images, communicates messages, and creates myths that transcend historical circumstances and can motivate future generations” [Emphasis is mine] (p. 179). Another important lesson learned from the past is that the understanding of terror and its complexity is contingent upon our understanding of terrorism as a conflict of political nature. Obviously, there is always a self presentation of those who use terror and a construction that governments and publics place on it. But, in fact, when people choose to call the actions of others *terror* or to label others as *terrorists*, then, this choice often has a sort of prescriptive relevance and not only a moral connotation. Martha Crenshaw (1995) in *Thoughts on*

Relating Terrorism to Historical Contexts explains that “political language affects the perceptions of audiences and their expectations about how the problem evoked in a particular way will be treated.” (p. 17). The vocabulary used to define or identify a problem, consequently, may also indicate a preferred solution.

A Culture of Fear

The overarching official document that originally contained and explained the National Security Strategy of the United States of America after September 11 was published by The White House in September of 2002, just a couple of months after the newly created Office of Homeland Security published The National Strategy for Homeland Security in July 2002. Since then, both documents guided both homeland and national security public policy making. These documents were followed by The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, Washington, The White House, March 2006, which is a more sophisticated version of the original one. It gives an official historical version of what was described as the successes and challenges of the context at that particular time, and most importantly, described the way ahead giving a sort of road map for a desired version of the future, which is also part of the document. Shortly thereafter, when the cost of the war and foreign policies in the Middle East started to be increasingly questioned, two other important documents were made public: The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, Washington, September 2006; and 9/11 Five Years Later: Successes and Challenges, Washington, September 2006. From a political and

pedagogical point of view, these documents are of the uttermost importance: they legitimized the War on Terror as a civilizing process:

Today our enemies have seen the results of what civilized nations can, and will, do against regimes that harbor, support, and use terrorism to achieve their political goals. Afghanistan has been liberated; coalition forces continue to hunt down the Taliban and al-Qaeda. But it is not only this battlefield on which we will engage terrorists. Thousands of trained terrorists remain at large with cells in North America, South America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and across Asia. (p. 5)

It is easy to be overwhelmed by the realization that war makers have enormous power. But like any other legitimating strategy, this one hides as much as it reveals. Concerned by the deterioration of democratic powers in America, Cornell West (2004) has extensively talked and written about what he considers a sort of sedimentation of democratic values, and has made the case for a strong differentiation between democratic commitment and flag-waving patriotism. “Democratic commitment –he strongly argues– confronts American hypocrisy and mendacity in the name of public interest; flag-waving patriotism promotes American innocence and purity in the name of national glory” (p. 103). The problem West (2004) sees here is by all odds engrained in the cultural make of the American society, which –in his own words- is “not knowing how to deal with our traditional fear of too many liberties, and our deep distrust of one another” (p. 6). This fear, in its turn, he concludes, manifests itself in a politics that is about winning a political game and not about producing better lives for all. Robert Jay Lifton (2003) has an interesting take on this issue as well. As a psychiatrist interested in the human condition in extreme situations, he describes the American experience as a superpower syndrome: “We have long had a national self-image that involves an ability to call forth reservoirs of

strength when we need it, and a sense of a protected existence peculiar to America in an otherwise precarious world.” (p. 125). As a consequence, he argues, this sort of exceptional condition makes us feel as if it were almost un-American to be vulnerable. Notice here that one condition is immediately implicated by the other. They are presented as irremediably inseparable. But in all reality, for an ordinary flag waving citizen, it is the equivalent to claiming a power that is unlimited just to compensate the intolerable idea of not being invulnerable, and to compensate the intolerable emotion of being vulnerable. So, “one solution, says Lifton (2003), is to maintain the illusion of invulnerability”, even when that means that the superpower “runs the danger of taking increasingly draconian actions to sustain that illusion” (p. 129).

Michael Lerner (2007) describes this illusionary state of consciousness as cynical realism in the *Left Hand of God*. This state of consciousness is characterized by a heightened state of alert and a profound sense of fear. In this very human condition, he explains, there is a battle of all against all, where others will necessarily dominate you unless you dominate them first. For Lerner (2007), here, fear of the other is the most common of the senses; and as such, the prism of our human diffraction and the cause of the fragmentation of our lives. Within this logic, “security for ourselves, our families, our communities, or our nation depends on our ability to get advantage over them before they get it over us” (p. 77). But Lerner (2007) gives a good dressing down and warns us that when fear dominates, what happens is that all our experiences are discerned through these lenses, prevailing over other parts of our cultural heritage precisely because they validate those fears. Consequently “people seek to maximize their own advantage”. Fear is not

only, then, and alienating force, but, also “the energy that summons us to the market” (p. 80) I argue that it is also the straining force that motivates the need to open other societies.

L’Enfant et les Sortilèges

There is an intrinsic weakness in governments, though, says Howard Zinn (2007) in *A Power Governments Cannot Suppress*: “however massive their armies, however vast their wealth, however they control images and information, because their power depends on the obedience of citizens, of soldiers, of civil servants, of journalists and writers and teachers and artists” (p.13). And any government’s power –he concludes- may become futile when critically confronted by an educated citizenry.

In an effort to do away with the debris produced after so much official neatness during the Bush administration, a sworn-twice President Barack Obama turned his undivided attention to national security matters during his second day in office, and continued to untwine the arras of policies woven by his predecessor over the previous eight years. He signed executive orders designed to close Guantanamo Bay prison within a year, prohibit extreme interrogation practices, and revisit military tribunals for suspected terrorists. “Shuttering the detention facility is intended to show that U.S. foreign policy is in metamorphosis,” President Obama said during a press conference. “The message that we are sending around the world is that the United States intends to prosecute the ongoing struggle against violence and terrorism” but will do so “in a manner consistent with our values and our ideals”. “We are not, as I said at our

inauguration, going to continue with a false choice between our safety and our ideals,” he concluded as highlighted by National Public Radio on January 22, 2009.

There is indeed an enthrallment in the narrative of national security documents and of national security issues. It pretends to be about dislodging violence, but in fact it just re-describes its redistribution. I argue that they continue to be powerful artifacts that very efficiently perform what Bauman (1995) so interestingly describes as an ordering activity:

Ordering makes protruding the difference previously unnoticed and creates a difference where there was none; it splits the set of objects within the field about to be ordered into such as fit the order and such as do not. The latter must be *coerced* to change themselves or to change their places. (p. 140)

The fact that the executive orders to close Guantanamo Bay prison within a year, prohibit extreme interrogation practices, and revisit military tribunals for suspected terrorists have certainly been hard to execute and have not been completed reveals not only that these are complicated issues but that, in fact, they are just the tip of underpinning structures that cannot be easily removed. With the President, I think that the choice is not between safety and ideals, as he has digressed, but, rather, a matter of consistency. The real choice will be where he decides to re-inscribe his digression.

The disruption created by such fit impetus reminds me of the powerful script written by Sidonie-Gabrielle Collette (1917) for Maurice Ravel’s (1925) opera "*L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*." In this story a boy conflicted by time and mathematical problems, tears off the wall paper of his room, knocks over his clock, and rips apart his favorite book, just to see that the characters that inhabited his little world -and with whom he had safely

grown for years-, are free, have a life of their own, and heartedly struggle and riot to continue to make the same sense even without their context. This is the story of a strange place in time where a boy comes face-to-face with the very objects he just broke and has no other option but to negotiate with them a new space. This is also, coincidentally, the story of our modern day so early and well captured by Collette (1936), in *Mes Apprentisages*: "by means of an image we are often able to hold on to our lost belongings. But it is the desperateness of losing which picks the flowers of memory, binds the bouquet" (p.67). The desperateness of loosing, in this case, brings us back to Martina Dwyer's dilemma and fragile human condition, to the picture of the boy holding the photo of a soldier holding that same boy, to the warps in which culture and memory are woven, to rituals, and to mirrors that lack the force to force.

A New Era of Responsibility

Back in 1999, an FBI report on Counterterrorism Threat Assessment to the U.S. Department of Justice indicated way before the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington DC that Osama Bin Laden's objectives –"driving U.S. and Western forces from the Arabian Peninsula, removing Saudi Arabia's ruling family from power, 'liberating' Palestine, and overthrowing 'Western-oriented' governments in predominantly Muslim countries"- had established himself as a leading figure among extremists who shared a similar ideological orientation. But the most alarming assessment contained in this little known document came in one of its conclusions: "While Bin Laden is one of the most recognized proponents and key financier of this

broad movement; he does not control or direct all such extremism. Should either he or *Al-Qaeda* cease to exist, this international movement would, in all likelihood, continue” (p.55).

The Al-Qaeda attacks of September 11, 2001 ushered in a time of fear which is now almost nine years old. Some scholars are beginning to refer to it as the “perpetual war”, since there seems to be no obvious conclusion in the horizon. But most importantly, a disturbing pattern emerges just from a purely academic examination, a pattern of disrespect for the law. The response of the state to politically subversive violence has repeatedly weakened the fluidness of the constitutional order.

“We’ve been fighting the wrong battle” has unflinchingly said Frank Cillufo, a former White House Homeland Security official, to Time Magazine’s Amanda Ripley (2008). “The real center of gravity of the enemy is their narrative. It is ideologically bankrupt.” (p.47) I think he is absolutely right. Howard Caygill (1993) has managed to articulate a clear image to illustrate the current world scenario:

With the limits for territorial expansion themselves reaching the limit [...] reasoned civility and sovereign violence threaten to collapse into each other [...]. The potential for violence displaced to the periphery returns to the centre with increasing speed. The border between civility and violence is no longer to be found at the limit of a sovereign, territorial space, but now traverses that space. (p.52)

For the same reason, I am afraid, shouldn’t an ideology that cynically infuses fear and its narrative of creative destruction be included in the same theoretical category? President Barack Obama (2009), in his inaugural speech, made an eloquent appeal to an uncompromising “recognition, on part of every American, that *we* have *duties* to

ourselves, our nation, and the world.” [The emphasis is mine.] Alluring the promise of citizenship, he ceremoniously ushered in what he called a “new era of responsibility.” A few days before, in spite of it all, he had already approved his first act of war, this time in Pakistani territory. “Last Friday [January 13, 2009], unmanned U.S. Predator drones fired missiles at houses in Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas, or FATA, killing as many as twenty-two people, including at least three children” reported Amy Goodman (2009) on her radio show *Democracy Now* on January 30, 2009. The Pakistani Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani told an audience at the World Economic Forum in Davos the day before of her report that “U.S. drone attacks were ‘counterproductive’ and ended up uniting local communities with militants.” On the other end, Goodman (2009) reported that U.S. Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, a remnant component of the former Bush administration, indicated at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on Tuesday, January 28, that “such strikes will continue and that Pakistani officials are aware of U.S. policy on this matter.”

How can one make sense of the sense of duty to which President Obama made reference in his inaugural speech if it is embedded in a renewed war scenario without undergoing gibelike feelings? To provide a sense in advance of what that might be, a few weeks later, U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano revealed to *Der Spiegel* some elements of what could be interestingly identified as a formal strategy of deradicalization. When asked for the specific reason why she did not mention the word “terrorism” during her first testimony to the U.S. Congress, she said:

In my speech, although I did not use the word "terrorism," I referred to "man-caused" disasters. That is perhaps only a nuance, but it demonstrates that we want to move away from the politics of fear toward a policy of being prepared for all risks that can occur. ([www.spiegel.de/international/world 3/26/2009](http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/3/26/2009))

The admitted sophistication of Secretary Napolitano suggests, though, that the appeal to a new era of responsibility is nothing more but nothing less than an appeal to procedural correctness, and that the sense of duty that it entails is no other but the ritualized belief that organizations are moved only by an impersonal logic of self-propelling principles, where individuals that act within the realm of bureaucratic action are actually divested of their moral autonomy and educated both to distrust their own moral judgment and not to exercise it. What does this contradiction mean in pedagogical terms? Does it mean that metacognition and critical thinking can only go so far?

Depersonalizing War

The provision of security has long been recognized as one of the most important functions of a democratic government. It took centuries for the modern state to evolve and gain exclusive control of the means of violence. But history is evolving in a way Max Weber did not foresee. Peter Singer (2003) in *Corporate Warriors, The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry*, has identified and started to describe an overall global pattern, "one of growing reliance by individuals, corporations, states, and international organizations on military services supplied not just by public institutions but also by the non-sovereign private market". The privatized military industry, for him, may very well represent the new face of warfare. The birth and growth of this kind of industry, he

asserts, and I agree, does not only mean that the monopoly of force from the state is broken, but that “the state’s role in security sphere has now become deprivileged” (p. 18). One can only wonder what kind of effect this change will produce in the process of shaping an identity. The unknown territory brings us back, once again, to the opposition between order keeping and violence; law enforcement and order disruption; insurgency and counterinsurgency. I think this scenario is not as simple as former President George W. Bush assumed in his promising view of the world. The end of the Cold War has allowed internal conflicts to implode states, and international conflicts have caused wars between neighboring states. Simultaneously, globalization has created immense areas where people starve and live under disparaging human conditions of insecurity, and has facilitated the emergence and re-emergence of conflict groups not bound to any one state. As Singer (2003) has very well pointed out, there was a vacuum in the market of security that was exacerbated, I believe, by a context where global threats and their authors too easily acquired notoriety, and traditional responses to insecurity came to the fore as weak and inappropriate, to say the least. Slattery (1995) explains this is why political studies have become central to curriculum studies.

Postmodern curriculum development recognizes the necessity of incorporating a new consciousness that transcends the modern categories of metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology. A reconceptualization of this classical philosophical trinity must emerge that understands existence, knowledge, and ethics in the context of postmodern political, cultural, and social upheaval. (p. 25)

But if the privatized military industry represents the new face of warfare, the increased use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) over the Federally Administered

Tribal Areas in Pakistan, for example, represents both a renewed attempt to depersonalize war and a sophisticated remake of the old deleterious voice of self-deception. It is not casual that such a territory has gained narrow focus in the war against terror. The region is nominally controlled by the central and Federal government of Pakistan. But the Constitution of Pakistan governs FATA only through the same rules which were left by the British in 1901. The President of Pakistan has an authority weakened by the remains of colonial tradition. This has created, in Western terms, a political vacuum which serves, like in the story of the boy and the spell, the interests of insurgents that have found refuge in an ingovernable territory and the interests of a superpower syndrome that seeks to improve its multibillion conventional war means over its much needed and less costly capabilities of counterinsurgency. Robert M. Gates (2009) made such an interesting digression in “*A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age*,” an article written shortly before his confirmation as U.S. Secretary of Defense by newly elected President Barack Obama and that eventually cleared his reappointment in office.

He said:

We should be modest about what military force can accomplish and what technology can accomplish. The advances in precision, sensor, information, and satellite technologies have led to extraordinary gains in what the U.S. military can do. The Taliban were dispatched within three months; Saddam’s regime was toppled in three weeks. A button can be pushed in Nevada, and seconds later a pickup truck will explode in Mosul. [...] But no one should ever neglect the psychological, cultural, political, and human dimensions of warfare. War is inevitably tragic, inefficient, and uncertain, and it is important to be skeptical of systems analyses, computer models, game theories, or doctrines that suggest otherwise” (p. 39).

But such an expression of unconventional thinking unfortunately does not find its reflection in reality. U.S. drone bombings have reportedly killed 687 Pakistani civilians since 2006, according to peace organizations Voices for Creative Nonviolence and Nevada Desert Experience. During that time, U.S. Predator drones allegedly carried out sixty strikes inside Pakistan, but hit just ten of their actual targets. In early April 2009, a group of fourteen peace activists were arrested for protesting outside Creech Air Force Base in Nevada, where Air Force personnel pilot the unmanned drones used in Pakistan and which Gates (2009) mentions in his Foreign Affairs article. Peace activist Father Louis Vitale, Franciscan Friar, explained it this way to Amy Goodman (2009):

Well, you know, it works out rather nicely. They [the pilots and sensor operators] live with their families in Las Vegas. They drive out and drop the kids off at school, drive out in the morning, fly their missions, drop their bombs. They can go home and have dinner with their family in the evening. (www.democracynow.org/2009/4/14)

Unsurprisingly, the corporate media did not report on the event. After all, how to seriously report what some of the soldiers have described as an intriguing arcade experience? How to explain the way they embody a sense of duty that has no sense of moral accountability? How to illustrate a scenario where the act of carefully watching dramatically overlaps with the condition of being observed and, yet, the overlap does not enhance a sense of consciousness but creates a black hole of disenfranchisement that allows for a sort of intermediary beings to roam and transgress the boundaries between the sacred and the profane? What stories are in-sync-mirrors telling and how are they becoming history? Peter Singer (2009) tells us:

The experience for drone pilots is a bit different. They work the same hours as if they were in war zone, usually seven days a week, twelve hours a day, with the unit split into two shifts. But, says, Colonel Charlie Lyon, commander of the 57th Operation Group at Nellis, 'At the end of the duty day, you walk out of the deployment and walk back into the rest of life in America.

A 1940 army pamphlet given to new recruits in World War II explained what it was like to experience war: 'YOU'LL BE SCARED. You'll be frightened at the uncertainty, at the thought of being killed.' By contrast, described one Predator pilot, 'Most of the time, I get to fight the war, and go home and see the wife and kids at night.' Another talked about flying missions in Afghanistan, and then getting home in time to watch reruns of the TV sitcom Friends. (p. 330)

Unfortunately, a mostly rural population estimated to be about 3,341,070 people in 2000, according to official Pakistani sources, remains at large in a deadly crossfire, trying to find refuge in the midst of a situation that may very well exemplify what Secretary Janet Napolitano has redescribed as man-caused disasters. Slattery (1995) reminds us what Vaclav Havel, President of the Czech Republic said:

The fall of Communism can be regarded as a sign that modern thought –based on the premise that the world is objectively knowable, and that knowledge so obtained can be absolutely generated- has come to a final crisis... It is a signal that the era of arrogant, absolutist reason is drawing to a close... and that we have to see the pluralism of the world, and not bind it by seeking common denominators or reducing everything to a single common equation... Sooner or later, politics will be faced with the task of finding a new postmodern face. (p. 24)

CHAPTER IV

IN SEARCH OF IDENTITY

It is often difficult to figure out just what the future will look like. Science fiction has embedded in our contemporary society both wild expectations and early acceptance of technologies that are not fully developed. It is widely known, for example, how helpful *Star Trek* was for Bill Gates in selling his small and easy to use computers to the public. The same is happening with robots from movies like *Star Wars* and *I, Robot*. But the commercial success of a movie like *Avatar*, for example, suggests that despite all the technological development some things, like identity, though *googable*, remain an underground mystery.

Undoing Obliviousness

Depending upon the way you want to look at it, Guillermo Del Toro's (2006) *Pan's Labyrinth* is the study of a rationale for Western politics in conventional terms or a spirited effort to redescribe it. The lashing of its text aesthetically unfolds its moral marrow through a sophisticated wealth of visual detail, heightened by the hospitable possibility of multiple meaning that its script engenders. Del Toro's poetic texture graphically flirts and tinkers with power. It describes how allegiances are acquired and graphically depicts how they are exercised. Simultaneously, but in a rather subliminal way, it also sways an incisive notion of social hope that is quaintly connected to a sense

of redemptive transgression. The intricateness of these two elements, the search of identity and the search of otherness, is precisely what constitutes, I believe, the greatest philosophical appeal of the film. I use Guillermo Del Toro's movie as a structuring text for a semiotic journey through the issues of suffering, cruelty, and responsibility to otherness as seen through the eyes of popular culture.

I must explain first that the selection of this film and the previous one as well, is not a random event. Kristin Herzog (1993) raises an interesting philosophical and curricular question in *Finding Their Voice, Peruvian Women's Testimonies of War*: "How does the portrayal of war, peace, and survival relate to what we traditionally call literature?" I follow her appeal to understand the term in its widest sense and inscribe it in the larger frame of what Richard Rorty (1989) calls solidarity. The process of coming to see other human beings as "one of us" rather than as "them," asserts Rorty (1989), and I agree, is basically a matter of detailed description of what "unfamiliar people" are like and of redescription of how we ourselves are like. Oddly enough, though, this is not a task for philosophy, political philosophy, or for any other theory—he says— but for genres such as ethnography, the journalist's report, the comic book, the docudrama, the novel, the movie, and the TV program. "They have gradually, but steadily, replaced the sermon and the treatise as the principal vehicles of moral change and progress" (p. xvi). I explore his postmodern assertion here:

The right way to take the slogan 'We have obligations to human beings simply as such' is a means of reminding ourselves to keep trying to expand our sense of 'us' as far as we can. That slogan urges us to extrapolate further in the direction set by certain events in the past—the inclusion among 'us' of the family in the next cave, then of the tribe across the river, then of the tribal confederation beyond the

mountains, then of the unbelievers beyond the seas (and, perhaps, last of all, of the menials who, all this time, have been doing our dirty work). This is a process which we should try to keep going. We should stay on the lookout for marginalized people- people whom we still instinctively think of as ‘they’ rather than ‘us’ (p. 196).

Consequently, I situate myself in a site that is temporary, contingent, ambiguous, and densely populated by binary oppositions. I call it a site of hermeneutical conflict. At the same time, I situate myself in front of one of Coppola’s mirrors and I let language flow with curiosity towards displacement, defenses, and affect. Just like Matina Dwyer did. Paying attention, as Deborah Britzman (2006) suggests, “to guarded statements, utterances that mislead, misrecognize and abject, and taking note of the little procedures of resistance to interpretation that service desire” (p. 6). What actually differentiates this position in learning -she says-, what dissociates and confuses, is when one position forecloses the capacity to think of its other, to reflect upon one’s representations, even if it requires wild speculation that exceeds conscious experience.

Del Toro’s formal argument takes us to an era of tyranny and bloodshed –the rural 1944 Spain in the still violent aftermath of the 1936-1939 Spanish civil war- but also, in a rather unannounced detour, carries us further and deeper to a sort of parallel realm of existence, where we are urged to associate, perhaps again, unexpectedly, with meanings of things which, in the best case, we might have thought we had already forgotten. I have used the film and its sublime invitation to undo obliviousness as a *pretext* for creative writing in my work as a Spanish Teacher. Pretty much like a Rorschach test, the caliber of the emotional responses it provoked in my students informed more about the viewers and the writers than about the characters portrayed in the movie. When hosting an open

ended site like this, the fictional and mythological components of the movie become provocative representations of excess of desire, volatility of affect, and playful meaning. But, mainly, the film works both as a collective mirror and as a gateway to more flexible understandings of what we take as reality.

In that sense, when the formal argument alludes to politics and we decode the language in modern Western political science categories, we are confronted with a basic dynamic that revolves around two opposing poles: the search for community and harmony and the pursuit of power. Benesetto Fontana (2002) explains in *Gramsci on Politics and State*, that politics is the activity that searches the common ground or space within which the common good or public end may be pursued, but, concurrently, it is also a competitive struggle for interest and advantage:

Coercion and persuasion, force and consent, domination and leadership, together describe and constitute the defining and essential character of the political such that the in Gramsci is characterized by two analytically separate, but historically and mutually penetrating, spheres: civil society, on the one hand, and the bureaucratic/military/administrative apparatus, on the other. Liberals, whether classical or contemporary, see the former as the sphere of private action and private initiative and the latter as the sphere of public/political interest. (p. 160)

From a psychoanalytical perspective, though, as Britzman (2006) so interestingly explains in *Novel Education* (2006), contrary feelings and opposite poles like the ones explained above are grouped under the experience of the sublime. This is a site, she observes, “where thought encounters its limits and becomes groundlessness, thereby alienating its perception.” When thought becomes sublime -she continues-, there is a sort

of madness, “we are unable to turn away from our fascination of being, at least momentarily, without our own nature to comprehend ourselves” (p. 7).

In the movie, *Ofelia*, an eleven year old girl, is trapped in a violent crossfire between the marauding guerillas of Spanish anarchism and the fascist soldiers of the world under General Franco. Her mother, Carmen, has married a brutal outpost commander, Capitán Vidal, who is portrayed as the embodiment of evil. Capitán Vidal rules absolutely unchallenged over a domain where whatever he says is done. Everyone is a subject and anyone can be tortured or shot at a moment's notice. Against him, outmanned, are the guerillas hiding in the surrounding mountains and their secret sympathizers within Vidal's own household, near the old mill, including a quietly troubled housekeeper, Mercedes, and an equally troubled but outspoken Dr. Ferreiro.

The notions of politics in general and fascism in particular are presented as an appealing and sophisticated design. Capitán Vidal is not the typical villain. He is always well-dressed, well-groomed, and well-spoken. He sends an elegant limousine to transport Carmen, his new wife and takes his glove off to greet her as he acknowledges her pregnancy. He gets up from his chair when a lady enters the room, dislikes burned coffee, indicates how he prefers his supper, delights in fine tobacco, rides a magnificent Arabian horse, enjoys music, and hosts an elegant dinner. Through all these carefully crafted detail, Del Toro seems to suggest that one of the dangers of politics and power when they flirt with evil in our world is, precisely, that it is very attractive. It is attractive to such an extent that most people, unable to undo the oblivion, will simply deny it. In that respect, Britzman (2006) explains very poignantly, and I agree, that “what brings language,

interpretation, and reflection its purpose is that these intrigues of meaning both address the Other and invite our own Otherness” (p. 5).

But if fascism is portrayed as an attractive evil, on the other hand, anarchism does not have a happy ending. It is portrayed as a lottery ticket, a gamble, as someone blinded by the sun, as someone who used to believe in fairy tales, as someone with urgent reasons to leave, as someone with urgent reasons to stay, with occasional victories, but irremediably sad as a lullaby hummed to a murdered child because the lyrics have been forgotten. In this case, says Britzman (2006), and very pertinently so, “it is the psyche that suffers, that suffers the passion of a missing object,” reminding us that “sublimation cannot prevent unhappiness even if its productions leave us happy” (p. 7).

Del Toro’s redescription of political philosophy considers politics, and the allegiances it generates, from the other side of the mirror. They are a sort of intuition, a felt absence. He urges us to place our imagination in the gap produced precisely where our representation was not able to capture the object. It is in this way that politics loosens up, loses its modern essence, and becomes instrumental, hopefully, in service of a more democratic understanding. An interesting dialogue about choices takes place around Capitán Vidal’s abundant dinner table as he informs his guests about his strategy to defeat the guerrillas through strict control of access to resources with a ration card:

Guest: We know you are not here by choice.

Capitan: You are wrong! I chose to be here because I want my son to be born in a new clean Spain. Because these people hold the mistaken belief that we are all equal. But there is a great difference: the war is over and we won. And if we need to kill every one of these vermin to settle it, then we will kill them all, and that’s it. We are all here by choice!

Guests: By Choice! [*Toasting*]

I argue that the message in Del Toro's imagery is that the modern sense of responsibility to act from a particular point of view, whatever it may be, should be subordinated to something more important portrayed as a restraining mood that can be described as a sense of responsibility to otherness. Clearly, choices are emphasized and vested in deontological resolve, but the reason or the idea behind them are not what matters, but the choice itself. One may choose to be destructive or one may choose to be love-giving. Each choice defines, each time, who we are and what politics is.

Moral Progress

The traditional philosophical way of describing what we mean as "human solidarity", says Rorty (1989), is that there is "something within each of us that resonates to the presence of this same thing in other human beings" (p. 189). He argues, though, from a point of view that coincides with Del Toro's restraining mood, that we better "try not to want something which stands beyond history and institutions" (p. 189). His warning is rooted in the historical evidence that suggests that the force of "us" is, typically, in contrast with the force of a "they", which also happens to be made up of human beings, who in a contrastive logic, happen to be the "wrong" kind of human beings and, unfortunately, too often and too easily wiped off. Rorty considers, for example, the attitude of contemporary American liberals to the unending hopelessness and misery of the lives of the young blacks in American cities –just like those drowning for TV after Hurricane Katrina-, as typical. "Do we say that these people must be helped

because they are our fellow human beings? –he asks.- We may, but it is more persuasive, morally as well as politically , to describe them as our fellow Americans –to insist that it is outrageous that an American should live without hope.” The important point he makes is that “our sense of solidarity is at its strongest when those with whom solidarity is expressed are thought of as ‘one of us,’ where ‘us’ means something smaller and more local than the human race.” (p. 191)

It is for that reason that Rorty (1989) argues for an understanding of solidarity as “the ability to see more and more traditional differences (of tribe, religion, race, customs, and the like) as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation” (p. 192). This is precisely what happens when Ofelia brings the other, her baby brother, and her own otherness to the labyrinth upon the Faun’s request:

Faun: Quick, Your Highness... Give him to me. The full moon is high in the sky. We can open the portal.
Ofelia: Why is that in your hand? [*The faun holds the dagger that Ofelia retrieved from the toad’s stomach.*]
Faun: The portal will open only if we offer the blood of an innocent. Just a drop of blood. A prick, that’s all... It’s the final task... hurry!
Ofelia: [*Ofelia nods negatively.*] [*Faun gets upset.*]
Faun: You promised to obey me without questioning! Give me the boy!
Ofelia: No! My brother stays with me!
Faun: You would give up your sacred rights for this brat you barely know?
Ofelia: Yes, I would!
Faun: You would give up your throne for him? He who has caused you such misery!?! Such humiliation!?!
Ofelia: Yes, I would! [*Camera opens up and allows viewer to see Capitan Vidal walking towards Ofelia holding a gun.*]
Faun: As you wish... Your Highness... [*Faun makes a reverence.*]

Before Ofelia re-embodies Princess Moana, before she is metaphorically admitted to the parallel realm of existence, the Faun had already explained to her that “We have to

make sure that your essence is intact, that you have not become a mortal.” But in her attempt to become Moana, the daughter of the moon, Ofelia, the mortal, arrives to the conclusion that humanity is flawed, imperfect, and should be loved because of that, not in spite of that. It is in her search for Moana, in her search of identity, that Ofelia found her own otherness. She made herself *another*. The wording of the Faun is as deceitful as the tasks he gives her; it seems to suggest the existence of a human core self. Ofelia is not concerned about that, and neither is Del Toro. Notice that she doesn’t have any recollection of previous knowledge or experience. She questions everything that doesn’t seem right to her. She breaks rules as she moves forward. Finally the last test puts her at a crossroads: to kill or to affirm someone else’s life putting her own life at risk. She chooses the latter. Was her essence intact? Had she become a mortal? Trying to make you respond to these questions is a playful diversion. He wants us to talk about moral progress. I argue that the key is the *we* expressly implicated in the Fauns warning. That is what needs to be discerned. It is the expansion of her sense of “us”, as Rorty (1989) would say, what is sublimated here; not the “recognition” of something previously recorded, but an “expansion of her sense of solidarity” (p. 197). That is what keeps her choice, as well as ours, as the focus.

Redeeming Transgressions

Visually, Pan's Labyrinth starts with a plain text which is automatically assumed as a preface of historical information. Emphasized white fonts that make contrast with a black background, immediately anchor our mind not only to a particular time and

historical context, but to a mood set by oppositional dichotomies. A sound of wind that can hardly be perceived, played as we are directed to read the text, though, starts telling, at the same time, what seems to be a different story which is immediately picked up, with the singular language of fairy tales, by the voice of an omniscient narrator. The film then unfolds as a flashback, and, apparently, switches back and forth between the worlds of fantasy and reality, just to navigate the interstices of our mind and heart in search of portals to reconnect with alternative meanings.

What we are led to perceive as a magical realm is, though, always present. We are led to think about it as a separate space through the appearance of a dragonfly -which to start the climax of the story and reinforce the dichotomy, transforms itself into a Disney like fairy-, and through Ofelia's exploration of a labyrinth that physically leads to a space that was long ago carved under ground, and is described by Mercedes as "just a pile of old rocks that have always been there... even before the mill;" and into which, she recommends Ofelia, not to get because "you may get lost." It is in this language of dichotomy where hermeneutical possibility is inscribed. The director, though, continues to play with us. There are several elements along the visual text that belong to both worlds, the real and magical, suggesting that it is not just an overlap, but, in fact, a false dichotomy. The possibilities of going up to the mountain and down to the labyrinth are not but a direct challenge to the establishment. The dying tree exists and continues to live, die, and resurrect through a blooming flower behind the mill. The fact that there is no way other than the chalk door for Ofelia to get from her room to Capitán Vidal's office to rescue her brother, as well as the fact that there is no way for him other the hedge that

opens in the labyrinth to get to the portal and seize him back, are just a few of them. The insistence of such a separation is so powerful that Mercedes cries for Ofelia and we feel for her.

Human history, according to Howard Zinn (2007), is not only about competition and cruelty, it is also about “compassion, sacrifice, courage, and kindness” (p. 270). Del Toro’s experiment with the absurd is just that, a note to self, a reminder to make the decision to listen to the voice of otherness, and not to conform to the expectations of others apparently more powerful, as a way to set a higher moral standard for our lives. His production is creativity symbolically used to prevent evil from winning. In that sense, it is both an act of resistance and a site for redeeming prospective projection.

Hope for social justice cannot be explained in a linear way and, of course, it does not happen in the vacuum. In Del Toro’s account it is portrayed as a labyrinth where the outcome of one’s decisions is indelibly marked by the morality of one’s choices. “The world is a cruel place; and you’ll learn that even if it hurts”, says Carmen, Ofelia’s mother, as she refuses to listen to her daughter’s plea, which she considers absurd and a distorted perception of reality. “Magic does not exist! Not for you, me, or anyone else!” she continues, as she starts dying together with a mandrake root which, squirming in the midst of fire, becomes as human as Carmen allowed herself to be in a patriarchal society that commodified and terrified women who were unable to perceive the line between needing help and being submissive in order to get it.

“Why is the psychical so incredible?” asks Britzman (2006). Why is it such an incredible endeavor? Not few of my students described Ofelia as schizophrenic. That is

very symptomatic. Going back to those creative writing exercises in order to undo obliviousness, the conflictive issue always seemed to be judging the worthiness of feelings as ideas. Del Toro summons our unconsciousness and invites its meanings for the dogmatic part of us to loose its grip. “The psychical spans ideas, perceptions, affect, consciousness, the unconscious, and the drives. Reality, too, will loose its transparency because perception will be a question of passion...” explains Britzman (2006). Del Toro’s movie is an interesting postmodern expression of politics that creates the possibility of a visual understanding of a complex intersubjective dialogue about contingency and solidarity.

Contingency and Solidarity

We have to start from where *we* are –this is part of the force of Sellar’s claim that we are under no obligations other than the ‘we-intentions’ of the communities with which we identify. What takes the curse off this ethnocentrism is not that the largest such group is ‘humanity’ or ‘all rational beings’ –no one, I have been claiming, *can* make *that* identification- but rather, that it is the ethnocentrism of a ‘we’ (we liberals’) which is dedicated to enlarging itself, to creating an ever larger and more variegated *ethnos*. It is the ‘we’ of the people who have been brought up to distrust ethnocentrism (P. 198)

This is what Rorty (1989) says about cruelty and solidarity. Is it possible, then, to imagine a world without politics? Del Toro answers this question through the voice of the omniscient narrator, at the beginning of the film: “A long time ago, in the Underground Realm, where there are no lies or pain, there lived a princess who dreamt of the human world...” He chooses a dichotomy to start unfolding his story, and, then, a dichotomy within a dichotomy to continue, just to finish it imploding the whole construct

with a paradox. People think that when they talk about politics, they are making reference to something intrinsically negative. I don't think it is. In suggesting extrapolations, though, Ofelia refers to her mother's pregnancy as "she is sick with baby", the imprisoned and tortured anarchist begs Dr. Ferreiro to kill him "please" –without us knowing whether he doesn't want to suffer any longer or if he is punishing himself for having "talked," and Ofelia tells her still unborn brother the story of a magic rose that blossoms every night just to die with the morning light "unable to bequeath its magic gift of immortal life to anyone who plucked it." Del Toro's text presents politics as a contingency, as something fragile, sublime, and constructed as memory. When Capitán Vidal knows his life is coming to a violent and abrupt end, he holds his father's watch in his hand, and asks Mercedes, who has received his son in symbolic adoption, to pass it on to him and to tell him, just as his own father did, "at what time his father died". Holding the symbol of his contradictions in his right hand, horrified, Capitán Vidal dies the loneliest death of all when Mercedes denies him the privilege of history: "No, -she says with determination- he won't even know your name." Del Toro reminds us, extraordinarily, that the unconscious may eliminate reality but cannot be eliminated by it so easily. Which reminds me of Appiah's (2005) questions to approach history from the ethical self: whose story are we going to tell? And, where are we going to embed it?

Finally, after this metaphorical preamble, how do security, identity, and education fit together in this discussion? As a lawyer, for example, I can understand murder for passion. I not only understand it, but I suggest that all of us condone it through a legal system that punishes it less severely as opposed to a more rational crime (given that a

crime could be considered rational); through a system that treats it as something that happens when we are out of our minds. Another sort of madness. But as a lawyer and an educator, I also know that law has nothing to do with morality. In this sense, I agree with Del Toro, who neither understands nor condones murder for an idea. In his eyes, to kill for the "right" idea, be it patriotism, nationalism, liberty, or, even democracy, is perverse. Capitán Vidal is the embodiment of that perversity, but most importantly, an appeal and invitation to our collective unconsciousness: his resistance to rationality, his loyalty to pleasure, and cancellation of time is like being ruled by unruly laws. For Britzman (2006) "this incontinent law is itself an aesthetic undertaking, for there the world is transformed, conviction is made, affect is given free reign, and new realities are created" (p. 9).

Something similar happens with the notion of war on terror. The preface to the movie is, curiously, a contradictory statement: "the civil war is over..." but, as we continue to read, it is really not over... "Hidden in the mountains, armed groups are still fighting the new Fascist regime that fights to exterminate them..." So the questions that Del Toro seems to pose here would be: what keeps wars going and what is it that, finally, will make them stop? He seems to suggest to give a look to the minimum terms of settlement of those who are in combat. Capitán Vidal laid his terms in an absolute tone, and the anarchists refused to consider exile because they had nothing else to lose other than their own alienated lives. The conflict scenario seems to be endless. But Del Toro does not leave us without another clue. Once Mercedes is captured, an interesting dialogue takes place between a hands-tied Mercedes and an all-powerful Capitán Vidal:

Capitán Vidal: *[talking to Garcés, his lieutenant, who has expressed doubts about leaving him alone with Mercedes in the torture room.]* For God's sake, she's just a woman!

Mercedes: That's what you've always thought! That is why I was able to get away with it. I was invisible to you!

Capitán Vidal: Damn... You've found my weakness: Pride. But it's your weak points we're interested in...

Del Toro reminds us that those weak points, in other words, the possibility of suffering and pain, are the ultimate reference which we, as humans, share as reality. In Del Toro's portrayal of the human condition, war is sublime. It expresses a fear of loss.

Something Cultural

In his essay *The Optimism of Uncertainty*, Howard Zinn (2007) reflects on how a person, in the midst of war and injustice, can manage “to stay socially engaged, committed to the struggle, and remain healthy without burning out or becoming resigned or cynical” (p. 267). His response is like anything simple: “if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future...to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory” (p. 270). This simplicity, though, encompasses a uniquely radical perspective; one that breeds a dynamic of passion that is not exhausted by rational calculation, but reflects and diffracts the very complex process of learning into its unerring meaning. Zinn shows a particular interest in the underlying phenomenology of what is considered historically relevant, and places his focus on the person herself rather than on the events. He is not only critical and keen to the ease with which historical explanations can easily be turned into self-serving justifications, but through his historiography, Zinn speaks to

possibility. Just like Copolla's mirrors and Del Toro's underground world. Each issue he depicts, each dilemma he unfolds, each voice he echoes, opens up and refers to a particular kind of being-in-the-world. And the most inspiring treat of his writing is that in each case, the person described is not a stranger, but someone we ourselves, at one time or another, could have been, or even better, could become.

Zinn's greatest treat as a historian, I believe, is that he openly acknowledges that his writing is not neutral and that through it he wants to bring into the light those marvelous victories mentioned above. Further more, as he explains in *If History Is to Be Creative* (2007), he feels the need to feature those many "unreported acts of resistance against the power of the Establishment" (p. 11) because, for him, at the end of the day, the standard scholarly practice of history minimizes our present freedom by privileging Truth at the expense of truthfulness. As a result, the historical material with which he deals as an intellectual is not just a matter of objectivity, balance, and methodological distance, but from a philosophical perspective, the only truth that may interest him, if any at all, is rather problematical, unfinished, unpretending, and most of all, alive. As an activist, there is no doubt; he walks the talk seeking to inspire others as he highlights the creative power of ordinary people struggling for a better world. And, as a socially engaged human being himself, he certainly believes that even though our future is unpredictable, change can certainly be induced; that speaking truthfully is a far more fitting ambition than speaking the Truth; and that "rebellion often starts as something cultural" (p. 16). It is precisely in that *something cultural* where Zinn, Copolla and Del Toro coincide. I describe it as the pedagogical site where dissent is expressed and

consciousness and unconsciousness shaped. I propose to see it also as the site where the concept of history can be demystified and where the notion of self becomes more fluid.

The Self as a Stream of Symbols

From his unique and transformative point of view, Zinn believes that “to anticipate a possible future without denying the past, it [History] should... emphasize new possibilities by disclosing those hidden episodes of the past when, even if in brief flashes, people showed their ability to resist, to join together, and occasionally to win” (p.11). His systematic effort to highlight the morality of the choices of those particular individuals to speak out, and the description of those acts as an expression of dissonance of intrinsic historical value is an important contribution to a postmodern historical analysis. Of the sort, but from a philosophical perspective, Bauman (1995) highlights the “endemic and incurable ambivalence of the moral primal scene –the scene of moral choices and the scene of discovery of the morality of choices—in which any consequences are begotten, by design or by default” (p. 9). His unorthodox cut to understand the “ambivalent appurtenances of postmodern life”, those of which “we do not yet know whether they are hurdles or springboards; and which, for all we know, may yet become either” (p. 9) is also an important contribution to a postmodern philosophical analysis.

I situate my reflection about curriculum and education, the process of shaping personal identity, and how the concepts of threat and security affect them within this postmodern reasoning framework; one where the human mind is, by definition, always

transforming itself and operating within a moral space. In this sense, the stream of symbolism that can be generated as I share my reflection on the issues portrayed in these films, for example, reveal that you and I can be seen as selves moving in a certain space of questions. I feel that there is an intriguing sort of need to symbolize and an equally strong and puzzling further need to symbolize our own symbolizations as a way to understand them. What I have learned is that, because of --and even despite of- our capacity to see and understand ourselves as observers and observed, our boundaries as objects of learning and subjects who learn may completely become blurred. When that happens, there is no room for dichotomies. We are selves on the make as we address the other and, inadvertently, in the mega-process, we are completely unable to avoid inviting our own unconscious otherness. In the symbolization of symbolization, neither I nor you can avoid informing the objects in hand of our love, hate, curiosity, aggression and earlier conflicts and, as Britzman (2006) says, in that way, we end up as a surplus, as a difference in the equation that, through this experience, returns to the work of learning as we read each other between the lines, loosening meaning “from our intentions as interpreters, and interpreting those gaps as expressing our unconscious meaning.” (p. 25)

Damnosa Hereditas

Navigating through strangely sublimated texts and freely diving to explore the interstices where moral choice and the morality of choices are sedimented, without the linearity of a traditional academic approach, should generate a serene and yet vivid sense of humanity as an emotional contend, as an intriguing but compelling undertake of affect,

and should allow a flowing sense of persona, encumbered, embedded, and yet open to change, able to negotiate among risks, and, most of all, able to indulge in uncertainty. As human beings, we are frail. This is why cultivating our individuality is, as it should, the most social endeavor. That is what a learning site is all about. We are formed, insists Appiah (2005) “it is our nature to shape our nature” (p.211). And this is how each of our selves may become a site of convergence, a time to depotentiate our inertia, a place to be diacritical, an exception to what it was sensed as our duty or considered *de rigueur*; an opportunity to become deffrangible, a challenge to give away our burdensome inheritance, and a need to affirm a mayor purpose in life. What Appiah says is true: we, as individuals, are a constant “interpretive response” (p. 163) to the changing social, semantic, and material contexts in which we live.

This is where what I understand as Curriculum, in particular, and Education, in general, plays a significant role. Copolla, Del Toro, Appiah, and Zinn not only raise a pertinent curricular question: whose story shall we tell? But they also coincide in a sensible and legitimate pedagogical one: Where will we embed that narrative? This questioning allows criticality as an abluent mechanism. It generates a democratic moment and a democratic space to nurture a self of that kind, let’s say, an abluent self. A self that refuses to be reduced to the role of an adiaphoretic amanuensis, secluded in a scriptorium, and condemned to a lack telic resolve. Contrariwise, our abluent self, exudes sensibility, thrives in the public space, and through this renewed aesthesia, tells about a *tell*. Once beyond her alcazar, outside his citadel, the transumptive self talks about the mound of accumulated debris over the site of an ancient settlement. Charles Guignon (2004)

captures it well: “we are not just tellers of a story, nor are we something told. We are a telling” (p. 127); and this means that we are something we do, that our embedding in a social context is what prompts our creativity, and that we should experience the past as a set of resources carried forward to achieving what *we* hope to accomplish. In that sense, I believe, education is an expressive project and not just a merely descriptive endeavor. In this project we educate each other in an encounter where every ascribed meaning is haunted by its excluded other. Instead of trusting say-so and dictum, it is practical and tries with dialogue, negotiation, and democracy. It can be seen as a movement outward, a migration, and an e-motion, but also as mystical in the sense Don Cupitt (1998) explains, in “the way the strange magical world of symbolic meanings holds the common world, the world of human life, in the hollow of its hand.” (p. 10). In the end, Education is a perspective to be developed at a crossroads, an unhinging critical point, and a juncture with a possible future. For Slattery (1995) the challenge of postmodernism is to move to post-formal thinking as a new zone of cognition. “Postmodernism challenges educators to explore a worldview that envisions schooling through a different lens of indeterminacy, aesthetics, autobiography, intuition, eclecticism, and mystery.” (p. 23)

CHAPTER V
A STATE OF EMERGENCY

Writing, here, following Vivian Gornick (2001) is like a conversation... verbal skills do not suffice if the conversationalist does not understand the difference between a conversation and two monologues. Listening, reciprocity, and turn taking reside at the heart of the activity. Like conversing, writing also calls for a double perspective. Only as a teacher of writing in a foreign language did I learn that to know who is speaking, what is being said, and what is the relation between the two had become not only a way of making thoughtful sense of our own experience, but mainly a way of being, and of becoming.

A Time of Fear

I remember it perfectly. It was one of those moments when the sullen Andean temperature, after an intensely bright and rather warm day of spring, abruptly drops for an uncompromising freezing cold to fill the air probing both the hardness of the rocks and the inveteracy of human bones. It was October 17, 1986, at dusk. I was walking back home, after work, trying to get through the crowd, as I usually did. When, all of a sudden, out of nowhere, that voice and those words hit me like a bolt of lightning: “*¡Sabemos quién eres!*” It was a fierce and lurid moment. “*We know who you are!*” That was what it was saying... I cautiously turned towards the voice in a naïve attempt to see from where

it was coming and, perhaps, deeply hopeful, recognize one of those who so boisterously arrogated such a knowledge. I saw him very briefly, pointing at me. I could not tell apart. And, yet, there he was, deliberately bespeaking to me. For an eternal second, he stared at me and said absolutely nothing else, but managed to push me to the profound abyss of an existential black hole. His physical attributes out cried his Andean ancestry, his height revealed his Western tangencies, his tone carried a distinctive militant feature, his surreptitious appearance exposed a disquiet intention, and his whole body language laid bare scourge. The freezing cold that filled up the air cut its way, unrestrained, through the meanders and interstices of my human condition, a frail and assailable condition; and while I searched for my soul, after another eternal second, he went back to the place from where he came, dusk became night, and I found myself submerged in a quarry of fear and densely populated by urgent reasons.

In 1980 a newfangled relationship between violence and state power was established in Peru, my home country. The horror I witnessed as a citizen escaped every single possibility of description at that time. It was not just because simple language could not give an accurate account of what was happening, but because it was dangerous to describe. Murder, disappearing, and massive torture were matched by the aloofness, ineptitude, and loafing of those who could have prevented a humanitarian catastrophe and did not. As an ethically concerned law student I struggled not only to fully grasp the complex dynamic between justice and security in a country that could not exhibit long and deep democratic traditions, but just to comprehend the striking morbid battle to describe every single space of reality. The point of departure for that new relationship has

been located exactly in May of 1980, when a then little-known-left-wing party, the *Partido Comunista del Perú-Sendero Luminoso*, carried out its first *acción armada* by burning ballot boxes in Chuschis, Ayacucho, a small and remote Andean town, during the first general elections after twelve years of military government and hundreds of neglect. During the twelve years that followed, *Sendero Luminoso* unraveled its theater of operations from the rural Andean highlands to the capital city of Lima. Its increasing reliance on targeted killings of local government officials, exemplary punishments, destruction of state infrastructure, and random bombings was described by the shortsighted media based in Lima with overwhelming disdain for the detail concerning those who suffered violence and their scenarios, and contributed to create and maintain a deceitful and overly simplified sense of domestic violence far from the real tragedy brought forth by human beings against other human beings. In an attempt to unsettle that process and affect memory Piedad Pareja Pflücker and I (1989) documented in *Municipios y Terrorismo, Impacto de la Violencia Política en el Gobierno Local*, the circumstances, places, and names of those who adhered the democratic possibilities of the country and dramatically embodied their responsibility to others in the context of political violence. Naming them and drawing their human face was an act of resistance to those who from both sides of the spectrum demonstrated a deep contempt and disregard for the most dispossessed.

The political violence of *Sendero Luminoso* was indeed met with equal force by the Peruvian armed forces. They unabashedly displayed the skills and adopted the strategies of counterinsurgency very well learned at the School of the Americas, in

Panama. According to the Final Report of the Peruvian *Comisión Nacional de La Verdad y Reconciliación* (2003), around 898 Peruvian high officers were trained by the CIA between 1980 and 1996. Political pressure of human rights organizations forced the Pentagon to declassify between 1996 and 1997 seven manuals produced in Spanish by the intelligence agency that were used to disseminate the doctrine of national security amongst a selected group of Peruvian military officers as well as other Latin American high ranks from Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, El Salvador, and Venezuela. In the context of the war on terror, it is important to know that, according to this source, the content of those manuals directly comes from what was known as “Project X” (Foreign Intelligence Assistance Program, U.S. Army Intelligence School) designed for intelligence training directed to U.S. allies around the world. Of particular interest is the fact that this project, housed in Fort Huachuca, Arizona, nurtured itself from the experience of the war in Vietnam, and was the site where all the resources generated for that conflict were not only preserved but eventually recycled to become the concept of “low intensity warfare.” (p. 314) The arbitrary detentions, occasional killings in confrontations with demonstrators, cruel mistreatment, exile and deportation with which the state had previously confronted the opposition and popular movement, gave way to more drastic modes of exemplary violence aimed against the civilian population, popular leaders, and grassroots and left-wing organizations. Deborah Poole and Gerardo Rénique (2002) accurately described the scenario in *War and the Privatized State. A Peruvian Parable*:

In rural areas, paramilitary and military death caravans carried out torture, rape, and executions; college professors and students disappeared from dormitories; entire peasant villages were relocated into strategic places; thousands of people suffered systematic police harassment and arbitrary detention; journalists, lawyers, and relatives of alleged subversives were executed, arrested, or disappeared. Although international human rights monitors amply documented all of these abuses, state proclamations concerning a “just war” against terrorism met their objections (p. 153).

But *Sendero Luminoso* also exceeded the mostly ceremonial embrace of revolutionary violence that had characterized the Peruvian left. In a dramatic reversal from this tradition of class-based unrelenting violence, *Sendero Luminoso* turned its fierceness toward those who occupied any sort of middle ground between its own fundamentalist positions and those of the state. It executed leaders of many unions, peasant federations, women’s groups, neighborhood organizations, and student federations who had not pledged allegiance to them. Activists, public office candidates, nuns, priests, evangelical preachers, nongovernmental organization workers, and local government functionaries were also intimidated, threatened, or targeted, often in public executions. *Sendero Luminoso*’s cells in the rural areas also used exemplary punishment to retain control over peasant communities. In the cities, *Sendero Luminoso* carried out random bombings and shootings of passers-by and bus and cab drivers to enforce the organization’s armed strikes. For the Andean peasants and people living in the highland cities and towns caught between the crossfire of so-called terrorists and antiterrorists—to paraphrase an influential early report on the Peruvian war by Amnesty International—*Sendero Luminoso*’s armed struggle ushered in a new moment in history, called *manchay tiempo*, which in the Pan Andean native language means “time of fear”. In contrast, for

most people in the cities, war meant to certain extent a cynical adjustment of our daily lives to constant bombings, blackouts, selective surveillance, police roundups and military search and checkpoints, until a loud, deadly, and indiscriminate car bombing in an upper-middle class residential neighborhood in Lima announced that the war scenario had finally arrived to the city in 1992. Through all these acts of violence that started in 1980, as Poole and Rénique (2002) very well assert, a new form of violence known as *terrorismo* was introduced into the lexicon of Peruvian political life. But, nevertheless, the lexicon neither grasped the suffering of the almost seventy thousand persons who were murdered or disappeared in those extremely violent circumstances, nor sympathized with the agony and loss of dignity of those around them.

Evicted from a position of urban privilege, without the sense of security with which it is usually vested, my first reaction was paranoid: I needed to go to a safe place. I rushed to the corner. “*There must be a store in the corner*”, I thought. I did not know the town’s configuration very well yet. But almost always, in small towns of countries like my country, there is a little store at the corner. Any corner. I had just arrived a few weeks before to Cusco, filled with good intentions and many more assumptions, to work in a highly regarded non-government development project. And there it was, the little store, as it *should*. Once there, I felt like a refugee in *its* refuge. Safe in that particular moment and in that particular place, but, nonetheless, feeling very uncomfortable, less than a person. I greeted as I went in. Crossroads are always a meeting place. I was greeted back by the people meeting there, maybe other refugees... I will never know. I did not share my fear.

An Ironic Reversal

The thought of that event has never been gone. I realized sometime later that, in a subtle way, it had managed to make its way into a deeper and more complex mood. It became part of a collective mindset that supposedly mirrored what was happening in our daily lives, as I recall it now, twenty three years later. We used to call it *estado de emergencia*. But this state of emergency was not about an unforeseen combination of circumstances –I am afraid- or the resulting state that called for urgent action, as the official language pretended. There was nothing unforeseen at that point. It was, rather, about a sort of pragmatic acquiescence to war dressed up in stately manner; about the scripted collapse of the public space; and, sadly, about the abuse of a carefully crafted nuance to conceal our social negation as possibility. In an ironic reversal generated by *zinnoptics*, though, today, as I summon memory to affect me in order to gather spontaneous sensations generated by reminisce, embodying Zinn's (2007) optic to deal with history, I see myself as a spectator of an act without ceasing to be part of it, and I realize that my narrative is unfinished. So I invite you, following Britzman (2005), to read it with expectant regard for what is unsaid as well as for what is said –for its open-endedness, silences, negative spaces, inexplicable disturbances, and omissions as well as for its plain statement. If nothing else you may get a firmer grip of the notion of human will and understand how, when conjoined to other faculties like intelligence, judgment, hope, or imagination, and, basically due to the weakening produced by this proximity, which I want to call the viscosity of the sublime, it may transport you to particular stage settings where, in a rather unpretending way, it will prompt the flow your life seems to

bear naturally. In its unbecoming fashion, though, like the picture and its soldier, will dissociates itself from these other faculties, and becomes distended, oppressive, as it tries to cancel everything else and dominate all aspects of experience.

I am calling ironic reversal to an odd circumstance when and where something acquires an unexpected and unsuspected meaning usually at odds with the original one. In another ironic reversal, I discover my self inhabiting the realm of the aesthetic in order to redescribe what happened and I realize that fear is not gone after all. But this makes me wonder, though, given the current context of institutionalized fear, if aesthetic deliberation practices have the potential to open up and preserve public spaces for pedagogical dissonance. I think they can. I think they are. But for that to happen it is crucial to consider the democratic possibilities of aesthetics as historically embedded, and see them as constant alerts of significant concurrence or convergence of events, and as an ironic survey and wry register of important *junctions* and *crossroads*.

Today, for example, while the United States is enmeshed in two wars abroad, the minimalism of the attempted terrorist attack on Christmas Day in an airliner bounded to Detroit, dramatically reminds us that we still have homework to do in our historical understanding of power and meaning introduced by terrorism and on how it is mimicked and inscribed in our own interpretive responses to them. It is ironic, for example, that the only response to militants in Iraq and Afghanistan that, according to The Wall Street Journal's Siobhan Gorman, et. al (2009), have used \$26.00 off-the-shelf software to intercept live video feeds from U.S. Predator drones, potentially providing them with information they need to evade or monitor U.S. military operations, has only been further

encryption procedures. It is also ironic that the most sophisticated expression of the domestication of war, the increased use of unmanned aerial vehicles instead of troops in geographical areas where it would be considered politically untenable or too risky has introduced now the possibility to redescribe war as a battle that can be fought not only without public support but also without soldiers in the front. The pedagogical dissonance generated by these events has been so modest that a public, more concerned about their own financial crisis, ironically, retains little or no sense of the irony.

One of the greatest challenges for the immediate future lies in the pedagogical experience of redescribing *security* and reinscribing *threats* in an alternative framework that does not urge to decode everyday life situations as sites for counterintelligence action or enthrones security drills that pretend to fully discipline subjects. Understanding curriculum as a process of negotiation of meaning in the midst of uncertainty provides a framework for a candid embrace of tension between inheritance and innovation, and to be truly open to the movements at the margins of institutional life, viewing them not as threats but as opportunities to learn, understand, and make critical comments to our ability to self represent. Britzman (2006) says:

Our concern with (...) understanding obstacles to learning as intrinsic to obstacles to narrating learning. Here is where the line between that which resists telling this novel story of learning and that which urges one to become a narrator is blurred, obscuring the boundary between the object of learning and the subject who learns. What kind of testimony to learning reaches into the conditions, values, and effects of its own production, including there what escapes and resists its grasp? (p. 1)

Aesthetic deliberation, inevitably, will situate us at challenging junctures and crossroads, exactly the kind which, ironically, we can no longer pretend to consume

knowing ahead of time whether they are social solvent or social glue, but which, precisely for all we do not know, may all the same become both.

A Chronicle of Surprise

What do ironic reversals have to do with education? As a classroom teacher, when my students were ready for the pedagogical experience of expressing the fullness or the ambiguity of their ideas and needed to learn how to navigate the more complex and sophisticated linguistic structures that the subjunctive mood offers in the Spanish language, I usually took a serious departure from the materials that the school district offered. They focused in what is called *command form*. Those pre-elaborated lessons rushed the uncritical teacher and unquestioning student to activities that prompted to express ideas, doubts, feelings, and emotions in an impersonal, generic and, for that reason, meaningless way. My students developed the skill to use command forms as a byproduct. Our learning activities were mainly designed for them to become aware of the semantics of power. They not only learned how to give –or for that matter, receive- a command, which seemed to be the goal of the textbook; they, instead, developed linguistic structures conducive to open up spaces for them to think about and experience negotiation, persuasion, empathetic understanding, collaboration, and cooperation as possibilities for their own lives and that of others with whom they related. I frequently asked my students to share their feelings and beliefs, and encouraged them to think hypothetically about the relationship between their feelings and beliefs with the real world. These exquisite moments of vision were my favorite activities, not only because

there was great anticipation for the time to share their thoughts, but because of the surprises this time of the year usually brought for me. As an educator, I approached that time with the same anticipation. It was a time to learn as well, but to learn how to allow surprise to challenge my expectations. When I asked my students to share their feelings and beliefs, I was (not only) providing an autobiographical opportunity to practice their Spanish grammar, I was (mainly) inviting them to think about their lives, the life of others, and engage in conversation with each other about them. During our *circle time*, which was a corollary to the thinking and writing processes, we sat on the floor to listen to each other read from our writing, and had candid conversations where, time and time again, they refused to treat anything as irrelevant. It was a time where the boundaries of knowers and known became unintelligible while a sort of instinct of wide reading and wide listening was gently unfolded. My surprise, though, did not come from unexpected isomorphism or adventitious accuracy of linguistic structures in this textual event, but from the utter reality of young persons giving voice to their sense of possibility, individuals giving voice to imagination and hope as they used linguistic structures – linguistic structures that were foreign to them- to critically push the limits of their thoughts exploring the frontiers of knowledge to articulate their own heart and mind. As I return critically to this previous experience I cannot but chronicle it as an announced surprise. I particularly recall one black female student making a thoughtful remark with a smile: “the Spanish was not the problem... you made me think.” This confirmed the validity of my curricular deviance. I didn’t want them to feel that they had to say something; I just wanted them to know that they had something to say.

Texts, all kinds of text, are partly created in the writing and partly created in the reading. We as embeds, embedding and embedded, express and receive meaning through our interactions. That is why there is open-endedness and yet understanding. That is why there is meaning and the possibility of multiple meanings. That is the kind of surprise in which my students and I often found ourselves dwelling, learning together; not pursuing but surrendered. In a sense, some of the dynamic of that reading and listening is described in Lerner's (2007) secular parable where our world is described as a site of continual struggle between the forces of hope and fear. "We hold elements of both paradigms in our minds, both the Right Hand and the Left Hand of God, both fear and hope, and in every encounter we hear both voices, which together shape how we experience the world and one another" (p. 84). Lerner's (2007) metaphorical approach provides another framework of understanding within which it is possible to discern the political meaning of the culture, intellectual life, religion, and mass psychology that surround us. But the sense of wide of reading and wide listening that I have described above has more of a Freirean marrow and refers to a habit of the mind and the disposition to act accordingly that it implies that dwell in his concept of *conscientização* and flow from his sense of history. For Freire (1971) one of the most important points in conscientization was to provoke recognition of the world, not as a given world but as a world dynamically "in the making" (p. 106). I think this is still accurate and the main reason why we must take our presence in the world as the focus of our critical analysis. For it is inconsequential to separate belief and action. But the world since then has changed dramatically and continues to change at a rapid pace. Our ability to be present and be a

presence in the world, now enhanced by a technology that has no attachment, has altered the sense of immediacy and evolved into an uncritical and paradoxical way where distant and near conflate. Modern discourses and methods of analysis simply can neither understand nor even name these changes. An important challenge for transformative education, like in aesthetic deliberation, is to provide a dynamic space for the creative interaction of the rational and the affective as means for critical reflection.

An Unhinging Question

Facebook is the epitome of a virtual marketplace, and Mark Zuckerberg, its founder, a 25 year old Harvard drop-out, the personification of the quintessence of a capitalist entrepreneur. He started it not too long ago as an Internet social network. Many of my current and former students have their personal pages in it. I have seen my image posted in a couple of them, as well as still shots of some of our planned class activities and the more spontaneous happenings somehow fun or significant to them. The sheer possibility to generate a privatized dimension of meaning, selective and exclusive by definition, and, yet, open to the public sounded fascinating to me; but, at the same time, worrisome. Who would want or need such an exposure? I certainly would not. But, regardless of what I think or how I feel about it, it is still there so, perhaps, I should reconsider the issue and reformulate the question to *who would want or need to be that vulnerable?* Listening to my students I learned that it was a sophisticated version of a journal with some little extra components that allow users to share information and track each other. The fact that it is open to all your friends has helped it to become a popular,

potent, and effective communications tool. But there is a catch: the expression *friend* in Facebook, like everything else, is devoid of meaning. Facebook, like any other platform of the sort with a hyperlinked database, allures you and me to wander through an unbounded network of information, all of which is equally accessible and none of which is privileged. Hubert Dreyfus (2001) describes very well this leveling down process. In the Internet, he says, where everything is organized as a syntactic structure, nothing is relevant and, most importantly, “meaning plays no role” (p. 11). That is, Facebook is a platform where people you do not even know may claim to be your *friend* but in an unpoliced and uncommitted fashion, at face value. Like in a market. Let’s say, a volatile market of whim wham friendships.

Facebook’s story, though, is interesting not because its young owner, reportedly, turned down a 15 billion dollars purchase offer from Google, but because, almost two years ago, Mark Zuckerberg started what it is now considered a movement. According to Josh Quittner from Time Magazine, he told a gathering of about 800 software developers in San Francisco that the problem with social networks at that particular moment was that they were closed platforms, and, in a rather celebrity tone, he added: “but today we’re going to change all that” (p. 48). In the same act, he invited anyone who knew how to write applications to jump in and do it for Facebook, offering free distribution and a proportionate share of income from advertisement per user download. According to Facebook’s website there are more than 800,000 programmers developing applications for Facebook Platform. Not all of them very helpful, indeed, but strategically embedded and invisible mechanisms immediately were set to help spread the most useful --while

quelling the ones that were not- showing to be an effective self-regulating system. Just like any other market. The unhinging move, in this case, was that Facebook gave out its Application Programming Interface (API) keys, the code that developers needed to access Facebook's platform. For Zuckerberg it was not just that closed networks restrained the innovational frame of mind. His entrepreneurial flair was that Facebook could avail from a certainly inventive but, nevertheless, potentially disruptive influx that could eventually take place in an unrestrained and unreclaimed virtual community, that of friendships devoid of meaning. His move generated an increasing mass of users attracting a multitude of developers who wanted to build fun or useful stuff, which in turn pulled in even more users. A real market. A marketplace of ideas. One with weed out mechanisms, but without debate or public scrutiny.

What was at stake, then, in his unhinging move? Was it the possibility of improving the quality of social networking? Was it an interest in democratizing opportunities for communication and outreach? Or, perhaps, the sublime satisfaction of a basic need for self assertion? Well, your perception is probably going to privilege the response to one or more of these questions. But all of them are going to generate the wrong answer. Not because there is a problem with your perception, but simply because they are the wrong kind of questions. They will not lift any hinges. So, let's reformulate it to *what was unhinging in the move?* Very simple, just imagine the shock and awe that Zuckerberg created when he announced that he would give his API keys to whoever wanted them. I guess it was like putting a sign at your home's front door saying that the keys are under the doormat. Or maybe like spamming your social security number all

over the net. Just imagine the surprise, uncertainty, and fear of the competitors on the verge of an imminent and generalized security breach in their carefully crafted virtual towers. What was unHINGING was the collapse of assumptions as to how to do business. His subversive re-positioning in the market. It was not a romanticist and visionary transformation of Zuckerberg's *Weltanschauung*. It was, actually, its confirmation. He enabled the creativity of people to whom he did not have to pay and benefited from ideas he did not need to process. He just maximized his profit. In the nature of surprise dwell unHINGING possibilities. But it is how and why we use them, and where we embed the results what matters. Sometimes, though, the matter that matters is not as obvious. It is sedimented and often covered by the debris produced, let's say, surprise after surprise.

Have you ever been driving on a highway for a while, lost in your thoughts, just to, all of a sudden, realize that you are far away from the point where you had your last moment of self consciousness? I have. And if you are like me you might have also wondered where you were and how did you manage to get there safely. Or have you ever had a conversation in which you get so involved in the topic that you seem to become totally absorbed in an intense discussion where the focus is defined by the ongoing flow of ideas as they carry the matter at hand forward, like you in your car; or, literally, like you *and* your car? I have. And if you are like me you might have also wondered where you were and how did you manage not to be there safely. Curiously, both situations have something in common, and that is that we, as individuals, were not the focus of the picture. They differ, though, and differ dramatically, in that, in the former, you and I were like sleepwalkers in a tell, cruising through the mound of accumulated debris over a site

of ancient settlement. But in the latter, you and I were part of a larger flow; we were removing debris and *settling*.

Charles Guignon (2004) refers to situations like the latter as a sort of *releasement*, where we are “no longer letting our egos get in the way in every situation,” but rather, “it points to a way of getting into the swim of what is going on around us without asking where we stand in it all” (p. 165). I originally thought that *Facebook* was a means of releasement in the sense that, through a sort of virtual disembodiment, any one could introduce an element of flexibility to the self and start loosening it up. But now I think that, without the possibility of any significant commitment, it is just a place for private fantasies; a sort of virtual crack for spiritual vacancy; another subtle way to become numb to the social misery in our midst. The fight for control of the electronic mediation that holds it clearly indicates that Facebook is just the virtual concretion of a larger phenomenon, the market, where fear and profit are connate, and the confirmation that they connive in an expedient fashion. The reverie with the control of media of the sort, warns Guignon, “means the imposition of human will onto everything in the world, even onto our relations and our selves” (p. 166). So let me ask again, who would want or need to be that vulnerable? Zuckerberg created a lucrative paradox. By giving up security he allowed free flow of ideas and, at the same time, secured his profitable control of that particular marketplace. Control of signs, symbols, and images seemed to be his ultimate goal. That is one of the reasons why Facebook revealed itself as an appealing metaphor. Not because I have *Facebook friends*, but because it just happens that some of them are,

also, friends of mine, friends for whom I deeply care, and with whom I share an educational project. For me, if you have not noticed it yet, the personal is also political.

What a Thought Cannot Think

Power plays an inordinate role in shaping our consciousness. For knowledge and consciousness continue to be socially constructed, power to create meaning becomes the greatest of all. As a foreign citizen myself, but established and living long enough in this country to call it home, I must admit that I am still trying to discern the meaning of the *American Ideal* –the possibility to separate the domestic life from the external world-, and the contradiction that holds it together -why so many people have been and still are willing to risk so much to become an American, and why so many people have been and still are willing to risk so much to prevent it from others-. I can only guess that that is possible only because, normally, the personal and the historical do not intersect; like in Facebook. But I wonder what would happen if they did. Like in what holds Facebook together, a marketplace fueled by insecurity, where the separation of the personal from the historical can no longer be assumed. So when I ask, who would want or need to be that vulnerable? It is not a mundane question. I am actually wondering whether there is any viable alternative to a worldview that prioritizes domestication of others as the best way to achieve freedom and security.

During months past I have been engaged in understanding from an ethical perspective what is understood when we talk about curriculum. A concern sublimely weaved by words which must be un-weaved by meaning, also weaved by words. A

concern that, for that reason, calls for an exploration of the limits of our own language and the honest examination of what remains unsaid or one dismisses because one chooses not to say or may not bear to know. Oddly enough, it just happens that the times I have mentioned to my colleagues, upon their casual interest about my current academic work, that I was looking at discourses of patriotism, nationalism, violence, terror, and terrorism trying to establish a connection between education, identity, and national security, their polite and very brief acknowledgement was never followed by a question. The eloquence of their silence confirmed the pertinence of my curiosity. After all, the curricular issue at hand is how to chronicle what a thought cannot think. Why is it so unthinkable to work through such concepts when one thinks about curriculum, literacy, and pedagogy when, in fact, national security doctrine is unquestionably and uncritically assumed as grounds for pedagogical action? Here I am following Britzman (1999) in what she calls her “queer pedagogy” as it:

offers education techniques to make sense of and remark upon what it dismisses or cannot bear to know. This theory insists, using psychoanalytic method, that the relationship between knowledge and ignorance is neither oppositional nor binary. Rather they mutually implicate each other, structuring and enforcing particular forms of knowledge and forms of ignorance. In this way ignorance is analyzed as an effect of knowledge, indeed, as its limit, and not as an originary or innocent state. Perhaps the most curious insistence is the study of what hegemonic discourses of normalcy cannot bear to know. (p. 214)

But I look especially to what she calls the study reading practices:

These reading practices point to the fact that there are no innocent, normal, or unmediated readings and that the representations drawn upon to maintain a narrative or a self as normal, as deviant, as thinkable are social effects of how discourses of normalization are lived and refused. Reading practices might well

read all categories as unstable, all experiences as constructed, all reality as having to be imagined, all knowledge as provoking uncertainties, misrecognitions, ignorance, and silences. Then the problem becomes one of thinking through how readings might open the questions of ethical relations. So given this queer theories, identities and the self knowledge that render them unintelligible and suggest more about the social effects of the political than they do about essential selves. (p. 226)

This is an example of how it works. Look at the cultural logic that structures the Military Commissions to trial certain non-citizens in the war against terrorism endorsed by President Obama in October of 2009. Critics say that the 2009 act is an improvement over the 2006 version of military-commissions regime passed during the Bush administration. But Warren Ritchie (2009) from The Christian Science Monitor documents those same critics saying that “it is still substandard, offering a second-class system of justice designed to obtain quick convictions.” A comparison of the texts from 2006 and 2009 cannot but lead you to that conclusion. Ironically, it was but fourteen years ago that the United States roundly condemned the conviction by a military commission in Peru of New York native Lori Berenson on charges of terrorism. Through official channels and great media coverage it was demanded that she be retried in a civilian court because of the lack of due process afforded in the commission. The cries of unfairness were echoed by United Nations officials who openly criticized Peru’s anti-terrorism military courts. To me there seems to be little difference in the measure of due process afforded to Berenson in Peru and what is called for under the current circumstances. Something is not in-sync, but pretends. Notice though that what may be considered by some as political in consequence is not really the issue here, but the irony of those military commissions moving in the opposite direction for which they were

intended, confirming an inveterate urge to remit everything back into the safe quarters of preferred, predefined boundaries and identities. The Obama administration has committed to closing the prison at Guantánamo, but the already overdue closure will be devoid of meaning if the administration leaves in place the policy that the prison has come to represent. This is the kind of disconnect between signifier and signified that an educated citizenry should be able to identify, morally challenge, and democratically quell. I do not pretend here to do an exhaustive comparative analysis of polities, politics or policies. But despite the differences in the scope and magnitude of the violent affairs and the level of democratic development between Peru and the U.S., the grounds for legality and legitimacy of the outcomes of the war against terrorism in both countries are common and should be subject to the same standard. Nevertheless, it must be admitted, the notion of war on terror has rendered ineffectual the categories and routines that education traditionally offers. So gathering and mulling over such a notion is not only an open invitation to the pedagogical experience of thinking ethically about what discourses of patriotism, nationalism, violence, terror, and terrorism mean in the classroom, but an example of venues to think critically through ideological structures that like, for example, the National Security Strategy, use coercion in service of individual self assertion. There, I argue, no one is safe because the very construct of security, in its paranoid quest for certainty, prescribes normalizing identities, tells you who you are, and ascribes undesired meanings to any expression of dissonance which, like in a symbolic metastasis, might generate an uncontrollable growth of meaning. So security, I propose, is not to be understood only as a conceptual framework that regulates a cold operating procedure to

situate a particular issue, considered a threat, in the security agenda in order to respond with emergency measures; it is basically a powerful political meaning positioning system where a particular issue may trigger protected deviance behavior from the state.

CHAPTER VI

SECURITY AS A CONSTRUCT

The undeniably acute danger on international terrorism cannot be combated effectively with the classical instruments of war between states nor, consequently, by the military superiority of a unilaterally acting superpower. Jürgen Habermas (2006) in *The Divided West*, has already said some of what President Obama (2009) indicated only a few weeks ago, in the aftermath of the failed terrorist attack on Christmas Day: that only the effective coordination of intelligence services, police forces, and criminal justice procedures will strike at the logistics of the adversary. What he did not say was that “only the combination of social modernization with self-critical dialogue between cultures will reach the roots of terrorism.” (p. 184) Self-critical dialogue does not match self-assertive coercion. Here is Habermas (2006) a call for transformative education: “Citizens of a democratic political community sooner or later become aware of cognitive dissonances if universalistic claims cannot be squared with the particularistic character of the obvious driving interests” (p. 185).

Breaking the Spell

In a response to McLaren (2007), who strongly argues that “critical educators need to consider citizenship outside of a narrowly nationalist sense in a manner that situates them in a larger practice of global citizenship and solidarity” (p. 86); I have

engaged myself in a pedagogical reflection that encompasses a modest but honest effort to contribute to an alternative frame of counterbalance hegemonic meaning. In particular, making reference to the involvement of the state in the construction of what Appiah (2007) calls an ethical self, and to the fashion in which the bulk of the population is socially integrated and riveted into what Bauman (1995) calls the process of systemic reproduction. These social issues are important not only because they affect our personal projects, but mainly because they determine their nature and bear upon our dignity as individuals. But my pursue has been less universal and, perhaps, a little more pragmatic: in the light of threat inflation and under heightened national security alerts, I have moved critically through the marketplace of ideas to specifically inquire how much in fact the state intervenes in the pedagogical process of interpretation through which each of us is supposed to build an identity. Unsurprisingly, I have found that the concept of national security plays an important role in this formative process. Like a prism designed to protect the State in conflictive scenarios, it not only uses but models coercion in service of self assertion. The analysis displayed to verify this claim has been, though, rather unconventional. I have used biographical and autobiographical reflection, narrative inquiry, literary analysis, aesthetic deliberation, and contextual understanding as a way to avoid the classic dichotomies of modern political examination. In a traditional approach language would have been, for the most part, irrelevant to study of this concept. Material practices like recruitment techniques, troop deployments, or missile strikes launched from drones; and material realities like weapon stockpiles, surveillance satellites, and non-combatant detainees are the frame and fabric of security. But analytically, this meager

framework, dominant since last century's Cold War, ignores other important sources of meaning and forms of security representation and intervention.

At West Point, last December, though, President Obama (2009) *spoke security* in a different tone. As he announced the end of the war in Iraq and the deployment of an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan -which, he made clear, will begin to return after 18 months, once the transition of responsibilities to Afghan authorities has started-; he actually changed the official mood and, drawing from a pragmatic reading of President Eisenhower's doctrine, said that National Security policy must be weighted in the light of a broader context: the need to maintain balance in and among national programs:

Over the past several years, we have lost that balance. We've failed to appreciate the connection between our national security and our economy. In the wake of an economic crisis, too many of our neighbors and friends are out of work and struggle to pay bills. Too many Americans are worried about the future facing our children. Meanwhile, competition within the global economy has grown more fierce. So we can't simply afford to ignore the price of these wars. (p. 6)

This retreat, then, is not as much a strategic move in search of security as it is a strategic move in search of identity, at least a more legitimate one in a growingly contesting international scenario; a sort of American *glasnost*. To combat our "diffuse enemies," he said, "It is necessary to improve and better coordinate intelligence efforts, so that we stay one step ahead of shadowy networks." But most importantly, as he sprinted in impeccable style to close his speech, summoning the images and stirring the emotions that September 11 still generates, he sealed it with a commitment to forge an America that is *safer*, not secure. I did not repair in the ironic detail until I read the transcript provided online by the White House (2009) the following day. I say ironic

because despite his Nobel Peace Prize remarks in Oslo on December 11, reminding the world of his ambivalence about the use of force and his “right makes might” adaphoretic philosophy, a 24 year old, highly educated, affluent, and radicalized Nigerian Muslim, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, managed to make the headlines in the entire globe for a very serious and potentially deadly security breach on Christmas Day, helping, unexpectedly, to put national security system under scrutiny and to generate a certain space for a different perspective to settle. Habermas (2006) had already shared his views:

The sanctioning of states whose governments provide a haven for, or actively support, the new international terror requires neither the erosion of the narrowly defined right of self-defense nor the suspension of key provisions of the Geneva Convention. Nor does effectively combating the new terror at the domestic level call for restrictions on basic rights that amount virtually to their destruction. Of course, this specter could vanish with a change in administration in the United States. Nevertheless, the image of a superpower that uses its military, technological, and economic superiority to create a global order in accordance with its own religiously colored notions of good and evil and its geostrategic goals suggest a heuristically useful alternative, namely, one between a progressive constitutionalization of international law and its substitution by the liberal ethics of a superpower. (p. 148)

Coincidentally, in this alternative line of thought is, amongst others, Matt McDonald (2007) who in *The Copenhagen School and the Construction of Security* had already lined up against the traditional understanding of security and in favor of the consideration of other discourses such as:

(...) the role of audiences and the inter-subjective dynamic of security negotiation; the often incremental processes through which the referent object and threats are positioned as such over time; the role of non-elite and non-institutional voices in the construction of security (...). (p.294)

Concurring with him, I have ventured myself in a sustained, broader, and non linear understanding of the process itself to try to describe what kind of personal identities a traditional frame of national security actually generates. In the process of getting a firmer grip of the circumstances of the other, I have confirmed otherness as an important source of entropy. Many questions, which I think are valid questions, have come to the fore. How do issues become security issues? How do they become threats? How do some junctures between security and threat come to resonate more than others? How do we know when they do? Further more, I have also wondered if meaning plays any significant role in the formula. And if so, what are the processes in virtue of which some actors are empowered to predicate security? How is the other described in security discourses? Who plays the role of the oracle? What are the alternative perceptions and articulations of security? And finally, are these voices legitimate? Of course I do not pretend to give a response to all these questions here. They point a future course for further research. But you can certainly see these questions as a warp that can make more intelligible the life responses given to them by the individuals portrayed in this writing. If any, their unhinging goal is to break Illich's (2002) spell in order to build a new cosmos. So as I finish putting this collage together, I cannot but honor the uniqueness of their voices still trying to make sense even out of their own contexts.

Blueprint Identities

Allen G. Breed and Kevin Maurer (2008) staff writers from Associated Press followed up on Joseph Patrick Dwyer's story and recorded more details about his ordeal,

like his aspirations to become a police officer upon discharge and his fear that a PTSD record would prevent him from further professional development. They also informed of a letter to post Commander Maj. Gen. Robert Lennox, by Dionne Knapp, a former comrade and friend of the Dwyers, expressing anger that “Army officials who were proud to display him as a hero” had now turned their back on him. "Joseph Dwyer, who had left to Iraq one of the nicest, kindest, caring, self-sacrificing and patriotic people I have ever known," she wrote, "was forced to witness and commit acts completely contrary to his nature and returned a tormented, confused disillusioned shadow of his former self that was not being given the help he needed." Joseph Patrick Dwyer had been attached to the 3rd Infantry's 7th Cavalry Regiment. He was at "the tip of the tip of the spear," during the push into Baghdad, in one of his officer's phrasing, quoted by the Associated Press. He was in the front line for 91 days only, but for most of the six years that followed he acutely suffered in a private hell the condition of not existing, “shooting at imaginary enemies and dodging roadside bombs,” embodying the contradictions between security and identity. “I'm a soldier," he would say. "I suck it up. That's our job." This is, I believe, a guarded statement, a misleading utterance, and a procedure of resistance to interpretation. His experience was sublime indeed, but in an ironic reversal, sadly, he seemed to be unable to turn away from the horror of being able to comprehend himself. Pretty much like Dominic Matei, the post historic man, who lived in fear, “dreading what awaits in the alleyways.” A virtual collapse of all frames of understanding. A madness. There are many soldiers suffering in silence the effects of a blueprint identity that domesticates their human condition.

Matina Dwyer, on the other end, experienced turmoil and coped with her own circumstances with the powerful ability to redescribe. She remains a private citizen but, indeed, lived her own state of emergency. Matina Dwyer reminds me of Del Toro's (2006) *Mercedes* not only because of their shared sense of responsiveness despite negative circumstances, but because they both had the ability to acknowledge their multiple allegiances and seemed to understand even their own identity, in the way Britzman (1999) understands identity, as a state of emergency:

The new questions that must be addressed concern what education, knowledge, and identity have to do with the fashioning of structures of thinkability and the limits of its thought, with what education has to do with the possibilities of proliferating identifications and critiques that exceed identity yet still hold onto the understanding of identity as a state of emergency. (p. 227)

Ultimately, Matina Dwyer also reminds me of Coppola's (2007) *Ofelia*. None of the three really knew what would happen next, but they kept moving forward, imagining, perhaps, a gild unhinged from the dominant order. Their social intervention was certainly a challenge to a set of traditional responses and to security as a construct.

Ewan Macdougall was born in New York as well. He currently attends the Kennedy School of Government as a Belfer IGA Fellow. The highly prestigious Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs is housed at Harvard University. He attended Yale as an undergraduate where he studied Grand Strategy and gained notoriety thanks to John Lewis Gaddis's (2004) book. He spent his summers, like he said he would, completing Officer Candidate School for the United States Marine Corps and interning as a research assistant at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. He graduated

with a BA in History in 2003, and was immediately commissioned as an officer in the United States Marine Corps. One year before graduation Macdougall (2002) shared his mixed emotions when it came to figure out who he was for the Yale Daily News:

On this anniversary of Sept. 11, I find myself pondering with renewed intensity the three-way conflict that has plagued me for the past year: how to reconcile my background as a New Yorker, with my education at Yale that challenges me to seek universal truths, with my training in an institution that demands decisions, that by definition must take sides, and that then requires unflinching commitment to its cause -- the United States Marine Corps. (...)

I concluded that, despite some flaws, I love America. I found great comfort in my affiliation with the Marine Corps. Rather than lament Sept. 11, the Marines took action. There is simply no higher calling, because without institutions like the Marine Corps, there can be none of the other high callings that are open to us as Americans, and especially to us as Yalies. This remains true to this day, a year later, with al Qaeda fairly well debilitated, for the question raised by Sept. 11 lingers on: can we Americans be fully Americans, and we Yalies be fully Yalies - with the implied high standards of living, freedom, and equality and with the definitional degree of economic, educational, and career opportunity -- if we still live in fear? Franklin Delano Roosevelt thought not, and it is the job of all of us and especially, I am proud to say, of the Marines, to be increasingly vigilant and press on in the war on terror.

Macdougall served as an infantry officer for five years, deploying three times with 1st Battalion, 5th Marines. According to the Belfer Center (2010), his assignments included platoon commander in Ramadi, Iraq; officer of the guard at the Government Center in al-Anbar; training Filipino Marines; a friendship building exercise with the Chinese; and setting up medical, dental, security training in the Maldives. After a tour as an executive officer, he was promoted to captain and then left the service to attend graduate school. Macdougall, according to the same source, spent the summer of 2009 in Afghanistan embedded with the Kapisa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), in the

north-east of the country, and the 1st Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (MEB), researching the relationship between development and security in a counterinsurgent environment and the structure and functioning of the provincial reconstruction team model. According to Peter Jakobsen (2005) a PRT is a unit originally introduced by the U.S. government consisting of military officers, diplomats, and reconstruction subject matter experts, working to support reconstruction efforts in unstable states. The overall PRT-idea in Afghanistan was, and is, according to Robert Perito (2005) to use relatively small joint civil-military units to achieve three objectives. These PRT-objectives are to improve security, to extend the authority of the Afghan central government, and finally to facilitate reconstruction. The 1st MEB website declares that its mission is to conduct “mobility, protection, and stability or civil support operations in an assigned area of responsibility to preserve freedom of action of the supported force.

Warren Zinn, a 1998 graduate of the University of Michigan, interned as a photographer with The Michigan Daily, the Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel, and the Miami Herald. After college, he became a photographer with Army Times Publishing Co. While employed at Army Times, Zinn covered events all over the world, from uncovering stories about trafficked sex slaves in South Korea to being one of the few people who was at both the Pentagon and the World Trade Center on Sept. 11. He then completed two trips to Afghanistan spending more than 100 days with the troops on the front lines along with the 3rd Infantry. He had already left photojournalism and war behind for four and a half years when Joseph Patrick Dwyer died. He admits that war had taken its toll on his family, his friends, and on him. “I couldn't find it in me to go back to Iraq and risk my

life again. That's the difference between me and soldiers like Joseph Dwyer: I had the privilege of calling it quits whenever I wanted to. The men and women of the Armed Forces don't have that luxury." Zinn became a student and was struggling with Contract Law, according to his own account, at The University of Miami, School of Law, Florida when he received the news. In an article published by The Washington Post, Warren Zinn (2008) tells that, as soon as he heard about Joseph Dwyer's death, "I drove home in a daze and walked into my apartment. And there was Joseph, on the wall, looking at me." He explains that for years he had proudly displayed the front page of *USA Today* featuring his photo. "It was a tremendous accomplishment for me; I was only 25 when I took it." But, he also says that, as he continued to stare at this image on the wall, he couldn't dodge the question:

"Did this photo have anything to do with his death? News reports said he hated the celebrity that came with the picture. How much, I wondered, did that moment -- just 1/250th of a second when three lives intersected on a river bank in Iraq -- contributed to the burdens he'd brought home with him? If I'd never taken his picture, would he have ended up as he did? Would he still have been a casualty of war?"

In this second recollection for the media he remembers thinking, "I hope this is in focus, I hope the exposure is right, God, Warren, don't mess this one up." I thought "this was a moment that the world needed to see -- a moment of American heroism, of American commitment to saving a people and to saving lives." (2008) continues telling:

"The last message Joseph sent me was on Dec. 1, 2004." "When I first got back I didn't really want to talk about being over there to anyone," he wrote. "Now looking back on it, it's one of the greatest things I've ever done. I hope you feel the same about what you have done. I truly believe you played an important role

in this war. You told everyone's story."

To which Zinn (2008) responded with two important questions: "What happened to him after he wrote that? And did I do what he said?" He concludes his story saying: "Had I never captured that image of Joseph, it's likely that very few people would have paid any attention to this one soldier's death." And then, he shared his philosophical take:

Photographers like to say that when they place the camera to their eye, it acts as both a physical and mental barrier to what's going on around them -- that somehow the camera can be a shield between you and the awful scenes taking place in front of you. The fatal flaw in that thinking is that the shield has a hole in it right where your eye goes; nor does the camera block smells and sounds, which *are* rampant on the battlefield. So although it may be easy to say that you're just a fly on the wall, not a participant, the truth is that journalists are participants, in their own way. I've never struggled to the degree that Joseph and Ali did, but there are small things that affect me every once in a while. Certain sounds will get to me. Fireworks, for instance, make me jump. Don't know that the photograph of Joseph was the best one I ever took, or my favorite, but I think it represented something important. At the time, it represented hope. Hope that what we were doing as a nation in Iraq was the right thing. Hope that our soldiers were helping people. Hope that soldiers such as Joseph cared more about human life than anything else. But now when I look at the picture, it doesn't feel hopeful. It makes me realize that so many soldiers are physically torn and in such mental anguish that for some of them, hope has turned to hopelessness. That, I have to believe, is what happened to Joseph Dwyer, who was haunted by the ghosts of what he'd seen in Iraq, by fears he had lived with for too long. He could never leave the battlefield behind.

Adiaphorization

Howard Zinn (2007) highlights a historical juncture when, during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, the New York Times gave its readers miniature portraits of the human beings known to have died on September 11, 2001. Their names, photos, glimpses of their personalities and idiosyncrasies became vignettes that documented what at that moment was still unthinkable. Zinn (2007) describes how he

was deeply moved reading those very intimate sketches and wondered whether those who celebrated the symbolism of this horrendous act would have second thoughts if they could see the faces and read the foreshorten stories of those who lost their lives. Then it occurred to him:

What if all those Americans who declare their support for the U.S. 'war on terror' could see, instead of those elusive symbols –Sheikh Mullah Mohammed Omar, Osama Bin Laden, al-Qaeda—the real human beings who are being killed by our bombs? I do believe they would have second thoughts. (...) Often these are children, victims of unexploded land mines, or cluster bombs. But the American people are not told these stories; we are kept ignorant of what the 'war on terror' means in human terms. (p.78)

Discourses about “collateral damage” which is a euphemism originated during the Vietnam War and other recent nuances like “unmanned aerial vehicles”, “corporate warriors”, “non-combatant detainees”, and “man-caused disasters” contribute to quicken and thicken, I believe, Bauman’s (1995) pervasive notion of adiaphorization magnificently captured by The Washington Post on July 30, 2006:

The truth is, it wasn't all I thought it was cracked up to be. I mean, I thought killing somebody would be this life-changing experience. And then I did it, and I was like, 'All right, whatever'... "I shot a guy who wouldn't stop when we were out at a traffic checkpoint and it was like nothing," he went on. "Over here, killing people is like squashing an ant. I mean, you kill somebody and it's like 'All right, let's go get some pizza.'" (p. B1)

This is 21-year-old school-drop-out Private Steven Dale Green from Texas, deployed with the 101st Airborne Division talking to Andrew Tilghman (2006) embedded reporter in Iraq for The Washington Post. At that time, he said, “the soldier's matter-of-fact manner struck me chiefly as a rare example of honesty.” Tilghman had been on a

nine-month assignment spending much of his time with soldiers like him -- mostly young and immature “who sign up for a job as killers, lured by some gut-level desire for excitement and adventure.” Dark sense of humor was common, he found. “They were clearly desensitized to death,” was his final assertion. He thought Green was just one of the exceptions who wasn’t afraid to say what he really thought. But the next time he saw him, it was in a front-page newspaper photograph five months later; he was standing outside a federal courthouse in North Carolina, where he had pled not guilty to charges of premeditated rape and murder. The brutal killing of the 14-year-old Iraqi girl, Abeer Qassim Hamza, and her family in Mahmudiyah, of which he was accused, had taken place just three weeks after they talked. He was trying to cover it up as an operation that went wrong. Even though he was found guilty on 16 counts by Federal Court in Kentucky, eight of them carrying death penalty, he was sentenced to life in prison without possibility of parole in September of 2009. Four other soldiers involved in this gang-type crime received similar sentences. But the description that Green offered and Tilghman recorded of his daily duties will not only remain as a monument to reckless disregard for human life, but as a symbol of the lethality of enthroning procedural discipline as the all-overriding criterion of moral performance.

Peter Singer (2009) in *Wired for War* interestingly describes but from a different perspective, how the robotic revolution is changing war and warriors, and challenging traditional concepts that do not find a referent in the way conflicts tend to be handled in the 21st century, creating a wider gap between signifiers and signified. There is a clear

tone of nostalgia in his writing, though, but he is right in his core analysis as he narrows it down to the unmanned aerial vehicles:

By removing warriors completely from the risk and fear, unmanned systems create the first complete break in the ancient connection that defines warriors and their soldierly values. If you are sitting at a computer's controls, with no real danger other than carpal tunnel syndrome, your experience of war is not merely distanced from risk, as with previous technologies, but now fully disconnected from it. And thus, these new warriors are disconnected from the old meaning of courage as well. As one described his experience in the Iraq war, fought from a cubicle in Qatar, "it's like a video game. It can get a little bloodthirsty. But it's fucking cool." (p. 332)

What is prominent in Singer (2009) is that he establishes an accurate parallelism between modern industry and modern war. The former went from fields to factory floors to cubicles; the latter has gone from the battle space to the office space. "For a new generation going to war doesn't mean shipping off to some dank foxhole in a foreign land to dodge bullets. Instead, it is a daily commute in your Toyota Camry to sit behind a computer screen and drag a mouse." (p. 329) But the gap between signifiers and signified had already been there for a while. Bauman (1995) described it as "covering up the link between partial action and the ultimate effect of coordinated moves." Singer (2009) seems to be more concerned with a "virtueless war." My concern is war and how those sensor operators are so easily excluded from the realm of moral subjects. Britzman's (2006) appeal to understand our acts beyond our own consciousness and even in contradiction with it, and Rorty's (1989) call for the expansion of our sense of solidarity through the closer description of the other are, I believe, necessary pedagogical and moral endeavors to both get rid of assumptions, those long-standing but unexamined habits of

thought that either keep us prisoners of our naïveté or grant our complicity with immoral situations, and outdated and dangerous ways of seeing the world.

Multiple Allegiances

Finally, my writing is a proposal to go through the pedagogical experience of seeing the study of security as the study of the designation of threat. It is precisely from this point of view that McDonald (2007) explains that an issue becomes a security issue precisely when it is positioned as a threat to a particular political community. What is interesting in this particular study of threat is that it is based in the idea that security is traditionally constituted in oppositional terms: by designating that which it is not or that from which it needs preservation or protection. That is, who we are would be basically determined by the designation of a threatening other. The designation of an issue as a threat, then, justifies the use of extraordinary measures to handle the other. Since the invocation of security is the key to legitimizing the use of force, I have been trying to visualize like in a sequence of frames precisely how is it that the interpretive responses that constitute our identities are affected. Here, the importance of contextual factors -from traditional geopolitical ones to dominant narratives of history and culture- are prominent. These factors, McDougal (2007) insists, and I agree, should be viewed as central to a broader construction of security. “The discourses of security and threat emerge out of an inter-subjective process that involves both speakers and audiences,” even (or especially) when such interactions are profoundly shaped by existing power relations.

Amin Maaluf (2000) has a particularly interesting perspective that I want to invite because it could very well contribute to a deeper understanding of threat and because it broadly resonates with the concepts of solidarity in Rorty (1989) and adiaphorization in Bauman (1995). In his book *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, Maaluf makes an emphatic and empathetic effort to press on our collective consciousness and redescribe “why so many people commit crimes nowadays in the name of religious, ethnic, national, or some other kind of identity,” and to understand how what he calls “identities that kill” are made and sustained. Murderous identities are born of humiliation, he says. Consequently, if we want to address the problem of ethnically or religiously motivated violence, for example, we must work to counter the conditions under which people are humiliated or denigrated for being part of some ethnic or religious national group. But the same principle can be applied to all kinds of identities. For Maaluf (2000), the key condition that makes it possible for some to humiliate others is a failure to understand the true nature of identity. Identity, he reminds us, is neither monolithic nor static, “it is built up and changes throughout a person’s lifetime.” As such, he explains, it is a shifting composite of a greater number of different, often conflicting, allegiances and attachments, including one’s allegiances to one’s family, neighborhood, village, and country, to one’s religious, ethnic, linguistic, and racial group, to one’s profession, favorite soccer team, or political movement.

These constitutive allegiances are what Maaluf (2000) calls “genes of the soul” but he hurries to make sure that we understand that they are not innate and reiterates that “we are not born but made in relation to the world in which we live and the choices that it

presents to us.” The greatest appeal and contribution of his book comes as a warning, though. He says that the failure to recognize the fluidity, multiplicity, and malleability of identity is not only misleading but also dangerous. He explains, dramatically, that the danger is twofold. First, a failure to recognize the complexity, the multi-dimensionality of the Other makes their dehumanization easier. Second, imposing on the Other a rigid, singular (and usually inferior) identity will provoke them, in anger and defiance, to pick up arms to “assert their identity.” In view of Maaluf’s (2000) idea of multiple allegiances, McLaren’s (2007) appeal to practice global citizenship and solidarity acquires now a powerful contrastive sense to the war on terror but keeps its sense of urgency, and the in-seam of Education as part of a complex mechanism to secure global ideological transfer becomes the opposite, an urgent reason to unlearn collective prejudices and create pedagogical dissonance around dominant state-based narratives of security.

Consequently, if we wanted, we could learn a lot more about the construction of security through studying the issues that are represented as existential threats. That is, representations of threat can be seen as representations of security and representations of identity as well, but most importantly, as constitutive of security and identity. For the predicate of that from which we need to be protected is critical in telling us who we are, what we value, and what we are prepared to invest and warrant protecting our self-preferred identities, there is little room for understanding how difference or otherness can ever be negotiated in non-threatening terms. This is a very challenging pedagogical experience. In this alternative frame of understanding, then, what would it mean when someone, in one way or another, tells you *Sabemos quién eres?* Well, first of all, it would

be a wicked assault on your dignity, an upright hypostatization; the unbearable reduction of your humanity to an object that is bereft of your personal qualities and your individuality, the picture of a picture taken out of context. Second, it would be the creation of a fallacy, a fallacy of misplaced concreteness; a mirror that pretends to be one step ahead of reality. And finally, it would be a shivery effort to annotate a complex set of phenomena as if it were a single, simple entity; a labyrinth without its Faun. I can share now that I cannot tell who *spoke* to me nor can I attest from what side of the spectrum. That is not the matter that matters. It will always be the memory of a fearful and lurid moment, because for all I know, it could have been either.

Moments of Vision

When I started writing this dissertation I looked upon this theme as a real challenge not only because I thought it was relevant to the present juncture but because it is crucial to do it critically. My critical perspective, in itself, presupposes an intimate connection with the theme in the sense that it implicates memory and, at the same time, a deep sense of hope. This dissertation, then, responds to the challenge by becoming yet another challenge for whoever reads it. Fred once told me that “the reach of your hand is always beyond your grasp.” Herzog the theologian explains it this way:

The mystery of God-walk is not the final consummation of all things beyond history. The mystery is the presence of God-walk in history. It is the presence of the coming God, appropriated as liberation from sin and all the powers of evil, and the prevailing of our life over death. The gospel is not just pie in the sky –the offer of something in the distant future. It is history reshaped. (p. 195)

My critical position, which is a pedagogical position, has led me through an act of knowing. You may agree or not with what I wrote, but in order to do one or the other, you must join the process as a knowing subject as well. Knowledge is not something done and finished and, I believe, consciousness is rather an aim. Whether critics like it or not, Slattery (1995) strongly argues that:

Society has become a global plurality of competing subcultures and movements where no one ideology and episteme (understanding of knowledge) dominates. There is no cultural consensus, and –cultural literacy programs notwithstanding– there is no curriculum development consensus either. Even if the fragmentation of culture and education into many subcultures has been exaggerated, the shift to a postmodern worldview is evident. (p. 17)

We know that the language of education has been co-opted by managers and strategists, and Education is being redescribed in ways unimagined that foreclose the creation of dynamic spaces for creative interaction of the rational and the affective as means of critical reflection without challenge by educators. In this sense, this is an effort to counterbalance a discourse that manipulates the marketplace of ideas and counts on our uncritical view to keep going. Schools of Education seem to be committed to functional literacy only and show more concern with the sophistication of measuring procedures disguised as accountability, than with the realities they pretend to measure. There is an abdication of possibility in service of selfish agendas. I think Schools of Education ought to be much more than that. They should be unhinging sites ready to create dissonance; be understood as sites of struggle to stir the sedimentation of democratic values, be assumed as hermeneutical crossroads ready collapse frames and unveil the expressions of a surrounding culture of fear, and be undertaken as generators

of ironic reversal that enable a pedagogical cope with the challenges of the time. Three words are of utmost importance for that endeavor: hope, memory and, above all, critical sense. In the same way the Department of Homeland Security is the institutionalization of fear; our Schools of Education should be the institutionalization of solidarity, understood as the ability to see more and more traditional differences as unimportant when compared with similarities generated by our shared vulnerability to pain and suffering. Like the vignettes of life that we theologially read, they should allow the fluid navigation through the interstices of our minds and souls in search of portals and mirrors to connect with alternative meanings.

On our end, Educators should not be, by any means, seduced by power or official approval. Kincheloe (1993) and Slattery (1995) remind us that

Post-formal thinking about thinking draws upon the boundary trespasses of Hermes and the playful parody of postmodernism to transgress the official constraints of our consciousness construction, to transcend modern convention by exposing its ironic contradictions.”

We should embody the ability of wide listening and wide reading so the other can become more familiar, keeping focus in the underlying phenomenology of what is considered historically relevant. We should trust the worthiness of aesthetic deliberation and feelings as ideas, keeping empathy as an important source of knowledge speaking to possibility. We should embody moments of vision and embed visionary possibilities in our lessons. Let's not take peace lightly, let's rather be lighthearted about it.

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