

# Critical Education

Volume 7 Number 8 June 15, 2016 ISSN 1920-4125

## *Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy Staking a Claim Against the Macrostructural Unconscious*

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Citation: McLaren, P. (2016). Revolutionary critical pedagogy: Staking a claim against the macrostructural unconscious. *Critical Education*, 7(8). Retrieved from <http://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/criticaled/article/view/186144>

### **Abstract**

*Critical pedagogy currently exists today as precariously as a shabby lean-to room added to a typical American hall-and-parlor house. I am referring to the type of house that formed the basic English prototype for the classic American building we see everywhere in New England and on the East Coast. If the hall-and-parlor house represents education in the main, then we critical educators are as rare as hen's teeth, shunted to the rear of the house, squatters huddled under a slanted roof, wearing fingerless gloves, clutching our tin cups of broth, spearing biscuits and dreaming of the day when we will become an official part of the architecture of democracy.*



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Critical pedagogy currently exists today as precariously as a shabby lean-to room added to a typical American hall-and-parlor house. I'm referring to the type of house that formed the basic English prototype for the classic American building we see everywhere in New England and on the East Coast. If the hall-and-parlor house represents education in the main, then we critical educators are as rare as hen's teeth, shunted to the rear of the house, squatters huddled under a slanted roof, wearing fingerless gloves, clutching our tin cups of broth, spearing biscuits and dreaming of the day when we will become an official part of the architecture of democracy.

Those of us who practice revolutionary critical pedagogy, who comprise the night shift of critical pedagogy, are more marginalized still. Our push for democracy in U.S. schools is drowned out by the clamour of the parlors and chambers being enlarged above to make room for more policies such as No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top or even the current Common Core. Charter schools, while making up only a fraction of the overall schools in the country, are more accepted into the floor plan than are public schools in communities struggling with unemployment and urban infrastructure damage. And what happens when students exit those floor plans and enter into the university system? Here students enter a more ominous structure because they are given the appearance of having some autonomy over the process of their learning, of having some control of the production of knowledge and the formation of their own political subjectivity. Yet here, alas, wisps of consumer whimsy disguised as truth trickle out of the smokestacks of knowledge production; intellectual chloroform wafts from corporate furnaces towering over the entire system, anesthetizing young brains and putting dreams into deep sleep.

Life since Year Zero of the Capitalocene to the advent of technoecosystems and their toxic and eutrophicating chemicals has not been a pleasant ride. Soon we will be fracking the noosphere of human thought in our lecture halls, making Freire's critique of banking education seem utterly tame. Teachers' work will be routinized and rationalized to that of stoop labourers (as Henry Giroux would put it) weeding celery fields. As far as job satisfaction goes within our inherited system of reactionary meritocracy, a Walmart cashier or a Best Buy clerk would feel more fulfilled. As any awake teacher is aware, we live at a time of intensified race and class warfare in U.S. society. The crisis is epidemic and readily visible in our schools. As each generation tries to move forward on the path to liberation, we are held back, ensepulchered in the vault of hubris like insects frozen in amber, while the trees are filled with green whispers of perturbation.

The world is being transformed into a single mode of production and a single global system and bringing about the integration of different countries and regions into a new global economy and society (Robinson, 2004, 2014, 2016). As William I. Robinson notes, the revolution in computer and information technology and other technological advances has helped emergent transnational capital to achieve major gains in productivity and to restructure, "flexibilize," and shed labor worldwide. This, in turn has undercut wages and the social wage and facilitated a transfer of income to capital and to high consumption sectors around the world that provided new globalized flexible market segments fuelling growth. A new capital-labor relation emerged that was based on the deregulation, informalization, deunionization and the subordination of labor worldwide. More and more workers have swelled the ranks of the "precariat" – a proletariat existing in permanently precarious conditions of instability and uncertainty. In saying this, we need to recognize that capitalist-produced social control over the working-class remains in the hands of a single powerful state—what Robinson (2004, 2014,

2016) calls the core institution of the transnational state that serves the interests of the transnationalist capitalist class. This transnational capitalist class (TCC), according to Robinson, constitutes a polyarchy of hegemonic elites which trade and capital have brought into increasingly interconnected relationships and who operate objectively as a class both spatially and politically within the global corporate structure. This corporate structure has congealed around the expansion of transnational capital owned by the world bourgeoisie. Robinson here is referring to transnational alliances of owners of the global corporations and private financial institutions that control the worldwide means of production and manage--through the consolidation of the transnational corporate-policy networks--global rather than national circuits of production. Robinson describes these groups as operating in clusters scattered throughout the globe, clusters that cohere and increasingly concentrate their wealth through mergers and acquisitions. This transnational capitalist class struggles for control over strategic issues of class rule and how to achieve regulatory order within the global capitalist historic bloc. According to Robinson, there are clear empirical indicators that transnational capital is integrating itself throughout the globe and some of these include the spread of TNCs, the sharp increase in foreign direct investment, the proliferation of mergers and acquisitions across national borders, the rise of a global financial system, and the increased interlocking of positions within the global corporate structure. Robinson essentially argues that capitalism is now participating in a global epochal shift in which all human activity is transformed into capital. All social relationships are becoming privatized as part of the global circulation of capital.

Robinson (2016) has described in compelling detail the acute crisis surrounding the structural destabilization of capitalist globalization as a result of capital over-accumulation and runaway transnational capital. This has contributed fundamentally to a system of what he describes as “sadistic capitalism” that has created a “new social global apartheid” as well as pushed us to the ecological limits of capitalist reproduction. Robinson reports that in the wake of the 2008 financial collapse, the G-8 and G-20 were unable to impose transnational regulation of the global financial system that had broken free from the constraints posed by the nation-state. This was to remain the case despite increasingly desperate attempts to regulate the market in the wake of the crisis.

Earlier structural crises of world capitalism were nothing like the systemic crisis that we are witnessing today. Robinson notes that the level of global social polarization and inequality today is unprecedented as we face out-of-control, over-accumulated capital. He points out that among the upper echelons of the global power bloc, the richest 20 percent of humanity owns approximately 95 percent of the world’s wealth. The bottom 80 percent owns approximately 5 percent. This differentiating wealth or inequality not only exists between rich and poor countries but also increasingly exists within each country. All over the globe we are witnessing “the rise of new affluent high-consumption sectors alongside the downward mobility, ‘precariatization,’ destabilization and expulsion of majorities” (Robinson, 2016). Robinson (2016) warns about the alienation of a vast surplus population inhabiting a “planet of slums” (approximately a third of the world’s population) who are unable to participate in the productive economy. He describes these new members of the vulnerable and exploitable “precariat” as “the proletariat that faces capital under today’s unstable and precarious labor relations—informalization, casualization, part-time, temp, immigrant and contract labor.”

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Never before, notes Robinson (2016), has there existed such escalating worldwide inequalities monitored by a “panoptical surveillance society” holding such an obscene control over the means of global communications and the production and circulation of knowledge. He uses the metaphor of the “green zone” in central Baghdad to illustrate how the transnational ruling class has “green-zoned” the world by means of gentrification, gated communities, surveillance systems, and state and private violence. He writes that within “the world’s green zones, privileged strata avail themselves of privatized social services, consumption and entertainment” (2016). He illustrates how this group “can work and communicate through internet and satellite sealed off under the protection of armies of soldiers, police and private security forces” (2016). Keeping those outside of society’s green zones under the iron fist of the state is much easier with what Robinson (2016) calls the exercise of “militainment.” This refers to “portraying and even glamorizing war and violence as entertaining spectacles through Hollywood films and television police shows” a form of entertainment that Robinson (2016) argues may constitute the “epitome of sadistic capitalism”.

The crisis of capitalism has been especially destructive for America Latina. At present there is little growth among the transnationalist capitalist economies (even China is slowing down) and as a result we are experiencing a deflationary crisis—meaning that there exists a deflated international demand—marked by a drop in world commodity prices (notably oil) that is slowly arching the world towards a depression and along the way increasing social polarization and political crisis. The West is not only resorting to its standard brand of financial parasitism but is now participating in “Fourth Generation military intervention” (integrating the hegemonic center of the West by means of a consolidation of professional and mercenary armed forces, the media and the global financial mafia) in order to turn peripheral societies into what Jorge Beinstein (2016) describes as “pillage zones.” This is what Robinson (2016) refers to “militarized accumulation” which he describes as “making wars of endless destruction and reconstruction and expanding the militarization of social and political institutions so as to continue to generate new opportunities for accumulation in the face of stagnation”. Whereas according to Beinstein, the Keynesian reconversion of the 1940s and 1950s constituted a recomposition of the political-military-economic system, today’s “parasitic mutation of capitalism” reflects a complete degradation of Keynesianism as the guardians of capitalism are turning their sights towards the productive forces themselves which has transformed the old bourgeoisies into central and peripheral lumpenbourgeoisie through financial banditry and outlawry and the restoration of the right-wing. This new “nihilist lumpenbourgeoisie” are now “occupying the positions they had lost and consolidating those they reserved” (Beinstein, 2016), have shed any former illusions of humanism or pretensions towards optimism and are now operating as full-blown charlatans and looters.

The disappearance of favorable international commodity prices has negatively impacted internal expansionist policies as internal markets have dried up in the peripheral countries and the U.S. is now frantically attempting to “reconquer” its own international backyard amidst opportunities brought about by the new “mafia globalism” that is overturning the left-leaning governments of America Latina and also weakening the power of the BRICS (an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). The fresh squeezed progressive movements in America Latina and their spin-off collectives (which shifted uneasily between a stale social neoliberalism to a light Keynesianism) failed to gain sufficient political traction and move beyond structures of capitalist reproduction due, in part, to

reactionary hysteria from the upper and middle classes, and this has helped to consolidate a repressive fascist rightwing that now includes the middle classes (Beinstein, 2016). The economic machinations accompanying the resurgent rightwing is deceptively simple. It's just pure wanton pillage, part of today's take-the-money-and-run capitalism.

Here in the U.S. the mutation of capitalism is as alluringly disturbing as the porcelain doll's face missing an eye and large swaths of hair that you noticed staring at you from the grime splotted window of the local antique shop. We are surrounded by huckstering dogtrot politicians making backroom deals with real world order big wigs while pretending that they're just folks like us when, in fact, there is a slumberous gulf separating them from ordinary wage labourers. These guardians of the transnational state don't even have the diplomacy of an innocent-seemingness. They make no bones about thriving on war and widespread human misery and try to convince us that we all will benefit from their practice-oriented codes of moral outlawry. These mawkish moralizers, these Byzantine meritocrats, these shameless panderers to farmers and blue collar workers, these exploiters of rank-and-file workers, Blacks, Latino/as and other oppressed minorities and indigenous peoples, these oppressors of women, of lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender people and youth, these fear mongers and militant extollers of family and Christian values know very well that by announcing that you are down with the Lord from a mobile bandstand set up in a Chuck E. Cheese, it will allow you to be forgiven in today's political arena of the spectacle even if, years later, you are exposed on America's Most Wanted for having butchered your parents with your Deluxe Wood Burning Kit and thrillingly slurped down their intestines with a root beer float when you were a 12 year-old because they didn't get you a puppy for your birthday. These sybaritic plutocrats, their suitcases brimming with obligatory knowledge and spineless comportment are hauling their vacuous anti-wisdom into the classrooms of our children. The transnational capitalist class, wearing God on their shirtsleeves and dawdling at shop windows full of indulgence, with hardly a craving unsatisfied, their enraptured gaze directed at some new electronic toy, are hurtling us into a future where the tenor of pain and alienation are carefully calculated to intensify with value production.

I could easily have adopted the ideology of this cabal. Why I did not, and at what cost, is perhaps a topic for a future paper. I remember my "Junior Fellow" days at Massey College in Toronto, a site of higher learning patterned after All Souls College, University of Oxford, that reproduced and maintained the cognitive command structures of the Canadian ruling elite. Swaddled in my academic gown (required for all meals) I would drink port at high table dinners (mainly to distract me from the smell of wood polish) with brown-nosed boffins and beanpole and bemused graduates from Upper Canada College who seemed to have been born with a charismatic self-possession and system-loyal élan much like the votaries of capitalism that taught them. These slick-witted harbingers of a capitalist technofuture, this microclass of the Canadian power elite, would captivate us with topsy-turvy and scintillating stories of their champagne-drenched lives that flowed effortlessly from their mirth-filled prime of life, forcing those of us who had shaved their adolescent faces in the porcelain basins of working-class apartments to palisade our dreams behind looming towers of regret. We were certainly no match for those inflated chests sporting velvet vests and perfectly tailored suits cavorting raucously with fellow members of Oxford's Bullingdon Club, or the Piers Gaveston Society, whose years of sumptuous debauchery had fine tuned their systems so that they could accommodate eye-popping amounts of MDMA or cocaine—much more than the lads in our neighborhood could ever boast. No matter, we wouldn't have looked good in tails or straw boaters and alcohol induced vomit is

difficult to clean from hand wire embroidered bullion patch pocket crests. Besides, our Canadian accents would certainly have clashed at Eton, Winchester or Harrow. We didn't even pose pretentiously for pictures on stone staircases in inner courtyards, descend our private parts into the heads of dead pigs in David Cameron fashion, or drink ourselves senseless in pubs where the damage we caused to the surroundings would be paid for in cash. Perhaps life would have been different had there been a Canadian equivalent of The Tudor Room at the Manor or The Bridge in Oxford. Later in life I was fortunate enough to be able to replant my bread crumb memories in new, subversive soil away from the imperialist nostalgia of the Canadian haute bourgeoisie. Out of the rubble of the world-shaking revolution of 1968 had emerged counter-memories that helped some of us to challenge our sabotaged lives and reorganize patterns of political subjectivization and resistance. True, many of these counter-narratives were captured in a sound-byte rebelliousness and expressed in guerrilla-style readymades, but the zeitgeist of revolution was unceasing in its power to illuminate the hierarchies of power and privilege that served to stabilize the social system. Those memories were still there in the 1980s when I needed them. It was this history that helped me to shake off the cigar and brandy days of my 'higher' learning. Today I don't need a barstool nostalgia or acid kickback to dial back the years and remember the counter-narratives that guided my life in 1968. The red bones of my memories suffice and there is enough foot room in my mind to find the right ones. And there is also the raised part of my forehead courtesy of the Metropolitan Police flashlights my skull encountered repeatedly in a jail cell when I was nineteen.

### **The Macrostructural Unconscious**

We have already entered the public imaginary with wildly divergent ontologies, ethics and epistemologies, and we seek to forge communities out of the mindful mischief of the capitalist present, where liberal permissiveness and fundamentalist autocracy have become two sides of the same coin. We recognize our failure fully to disarticulate our political project from liberal moral theory which has contributed to the revolutionary left remaining today at such an earth-shattering standstill. Ours is not a quiet foray into the status quo capitalist state, neither is it a thunderous ingress. While we remain too weak to prevail over the forces of capitalism, we are too strong to submit to them, even as each of our struggles fade as they unfold. Despite impossible odds we are continuing our work, confident in our victory while at the same time realizing that it is not inevitable.

I claim that identifying and surmounting the contradictions between the assertions of ideology and the actual structure of social power, and defending ourselves against both material and socially constructed antagonisms brought about by capitalist social relations constitute the primary challenges that face critical pedagogy today. We are up against the macrostructural unconscious, which can be known, but only partially. The primary function of the structural unconscious is to reconcile reality and ideology at the level of both the everyday and the nation state, and this requires conceptual structures and attendant emotions to help citizens adjust to its genocidal history. These macrostructures are provided by myths of democracy, the charade of meritocracy, rugged individualism, and White supremacy that lie at the heart of U.S. capitalist society. These myths are ritualized throughout the social order in the perpetual pedagogy of the corporate media and in the routines and structures of everyday life (such as national spectacles and school rituals, see McLaren, 1986). They become part of our dream life. They also connect macrosocial and macrostructural arrangements to collective unconscious desires. Here I follow

Dean MacCannell (1984) in arguing that unconscious and macrostructural arrangements function as a conscious form of subjectivity but within a consciousness “that has lost its ability to speak” (1984, p. 34). These macrostructural arrangements occupy the same time-space as the gap between cause and effect and are revealed in dreams, myths, and ideologies and indirect signs. They appear as discontinuous quasi-explanations and rationalizations of politicians, religious leaders, educators and guardians of the empire of capitalism. So that an exhortation such as “to make America great again” by a bumptious politician and a scapegoating of non-White immigrants does not seem to be connected but in effect is one and the same thing. In other words, any attempt “to describe the structure of the unconscious or the unconscious structure of society will be met with resistance in the form of rejection or disbelief even if all evidence is on the side of the description, and if no disconfirming evidence can be found” (1984, p. 34). Following Lacan, MacCannell notes that the unconscious “reveals a gap through which the neuroses recreate a harmony with the real” (1984, p. 43). This unconsciousness, in other words, is not always fully repressed.

One example can be found in the reflex remarks made by billionaire television reality host and U.S. presidential election frontrunner, Donald Trump, whom I would describe as the White Male Capitalist Id that reflects important aspects of the macrostructural unconscious of the United States. In “making America great again”, Trump wants Mexico to build a wall in order to keep their “rapists and murderers” out of the U.S. He wants to ban, at least temporarily, all Muslims from entering the United States. He claims to want to keep businesses from leaving the United States in search of greater profit margins (sans acknowledgement that the only way such businesses can be competitive is to create the same exploitative bottom-line conditions in the U.S. as they have in countries such as Mexico and China).

The transnational capitalist class relies not only on the myriad ways in which political passivity—the idea that one’s destiny is predetermined or unchangeable—pervades and penetrates our educational analyses and interpretations, our concepts, theories and methods but also on the utility of creating passive personality structures among the oppressed themselves. Ignacio Martín-Baró (1994) warns that “psychologizing” political passivity as the cultural and normative breakdown of the marginalized person—as, in other words, a personal syndrome—is merely another form of blaming the victims for their own oppression. In fact, this condition simply “provides the ruling classes with an effective spearhead for defending their class interests” (1994, p. 217).

The problem with concepts such as “the culture of poverty” or “learned helplessness” is that they assume a functional autonomy independent of the overall social system by failing to acknowledge that the capitalist social system cannot meet the needs of vast segments of the population (Martín-Baró, 1994). This fatalism has political utility for the anointed leaders of the transnational capitalist state—which is precisely why it is encouraged and reinforced and why the poor, with few exceptions, are intergenerationally confined to the sloughs of capitalist misery.

Embedded deeply in the macrostructural unconscious is the idea that the only way to change the social situation of an individual is through personal effort on the part of that individual, which often means focusing on the symptoms of oppression without attempting to transform the causes. Martín-Baró argues that we must reject the functionalist vision that “there is harmony and cultural unity among the sectors that make up a society” and that “belonging to a

social system entails embracing a community of values and norms” (1994, p. 213). Clearly, “there are also class-based behavioral patterns...that are stimulated and reinforced differently according to the social class to which one belongs” (1994, p. 213). According to Freire (1971), in the process of ideological colonization, the oppressed are pushed up against a seemingly immovable “limit situation” from which there appears to be no avenue of escape. Martín-Baró warns that “ultimately the root of fatalism lies not in the psychological rigidity of individuals but in the unchangeable character of the social conditions in which people and groups live and are formed” (1994, p. 217). He writes “we cannot propose getting rid of fatalism by either changing the individual or changing his or her social conditions; what has to change is the relationship between the person and his or her world, and that assumes both personal and social change” (1994, pp. 217-218). And such change—and movements for change—are always historically specific. During the revolution against industrial capitalism, Chomsky notes that

Labor activists warned of the new “spirit of the age: gain wealth, forgetting all but self.” In sharp reaction to this demeaning spirit, the rising movements of working people and radical farmers, the most significant democratic popular movements in American history, were dedicated to solidarity and mutual aid—a battle that is far from over, despite setbacks, often violent repression. (2016, p. 74)

Chomsky makes it clear that political fatalism can be overcome by means of collective struggle, and he does this by drawing upon a lineage traceable to the early days of class struggle. According to Martín-Baró (1994), revisiting the historical memory of past struggles is the first element in putting fatalism aside, which for oppressed groups means overcoming the exclusive focus on the present and recovering the memories of their personal and collective past. Uncovering the obstacles to historical memory, as Martín-Baró limns them, is a crucial first step towards cultivating protagonist agency. As Martín-Baró himself puts it:

Only insofar as people and groups become aware of their historical roots, especially those events and conditions which have shaped their situation, can they gain the perspective they need to take the measure of their own identity. Knowing who you are means knowing where you come from and on whom you depend. There is no true self-knowledge that is not an acknowledgement of one’s origins, one’s community identity, and one’s own history. (1994, p. 218)

This is what Fals Borda (1998) refers to as fighting against the obstacles to liberation by discovering one’s collective strength through memory. After all, the Angel of History does not sit still, riding a teleology of historical progress strapped into a rocketship chock a bloc with the latest digital technology, nor does she carry under her wings a vial of embalming fluid. Which is why Karl Marx (1975) addressed in the third of his theses on Feuerbach, the contradiction between the laws of history and the so-called inevitability of socialism. He did this through his notion of revolutionary practice: “the coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice”. We can see his concept of revolutionary practice (which I refer to in my own work as developing a philosophy of praxis) emerging from his dialectical sublation of abstract idealism and sensuous materialism and of determinism and voluntarism. I believe it is our task as educators to make socialist class consciousness possible, as an ideal to which current conditions of austerity must adjust themselves as we work to unify social movements on the left



into a transnational socialist front. A step in this direction can be accomplished through what Martín-Baró (1994, p. 219) refers to as building historical consciousness through popular organizations and class practice.

My concept of the macrostructural unconscious veers away from traditional analytic methods of the physical sciences and has not closed off the question of the causal relationship between mind and brain. My ideas on this topic are not built upon a materialistic determinism since I do not assume that mind is a secondary, independent byproduct of matter or physiological processes. Just as I believe that the sociological concepts of structure and agency interpenetrate and are different manifestations of each other, I do not assume that mind and matter are antiseptically cleaved and constitute some polemical antithesis, as if they were inexorably divergent and irredeemably and diametrically polarized. Here mind is the independent variable and brain is the dependent variable, rather than the other way around. In fact, I believe that the brain more likely filters, shapes and mediates consciousness than actually produces consciousness, but that is a topic for further research.

Such research has already been taken up by Edward F. Kelly and Emily Williams Kelly and is greatly influenced by the work of F.W.H. Myers and his 1903 book entitled *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* (republished in 2005). I am using this work not to develop a fully worked out theory of the macrostructural unconscious but rather as a set of heuristic devices to help us better understand how personalities can be formed by capitalism and trans-formed through an arts-based revolutionary critical pedagogy. What drives my interest is not whether or not consciousness survives physical death (as was the key interest of Myers) but the utility of his theory of the mind for exploring how the macrostructural arrangements of society and actions resulting from them such as war, torture, depression, suicide and homelessness might configure and reconfigure different selves or personalities. I am interested in how humans adapt to the demands and to the horrors of our present capitalist environment and how this environment shapes our waking consciousness out of a broader, more latent consciousness that Myers referred to as the Subliminal Self. Here I see macrostructures as organized forms of condensed and patterned agency, that is, as congealed social relations codified in ways that ensure that they can be legally and politically enforced by certain behavior formations. My understanding of mind and consciousness attempts to make room for causal volition, resistance, and what I refer to as protagonistic agency.

Here I adopt Myers' concept of the subliminal self, (or Subliminal Self), a more extensive consciousness out of which is formed the supraliminal consciousness, or a small fraction of the psychological personality that we identify with our ordinary waking consciousness, or the coordination of our perpetually renacent consciousness. The subliminal consciousness refers to the process of cerebration or mental functioning that occurs outside of an individual's ordinary waking awareness (Kelly, et al, 2007; Kelly, Crabtree, & Marshall, 2015). It is important to emphasize that what is conscious is what can be remembered, that is, it refers to that which can be comprehended within a chain or multiple chains of memory. In other words, it must be potentially memorable (Kelly, et al, 2007). Supraliminal consciousness refers to what is memorable in our waking consciousness. And this process is intimately connected to the response we have to our environment.

The subliminal and the supraliminal consciousness is always in flux and is ever-changing. The term ‘subliminal’ used by Myers is problematic since we could also equally apply the term ‘superconscious’ because, in Myers’ view, our waking consciousness does not refer to some threshold under which the subliminal consciousness is buried. Supraliminal consciousness and subliminal consciousness do not exist in a hierarchy and can better be understood as segments of our personality (Kelly and Kelly et al, 2007, p. 77). So that the supraliminal consciousness—or the ordinary waking self—is in effect a segment of a larger Subliminal Self. So that it is possible that our mind can be conscious or aware of something that we don’t remember.

I wager that we can be affected by macrostructures of which we are not cognizant in our supraliminal state. Because these structures affect us emotionally and are transferred to memory chains that communicate mostly in pictorial or symbolic ways. Here we can think of the mind as both unity and multiplicity. Certain chains of memory get selected for us in the struggle for our existence. In other words, they help us to cope and survive in this messy web of capitalist social relations. Other chains of memory can emerge, however, and these groupings are potentially endless and can develop into secondary personalities. These are not to be thought of as constituting two coexisting and discrete selves; rather there are multiple correlative and parallel selves always existing within us. Please don’t misunderstand what I am saying. This is not simply a theory of multiple personalities. Far from that, in fact. Because Myers’s theory of mind accounts for both the multiplicity and the unity of human individuality and the Self. For Myers, *individuality* or Self (large case) refers to the underlying psychical unity that exists beneath all our phenomenal manifestations whereas *personality*, or self (small case), refers to external or transitory chains of memory of the supraliminal self, or ordinary waking consciousness, as well as the potentially infinite number of selves formed from secondary personalities or chains of memories found within the subliminal self. To avoid confusion, I follow the advice of Kelly & Kelly et al., (2007) and refer to the subliminal self (lower case) as consisting of chains of memory that are sufficiently continuous to acquire a character of their own, and the term Subliminal Self (upper case) to refer to the underlying larger Self. While Myers’ typology is used by many researchers to explain the much derided phenomena of paranormal events and psychological automatism, I believe that such a model of the mind can be important in considering the relationship between macrostructures of oppression and personality structures that are shaped by capitalist social relations. I am interested in how the subliminal mind interacts with other minds who have gone through experiences of war trauma and torture and how collective forms of resistance might be possible.

I am working under the assumption that mind and matter co-evolve and in the process become more complex, a theory famously developed by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit priest, paleontologist and geologist who conceived of the concept of the universe evolving towards the Omega Point, or a level of maximum complexity. I adopt the idea that there is a transcendent, liminal or extracerebral consciousness that exists beyond our neuronal apparatus or neural brain activity. This extracerebral consciousness is overwhelmingly filtered out by the brain to enable only information most useful for our immediate physical survival on the planet. I first confronted this idea in the 1960s after meeting Timothy Leary and reading the works of Aldous Huxley. The filtering process of the brain creates habits of mind, or routine pathways or "canals" along which we attune ourselves to daily sensory information but at the same time limit ourselves to more expanded levels of consciousness.

My argument is that we need to address both the subliminal (superconscious) and supraliminal dimensions of the Self in transforming our own consciousness in order to create the kind of protagonistic agency that can transform capitalist macrostructures of oppression. I am particularly interested in uncovering the contents of those hidden subliminal strata produced under capitalist relations of exploitation and oppression which appear to be pictorial and symbolic rather than verbal or propositional (Kelly & Kelly et al, 2007, p. 88).

I recall a visit years ago to Medellin, Colombia. A group of teachers from a school attended a sociology conference where I was speaking in order to invite me to their public school to meet the students and speak to the faculty who had expressed interest in having me as a guest. They wanted to know what my recent ideas were about critical pedagogy. The school was located in a densely populated area of the western Comuna 13. I left the conference with the teachers and agreed to spend the rest of the day with them. During my talk—which focused on the struggle for a socialist alternative to capitalism—I noticed that the teachers were looking anxious and concerned. When I asked what was wrong, several teachers mentioned to me that while they appreciated my work (which was apparently read by the teachers in their engagement with critical pedagogy), they were worried that my Marxist discourse could get them in trouble, perhaps even killed. When I protested that they were perhaps exaggerating, they showed me some photos from a visit they had by the state in 2002. They were referring to Operation Orion, a four-day military offensive involving the army, police, air force (two helicopter gunships) and 800 paramilitary from notorious groups such as Bloque Cacique Nutibara. The offensive was designed to remove left-wing rebels from the neighborhood. Hundreds of the residents were injured, and over the ensuing years hundreds more were killed or ‘disappeared’. The offensive was carried out by the commander of the locally stationed 4th Brigade, General Mario Montoya, and the Medellin Police Commander, General Leonardo Gallego, to oust all insurgent groups from the Comuna 13. More than 1,000 soldiers, contingents of (sometimes hooded) paramilitaries and policemen, supported by armed helicopters, attacked the area. Afterwards, the paramilitary took control of the area and they continued to torture civilians, participate in arbitrary detentions and take part in ‘disappearances’ of hundreds of people in the neighborhood whose bodies were eventually deposited in a dump site called La Escombrera. After hearing about the attack and viewing the photos, I understood immediately the ways in which my language was inappropriate for this group. At the same time, I wondered how they appropriated my work, and critical pedagogy in general. They told me that they employed critical pedagogy in a language that was devoid of identifiable Marxist rhetoric in order to treat the trauma suffered by young people who grew up in the middle of the civil war. They focused on the affective domain of the students, using art, drama, and other approaches. Over time, I began to wonder how the subliminal selves of the students codified their memory-experiences and how these selves could be healed from the trauma of war. At the same time, I wondered how these young people could integrate their understanding of the war, and the experiences of everyday life under capitalism, into a more unified and critical supraliminal self. And how the development of a critical consciousness could influence the re-membling of their chains of experiences and consequently the memories associated with them. Here is where Augusto Boal’s forum theater, Keith Johnstone’s work in improvisation, and Peter O’Connor’s work in applied theater can be of fundamental importance.

Within these contexts opportunities can be created to build spaces of recollection—memorials to a past that has been destroyed—that focuses, for instance, on iconic memory.

Iconic memory is a type of memory that precedes narrative memory. Whereas narrative memory has a plot line (often with a beginning, middle and an end), iconic memory—which can be triggered by a sound, a smell or an image—is linked to a set of associations for which no narrative structure yet exists (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 127). Bits of iconic memory—also known as Deleuzian “radioactive fossils” or a Benjaminian “aura”—can be retained by people who have suffered trauma in which there is no language available to describe the links being made (Watkins & Shulman, 2008). Watkins and Shulman (2008, p. 127) write:

When attempting to develop public spaces of recollection, one is essentially creating an opening where people may bring forward iconic images related to past trauma. Entering into these spaces may require more silence than dialogue, a kind of hospitality or empathetic witness for which the primary ritual is presence or touch. Essentially, spaces of recollection are a way of constructing altars or memorials to what has been ruined in the past....The iconic objects or images that are brought forward in such spaces activate the memories and affects of individuals, while at the same time maintaining a significance that is collective and historical.

Watkins and Shulman (2008) provide several examples of this process that they refer to as an “aesthetics of interruption”:

For example, artifacts such as a photograph of Steven Biko, Salvador Allende, or Rosa Parks; a song by Bob Marley, Mercedes Sosa, or Miriam Makeba; or a Bible, a Torah, or a Koran may have a powerful metonymic significance for members of certain communities, especially those with a crypt or a post-memory from a traumatic past, while at the same time people from other communities of memory may have no response at all, or even a negative and dissociative response. Thus we cannot assume that people enter spaces of recollection as freestanding individuals equally capable of dialogue across difference. Spaces of recollection are an opening, a *kairos*, for those who have or want to find a key. (p. 128)

I remember heart-wrenching discussions in Buenos Aires and Rosario, Argentina, with groups such as Madres de Plaza de Mayo, Asociación Civil Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo and Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio that left all of us in a tomb of silence. Yet through the persistence of the survivors of the horror of Argentina’s dirty war, participatory public spaces of dialogue and sharing were created to address a part of Argentina’s history that had been buried in trauma, spaces “where the unsaid will exceed the sayable” (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 121). But such spaces are not always possible to create, especially in contexts in which they are forbidden through violent forms of government repression. In which case, communities of suffering are ensepulchred in what Watkins and Shulman (2008, p. 121) refer to as “crypts” in which unbearable symptoms and images continue unabated through “anasemic effects” or “parts of the psyche that are unknown because they are not linked with narratives and symbols of self-identity.” According to Watkins and Schulman, 2008, pp. 121-122):

These crypts form a living kernel surrounded by a symbolic shell made up of our remembered and symbolized personality. We are then haunted by enigmatic symptoms, images and feelings emanating from the phantom kernel. Children whose parents have been traumatized—and we also think friends, neighbors, witnesses, and other family members—experience the trauma victim’s secret crypt as an uncomfortable absence, a verbal silence along powerful images that creates....enclaves or isolated parts of the self full of mute fantasies about the absence that is never spoken.

Hence, we must always struggle to create sites of “social witness” to address “unsettled retellings and memorializing of unfinished history” (2008, p. 130) connected to “a deep-seated human need to make collective meaning of life experience” where we can engage in acts of collective mourning and where such “mourning is non-redemptive in the sense that it will need to be done in ritual space over and over again because there is no possible closure about what has been lost within the current climate where so many are invested in forgetting” (Watkins & Shulman, 2008, p. 129). And here, I believe that the “liminal servant” (McLaren, 1986) can help to navigate the ominous terrain for the participants.

Thus the struggle to identify the role of the macrostructural unconscious is of crucial importance in the praxis of revolutionary critical pedagogy where we need to move past our trauma of capitalism to create new spaces of hope and possibility. I believe, for instance, that one important step for transforming the structural unconscious of the United States would be to construct a memorial to its own victims of imperialist aggression, to ask for forgiveness for its genocidal history involving indigenous peoples, African slaves, and other historical targets of its aggression. Yet what would be the reaction to such a proposal for the healing of a nation that has been founded on violence, racism, misogyny, and white supremacy?

To fight against the macrostructural unconscious we need to connect capitalism’s internal relations to our structures of feeling. We need to be wary that sometimes our struggles will create a complimentary dialectic between capital and our fight against capital which will only turn us into a force within the very logic of the system that we are struggling against. If we do not target neoliberal capitalism in the curricula of our schools of education, then it is easier to stultify teacher educators into supporting the notion that there is no need to restrain capitalist exploitation. We must acknowledge that our own forces for emancipation could become corrupted by market forces that disguise themselves as democratic interventions but which are, in fact, the products of racism, false consciousness and economic exploitation. The idea of “making America great again” articulated by Trump and others permits us to get beyond the Panofsky paradox by increasing poverty and the number of millionaires simultaneously while celebrating the greatness of an intolerant, racist nation. Here the supraliminal self associates greatness with capitalist wealth, without understanding that capitalism is not about creating wealth per se, but about value production. As Peter Hudis and other Marxist humanists have argued, the drive to increase material wealth is *not* the *fundamental* problem. The fundamental problem is the drive to increase value—which is not the same as material wealth. It is important to understand that wealth is a physical *quantity* that has limits to its expansion whereas value (i.e., surplus value or profit) is a non-physical quality that can be expanded indefinitely. The creation of more millionaires does not mean there will be less poor; the truth is more likely to be the reverse.

In our struggles alongside our many comrades—ecosocialist, anarchist, socialist feminist, autonomist Marxist, and Marxist humanist—we must work together to fight the transnationalist capitalist state in all of its hydra-headed relations of exploitation and alienation by developing a philosophy of praxis.

In their struggle for a social alternative to capitalism's value form of labor, revolutionary critical educators have challenged the lissome grandeur of postmodern theory and its fear of universal values and its inevitable retreat behind the tombstones of a sepulchral bargain-bin secularism. Whether revolutionary critical pedagogy's push for a socialist alternative will make an impact on the field of education in the near future is unclear, especially at a time in which right-wing populism and fascism continue to predominate across the political horizon of the country.

It is acutely painful to reflect upon the tragic irony of the current crisis of education that leads Stan Karp (2011) to characterize it as follows: "If you support testing, charters, merit pay, the elimination of tenure and seniority, and control of school policy by corporate managers you're a 'reformer.' If you support increased school funding, collective bargaining, and control of school policy by educators you're a 'defender of the status quo.'" Largely as a result of huge marketing campaigns in the corporate media, it is the ideological right wing that now claims the mantle of reformer and progressive teachers and defenders of public schooling have been placed on the defensive. The rightwing educational reform movement, so dangerous to our democratic pretensions, must erelong bear potential surplus value returns for the capitalist class. That's the whole point. Critically minded educators are not so easily fooled and we will not meekly and fruitlessly submit to the tenor of the times.

Decades ago I sounded a little-heeded alarm that urban education in the U.S. increasingly was susceptible to the intentions of neoliberal capitalism and a jaundiced corporate-infused perspective. Today, in a world where capitalism has monopolized our collective imagination as never before, befouled our bodies through a frenzied pursuit of narcotizing consumption and turned education itself into a subsector of the economy, such a remark would be read by most critical educators as a gross understatement. Because today, more than at any other time in human history, the perils of capitalism have been exposed. It is no longer controversial among many of us in the teaching profession to acknowledge that "governments seek to extend power and domination and to benefit their primary domestic constituencies—in the U.S., primarily the corporate sector" (Chomsky, 2013).

U.S. democracy once lit up the sky of the American dream like a glitter helix launched from a girandole. With the advent of neoliberal capitalism and the success of groups such as Citizens United and the American Legislative Exchange Council, the seams of democracy have been ripped asunder. The contradictions that for so long have been held in check by the violent equilibrium of market regulation have unchained themselves and as a consequence the mythic unity of capitalism and democracy has been exposed as a trussed-up fraud.

The shards of a dashed hope have been sent spinning like whistling bottle rockets into a firmament of sputtering stroboscopic dreams and titanium salutes, under a red glare and bombs bursting in air. The pursuit of democracy has given way to the waging of war, and there certainly is unanimous agreement worldwide that the U.S. "does war" better than any country in history.

Yet in the academy few have chosen to speak about the crisis of democracy and instead are self-admiringly recapitulating all the articles they wrote before getting tenure, that is, before they decided to overhaul what is left of the pursuit of knowledge so that it fits better into the corporate brand of their institution. They even might be working on university–Pentagon joint partnerships on crowd control or cyber warfare. The good professors don't bother to offer up any excuses for not jumping into the public fray other than maintaining that they are still collecting "data" and aren't ready to make any judgment calls about politics.

As I have written elsewhere about some of the professional researchers that I have met in the academy over the past twenty years:

Many of my academic colleagues, looking for some final vantage point from which to interpret social life, remain politically paralyzed, their studied inaction resulting from a stubborn belief that if they wait long enough, they surely will be able to apprise themselves of a major, messianic, supra-historical discourse that will resolve everything. Presumably this ne plus ultra discourse will arrive on the exhausted wings of the Angel of History! There seems to be some naïve belief that a contemporary codex will eventually be announced (no doubt by a panjandrum at an Ivy League university) which will explain the quixotic mysteries and political arcana of everyday life. At this moment intellectuals will have the Rosetta Stone of contemporary politics in their possession, enabling them to know how to act decisively under any and all circumstances. Establishment academics under the thrall of technocratic rationality act as if the future might one day produce a model capitalist utopia in the form of an orrery of brass and oiled mahogany whose inset spheres and gear wheels, humming and whirring like some ancient clavichord melody, will reveal without a hint of dissimulation the concepts and practices necessary to keep the world of politics synchronized in an irenic harmony. All that would be necessary would be to keep the wheelworks in motion. (McLaren, 2008, pp. 474–475)

The tendrils of capitalism's poisonous vine are spreading into all the spaces and virtual spaces of potential capital accumulation and we need cadres of teachers to speak out and to create spaces where their students can assume roles as razor-tongued public instigators for the social good. Globalized finance capitalism is the most widespread authoritarian structure in the history of civilization, giving the rich even greater riches and forcing the dispossessed to set up markets on moonlit streets to augment their exiguous incomes. We might be living in what is now called the "age of greed" but we should not be fooled that the current crisis of capital is linked mainly to the greed of corporate capitalists captured by Hollywood figures such as Gordon Gekko, since we believe that it is endemic to the system of capitalism itself.

Our shadow grows large beside the flames of capital's vast furnace, a grotesquery out of Dante's *Inferno*. We appear specter-like, Nosferatu the Vampire with fingers extended across the wall of our flickering cave that we call civilization, all the better to grasp profits wherever our bloodlust for capital finds them, and to palpate the farthest rim of the earth if necessary, even to squeeze out from the vacant eyes of the poor their last tears of sorrow, if they could fetch a handy price in the market. All human and non-human animals inhabiting the planet have been stuffed stone-eyed into the vaults of capitalist social relations, a mausoleum of tortured beings

writhing in the toxic vomit of the earth. We weep with all sentient beings, even as we shift from our anthropocentric cosmovision to a biocentric one.

According to Noam Chomsky,

This is the first time in human history that we have the capacity to destroy the conditions for decent survival. It is already happening. Look at species destruction. It is estimated to be at about the level of 65 million years ago when an asteroid hit the earth, ended the period of the dinosaurs and wiped out a huge number of species. It is the same level today. And we are the asteroid. If anyone could see us from outer space they would be astonished. There are sectors of the global population trying to impede the global catastrophe. There are other sectors trying to accelerate it. Take a look at whom they are. (Cited in Hedges, 2014, para. 3)

This behemoth we call capital is not some creature encountered in the medieval surrealism of Hieronymus Bosch or a Bestiarum vocabulum of the Middle Ages or in a sideshow banner in a county fair midway where you might be expected to find, in the abhorrent language of the carnival, Melvin Burkhart the Anatomical Wonder; Zippy the Pinhead; Chang and Eng, the original Siamese twins; Johnny Eck, the King of the Freaks; or Koo Koo the Birdgirl. The beast of the apocalypse, which I could name Exploitagus, is here among us, among both the living and the dead. Besmirched with a feral lunacy, and driven by a lust for the spoils of labor power, it towers over our world and all of our imaginings of what other worlds could, or should, be like. Its pallid countenance, lolling tongue and bloodless skin disguises its gluttonous and perverse appetite for profit, an appetite so ravenous that it would swim across an ocean of excrement, even risking the trident of Britannia, in order to ingurgitate a half farthing wrung from the aching arms of a bootblack. Its indelicate stride is not an evolutionary gallop as we are much too worldly wise to label it progress. Quite the contrary, it's a devolutionary sprint, a conquest of the globe that has laid waste to the land and has made civilization into a mausoleum, a place of dry bones in what once was a thriving metropolis of pulsating, fibrillating and undulating flesh; it's now a place of hollow sockets and empty brainpans that once held the vitreous and the electrical charges that fashioned for humanity the gift of sight and foresight. Even a premonitory lunge from its febrile hand can cause havoc to cascade from its fingers of fire. And when it goes on a rampage, squatting on its precious platinum haunches and depositing its larvae as it has this past decade into the gin and tonics of our political leaders, nothing can stand in its path and survive, least of all the impecunious bystanders who seek out whatever diversions they can in order to avoid staring directly into the darkness of their own souls. Inside the darkness, they can see the junkyard world of the future. Finding relief in the light, they become blind to any and all alternatives to capital's value form.

The free-market economy is championed as the protector of democracy, like the fierce Chinese guardians or warrior attendants in a Tang dynasty temple. They protect us from any competing alternative, such as dreaded socialism. The new citizens of this tilt-a-whirl domain of American politics remain functionally unaware, studiously refusing to see capitalism as a means of the exploitation of the labor-power of the worker and even less as accumulation by dispossession. As David Harvey (2010) puts it, accumulation by dispossession "is about plundering, robbing other people of their rights ... capitalism is very much about taking away the



right people have over their natural resources” (Harvey, 2010, p. 99). Accumulation by dispossession is interrelated with neoliberalization or institutional reforms that are premarket and pro-privatization and against state interventions into the marketplace and so on.

The champions of neoliberalism—the antinomians, the pre-millennialists and post-millennialists—see those who would oppose their master—the socialists, liberals and communists—as in league with the anti-Christ. Some of these “warrior Christians” (as they like to see themselves) send their children to “Jesus camps,” while others join the Christian militias, like Hutaree, and plot to kill government law enforcement agents and train to wage war against the anti-Christ (a recent poll indicated that one-quarter of Republicans believe that Barack Obama could be the anti-Christ, the Beast of the Apocalypse in the Book of Revelation). Of course, the Jesus of these militant evangelical extremists bears little resemblance to the Jesus of the Bible, even though their serpent-handling pastors and fellow sign-followers like to brag in their tent crusade revival meetings (once the copperheads and water moccasins are carefully secured in their baskets) that their values and politics derive from a ‘literal’ interpretation of holy Christian scriptures. Theirs is the Jesus of the prosperity preachers, a Jesus who wears a revolving Krispy Kreme donut as a halo, complete with sprinkle candy.

Those who do not want to talk critically about capitalism should keep quiet about the barbarism we are witnessing all around us. Be my guest and keep complaining about violence in schools, and how poorly teachers teach, and how immigrants are spoiling the country, but we don’t need your advice. Can’t you hear the earth shuddering in agony beneath your spit-and-polished jackboots? People aren’t falling on the streets like spent bullets in crime ridden neighborhoods. Violence is more than a metaphor. People are falling in the street *because* they have been shot with bullets! And these are disproportionately people of color. Is it so difficult to connect this destruction systematically to capitalist relations of production rather than simply foisting it off as the result of greedy capitalists (we are tired of psychologizing what is clearly a structural crisis built into the dynamics of value production under capitalism)?

Present attempts at resisting the hydra-headed beast of capital are frozen like dried blood on history’s stale proscenium where we dream our dreams and are dreamt in an overcrowded theater of destruction. In this country of strangers, the scourge of capitalism is too infrequently accompanied by a momentous uprising by the oppressed but instead is met by isolated individuals enshrouded in a cynical resignation and a calcified hope, resulting in a paralyzing quietism awaiting its own dispersion. We will not be bequeathed another Che Guevara or Paulo Freire who will lead the fated triumph of the hardscrabble workers over the succulent and savvy bourgeoisie, who will transubstantiate the graveyards of political defeat into a victory march of the Left, or who will bring us into a world of unbearable beauty and harmony, a land of Cockaigne devoid of Breughel’s slothful peasants. Those days are gone. But we do have Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden, and we should acquaint ourselves of their gifts of courage.

In our world of hand sanitizers, willfully disenfranchised youth, high-gloss reality shows, television commentaries on world events that have as much analytical depth as sparkle dust sprayed from a vintage-style perfume bottle, and benign varieties of televised adolescent rebellion with fast-food marketing tie-ins, we try in vain to find a way out. But that proves as difficult as asking your eyeball to stare back at itself. Or Benjamin’s Angel of History to turn her

head and face the future. Yet even against logo-swathed backdrops and image-based commentaries of daunting corporate grandeur, we keep ransacking Marx's tomb, especially when an economic crisis hits that demands some kind of explanation not afforded by the pundits of the Wall Street Journal. Everywhere it seems—perhaps especially in education—you find Marxism being derided with a leering flippancy or galvanized indifference. You can't escape it, even in coffee shops for the urban literati, as a recent visit to a popular Los Angeles establishment taught me. There, among the hard-nosed espresso drinkers, a stranger approached me waving heavy hands. Bobbing over a thin nose and pair of succulent lips were a pair of tarsier eyes, as if they had been clumsily plopped onto plump, fleshy stumps that sprung out ominously from deep within his sockets. Escaping his overly caffeinated oral cavity was a stage-whispered admonition delivered with requisite theatrical intensity: "Oh, you're McLaren, the one that writes that Marxist shit." I responded with a simple retort, as quickly as if I had rehearsed it in advance: "I assume you're already so full of capitalist shit that I wonder how you noticed mine." Today's capitalism is spawned in a petri dish of virtual Faustian space, as dank and suffocating as the inside of a hot air balloon. Capitalism dresses itself up in corset-like vocabularies of common sense. It can adapt to and absorb any language—even the language of the Left. It works its discourse in the service of its self-expansion, having no master to serve but itself. Its favorite language is the language of mystification, of progress, of democracy. By fashioning itself out of the contradictory logic of progressivism and traditionalism, it can confuse and obfuscate unobstructed.

In these times the tears of the poor do not help nourish the seeds of revolution; before they can fall to the ground they are swept up into the tornado of fast capitalism that passes them like minuscule batons around and around from crisis to crisis in an arena of corruption where the race is never finished, only suspended like an image in a frozen computer screen until the next corporate bailout. Resistance cannot take hold. Freedom is slipping away. Arguably it is the case today that corporate greed constitutes the epochal spirit of our times. But to my thinking it is not the central antagonism at this current juncture in world history that is witnessing the ongoing trauma of capitalist formation within national security states such as the U.S. The problem is not entrenched corporate interests. This is merely the symptom that we mistake for the disease. The main problem—dare we say it?—is not that corporations and the banking industry (what used to be called the "Big Mules") are mulcting the public (which they are). The problem is global or transnational capitalism itself.

Capitalism is the very Eye of Sauron, the Hammer of Havoc, a heinous blight upon the planet that sees all, consumes all and destroys all in its path. We, the people, are lodged fast in the fetid bowels of the capitalist state, buried deep inside a monological regime of untruth, ensepulchered within the monumentalism and U.S. exceptionalism of the dominant culture—spread-eagled in the vortex of conflict that Bakhtin (in his work on dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia and open interpretation) calls the authoritative discourse of the state and the internally persuasive discourse of our own making that expresses our values and our aspirations. The discourse of the state—that positions the "other" as irredeemably evil, as a monolithic alien species that is so barbaric as not to merit the rule of law—along with the functional existence of the state as an instrument of exploitation and repression, clearly need to be overcome. How can this be possible? Cold War ideology prevails and U.S. citizens in the main bear the ideological marks of their times. The term "American empire" is being championed by the Right out of a sense of noblesse oblige—to be part of an empire is a duty and a responsibility that comes with

being the leader and protector of the “free” world. With their paternalistic toy trumpets, and their willingness to jettison their critical faculties in favor of embracing an iron certainty and ineffable faith that the United States has a providential mission in the world, the far right boasts that free-market democracy has to be delivered to the far corners of the earth (by bombing runs, if necessary) if civilization is to prevail on the planet.

We learn this in our Stephen Spielberg suburbs waiting for E.T. to return, in our double-mortgaged farmhouses, in our Appalachian towns ravaged by crystal meth, in our urban barrios where children with shipwrecked eyes and remastered smiles dream of Marvel Comics lives. We learn this from *Lamp Unto My Feet*, from *Our Gang*, from *Leave it to Beaver*, from *Happy Days*, from *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, from *Soupy and Pookie*, from *Tom Terrific*, from *What’s My Line?*, from *Winky Dink and You*, from *Ding Dong School*, from *Jack Bailey on Queen for the Day*, from *Twin Peaks*, from *Jeopardy*, from *Teletubbies*, from carnival barkers, from television commercial scripts, from rodeo announcers and commentator hosts from the Super Bowl to the Final Four. We are all infected.

The corbelled vault of our imagination from which memories cry out and dreams are born has been constructed out of the windswept debris of dead cities, destroyed civilizations, nations brought to servitude by the mailed fist of the world eaters, those whose imperial eyes sweep over the clearings when the dust of destruction has settled and seek to plunder the resources of entire nations, caring nothing of the aftermath, nothing of the blood that soaks into the earth or pools in the sewers of the heart, nothing of the blight brought to humankind.

Is it too late to re-enchant the world, to remold the planet in mytho-poetic terms, to create a past dreamtime, a mystical milieu in the present, to give ourselves over to dream divinities, to live in the eternal moment, to mold sacred totems from the clay of the riverbed? And while we ponder this possibility, the armies of the night march on, sneering at the pious surrender of the oppressed.

Because through the medium of experience the ego-driven individual is mistaken as the source of social practices, this process of misidentification has become a capitalist arche-strategy that marginalizes collectivity and protects the individual as the foundation of entrepreneurial capitalism. As a consequence, the well-being of the collectivity is replaced by the “politics of consumption” that celebrates the singularities of individuals by valorizing the desire to obtain and consume objects of pleasure. Experience in this view becomes non-theoretical and beyond the realities of history. This is why we need to locate all human experience in a world-historical frame, that is, within specific social relations of production. Revolutionary critical pedagogy, as we have been trying to develop it, attempts to create the conditions of pedagogical possibility that enable students to see how, through the exercise of power, the dominant structures of class rule protect the practices of the powerful from being publicly scrutinized as they appropriate resources to serve the interests of the few at the expense of the many (Ebert & Zavarzadeh, 2008).

While we do not seek to live life with caprice or with an insouciant smirk, our project is anti-normative as long as schools seek to normalize students to an unjust world of stultifying toil for the laboring classes. We challenge this natural attitude of capitalist schooling and its moralizing machinery by climbing out of our spiritually dehydrated skin and re-birthing ourselves into relations of solidarity and comunalidad. Critical pedagogy has done much to

inspire dissidents to engage culture in the agonistic terrain of the cultural imaginary so as to break with dominant relationships of power and privilege through forms of pedagogical subversion. While some dimensions of subversion have led to interventions and new communal relationships of solidarity and struggle, others have been dominated by forms of postmodern self-absorption and self-fashioning where the embattled agent engages in acts of symbolic inversion within the contradictions of consumptionist capitalism. What interest me are the ethical imperatives driving such acts of subversion. Is the protagonist subject not codetermined by discourses of resistance and possibility, as Henry Giroux might put it? If this is the case, then I would argue that within the field of critical pedagogy today, there is a disproportionate focus on the critique of identity formation at the expense of examining and finding alternatives to existing spheres of social determination that include institutions, social relations of production, ideologies, practices and the cultural imaginary—all of which are harnessed to value production.

### **Manos Sucias (Dirty Hands):The Sins of the State**

I am staunchly opposed to the violence of the state. This is a complicated issue and I draw here upon the work of liberation theologians and especially from Michael Rivage-Seul (2008). Frantz Fanon (2004) wrote about how the European elite undertook the creation of a native elite and in doing so legitimated and monumentalized the idea of non-violence, and attempted to mystify the working classes, the toilers of the world, into thinking that they have the same interests as the oppressed, the exploited, the dominated. Of course, the ruling class does not have the same interests. It often uses state violence to achieve its ends, yet officially preaches non-violence except in instances where it enforces its judicial code, which, of course, privileges the interests of the wealthy and mainly White property owners.

The first-level violence, or the violence of the state, is a violence whose idol is “empire,” and whose patron is “capitalism”; a violence that justifies itself in fighting terrorism; a violence which, here in the U.S., puts African Americans and Latinos in the prison system in vastly disproportionate rates compared to whites. Now second-level violence is what we could call revolutionary violence, a violence directed against the state, against the first-level violence of the state, its legal system, its police forces, its economic system. And then there is third-level violence, which is reactionary violence, a violence enacted by the state, a violence directed by the state against revolutionary violence.

It bears mentioning that all violence is divinized, it is a form of worship, a form of the sacred based on the feature of scapegoats and stereotypes and gives justification for our actions. However, it doesn't take much insight to see that the armies of the U.S. empire that undertake state violence are far less vulnerable than those who undertake revolutionary violence. Just look at the 200,000 slaughtered in Guatemala, the 80,000 slaughtered in El Salvador, the 70,000 slaughtered in Nicaragua and the perhaps 2 million slaughtered in Iraq—all by the U.S. military or forces receiving support from the U.S. empire. How much has really changed in those countries? People are still being used as cheap labor for multinational corporations. So you can see how even revolutionary violence—the violence most justified—can feed into the military-industrial complex, inflating it even further, giving it more reason to produce weapons of mass destruction which are incomprehensible in their ability to kill and maim and are sold to both sides of the conflict. This point has been made, as noted earlier, by Michael Rivage-Seul (2008) and other liberation theologians. We know that the violence of the state is not called violence, is

not called terrorism. We know, of course, that this is not the case. But if any act of violence is at least partly justified by “just war” standards (the U.S. cites its own “patriots” in the Revolutionary War against England), it is revolutionary violence. We cannot condemn those who practice revolutionary violence as long as we participate in state violence. That is my point. But revolutionary violence must be proportional, must be a last resort, must have the right intention and reasonable prospects for success. And we must always seek alternatives to violence.

We also need as Leftists to recognize that we have as much intrinsic capacity for abuse as those on the Right. We need to avoid both moral absolutism and political dogmatism and not be part of a righteous vanguard. The idea is not to defeat “evil,” because good and evil are inextricably connected, and human depravity is ubiquitous and persistent, but to figure out how to create a society in which we can establish the conditions of possibility to transcend the antimony of good and evil.

Hence, we cannot condemn others who engage in revolutionary violence— or second-level violence—when we who choose not to engage in such violence sit back and allow our tax dollars to fuel corporate interests and the military-industrial complex without taking action. It is important to develop forms of non-cooperation with injustice and to reform judicial systems, to create sustainable and just economic systems through the struggle for freedom. On an international level, we need to take away the moral authority of those who, in the name of the interests of state security, exercise violence. We need to have confidence that in many instances, non-violent direct action can stop structural violence if the world community can put pressure on the perpetrators.

In a political arena where the Grand Ole Opry meets slick Beltway hustlers, grim patriots with sandpaper smiles under faded NASCAR peaked caps are ready to believe almost any explanation of why their faith in America has collapsed. They lurch lockstep in drumbeat resignation that it must be the bankers who are to blame for their ills, or it’s Obamacare, liberals, socialists, multiculturalists, gays and lesbians or immigrants who have stolen their dreams. The focus is rarely on the real structural problems of living in a capitalist economy that is prone to crisis.

Capitalism clearly is structurally incapable of permitting democracy to live up to its own definition even minimally, as it can no longer tolerate, let alone absorb, the principle of economic justice and equality. Yet even in the face of this disquieting fact, there are few aspects of our teacher education programs or our graduate schools of education that focus on the perils of education reform in the context of examining the perils and pitfalls of contemporary capitalist society.

Any hope we have for a future that does not resemble the sets of Blade Runner (Deely & Scott, 1982) is increasingly land-filled. We are heirs to a time when voices calling for reason and sanity are the new unreason and victims of corporate media blackout. The warnings of Marxists, ecologists and environmental scientists about the impending crisis of the planet sound to many as irrational as the sports bar ravings of a besotted town crazy, and find an echo only in the conscience of those already considered part of the lunatic fringe.

Potential conscripts for fighting those who are waging war on the working class, the phalanxes of spindle-shanked inner-city youth who are consigned to big-box retail stores like Target and Walmart where they are paid salaries well below the official poverty rate, are as dependent on The Man as corporations are dependent upon fossil fuels, and return home too exhausted from work to mount much of a political opposition, although those that manage to pull themselves into the streets and picket lines to protest are surely to be congratulated. Computers displace clerical workers and many middle-class jobs and college degrees, if the right kind, might give a tiny edge to recent college graduates in the race to full employment. But many graduates are becoming more and more resigned to a grim enslavement to the corporate wage as non-union workers. Unions have been eviscerated, except in some instances at the local level, but most are enfeebled by laws constraining labor relations and workers' rights that prohibit the right to organize and act collectively. Union strikes in the U.S. are few and far between.

The macrostructural unconscious of "America" has an enormous capacity to assist the citizenry in escaping the reek and corruption of everyday life. It sends us skittering away desperately into hinterlands of social amnesia, far enough away from facing the harsh reality of our potential destiny as planet slum and entraining us in the short-term gratification of media culture. Revenge scenarios in television shows, the proliferation of television sports and the collective mockery of "losers" on reality shows are able to siphon away our energies that elsewhere could be committed to creating sites of collective dialogue and political organization.

We are, as the cultural critics tell us, libidinally invested in the delights of popular culture. It has replaced in our macrostructural unconscious what was once the call of a loon or the howl of a wolf in some mythic woodland in the darkness of an eclipsed moon. Instead, we get the thousand-armed Bodhisattvas who appear to us in our frivolous and restless minds today not as Buddha or Krishna or Christ but as Gomer Pyle, Pee Wee Herman, Ipana Toothpaste's Bucky Beaver, 20 Mule Team Borax, Soupy Sales, Lassie, Monty Python's Flying Circus, Jimmy Durante, The Monkees, Jack Benny, The Prisoner, Rawhide, Red Skelton, Liberace, Mother Mabel Carter, Mr. Magoo, Perry Como, Hee Haw, Catweasle, The Twilight Zone, Marvin the Martian, Roy Rogers, Dale Evans, Trigger, Ricky Nelson, Robert Tilton, a.k.a. the Farting Preacher or Pastor Gas, Hopalong Cassidy, Kookie and his comb, Robbie the Robot, Miley Cyrus's disco ball nipple pasties, Ryan O'Neal's sheepskin jacket, Sacha Baron Cohen's Bruno thong, The Glenn Campbell Goodtime Hour, Mr. Spock, Vanna White, Geraldo, Jiminy Cricket, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Breaking Bad and Game of Thrones.

It is not enough to complain about the egoism of economic life with moral-advocative denunciations, although that is certainly a good beginning. What drives the logic of capital relentlessly forward at tremendous pace is not egoism alone, but the structural contradictions of the labor/capital relationship within advanced capitalist societies—the alienation of humanity's labor and products from humankind through the commodification of everyday life. Greg Palast (2013) exposed what he called the "End Game Memo," which signaled part of the plan created by the top U.S. Treasury officials to conspire "with a small cabal of banker big shots to rip apart financial regulation across the planet." In the late 1990s, the U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin and Deputy Treasury Secretary Larry Summers pushed hard to de-regulate banks, and they joined forces with some of the most powerful CEOs on the planet to make sure that happened. The "end game" was tricky and seemed indomitable because it required the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act (1933) to dismantle the barrier between commercial banks and investment

banks. It should come as no coincidence that the Glass-Steagall legislation was passed the year that marked the end of the Banana Wars. The Banana Wars (1898–1934) marked a sordid time of U.S. military interventions and occupations in Latin America and the Caribbean. Countries that were targeted by the U.S. included Cuba, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, Mexico, Honduras, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, where the U.S. was intent on protecting its commercial interests (largely via fruit companies such as The United Fruit Company) and extending its sphere of political influence through military means in countries that were unable to pay their international debts. The Glass-Steagall Act was designed to help regulate Wall Street and strengthen the regulatory power of the Federal Reserve. Palast called the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act “replacing bank vaults with roulette wheels.” The banks wanted to venture into the high-risk game of “derivatives trading,” which allowed banks to carry trillions of dollars of pseudo-securities on their books as “assets.” However, the transformation of U.S. banks into “derivatives casinos” would be hampered if money fled U.S. shores to nations with safer banking laws. So this small cabal of banksters decided to—and successfully did—eliminate controls on banks in every nation on the planet in one single move by using the Financial Services Agreement (FSA).

The FSA was an addendum to the international trade agreements policed by the World Trade Organization that banksters utilized to force countries to deal with trade in “toxic” assets such as financial derivatives. Every nation was thus pushed to open their markets to Citibank, JP Morgan and their derivatives “products.” All 156 nations in the World Trade Organization were pressured to remove their own Glass-Steagall divisions between commercial savings banks and the investment banks that gamble with derivatives. All nations were bribed or forced in other ways to comply, and only Brazil refused to play the game.

Of course, as Palast (2013) noted, the game destroyed countries such as Greece, Ecuador and Argentina, to name a few, and contributed catastrophically to the global financial crisis of 2008. Of course, by then the model of the American imperialist war was no longer modeled on the small-scale Banana Wars, but the Iraq War, which privatized the Iraqi oil industry and allowed it to be dominated by foreign companies. And the game also destroyed the U.S. public educational system.

### **Solving the Problem of Inequality: The Market Is Not a Sustainable or Liveable Community**

Schools in the main reflect the inequality found in the structure of capitalist society. We need to face this grim reality of what has now become a truism in our society. New standards and high-stakes testing will not solve the problem of inequality; in fact they could even intensify the problem. High-stakes testing for the promotion of cognitive ability is more likely to create inequity than it is to eradicate it. The issue is not simply how the tests are used, but the very act of testing itself, which ignores non-cognitive factors which contribute to human (endogenous) development.

Schooling in the U.S. (and in most Western democracies) is successful to the extent that it betrays an uncritical acceptance of the doctrine of meritocracy and refuses to examine itself outside of the hive of capitalist ideology and its cloistered elitism—its precepts, concepts, its epistemicides and its various literacies of power through which ideas become slurred over time and actions on their behalf are guaranteed to remain as inactive as a drunken fisherman lost at

sea in a leaking boat. In their belief that the industrious and ambitious are justly rewarded, they unwittingly and unsparingly legitimize the existing structures of inequality. They resign themselves to the fact that answers to the questions of social justice and equality will remain predesigned before questions can even be formulated.

This vision of democracy is inevitably preformed and must be engraved on the minds of its citizens through ideological state apparatuses such as schools. As long as the ideas of the ruling class rule us—and they can certainly rule us with the help of the partnership between the state and corporate media—we will remain apprentices to the anguish of the oppressed. Ideas for eradicating poverty and injustice will be guaranteed to remain vacant, hidden in a thicket of “feel-good” bourgeois aesthetics whose complicity with inequality bulks as large as its opposition to it, making it an appropriate ideological form for late capitalist society. Such ideas will be guaranteed not to transgress the “comfort zone” of those who tenaciously cling to the belief that with hard work and a steeled will, we will reap the rewards of the American Dream—regardless of race, class, gender or geographical location.

If we want to participate in educational reform, then it becomes necessary to challenge the proponents of the competitive market whose corporate outlawry is driving the reform initiatives of education today. We barely can distinguish what augments and entrenches corporate power today from the brutal logic that powers the narco-cartels that wreak havoc throughout Mexico.

Today we not only are besieged by a world-historical crisis of capitalism, we also face a crisis of human decency. The future proffers an ominous stillness, an illusion already sucked dry by gluttonous speculators and the new transnational robber barons.

We in the field of education should be gravely disquieted by the power of this claim. We see the wake of capitalism’s devastation in the privatization of public schooling following Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coast to myriad ways that No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top transform public schooling into investment opportunities—not to mention trying to turn New Orleans into a city of white yuppies. We see it in the retooling of colleges in order to serve better financial and military-industrial interests, in overuse and exploitation of contingent faculty, in the growth of for-profit degree-granting institutions and in rising tuition and student debt (student debt in the U.S. now exceeds that of credit cards, totaling over \$1 trillion; see Cauchon, 2011), not to mention the assault on critical citizenship in favor of consumer citizenship. The crisis of the “free” enterprise system today, the naked money-grabbing practices that might accurately be described as gangster capitalism, or drive-by capitalism, lacks any sincere connection with human dignity and is reconstructed as a mere “greed-is-good” formalism and proffered to the American people as self-protection: a harsh and unavoidable reality of the times. This legally unrestrained self-initiative that enables all barriers to the market to be dismantled in the interests of profit making by the few is built upon a negative definition of freedom—the freedom from having to enter into the necessary conversations with humanity that permit the full development of human capacities for fairness and social justice.

Not only is this an acceptance of the current distribution of wealth and the transvaluation of social into individual needs, it is also the freedom to enjoy your wealth and success without having to accept any moral obligation for the suffering of others. Expenditures of any kind must



be made from the principle of self-interest and individual advantage, and in proportion to that advantage—and all such brutal vindictiveness of the capitalist class towards the 99 percent is egregiously justified under the term “human nature.” People come to be judged solely in terms of human capital: for their economic contribution as measured by the market. There is no motive of social amelioration. Further, in times of crisis, it is the bankers and huge corporations that can “socialize” their risk by transferring it to the taxpayers who are used by the government to bail them out.

But the market is not a community. It is only possible to realize your humanity if you are educated in an authentic community. And how do we achieve true community? Only by analyzing and understanding the distinction between how the social system understands itself, and how it exists in objectivity, that is in reality. In other words, only by working through false consciousness towards critical consciousness, towards a more dialectical understanding of how capitalism affects the very way we approach social problems, including educational problems. At present there is a huge disconnect between the two; that is, there is a tremendous gap between how U.S. society comprehends itself and how it is structured to be co-extensive with inequality. In a community, social wealth is distributed by means of the principle of equality in response to need. For me, education is about creating community in a society that has forgotten the meaning of the term.

Critical pedagogy is strongly assertive of its epistemologies and premises, its obligations and its practices, as well as its normative prescriptions and prohibitions with respect to engaging with others in the world. Even though critical pedagogy has been on the scene for decades, it is still argued by many in the educational establishment that the problem with working-class families has to do with the culture of poverty, in which it is assumed that there is an egregious deficit in working-class culture when read against the values and cultural capital of bourgeois culture.

But for critical educators, this is taking what is fundamentally a structural problem—capitalist-produced inequality—and turning it into a cultural problem: the problems of values, attitudes and the lack of high culture and preponderance of low or middlebrow culture within working-class families, which suggests erroneously that class privilege and educational success has something to do with individual merit and intrinsic self-worth. It reflects a ruthlessly instrumentalized and paternalistic presumption implicit in contemporary school reform approaches, namely, that the poor lack the proper ‘civilized’ attitudes and cosmopolitan values to help them realize their full humanity and succeed in consumer capitalist society.

Of course there is a racial dimension to all of these measurable inequities when examining the statistical facts of gaps between the outcomes of students disaggregated by race and affluence and comparing them with the statistical facts of disproportionate numbers of teachers among races. Moreover, when you compare these to the realities of the school-to-prison pipeline, and the resegregation of schools, we see a national trend. Consider the following statement from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.:

We have come a long way in our understanding of human motivation and of the blind operation of our economic system. Now we realize that dislocations in the market operation of our economy and the prevalence of discrimination thrust

people into idleness and bind them in constant or frequent unemployment against their will. The poor are less often dismissed from our conscience today by being branded as inferior and incompetent. We also know that no matter how dynamically the economy develops and expands it does not eliminate all poverty. (2015, para. 9)

### **Relatos Salvajes (Wild Tales): The Illogicality of the Market**

The fact that the logic of the market is a regulatory principle of life within capitalist societies is now commonplace. Over time, this regulatory principle has led the state to react harshly to fomenting opposition, especially from the current generation whose futures seem, in the words of Henry Giroux, disposable. This has led to various incarnations of “soft fascism” that we saw increase exponentially throughout the U.S., especially after September 11, 2001, and the global slump of 2008. We have witnessed the militarization of the police, the often fatal assaults on black men by the police, harsh sentences for whistleblowers, etc. and the push to privatize public spaces such as schools and universities where dissent can be more effectively controlled by private owners and conservative and well-heeled boards of trustees. Clearly, the corporatocracy is worried about political dissent. Capitalism is in the process of reconstituting itself transnationally. And those who are hit hardest are learning from alternative sites in the social media to see through the veil of deception and lies of the corporatocracy. They know that the state is recalibrating its plans for reacting to hostile opposition from the poor, from students saddled with debt, and from those who are committed to the process of democratization in all spheres of public and private life. They have been aided by critical educators who are intent on helping their students read both the word and the world dialectically, recognizing power as a constitutive dimension of both pedagogy and politics.

Revolutionary critical pedagogy has attempted to give substance to the lie that the U.S. is fighting evil empires around the globe in order to protect its vital interests, interests that must be met for it to continue as the prime defender of the ‘free’ world. Critical educators assume the position that equality is both a precondition and outcome for establishing community, and a community is a precondition for deep democracy. This demands that students question the various roles played by the U.S. on the stage of history and nurture a radical imagination where they can consider other forms of organizing society and collectively providing for themselves and others their economic, social, cultural and spiritual needs.

### **Critical Pedagogy**

Critical pedagogy locates the production of critical knowledges leading to praxis in its social, spatial and geopolitical contexts, and reveals the workings of the production process and how it operates intertextually alongside and upon other discourses, but it does so with a particular political project in mind—an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-racist, anti-sexist and pro-democratic and emancipatory struggle (McLaren & Rikowski, 2000). It works against what Anibal Quijano and Michael Ennis (2000) call the “coloniality of power.” Here a critical pedagogy serves to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar (i.e., refiguring how we see the relationship between the self and the social so that we can see both as manufactured, as the social construction of multiple dimensions and, at times, as the observers of each other, and the suppressed underside of each other); in addition, it attempts to bring out the pedagogical

dimensions of the political and the political dimensions of the pedagogical (as Henry Giroux would put it) and to convert these activities to a larger, more sustained and focused project of building alternative and oppositional forms of sustainable environments, of learning environments, of revolutionary political environments.

The *differentia specifica* of critical pedagogy is located within a wider optic than classroom teaching, or popular education that takes place in community settings. It is defined as the working out of a systematic dialectic of pedagogy that is organized around a philosophy of praxis. Here, the dialectic involves a process of mutual understanding and recognition, a movement between an outlook on reality and a method of analysis. In the words of Anna Stetsenko, the dialectic involves “an emphasis on and attention to the constant movement and dynamism, change and transition, fluidity and historicity, totality and interdependence” (2008).

This praxis begins with an immanent critique of conventional pedagogies in order to see if their assumptions and claims are adequate to the type of praxis needed to both understand and challenge and eventually overcome capitalism’s expansionistic dynamic. So we need both a philosophy of praxis that is coherent and forms of organization—horizontal and democratic and sometimes possibly vertical—that best reflect our praxis. Now it is a praxis of being and becoming, of mental and manual labor, of thinking and doing, of reading and writing the word and the world (in the Freirean sense); in short, it is a practice of the self, a form of self-fashioning but not simply in the Foucauldian sense or in the Nietzschean “will to power” sense.

Theory and practice are contradictions in a unity where they interpenetrate, define and presuppose each other while co-evolving in the process of development (Stetsenko, 2008). Theory and practice do not exist separately from each other. Theory and practice are intrinsically linked in a dialectical unity (Stetsenko, 2008). With respect to critical pedagogy, we can thus pose the questions: What are the theories that guide the production of critical knowledge? What are the actions that need to be undertaken to help inform our theories of knowledge in the production of social transformation? How can the development of critical consciousness inform a theory of knowledge, or a theory of social transformation? How can a theory of knowledge production aid in the development of critical consciousness that leads to acts of social transformation?

As Anna Stetsenko (2009) notes, in the classical worldview, knowledge is defined as the inner depiction of an outer mind-independent reality and phenomena, but this has little to do with the practical actions in and on the world. The focus, then, in a critical pedagogy is to bring together knowing and doing, words and deeds. In this way, the production of critical knowledge and critical knowledge itself cannot be ever thought of as separate realms.

A revolutionary critical pedagogy, then, is both a reading practice where we read the word in the context of the world, and a practical activity where we write ourselves as subjective forces into the text of history—but this does not mean that making history is only an effect of discourse, a form of metonymy, the performative dimension of language, a rhetorical operation, a tropological system. No, reality is more than textual self-difference. Praxis is directed at engaging the word and the world dialectically as an effect of class contradictions. A critical pedagogy is a way of challenging the popular imaginary (which has no “outside” to the text) that normalizes the core cultural foundations of capitalism and the normative force of the state. In

other words, the ruling capitalist ideology tells us in numerous ways that there is no alternative to capitalist social relations.

Critical pedagogy is a reading and an acting upon the social totality by turning abstract “things” into a material force for liberation, by helping abstract thought lead to praxis, to revolutionary praxis, to the bringing about of a social universe that is not based on the value form of labor and financial gain but based on human need.

Yes, ideas and reason have an important role to play in a meaningful account of life. We need to understand our place in the rational unfolding of the world, but more important, we need to play an active—and indeed, protagonistic—role in the unfolding of history. As critical educators, we can’t move history through ideas alone, we need to transcend the capitalist law of value and the social relations that constrain us. We transcend the alienation of this world by transforming the material world. Critical pedagogy is illuminated by an insight made foundational in the work of Paulo Freire: that politics and pedagogy are not an exclusive function of having the right knowledge via some kind of “ah-ha” awakening of the revolutionary soul. Critical consciousness is not the root of commitment to revolutionary struggle but rather the product of such a commitment. An individual does not have to be critically self-conscious in order to feel the obligation to help the poor and the dispossessed. In fact, it is in the very act of struggling that individuals become critically conscious and aware. Praxis begins with practice. This is the bedrock of revolutionary critical pedagogy’s politics of solidarity and commitment. While radical scholarship and theoretical ideas are important—extremely important—people do not become politically aware and then take part in radical activity. Rather, participating in contentious acts of revolutionary struggle creates new protagonistic political identities that become refined through theoretical engagement and refreshed in every moment by practices of critical reflexivity. Critically informed political identities do not motivate revolutionary action but rather develop as a logical consequence of such action. And the action summoned by revolutionary critical educators is always heterogeneous, multifaceted, protagonistic, democratic and participatory—yet always focalized—anti-capitalist struggle.

For some, making a commitment to help humanity liberate itself from its capitalist chains provokes an almost obsessive desire to understand everything that that commitment entails. For instance, a commitment to the oppressed is frequently postponed because of a fear that such a commitment might turn out to be all encompassing. This can be accompanied by an almost obsessive desire to know the full implications of serving the oppressed (i.e., how much time will it require; to what extent could it interfere with my other commitments; what kind of sacrifices will it require?). But as Luigi Giussani (1995) presciently remarks, “Making a commitment only after understanding it completely would mean never making a commitment” (p. 72). And it is through exercising our commitment (which is always undertaken in the realm of spirit as well as within material social relations of cooperation within our sensuous existence as producers) that critical consciousness begins to develop through action and doing, that is, through praxis.

So what do we mean by praxis? Imagine it as learning from our actions and acting from our learning. Theory and practice, knowing and doing, they are mutually constituting, and which comes first depends upon historical and situational contexts. But it is invariably an intervention. As I have written previously:

Teaching critically is always a leap across a dialectical divide that is necessary for any act of knowing to occur. Knowing is a type of dance, a movement, but a self-conscious one. Criticality is not a line stretching into eternity, but rather it is a circle. In other words, knowing can be the object of our knowing, it can be self-reflective, and it is something in which we can make an intervention. In which we must make an intervention. (McLaren, 2008, p. 476)

This brings us then to the distinction between abstract utopian praxis and concrete utopian praxis. An abstract utopian praxis remains external to the daily struggles of the popular majorities, and is antiseptically cleaved from the toil and suffering of the poor. It is located in the imaginary world removed from the messy webs of material relationships in which we are all objectively situated through the social relations of production. A concrete utopianism (see the writings of Ruth Levitas (1990) on the important theories of Ernst Bloch) is grounded in the creative potential of human beings living in the messy web of capitalist social relations—in the here and now—to overcome and transform their conditions of unfreedom. The epistemology in question must have a practical effect in the world. This echoes Walter Benjamin’s argument that if we merely contemplate the world we will only arrive at a knowledge of evil (see McNally, 2001). Knowledge of the good is knowledge of a practice designed to change reality; it derives from action, from contemplation. We judge the truth of our actions in their effects on the lives of the oppressed.

Everyday resistance in the streets needs a larger rudder, something to give the acts of emancipation not only ballast but also direction. It is precisely the double valence, or mixture of theory and practice (praxis), that prevents our utopian dreaming from becoming overly abstract and metaphysical and prevents everyday acts of resistance from becoming free floating and directionless, detached from the larger project of global emancipation. It directs everyday resistance towards a concrete utopia, grounded in everyday struggle. The repressed part of critical pedagogy returns, but it returns from the future. And, it is this delay, this deferral of action that allows us the space for dialogue, a dialogue that can serve as the conditions of possibility for a new beginning. Revolutionary critical pedagogy is a trauma that can be acted out hysterically or with a sufficient distance. We can create a liminal classroom where all identities are leveled and we confront each other in an existential void as equals, or we can create the necessary distance for critical self-reflexivity, or we can engage in a dialectical dance involving both. Of course, there are those critics who say that we cannot have critical distance today since the society of the spectacle necessarily subsumes criticality under distraction, given the nature of the new technologies and the media, where separations are concealed by an imaginary unity (Foster, 1996).

A critical pedagogy is about the hard work of building community alliances, of challenging school policy, of providing teachers with alternative and oppositional teaching materials. It has little to do with awakening the “revolutionary soul” of students—this is merely a re-fetishization of the individual and the singular under the banner of the collective and serves only to bolster the untruth fostered by capitalist social relations and postpone the answer to the question: Is revolution possible today? It falls into the same kind of condition that critical pedagogy had been originally formulated to combat. It diverts us from the following challenge: Can we organize our social, cultural and economic life differently so as to transcend the exploitation that capital affords us?

Do we today possess the ability to pull others and ourselves out of the gap of contemporary madness? Can we return the character one is playing to the actor playing it? And can we help the actor distinguish himself from his spiritual essence and his ontological vocation as an agent of social justice? Can we once again live in the world of exteriority, affirming our history, values, practices and spaces of liberty, without them being rooted in narcissistic, pretentious and totalizing systems of intelligibility that would legislate uncritically for us all manner of thought and activity? We have taken the position over the years that transcendence must always remain within the immanence of human possibilities. But first you need to have some idea of where you want to go. If you don't know where you want to go, it is pretty clear that no path will take you there (Lebowitz, 2010). What we need in critical pedagogy are strategic and tactical approaches in creating a world free from value production and a vision of the future that is gleaned from understanding how we are made by society and the educational system to be unfree, chained inside the prison house of capitalist social relations. Marx's vision of a society was one that would permit the full development of human beings as a result of the protagonistic activity of human beings in revolutionary praxis—the simultaneous changing of circumstances and human activity or self-change. This key link in Marx was the concept of human development and practice. In other words, as Marx makes clear, there are always two products as the result of our activity, the change in circumstances and the change in people themselves. Socialist human beings produce themselves only through their own activity (Lebowitz, 2010).

Marxist humanists believe that transcendence means not only abolishing the dehumanizing conditions of human life under capitalism but also going beyond the given to create the conditions of possibility for individuals to shape their own destiny, read anew the past, de-mythify the present and generate meaning from the multiple contexts people inhabit. It is a process, one in which we have in mind the betterment of our social condition. Of course, it is impossible to create a classroom free of the totality of social relations that make up the social universe of capital such that students or teachers can take charge of the rudder of history. Pedagogical struggle will always be contingent, and provisional, and relational as well as disciplined and most certainly at times mutinous.

We struggle to negate social structures and social relations that negate us as human beings. This includes aspects of classroom life: of authoritarianism but not authority; of apathy and a heightened sense of individualism; of fear of speaking about difficult topics; of a resistance to move outside disciplinary boundaries and of questioning the interrelationship of ideas and practices. If we could depict our own unity, what would we create? But such a vision and struggle will not be absolute, a once-and-for-all moment—or even a series of moments. It is a protracted struggle waged every day in the schools, the factories, the boardrooms and the churches and community centers.

The self-transcending formation of the meanings and values that illuminate our lives isn't restricted to the realm of ideas. It is an exigency and a demand. Our future has to be fought for through our projects, in the various realms of class struggle itself, in the productive dimension of history, within history's process of humanization as we become more and more conscious of ourselves as social beings—that is, within all dimensions of human creativity. The ideas of critical pedagogy—as well as its practices—are never independent of the social conditions of the actions and processes that produced them. The concept of a revolutionary critical pedagogy

implies some form of relation between knowledge of a domain formally constituted as “the social setting” in which learning takes place (such as classrooms) and another domain formally constituted as “the pedagogical” or where “teaching” occurs in the most general sense (and this includes venues other than classrooms). Revolutionary critical pedagogy analyzes pedagogical practices with protocols that are specific to the humanities and social sciences in general and Marxist and critical theory in particular. Depending on the level of detail at which analysis takes place, the object of critical pedagogy may take the gross form of a totality (capitalist society in general), or it may exist in nuanced forms: specific classroom practices or sites of knowledge production such as the media, community centers, conferences, church basements, coffee houses, etc., or some subset of pedagogy (i.e., definitions or generalizations about teaching and learning found in encyclopedias, education journals or handbooks of education).

But critical educators recognize that pedagogical acts of knowing and engagement can neither be given in advance nor arbitrarily constructed by an analytic choice, but are, rather, necessarily implicated in and derived from particular interpretations that are grounded in our social life, that is, in our everyday experiences. They have an experiential existence, a social existence, before they have an analytic existence. Experiences are never transparent, and they require critical languages that can interpret them and actions that can transform them. Otherwise, we are all guided by our quick-tempered opinions, our raw emotions, our unconditioned reflexes. And where is the morality in this?

Indeed, critical pedagogy seeks to challenge the core cultural foundations of capitalism that normalize the idea that there exists no alternative to capitalist social relations, no way of challenging the status quo, and no way of defeating inequality, injustice and suffering among human and non-human animals that populate this vast planet of ours. Revolutionary critical educators question capitalist concepts—such as wage labor and value production—alongside their students in order to consider alternative ways of subsisting and learning in the world so as to continually transform it along the arc of social and economic justice. They seek new democratic visions of organizing our schools and our communities through a conscious praxis that self-reflexively examines the historical context of our ideas, social relations, institutions and human relationships while opening space for the possibilities of the popular imaginary. As such, critical pedagogy calls for a movement that is anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-heterosexist and pro-democratic. The strategy I see myself as supporting—to challenge capitalism at its roots—requires that we question normative ways of thinking about the world that corporate advertising and consumer-based culture continuously push upon us both blatantly and deviously. We must look beyond Western, Euro/U.S.-centric ways of knowing the world that are based in capitalist wastefulness and a lack of regard for the planet, in order to consider alternative and oppositional ways of thinking about and acting towards/against the imperialism of free-market, neoliberal, global capitalism.

Rather than fall into the epistemologies of empire that designate certain knowledges as normative and non-dominant knowledges as “other,” revolutionary critical pedagogy must find creative purpose and protagonistic agency in embracing all epistemologies by acknowledging how peoples everywhere engage in a reciprocal relationship with the world from their own socio-historical contexts. It is through such a process of denying epistemologies of empire and recognizing the entirety of diverse human lifeways and thought that a new social order can be envisioned (Monzó & McLaren, 2014).

Indeed, this new social order should not be limited to Western/European responses to liberalism and capitalism alone, but rather should include the views of those who continue to suffer under the expansion of Western civilization while recognizing that their perspectives in response to colonization may not fully overlap with communist/Marxist responses to capitalism. Developing another artisanship of pedagogical practices also means interrogating Eurocentered epistemologies as well as producing decolonizing and decolonial knowledges through understanding our subjectivities as historical and biographical loci of enunciation. In other words, we need to engage in a geopolitics of knowing that will produce a geopolitics of knowledge that follows from a process of political and epistemic delinking from what is destructive about the grand Western episteme and cosmology.

Dialogic communication is born out of the experience of opposites, out of antagonisms structured in relation to the central conflict between capital and labor. There is a “witness” to knowing precisely because the experience of consciousness is always meaningful within the presence of another. Dialogical consciousness emerges out of conflict between the ego experienced as a subject versus the ego experienced as an object; between the ego experienced as worthy of respect and praise and the ego experienced as bad, degenerate and less than human; between the ego experienced as an active agent of history and experienced as a passive victim of oppression, betrayal, domination or exploitation. We strive to become active beings who can affect the world around us, but capital has, instead, embalmed us (through processes such as alienation and reification) so that we experience ourselves as constantly empty, as never being able to heal the jagged tear inside of our hemorrhaging self, never being able to stem the loss of our own agency as citizens from capitalism’s saber slash across the cheekbone of history. We are placeless subjects having not been satiated by the determinations of bourgeois life. Critical pedagogy makes this conflict an object of knowledge, a dialogical mode of understanding.

It is the power of critical reflection that separates the knowing subject from the object of knowledge so that the anguish and misery of everyday life can be examined; but critical pedagogy also enables the knowing subject to experience being the object of knowledge, as the “other” then becomes the knowing subject. That critical pedagogy enables the knowing subject and the known subject to co-exist within the hydra-headed Medusan horror of capitalist exploitation. Critical pedagogy therefore functions as Athena’s mirror shield that enabled Perseus to view Medusa through a reflection rather than directly; it protects the knowing subject through *acto in distans* from being consumed by the alienation of capitalism and the coloniality of being through a dialogical approach to reading the word and the world. Our identity is over time given continuity and coherence when we engage others not simply linguistically, as a set of linguistic relations, but as body-selves. The process of individuation—*Auseinandersetzung*—has as its most characteristic feature the encounter of oppositions (which in the capitalist world are really often distinctions within structural hierarchies that are metaphysically classified by the mind as oppositions) often experienced as antagonisms. This engagement—this dyadic relationship between self and other—gives form and substance to our sense of self. We don’t just “language forth” our social universe, we “body forth” our social universe. Human consciousness is not the mere “reflection” of material processes and relations—as this would be a pre-dialectical stance—rather, consciousness and language are modes of our embodied being with others. Physical objects have culturo-technological meaning because they are embedded, as McNally (2001) notes, in networks of human meanings. Commodities have meaning according to the social relations and contexts that situate the individuals who interact with them. Every



context is intercontextual, referring to other contexts of meaning. They interact, creating what is called a linguistic sphere. The body is integral to history and language. Consciousness, language and culture are all vital aspects of our bodies.

We are “seeing bodies”—bodies that are the experiential sites of spatiality and temporality rather than the transcendental category of mind (McNally, 2001, p. 124). Rather than teachers viewing students as disembodied minds, apart from teachers and other students and the outside world, we can only overcome the fragmentary character of our experience of our fermenting subjectivity and the world through our interactions with others. We need to instate the corporeal individual into our educational theorizing in and through the dyadic relationship between teacher and student, between the word and the world.

When we contemplate the current state of humanity, we are confronted with a myriad of choices. We can imagine the putrid stench of flesh decaying from regret; ambition lying fallow from an over-tilled darkness; voices rasping, hollowed out by unwelcomed perseverance; hope rattling like a dust-choked dream coughing in your brainpan. We can let death jeer at us, its chilling rictus pulled tight over our fears like a Canadian winter cap, or we can use the past, not as the deathbed of our last remorseful slumber, but transformed into a bow forged from our weary heartstrings, sending us spinning, a delirious flame shot into the temple of fate. Let us always be fearless teachers, even unto our last breath, and hope that such fearlessness will lead to wisdom. And such wisdom will lead to a transformation of this world to another world where love and justice prevail.

So far as I am aware, there exists no *Critical Pedagogy for Idiots* (although probably there is a proposal somewhere sitting on some publisher’s desk) and there is no easy way to grasp the capitalist present. We need to explore how we can construct systems of intelligibility from the conceptual intellect, where explanatory systems of classification and critical architectonics and interpretation cannot be separated from the underlying phenomenological descriptions of lived experiences of men, women, children and where, through logical inferences or critical theories we can tease out capital’s internal relations in some semblance of dialectical reasoning. To move from description to interpretation is not an easy task. We must not simply ally ourselves with compatible ideological interpretations but must be willing to challenge all our fraudulent assumptions. This includes a de-dogmatization about the merits of capitalism and the de-reification and de-colonization of the capitalist present. We need to be able to decondition beliefs and assumptions of our working epistemology, to de-reify and de-automatize everyday reality, smashing conditioned attributes that clutter our daily unthinking commonplace observations. Critical pedagogy does more than provide a Felliniesque tracking shot exposing the flamboyant earthiness of everyday life; it is a praxis that develops the kind of mindful protagonistic agency necessary to sift the through and transform those social relations of production in which the struggle for necessity are situated historically and materially.

In our current industrialist and post-industrialist world, we reside unhappily in a monophasic culture where alternative states of consciousness are avoided in favor of perceptual and cognitive processes oriented outward, in accordance with materialistic expectations related to the external world, thereby reducing its adaptational viability (Laughlin, 2011). We need to draw our attention to and learn from polyphasic indigenous cultures that value the dream-life, that are mindful of other domains of reality where dreams, myths and rituals make sense outside

of the limitations of Western epistemology. We shouldn't be discouraged from accessing mythopoetic dreaming in the inner theater of the mind, mastering the skills of shamanic dreaming and the techniques that drive lucidity and intentionality (Laughlin, 2011). Of course we are Marxist materialists, but we need to understand that dreams are fundamental to our waking life and all new worlds first appear in our dreams. Otherwise we make decisions about how to create a world outside of capitalist value production in situations where our hearts are encysted, and we remain sealed off from a deep dialogue with important dimensions of the Self. We need revolutionary dreaming if we are to smash through the firewall between piecemeal reform and liberation and this will require more than a change in the social relations of production but also endogenous spiritual development. While I am not hereby weakening my demand for a Marxist material analysis and sociopolitical project, neither am I intending a generalized fantasy of 'plastic shamanism' instead of a carefully situated and respectful set of political/pedagogical relations between first nations peoples and the wider settler culture. My comments here are self-consciously limited and meant only as suggestive and dignifying of the need for seriously engaging the decolonization of metaphysics at the level of the sociohistorical body of the proletariat. It remains a part of a wider dialectic that takes into account many different and variegated forms of struggle – not only around class, but also around race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, spirituality, political organization and youth. It also supports a dialectical unity and coherence around different revolutionary movements dedicated to overcome the capitalist order.

When occasionally the storm of everyday life breaks, and the chaos ebbs, and we enjoy a brief respite from the ever-increasing anxiety embedded in the macrostructures of daily life, do not expect the poor and the suffering to float away in their dreams in the drifting stillness of the night, on some wave of elation, anointed by some ineffable and inscrutable daimon; for the horror of everyday life knows no space of quiet beyond perhaps a few Zen moments of reprieve, Americanized into dorm room koans. For the torture will soon begin again—unemployment, insecurity, lack of medical insurance, no place to run except smack into oblivion. Unless of course we transform the system through a social revolution that will shake the world. As Marxist humanists note, moral calls for peace in a world rife with wars resulting from inter-capitalist competition is utopian; the opposite of war is not peace but social revolution. A social revolution that must be cobbled from, among other things, blood, sweat, tears, a rejection of the present capitalist order, a positive humanist vision, a dialectical philosophy and the cultivation of hope out of our engagement in acts of insurrection in the streets and on the picket lines.

The decisive marks of our humanity today appear in our lack of compassion and imagination and our unwillingness to confront what appears to be the insoluble parallelism of capitalism and freedom. Many Americans cannot recognize this parallelism as, in reality, an antimony, since for them capitalism is at one with a larger all-encompassing value that preserves freedom: democracy. Yet Marx (1973; 1983; 1984; 1984a) has shown us that capitalism and human freedom are not simply mirror aspects of each other, aspects perceived within different political registers but they actually work against each other. In the pedagogical struggle for a direct or participatory democracy that overcomes the telos of value-augmentation, we turn to the field of education, and a Freirean-inspired critical pedagogy. Here, we incorporate what Mary Watkins refers to as “imaginal dialogues”, which is a means “of creating worlds, of developing imaginative sympathy through which we go beyond the limits of our own corporeality and range of life experiences by embodying in imagination the perspectives of others, actual and imaginal”

(1986, p. 84). Relating to imaginal others could mean embodying points of view created by artists, musicians, artists, writers, and by our personal fantasies. But these need to be imaginal dialogues that further our goals of creating alternatives to relations of capitalist exploitation. After Watkins, we stress this as a developmental process, that is, we are concerned “with the development of the imaginal other from an extension of the ego, a passive recipient of the imaginer’s intention, to an autonomous and animate agency in its own right” (1986, p. 86). Here we do not presume that there is only one generalized imaginal other; rather, we are “more concerned with the deepening of characterization of many imaginal others” (1986, p. 86). Here we “will not dwell on how the imaginal other is really ourselves, but pursue further how the imaginal other is gradually released from our egocentrism to an autonomy from which he or she creates us as much as we create him or her” (1986, p. 86). We work, of course, with a prior ontological commitment to standing in solidarity with and alongside the oppressed. In our pedagogical work in this area we can benefit greatly from the work on “playbuilding” by Joe Norris, as well as work by Richard Courtney, Theresa Dudeck, Keith Johnstone and Augusto Boal. My own work (McLaren, 1986) on the liminal servant is perhaps of use here.

Within US capitalist society, academics continue to hide behind a politics of neutrality. I believe that it is not only possible but imperative that academics and researchers make a “commitment” as public intellectuals to a specific action or consider as an “obligation” their actions regarding the relationship between a specific premise and their concluding interpretations and explanations. That, of course, depends upon whether or not they agree to consider both creatively and dialectically the idea that our interpretation of the world is inseparable from our transformation of the world—both are linked socially and ethically. As such, a dialectical and critical self-consciousness of the relationship between being and doing (or being and becoming) becomes a part of the very reality one is attempting to understand and requires an ethical rather than an epistemological move, which is why ethics always precedes epistemology in the field of critical pedagogy. Only an ethics of compassion, a commitment to ending the horror of neoliberal capitalism through the creating of a social universe outside of value production, and respect for diversity can guide us out of the neoliberal capitalist impasse that we face. Such critical self-consciousness steeled by a commitment to the oppressed becomes revolutionary if, for instance, your analysis is placed within the class perspective of the oppressed, that is, within the class perspective of the proletariat, cognitariat, precariat, etc. Logic and reason must be anchored by values and virtues that are grounded in an obligation to help the most powerless and those who suffer most under the heel of capitalism.

The vision for socialism that I support as a part of revolutionary critical pedagogy is grounded in the notion that a philosophy of praxis is not simply a stance one takes toward the world, but a commitment to changing the world through the “onto-creative” process of becoming fully human. It is grounded in the notion that we discover reality in the process of discovering our humanity within the continuity and fullness of history. While capitalism abstracts from our subjectivity and turns us into objects and instruments of exploitation, our personhood can never be reduced to this set of abstract social relations since we are both the subject and object of history and play a part in pushing back against the economic system that produces us. While we reflect the ensemble of social relations that inform our humanness we also have the ability of transforming those social relations by assigning meaning to them. Those meanings, of course, vary in time and place and are part of the flesh of our dreams as much as the sinews and sweat of our material life.

To echo a famous Glen Campbell song (written by John Hartford and released in 1967), “it’s knowing I’m not shackled by forgotten words and bonds, and the ink stains that are dried upon some line” that sustains hope, a hope that wends through our hearts. And “through cupped hands ‘round the tin can” we can still find memories worth remembering, remembrances that remain gentle on our mind. We must know the world as something that is worth saving. And we must create a viable plan for transforming the world that achieves hegemonic ascendancy among the working-classes so that it becomes less likely that the revolution ahead will not turn into its opposite. And by viable plan, I don’t mean some blueprint for creating a steampunk universe where we sport oversized goggles, Gothic molded pauldrons and iron and leather spaulders and sail the skies in whale-shaped airships to some promised brass-fitted and steam propulsion dreamland. I mean rethinking socialism and democracy from the bottom up and bringing together dialectical philosophy with political activism through the development of a philosophy of praxis.

The falcon is “turning in the widening gyre,” beware! Do you not hear Yeats’s anguished cry as “things fall apart,” as the center collapses like a sunken lung? Beware the Spiritus Mundi, blackened with pitch and winter catarrh, carrying portents from lost scrolls hidden in the damp abode of billionaires’ yachts. A new messiah is being spawned from the curdling afterbirth of history’s raw defeat, its spine bent forward like a twisted compass, pointing to Silicon Valley. This “rough beast,” this “rising Sphinx” with a smile of infinite bandwidth and burning fiber optic eyes encoded with apocalypse wades slowly through deep deposits of NSA data, gleefully sinking in the muck of its own creation. It is up to us to fight this beast and to fight it with every means that we have. I think it was the poet June Jordan who said, “we’re the ones we’ve been waiting for,” a line made famous in a song by Sweet Honey in the Rock. Well, what can I say except, “we’re the ones we’ve been waiting for!” The time for the struggle is now. And it is a struggle that will tax both our minds and bodies. It will be fought in the seminar rooms, in the picket lines, and on the streets. Let’s get ready for a revitalized revolutionary critical pedagogy.

As I emphasized earlier, critical pedagogy is a reading of and an acting upon the social totality by turning abstract “things” into a material force for liberation, by helping abstract thought and action lead to praxis, to revolutionary praxis, to the bringing about of a social universe that is not based on the value form of labor and financial gain but based on human need. I wish to emphasize again that critical consciousness is not the root of commitment to revolutionary struggle but rather the product of such a commitment. An individual does not have to be critically self-conscious and well-versed in the theories of the Frankfurt School or the writings of liberation theologians in order to feel the obligation to help the poor and the dispossessed. In fact, it is in the very act of struggling alongside the oppressed that individuals become critically conscious and aware and motivated to help others.

A revolutionary critical pedagogy operates from an understanding that the basis of education is political and that spaces need to be created where students can imagine a different world outside of the capitalist law of value, where alternatives to capitalism and capitalist institutions can be discussed and debated, and where dialogue can occur about why so many revolutions in past history turned into their opposite (McLaren & Rikowski, 2000). It looks to create a world where social labor is no longer an indirect part of the total social labor but a direct part of it, where a new mode of distribution can prevail not based on socially necessary labor time but on actual labor time, where alienated human relations are subsumed by transparent ones,

where freely associated individuals can work towards a permanent revolution, where the division between mental and manual labor can be abolished, where patriarchal relations and other privileging hierarchies of oppression and exploitation can be ended, where we can truly exercise the principle ‘from each according to his or her ability and to each according to his or her need’, where we can traverse the terrain of universal rights unburdened by necessity, moving sensuously and fluidly within that ontological space where subjectivity is exercised as a form of capacity-building and creative self-activity within the social totality (see Hudis, 2005, 2012, 2014).

Here I am referring to a social space where labor is no longer exploited and becomes a striving that will benefit all human beings, where labor refuses to be instrumentalized and commodified and ceases to be a compulsory activity, and where the full development of human capacity is encouraged. It also builds upon forms of self-organization that are part of the history of liberation struggles worldwide, such as those that developed during the civil rights, feminist and worker movements and those organizations of today such as Anonymous, Idle No More, Movimiento 15-M/Indignados and the Zapatistas and those that emphasize participatory and direct democracy.

There is room for all at the table of restoration, a creative site of possibility, where we can contemplate our existence in the present and the not yet, where we can set freedom in motion but not fully realize it, where we can move towards redemption but not quite achieve resolution, where art can bring forth subconscious truth, where we can reconcile ourselves with others and where we can embrace our brother and sister trade unionists, civil libertarians, anarchists, small peasant proprietors, revolutionary intellectuals, precariats, metadidacts, students of Rhizomatics, agricultural workers, students, anti-war activists, Marxists, Black and Latino activists, teachers, eco-socialists, fast-food workers, factory workers and animal rights activists and all the while try to love our enemies. We seek to replace instrumental reason with critical rationality, fostering popular dissent and creating workers’ and communal councils and community decision-making structures.

We continue to struggle in our educational projects to eliminate rent-seeking and for-profit financial industries; we seek to distribute incomes without reference to individual productivity, but rather according to need; and we seek to substantially reduce hours of labor and make possible, through socialist general education, a well-rounded and scientific and intercultural development of the young (Reitz, 2013). This involves a larger epistemological fight against neoliberal and imperial common sense, and a grounding of our critical pedagogy in a concrete universal that can welcome diverse and particular social formations (San Juan, 2009) joined in class struggle. It is a struggle that has come down to us not from the distant past, but from thoughts that have ricocheted back to us from the future.

Heeding the warning of the greatest of all critical educators, comrade Jesus, the time has come to announce the Kingdom of God (which is here and now and not found in some metaphysical pie in the sky when you die or some harrowing metapunk cry to stomp out the capitalist system), to remain steadfast in our ethical obligation to struggle against differentiated wealth (inequality), and to be mindful of the role of the mother of Jesus, whom Mexico praises as La Virgen de Guadalupe, who is both female, indigenous or mixed race, and the mother of all the oppressed peoples of the world. Remember that race, class and gender are recounted in the

Pauline epistles, specifically Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

### Note

This article draws, in part, upon McLaren’s remarks delivered as the inaugural Adam Renner Education for Social Justice Lecture at the Rouge Forum Conference “Education and the State: A Critical Antidote to the Commercialized, Racist, and Militarist Order” at Lewis University in Romeoville, IL. At the time, McLaren’s Rouge Forum talk utilized a number of selected sections of already published articles by McLaren. For the updated version of this talk, selected sections from more recently published work by McLaren were also used and some of them can be found in Peter McLaren, *Pedagogy of Insurrection: From Resurrection to Revolution*. New York: Peter Lang Publications, 2015. Thanks to Richard Kahn for suggesting some theoretical directions.

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