

A pedagogy of mourning: tarrying with/in tragedy, terror, and tension

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*“Is there something to be gained from grieving,
from tarrying with grief,
from remaining exposed to its unbearability?”*
(Butler, 2004, p.30)

Foreword

Here are my remembrances as a teacher-traveler¹ around my live(d) experiences in a sometimes (always already) violent world. I attempt a narrative reflection on peace and/as violence in our worlds as we go about the business of teaching, learning and living together. It is preoccupied with the work of mourning and its possibilities for pedagogies for peace; a wondering and wandering through stories, accompanied by narrative ghosts of past, present, and the always imminent future.

Inspired by the work of Ted Aoki, this memory work is metonymic, slipping between different places and times. Such metonymic “memory plays the part of the shifter... the trickster, taking on ambiguous syntactic and semantic role of both here and there, this and that, then and now” (Hasebe-Ludt, 2003, p.463). In these metonymic movements, in these “spaces of generative possibilities in between” (Hasebe-Ludt, 2003, p.464) it is my hope that something will happen for me and for the reader; that there will be a *provocation*. My sense of the word provocation is inspired by Smith’s (1999) idea of provocation and/as pedagogy; a kind of productivity and a calling forth. This is echoed in Robertson’s (2006) observation that provocation and education are “etymological siblings” (p.175) where *educare* involves a “bringing forth” (Jardine, 2000, p.115) of life. These authors invite a return to life and the work of education that embraces all their difficulties and passions, because it is precisely in these tensions that we find generative possibilities.

From this perspective, I view the writing (and perhaps reading) of this text and the mourning it involves as an inherently pedagogical endeavor closely related to questions of peace, violence, and human connection. Above all else it is an invitation in/to difficulty, a provocation to pedagogical movement. I enter in the middle; a narrative moment, a movement. Moving forwards... four words: Tragedy, Terror, Tension, Tarry.

¹ As teacher-traveler, I inhabit a socio-historical positioning as a Canadian, white, middle-class, monolingual Anglo, Protestant woman. It is from this position that I read the worlds I travel and work my memories.



1st Movement – Tragedy/Terror

May 8, 1999

I am living and working in a small village on the outskirts of Beijing, China. I teach English as additional language to the children of well-to-do and politically well-connected families at an experimental school. This morning, I am standing at a lectern facing my grade eleven students speechless and with heavy heart. A terrible event has just occurred. In the Kosovo intervention, a NATO² air-strike in Belgrade (apparently targeting an enemy arms depot) has resulted in the destruction of the Chinese Embassy and the deaths of three journalists staying there: “Shao Yunhuan, 48, of the state-run Xinhua [New China] News Agency, and Xu Xinghu, 29, and his wife, Zhu Ying, 27, both with the national newspaper Guangming Daily”³. Confronted with such tragedy I have no words to offer my students. There is a lengthy silence that is finally broken by a young man, the class representative, of whom I am especially fond. He stands up from his desk at the back of the room and quietly asks, “Teacher, why would your country want to bomb our country?” And after a pause, tentatively, “Do you still like us?” At a complete loss, I begin to weep.

This was not the first or the last time that my Chinese students would move me to tears. What could I say? How could I respond to this terrible tragedy that had happened? It was a most poignant instance where life was restored “to its original difficulty” (Caputo, 1987, p.1) within the walls of a classroom (Jardine, 2000); a space of tension where pedagogy was confronted, brutally by the unpredictability and ambiguity of life. Of course that day I made reassuring remarks in a choked voice about the differences between macro politics and the micro interactions between individuals. I made stumbling excuses that I did not understand what had happened, but most surely I still cared for them all very much and that nothing could ever change that. Still, a terrible tension remained between us born of confusion, contradictions, and words that could not be spoken.

In the days that followed, public protests in cities across China had the dual effect of uniting the Chinese people in national sovereignty as well as stoking anti-

² North Atlantic Treaty Organization

³ These names were obtained from an online CNN article entitled *China Mourns Victims of Belgrade Embassy Bombing* (MacKinnon, May 12, 1999), but it seems significant that these same names are absent from the North Atlantic Council’s press release on May 8, 1999, where they express their “deep regret for the tragic mistake of the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade”. They go on to offer “the sincere sympathy and condolences of all members of the Alliance ... to the victims, their families and the Chinese government”. This is a recognition and yet a denouncing in the same rhetorical move. There is the presence of remorse coupled with an absence of specifics; it cannot name names. In a Derridian paradox, the presence of the three dead journalists seems all the more glaring in the absence of their names. As Judith Butler observes, “I am as much constituted by those I do grieve for as by those whose deaths I disavow, whose nameless and faceless deaths form the melancholic background for my social world” (Butler, 2004, p.46). This idea affects me greatly and I will return to it in various ways throughout this text. I sense the importance of naming names in order to recognize a life and to make space for the public recognition of a death.

American sentiments⁴. In Beijing, the local English language radio station consistently referred to the “*American* led NATO bombing” and university students, by the busload, arrived at the gates of the U.S. Embassy to hurl eggs, stones, bricks, and balloons filled with red paint in protest of what had become popularly understood in terms of a “terrorist attack” (Gries, 2004). It was a time when my school’s administration discouraged Canadian ‘foreign experts’ from traveling into the city, and if we absolutely had to do so, we were warned that we ought to carry our Canadian passports to avoid being mistaken for U.S. citizens. From my perspective though, most of these events had very little impact on my day-to-day life. It was inside the classroom that the aftermath of the bombing was most difficult for me.

At our school, the students of each homeroom class were responsible for decorating a chalkboard on the back wall of their classroom with an appropriate monthly theme. Immediately following the embassy bombing, all classes were expected to recreate their chalkboard displays as memorials to the victims and as protests against the terrible injustice they had suffered. In one room the students had pasted up large images clipped from newspapers that graphically showed the bloody, broken bodies of the journalists and others injured in the bombing. From my lectern at the front of the room, these images were inescapable and deeply disturbing. Yet strangely even more troubling was a careful chalk drawing amongst these images that read “NATO Nazis” in a red crossed out circle (much like a ‘No Smoking’ sign). At the time I could not put my finger on what bothered me so much about this text. Was it the association of NATO – and by affiliation, Canada – with another group responsible for unspeakable atrocities? Was it that this association caused me, for perhaps the first time in my life, to be ashamed of being a Canadian? Reflecting on these experiences now, from another time and place, I am surprised at how I overlooked the obvious.

The particular significance of this text, the reason it had struck such terror in my heart, was that it was written in *English*. Typically any words written in the students’ chalkboard displays were completely inscribed in Chinese characters. I am led to puzzle about the meaning of this English message, “NATO Nazis”. Who was this message for? Did the student who designed this image intend to address it directly to her/his English-speaking Canadian teachers? Did she/he want to be sure that we received, unequivocally in our own language, a public reprimand? That we should be made to feel their disapproval and reminded of our own complicity in the terror of this event? Here I am powerfully reminded of words that have also taken hold of bell hooks (1994): “*This is the oppressor’s language yet I need it to talk to you*” (p.167). Was this image a way to anonymously speak those words of anger that could not be said aloud? Words that could not pass from student to teacher, from Chinese to ‘foreign expert’⁵? These are questions that cannot be answered, so I am left to ponder

⁴ A careful analysis of the events around the Belgrade Embassy Bombing in 1999 and their effects on Chinese anti-American sentiment, as well as their effects on an enigmatic and rapidly evolving popular nationalism in China, is found in Gries’s (2004) book entitled *China’s New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy*.

⁵ ‘Foreign expert’ is the term used to describe foreigners who have attained a work permit for employment in China. However, this is a problematic term from a post-colonial perspective. It demonstrates clearly Pennycook’s (1998) argument that “the traces left by colonialism run deep” (p.2) and that colonialist discourses still adhere in English language, discourses through which “constructions of Superiority and Inferiority were [and still are] produced” (p.19). Pennycook writes, “It is important to understand colonialism not only in terms of its macro-political structures

the meaning of my student's response to the terror and tragedy in Belgrade; the giving of two words, both foreign and terrible: *NATO. Nazis.*

2nd Movement – Terror/Tension

September 12, 2001

As usual, I am in the office early this morning. Like most of the other Canadian teachers working at our school campus located in the countryside just east of Beijing, I am eagerly checking to see if there are any interesting Emails from home (there are not). I ignore the pop-up advertisement for a new disaster movie, an image of New York's World Trade Centre in smoke and flames, turn off my computer, and begin gathering together my teaching materials in preparation for another busy day in the classroom. Just now, one of my fellow Canadian colleagues, skids into the office looking sleepless and disheveled, shouting, "Have you heard the news?"

Most of the staff and students at my school in China experienced the attacks of 9/11, 2001 in the United States across a rupture of space and time. Half a planet away and twelve time zones 'ahead' in time, as the Twin Towers fell in New York, many of us in Beijing were snoozing away peacefully, temporarily oblivious to this event that would irrevocably change the geopolitical realities of the world we all share. Thus, it was not until waking on September 12th that I joined the world in shock and horror.

The first bell rings and I begin moving slowly toward my grade eleven classroom in a daze. What will I say to my students? Do they even know? Will I be the first bearer of this terrible news? As I stand facing my students, gripping the lectern to steady myself, I take a deep breath and begin with a simple question, "Have you heard the world news this morning?" I wait for a response. What happens next is shocking, unpredictable, and completely unfathomable. My beautiful Chinese students whom I hold so dear begin, in unison, to applaud. I am speechless, horrified, reeling. We fall into the grip of a tension-filled moment. I am silent. The students are silent. Finally, I ask, in a tone that I hope conveys incomprehension, rather than judgmental rebuke, "Why are you clapping?"⁶

That day was one of those "singular, rare, and *strange* pedagogical encounters [that] offer a window into cultural difference, which teachers within dominant languages and cultures may be prone to ignore" (MacPherson, 2005, p.52). This moment served to make strange what I had taken for granted. In Aoki's (2005c) terms this was a

but also in terms of the cultural politics of everyday life ... the micropolitics of daily life (p.24). It is perhaps, in part, these latent colonial structures that made it difficult, if not impossible, for my Chinese students, or even my Chinese colleagues, to openly discuss with me, as a so-called foreign expert, the possibility of Canada's complicity, as a member of NATO, in the 1999 bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.

⁶ By sharing this anecdote I fear I may have done my former students a textual violence by representing them and their actions through the fickle lens of my own memories. To attempt to lessen this kind of violation, I again refer the reader to Gries, 2004 book (see also Note 4) as a counter-text that helps to situate my narrative account, a mere snapshot, within in a broader and more complex socio-political picture.

metonymic moment in the site of living pedagogy where “curri/culum” is cracked open midst the tensions between the plannable/unplannable, the predictable/unpredictable, the sayable/unsayable (p.426). I had expected, even planned for, my students to react with shock, horror, sorrow, perhaps even tears. Instead, the jarring and unpredictable sound of their applause was a doubly noisy *provocation* in Smith’s (1999) sense of the word. It was a calling forth of something different, a generative possibility that grew out of terror and tension.

So what happened next? My students explained that they clapped because they were happy to see that someone had finally put the U.S. in its place and I suppose I did empathize with their feeling knowing how deeply the wounds of the embassy bombing two years earlier still affected them. In the ensuing discussion, it became evident that they were also under the impression that *only* a military installation (the Pentagon) had been attacked and their tone changed dramatically when I explained that the World Trade Centre was also successfully targeted. We talked about how this was a place of international business, full of U.S. citizens, yes, but also ‘others’ from all over the world, including Chinese and Canadians. They seemed taken aback when I told them that I myself was recently in the World Trade Centre on a tour with a group of my Canadian high school students. Then we thought about the crew and passengers on the planes that were hijacked and slowly the mourning began.

As an exercise in pedagogical textual mourning, I invited the students to create a persona and then write the imagined life story for someone on one of the hijacked flights. There were no rules: it could have been someone old or young, male or female, rich or poor, passenger or crew. Many fictions were written: the tale of a child going to visit her sick grandmother; another about a businessman who traveled all the time for his job in order to support his family. Looking back, it seems significant that no one chose to write the story of one of the hijackers and that it certainly had not occurred to me at that time to suggest that anyone take on this task. I wonder now: Would anyone have accepted such a challenge? What might that story have looked like? What might we all have learned from its writing?

The provocations of ‘other’ reasons

Admittedly, I found it hard to love my students in that moment when they seemed to applaud the deaths of over three thousand people. However, it was also an important provocation to reframe this *strange* pedagogical encounter in ‘other’ terms. The sources of such animosity toward the U.S., and perhaps in part all so-called Western developed countries, is multiple and complex. My intention is not to oversimplify these issues in a broad brush stroke of naïve geopolitical analysis here. Instead, in an attempt to understand ‘other-wise,’ I draw on the thoughts of scholars who have followed closely the complexity of these dynamics, particularly in a post-9/11, 2001 world.

From a European perspective, for example, Baudrillard suggests the gross wealth and conspicuous consumption of the West in comparison of the rest of the globe leads to the humiliation of ‘others’ and consequent hostility towards the West in his 2002 essay *The Despair of Having Everything*. He writes that “the attacks of 11 September were a response to this animus, with one kind of humiliation begetting another” (¶14). In the United States, Noam Chomsky (2001) has a slightly different take. He has responded to this popular suggestion that globalization and cultural hegemony have helped create hatred towards the United States by calling it a “convenient excuse” (p.31) for many U.S. and Western intellectuals. Instead

Chomsky (2001) sees U.S. foreign policy and actions abroad at the heart of the “why” question, elaborating thus:

What happened on September 11 has virtually nothing to do with economic globalization. ... The reasons lie elsewhere. Nothing can justify crimes such as those of September 11, but we can think of the United States as an “innocent victim” only if we adopt the convenient path of ignoring the record of its actions and those of its allies. (p.35)

Despite differing opinions of what these ‘other’ reasons actually entail, it is crucial that we attend to them if we accept Judith Butler’s (2004) proposition in *Precarious Life* to rethink the relationship between global geopolitical conditions and violent acts in such a way that responsibility lies at the nexus of individual agency and *collectively* produced conditions. Such a stance does not intend to blame the victims of terrorism, but does bring into critical question the role of Western societies in producing the conditions that provoke (sometimes) violent responses.

Earlier I described the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade as a “terrible tragedy”, but I am careful, taking a cue from McNiff and Heimann (2003), not to use the word “tragedy” in reference to the events of September 11, 2001. While the terrorist attacks of that day might be a generally considered a tragedy in the sense of a “disastrous event” that inspires “pity and terror” (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, n.d.); for McNiff and Heimann (2003) a tragedy rather “refers to the idea that people’s good intentions are ... caught up in forces outside their own control and diverted and distorted into outcomes they never intended” (*Introduction*, ¶4). Taking up this meaning alongside a serious consideration of Butler’s collectively produced geopolitical conditions of this era, the terrorist attacks can be seen as “atrocious, yes. Devastation and horrendous misery, yes. Tragedy, no” (McNiff & Heimann, 2003, *The nature of tragedy*, ¶1).

These are controversial stances and scholars who have advanced such positions have found, perhaps not surprisingly, that it is poorly received in the United States where binarism – you’re with us or against us – “stifles any serious public discussion of how U.S. foreign policy has helped to create a world in which such acts of terror are possible” (Butler, 2004, p.3). Baudrillard (n.d.) summarizes resistance to collective responsibility for the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attack thus:

That the entire world without exception had dreamed of this event, that nobody could help but dream the destruction of so powerful a hegemon – this fact is unacceptable to the moral conscience of the West, ... a fact that resists the emotional violence of all the rhetoric conspiring to erase it. (¶3)

Yet, our shared responsibility is difficult to hide from for, “in the end, it was they who did it but we who wished it” (Baudrillard, n.d., ¶4). Chomsky (2001) calls refusals to acknowledge our complacency in bringing about the geopolitical conditions, that set the stage for such terrorist events, “self-indulgent fantasies” (p.32) that “contribute significantly to the likelihood of further atrocities” (p.31). However, Butler (2004) offers a hopeful alternative. She argues that by accepting collective responsibility for geopolitical conditions and by attending to the ways in which the world has been shaped, we will find the possibility “to form it anew, and in the direction of non-violence” (p.17).

This 2nd movement is about terror and terrible happenings, but it is also about *tension*. I want to move on and briefly say something about the tension that remains after the terror, something about exiles in mourning. But who are these exiles? What are they mourning? What have they lost?

September, 2002

My friend and I are finding out the hard way that the old saying is true: You can never go home again. Our return to North America, after years of working in China, has been strange for both of us. In Canada, I am dealing with the reverse culture shock by taking refuge in the haven of Ottawa's Chinatown, while my friend is wrestling tigers of his own in far away Colorado, U.S.A. We send messages of support to each other and this week he writes, "I'm not American anymore, no matter what my passport says."

Our sense of displacement and loss, a metonymic tension in-between *home/not home*, was perhaps, in a historical moment that marked the first anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, felt all the more keenly by my friend who returned to a U.S. very different from the one he had left seven years earlier. As 'ex-pats' returning home 'post-9/11,' we faced a kind of double estrangement with the revelation that home was no longer *Home* – a capital *H*, monolithic Idea (Lyotard, 1993) – and perhaps it never was.

This sudden awareness that Home was a myth inspires a new kind of tension. Such is the result when hegemonic conceptions are raised to the status of grand narration, even though their unity is "only a transcendental illusion... [and] the price of this illusion is terror" (Lyotard, 1993, pp.15-16). Peters (1999) has commented that "idealization [of the original home] often goes with mourning" (p.19). These statements resonate with me as I try to understand how we might be mourning a Homeland lost. We have suffered the fate of the exile, but our loss is different because we were not forced out of Home. In a strange reversal, the Homeland we thought we lived in – secure and invulnerable – got up and left without us. Thus, as 'pseudo-exiles,' we suffer nostalgia for a Home that was lost in time rather than space (Peters, 1999). On September 11, 2001 Home was revealed to be a fiction.

Grandiose fantasies must be lost and mourned. ... Such mourning might (or could) effect a transformation in our sense of international ties that would crucially rearticulate the possibility of democratic political culture [in the U.S.] and elsewhere. (Butler, 2004, p.40)

In the wake of loss, in the residual tension, generative possibilities might emerge.

3rd Movement – Tension/Tarry

December, 2005

The Christmas season is in full swing and everywhere the immediate world around me is filled (in only for this moment) with the messages of peace, joy, and love. I wanted to join this hopeful herald. I wanted to say something about a peaceful future, by reflecting on tensions of the past. But at this same



moment, other messages swirl around me. As my computer boots up this morning, breaking news arrives instantly by the World Wide Web reporting horrible acts of violence only minutes old: a suicide bomber on a bus kills thirty; elsewhere the lives of four kidnapped peacemakers hang in the balance as the deadline for their execution ticks by. My efforts to push such events from my mind and get caught up in the fervor of festive concerts, parties, card-sending and gift-shopping seem doomed to fail. So this holiday season, instead of yuletide rush, rush, rush, I propose something different. I propose to tarry, to tarry with/in tension...

Writing this text was a welcoming of Aoki's (2005d) challenge to "tarry with the negative," not in Zizek's sense of the absence of a master signifier, but in the absence, or rather in the absent presence of names and in mourning for (un)nameables. That I choose to spend time in these difficult spaces and reflect on what they might mean should not be construed as a kind of nihilistic melancholy. Instead I come to these reflections with an Aokian understanding that such a space is "a site of original difficulty, of ambiguity, ambivalence and uncertainty, but simultaneously, a site of generative possibilities and hope – a site challenging us to live well" (Aoki, 2005c, p.429), a site "where newness can flow" (Aoki, 2005a, p.319). In the following section, I find myself tarrying with/in such tension-filled spaces as I embrace McNiff's (2005) provocation to value reflective work as a way to meaningfully encounter the 'other'.

Tarrying with/in Tension

I am haunted by an image; a close-up, freeze-frame. These are the eyes of a suicide bomber moments before he will attempt to change his world in the only way he believes he might; ready to take his only way out of a life he cannot bear. Peace, finally, imminent in his mind. The beauty of these dark eyes is interrupted by a strange lifelessness. Eyes dead, drowned in too many tears, too much mourning. Eyes in which there is nothing but empty resignation.

This is the final scene of *Paradise Now*, a film that traces the last forty-eight hours in the lives of two young Palestinian men, Saïd and Khaled, childhood friends, who have been recruited for a suicide bombing mission in Tel-Aviv. I watch this movie from a comfortable theatre in Ottawa, a place that is an unfathomable distance from the occupied territories. This distance is a reflection of life-worlds that are also light-years apart. But is this an (un)bridgeable distance? How might this film act as a bridge, not as a place for crossing over, but as a space for tarrying (Aoki, 2005a); a space for encountering an 'other'; a "contact zone" (Pratt, 1992) where East and West might come together?

Reflecting on another contact zone, the space of international arrivals in airports, Braidotti (1994) observes how those who arrive on the doorsteps of the so-called developed world without any written documentation of their official 'existence' (e.g. a birth certificate, identification) become non-people. Relegated to the crowded margins, where "nonbelonging can be hell" (Braidotti, 1994, p.20), they wait to be scrutinized, recognized, and brought to life on paper by an immigration official's rubber stamp. Similarly, *Paradise Now* also depicts the ways the lives of Palestinians are textually acknowledged through official work permits and identification in the

contact zones of checkpoints between Israel and the occupied territories. Their lives are conjured into being through this inscription.

Death is likewise made 'real' in writing. This is the thought that comes to my mind as I link this idea of life becoming on paper with the textual recognition of deaths. Judith Butler (2004) has also noted the textuality of death in *Precarious Life*: "If there were to be an obituary, there would have had to have been a life, a life worth noting, a life worth valuing and preserving, a life that qualifies for recognition" (p.34). The politics of the textual avowal of deaths are poignantly demonstrated by Butler (2004) in this anecdote:

A Palestinian citizen of the United States recently submitted to the *San Francisco Chronicle* obituaries for two Palestinian families who had been killed by Israeli troops, only to be told that the obituaries could not be accepted without proof of death. The staff of the *Chronicle* said that statements "in memoriam" could, however, be accepted, and so the obituaries were rewritten and resubmitted in the form of memorials. These memorials were then rejected, with the explanation that the newspaper did not wish to offend anyone. (p.35)

This story, echoing NATO's (un)naming of the journalists killed in the Chinese embassy bombing in Belgrade discussed earlier, tells of the double disavowal of certain lives/deaths that cannot count, that cannot be named, and that cannot be publicly, textually mourned.

Now I am thinking again of the suicide bomber in the narration at the outset of this 3rd movement. I am trying to connect with him on some level by imagining him like the character Saïd in *Paradise Now*. I want him to have a name. But suicide bombers must remain faceless, nameless, lifeless, and inhuman. They are not nameable and are certainly not mournable. "Some lives are grievable, and others are not" (Butler, 2004, p.xiv). Butler (2004) challenges us to consider "who is normatively human: what counts as a livable life and a grievable death?" (p.xv). It seems that, at this historical moment, the life/death of the suicide bomber cannot be publicly mourned; an (un)speakable death for an (un)speakable life that always offends.

Yet *Paradise Now* has provoked in me a strange compulsion to know the names of the suicide bombers I hear about nearly weekly in the news. I went looking for names and deaths that were written, textually recognized, and so made 'real'. What I found was an online article in the German magazine *Spiegel Online* by Yassin Musharbash (2005) entitled *Terrorism in the Internet: The Cyber-Cemetery of the Mujahedeen*. His introduction reads:

They were once medical students, fathers or businessmen who took their own lives -- as suicide bombers in Iraq. Their obituaries, which can be read on the Internet, are documents of men who were blinded by their deadly version of faith. (¶1)

Musharbash goes on to offer excerpts from the obituaries of these would-be "martyrs" not as examples of public grieving in text, but rather as examples of propagandizing "hero worship." He condemns these texts that serve "the goal of aggrandizing the

terrorists' deeds and encouraging others to follow in their footsteps" (*Goal: Hero Worship*, ¶4).

Despite this denouncing of these obituaries, I still find myself cautious about discussing them here. Perhaps this hesitancy is born of "the cultural barriers against which we struggle when we try to find out about the losses that we are asked not to mourn, when we attempt to name, and so to bring under the rubric of the 'human,' [the ungrievable]" (Butler, 2004, p.46). Can we grieve the nameless suicide bomber? Can we mourn for an 'ungrievable'? Is such grieving significant? How might it be related to our capacity to connect with the 'other'? To see the 'other' in ourselves? In response to the tensions provoked by such questions, I offer this fictive counter-text:

Obituary for a suicide bomber: December 8, 2005

Mr. Unknown (The world will not know his name. He knows this. He and his people are forgotten. He knows this too.)

Mr. Unknown, aged 23, died in a fiery bus in a foreign land, believing himself a martyr. He will be remembered by his friends and family as a loving father and husband; a skilled electrician who dreamed of getting a work permit so that he might support his family. He is survived by his wife (who continues to live in poverty), two children (who do not have the privilege of regularly attending school), and his mother (who has lost a total of three sons now to the conflict). He is not survived by his father who was tortured and then executed as a collaborator, and the 30 (also nameless) victims that he murdered in that same fiery bus. Memorial services for Mr. Unknown will not be held, as his friends and family are now in hiding for their own safety. A public mourning being impossible, Mr. Unknown will be mourned in private.

Through this textual mourning, I hope to heed Butler's (2004) imperative to bring to light the conditions that set the stage for such atrocities and to reflect on my own complicity in the shaping of them. Writing becomes a pedagogical provocation; an attempt to empathize; a way to seek a connection across strangeness, albeit in the most partial way, with the (un)nameable 'other'.

Refrain – Tarrying as Pedagogy

Refrain – a curious signifier whose roots in old French suggest the paradoxical tension within it between "refrain (n.)" as musical repeat, and "refraigner (v.)" meaning to "restrain, repress" (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.). Its multiple significations create the tension of a *repetitious avoidance*, but an avoidance of what? Schools are often places of refrain as repetition (Kumashiro, 2002): "Repeat after me," invites the teacher, repeat the timetables, repeat the story, repeat the refrain of the status quo. The indoctrination that ensures the repetition of normalized hegemonic discourses also demands refrain as restraint and repression. Please refrain from speaking, from running, from questioning, from thinking. Please *avoid* these many dangerous, vital things. This is education as refrain. However, *refrain* can also suggest "something that causes a song to 'break off' and then resume" (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.). This is a hopeful reformulation of pedagogy and/as refrain. It is not a repetition, but instead a break and resumption. In this retexturing of refrain there is the possibility of a radical *break* and the potential that something transformative might happen in the ensuing iterations.

Tarrying with/in Mourning

Now I am looping back to think again of other avoidances: refrains from/of naming and mourning. Butler (2004) recalls such a refrain from mourning: “President Bush announced on September 21 that we have finished grieving and that *now* it is time for resolute action to take the place of grief” (p.29). She reminds us however, that such a move to quick resolution only serves to “reinvigorate a fantasy that the world formerly was orderly” (p.30). Instead she invites another kind of refrain, a radical break from the repetitious cycle of violence begetting violence. Instead of a rejection of grief and mourning, she proposes something otherwise by asking, “Is there something to be gained from grieving, from *tarrying* [italics added] with grief, from remaining exposed to its unbearability and not endeavoring to seek a resolution of grief through violence?” (p.30).

My sense is that the answer is a resounding ‘yes!’. I feel I have gained something (perhaps lost something) and provoked something to happen within myself by tarrying with/in mourning during the process of writing this text. This experience attests to Derrida’s (2001) observation that, “One cannot hold a discourse *on* the ‘work of mourning’ without taking part in it” (p.143). So I believe Butler (2004) has something when she suggests that “perhaps mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation (perhaps one should say *submitting* to a transformation) the full result of which one cannot know in advance” (p.21).

I want to turn my attention to the implications of this narrative journey for the work of learning to “live together in a way that will ensure that life can go on” (Smith, 1999, p.132). In other words, what might be the pedagogical possibilities of tarrying with/in mourning for the work of educating for peace? One of the key elements of an approach to peace education is to develop a sense of empathy that somehow fosters *connections* with the ‘other.’ Broadly conceived, this empathy with the ‘other’ can include connections with another group of people, with a specific individual, or with all life forms and inanimate elements of our shared biosphere (as in the ecological strand of peace education).

The work of scholars who take up feminist epistemologies to attempt to theorize this connection with the ‘other’ may offer a powerful way for peace educators to rethink the pedagogical work they do. Heidi Ross (2003), for example, draws on “relational theorizing” to understand human connection as “being in a relationship through inclusive, multilateral, and generative approaches to power and respect” (p.34). Her theoretical work also shares Butler’s (2004) concern for the notion of shared vulnerability. However, in Butler’s theorizing, “a ‘common’ corporeal vulnerability” (p.42) has taken on the shape of an *embodied* relationality that highlights the public, social, and political nature of bodies thus forcing us to ask ourselves: “Who ‘am’ I, without you?” (p.22). A feminist stance also informs the theoretical and pedagogical writing of Megan Boler (1999) who brings to the fore the political and public aspects of emotions in education.

These scholars’ theorizing around connection and emotions help make intelligible what might happen through tarrying with/in mourning. I recall the way in which the collective, public mourning of the journalists killed in the Chinese embassy bombing (manifested as a chalkboard display) was an important conduit through which I was able to feel a connection with my Chinese students. In a similar way, our collective mourning for the passengers of the hijacked flights of September 11, 2001 (actualized in the imagined life-stories students wrote) had a doubled connectivity, drawing my Chinese students and I closer together as well as provoking a reimagining

of our relation to the U.S. ‘other’. These textual mournings became ways for us to access our underlying interconnectedness and to foster feelings of empathy. Moreover, I suggest the potential for this kind of connection may be less possible when mourning is viewed as something to be gotten over quickly, worked through, or avoided completely. When the newspaper I mentioned earlier refused to publish the memorials for the two families killed in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the grounds that it *might* offend, they were precluding the possibility that it might also *connect* people in important ways. The act of collective, public mourning has multiple, unpredictable possibilities.

We can also touch this abstract connection with ‘others’ by revisiting our own individual losses; returning again to grief by tarrying with/in that mourning. “For all of us have some notion of what it is to have lost somebody. Loss has made a tenuous ‘we’ of us all” (Butler, 2004, p.20). To demonstrate that “suffering as grieving is an experience common to us all, one that is inevitable” (Aoki, 2005d, p.409), Aoki (2005d) recounts the Ch’an Buddhism story of Kisagotami. In short, this is a tale about a woman who loses her mind after the death of her child, but who is returned to her senses through a task asked of her by the Buddha: to bring seeds from a house that had never known death. Of course, she finds this impossible because every home had experienced a loss and listening to these stories – narrative grievings for people with “*names* [italics added] and birth dates, distinctive traits and dreams” (Hershock, 1994, p.690) – returns Kisagotami’s sanity. Here again is an example not only of the transformative power of shared grieving, but also of the importance of naming names and knowing the life-stories of those who have died, whether they are victims or even, as I have proposed, the perpetrators of violence.

I would like to take a doubled cue, from Leonard Cohen via Ted Aoki (2005b), to crack the open mourning to “let the light in”. This metonymic move cracks mour/ning to think about *mourning-as-shared/mourning-as-difference*. So far, I have tried to show the value of mourning-as-shared as a way of allowing people to find a connection with, and a way to empathize with ‘others’ as a possible in-road towards peace. However, in (re)presenting Hershock’s doubled interpretation of Kisagotami’s Story, Aoki (2005d) rejects a modernist Western logic that attempts to essentialize and universalize the *specificities* of experiences of suffering. This reflects mourning-as-difference. While mourning-as-shared is a suggestion of the ubiquitousness of grieving, mourning-as-difference recognizes that the shape of this experience is multiple and unique. Derrida (2001) has also noted the universality and singularity of mourning writing of “the emotion of mourning that we all know and recognize, even if it hits us each time in a new and singular way” (p.158). The form each mourning will take is unique and also unpredictable: a gorily graphic chalkboard display, the nostalgia of the pseudo-exile, an obituary, tears, applause, silence. As these narratives of mourning-as-difference intertwine, mourning-as-shared becomes the twine that might tie us together.

Coda – Pedagogical Provocations

In the future imminent...

There are exciting times *now*, ahead. It may appear odd to bring together mourning and excitement in the same text, but it is less so if these are seen as a *provocation*; a generative movement of something that is always already happening. Jardine (2000) reminds us that new life explodes into being as a “provocative, a prophetic ‘calling

forth, 'a voice crying out from the midst of things' (p.120). Such voices are bursting forth from within the discipline of peace education to invite a reimagining of the work of pedagogies for peace. They are calling out for "something totally Other ... as a demand for responsibility, seriousness, and love" (Gur-Ze'ev, 2001, p.336); challenging us to think Other-wise and *differently* (McNiff, 2005). They are asking for a pedagogical refrain: a breaking off and a transformation in the resumption.

Other voices from diverse emergent epistemologies are also provoking something *different*. Postmodern moves are disrupting the taken-for-granted certainties that characterize a modernist worldview (and I see this as a productive thing). Using a Deleuzean approach May (2005) urges us to consider complex answers to the apparently simple question: "How might one live?", or in terms of educating for peace we might ask "How might we live together?" Postcolonial perspectives are also offering ideas – such as Kanu's (2003) "postcolonial imagination" and Asher's (2002) "hybrid consciousness" – in their efforts to bring people together in generative "hybrid third spaces" that encourage thinking Other-wise and move us towards more responsible, ethical forms of pedagogical work. From a feminist stance, Boler (1999) outlines a "pedagogy of discomfort" that draws "the emotional dimensions of our cognitive and moral perception" (p.xxiv) back into education in ways that push for a critical and affective examination of our relationship with 'others'. Elsewhere, complexity and chaos theories are being used to conceptualize the underlying "connectivity and potentiality" of nonlinear, open curricular systems, and to help bring us to terms with the multiplicity and "unpredictability" of live(d) curriculum (Smitherman, 2005, p.168). Others invoke quantum theory, like MacPherson (2005) who ponders our underlying interconnectedness using the concept of "entanglement" to suggest a collapse of space-time that allows a "correspondence" when "two human beings meet, affect one another, and part again" (p.44). Everywhere voices are calling out, provoking diverse, strange, and productive ways of thinking about pedagogical work and human connectivity.

But all of this comes with a caveat to educators. Boler's (1999) choice of the phrase 'pedagogy of *discomfort*' is apt. None of this is likely to be easy; the provocative rarely is. Then what are the risks of pedagogical violence that lie in tarrying with-in mourning? Should the ethical educator avoid moving into these difficult spaces with students, spaces of mourning and emotional upset? In response I offer words from Kumashiro (2002):

Not surprisingly, some educators choose not to teach such information or to lead students to uncomfortable places. ... Felman (1995) suggests that learning through crisis is not only ethical, but also necessary when working against oppression. What is unethical, she suggests, is leaving students in such harmful repetition. Entering crisis, then, is a required and desired part of learning in anti-oppressive ways. (*Learning Against Repetition*, ¶12)

After making an argument that emotional crisis is needed to break away from repetitive cycles of oppressive education and open the way for other possibilities, Kumashiro goes on to articulate the ambivalence and ambiguity that imbue such difficult pedagogical spaces.

Of course, not all students will respond to a lesson by entering some form of crisis, nor will all students benefit from a crisis. Once in a crisis, a student can go in many directions, some that may lead to anti-oppressive change, others that may lead to more entrenched resistance. (*Learning Against Repetition*, ¶13)

Provocations, then, are characterized by passion and conflict, ambivalence and ambiguity, “excitements and uncertainties” (Robertson, 2006, p.174). The outcomes of strange thinking and provocative pedagogies cannot be known *a priori* because, if we follow Deleuze, thinking “is an event that happens *to us*” (Colebrook, 2002, p.3) and is beyond our control. Similarly, the work of mourning and its potential transformations “cannot be charted or planned” (Butler, 2004, p.21). Each mourning is singular and unique (Derrida, 2001). This ambiguity is part of what makes the prospects of peace education through tarrying with/in mourning so exciting – rife with possibility – yet unnerving in uncertainty. Despite, or rather *because of*, these ambiguities and ambivalences, I believe there is a provocation to hope in pedagogies of peace that tarry with/in tragedy, terror, and tension; in the promise of transformations through tarrying with/in mourning.

I exit now, leaving these ideas and reflective stories ‘out-there’ in the process of their inscription. Perhaps they will be caught up and taken elsewhere, elsewhen. Perhaps they will make *something* happen. This is an invitation, a provocation, ‘an end’ and a beginning.

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