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"Service Guarantees Citizenship": The Generation of Criticism in a Postmodern Public Sphere

Michael Calvin McGee, Carol Corbin, Geoffrey Klinger

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Carol Corbin
Department of Communication
[University College of Cape Breton](#)
Box 5300
Sydney, Nova Scotia B1P 6L2 Canada
Carol_Corbin@ucb.ns.ca

Geoffrey Klinger
Department of Communication
[DePauw University](#)
Performing Arts Center
Greencastle, IN 46135
klinger@depauw.edu

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"This is your world now. Thought is real. Physical is the illusion. Ironic, huh?"

~Albert

[*What Dreams May Come*](#)

In his monumental *Truth and Method*, Hans-Georg [Gadamer](#) comments on the relationship between a "picture" and its "original." He writes, "The relation of the picture to the original is basically quite different from what it is to a copy. It is no longer a one-sided relationship" (124). The picture develops a life of its own which requires "an essential modification, almost a reversal of the ontological relationship of original and copy if the picture is an element of 'representation' and thus has its own ontological status. The picture then has an independence that also affects the original" (125).¹

We live in a world that is constantly mediated and driven by images. Such a world

demands, as Gadamer observes, a newly configured understanding of reality and representation, of ontology and epistemology. [Lyotard](#) contends that since the nineteenth century, structural transformations have irrevocably altered "the game rules for science, literature, and the arts" (xxiii). These transformations have prompted [Foucault](#) to declare:

The space of order, which served as a common place for representation and for things, for empirical visibility and for the essential rules, which united the regularities of nature and the resemblances of imagination in the grid of identities and differences, which displayed the empirical sequence of representations in a simultaneous table, and made it possible to scan step by step, in accordance with logical sequence, the totality of nature's elements thus rendered contemporaneous with one another—this pace of order is from now on shattered. (239)

Like Lyotard, Foucault traces this rupture to the "last years of the eighteenth century [which] are broken by a discontinuity similar to that which destroyed Renaissance thought at the beginning of the seventeenth" (217).

We believe that one of the consequences of this transformation is that it forces us to either change our notion of what is material, or admit that there is nothing material in history. When we take the former path, each narrative becomes an item of the past and we treat it as if it were a material phenomenon—an actual set of events and structurations that had the power of causation. If, on the other hand, we take the latter path, then history cannot be material at all, but is instead a fiction, and the attempt to collect all of the perspectives is an unfulfillable romantic, serendipitous dream.

We seek to reconfigure our understanding of materiality and, subsequently, social and critical agency, through a network of four terms—past, history, present, and genealogy. In the course of our investigation, we hope to outline critical and rhetorical space outside of history, outside of neoclassical ontology, and outside of traditional scholarship. We choose Robert A. [Heinlein's](#), *Starship Troopers* as a text that illustrates our approach to these important issues.²

From History to Genealogy: A Theory of Generations

[Foucault](#) comments on the relationship between the historical method and modernity: "From the nineteenth century, History was to deploy, in a temporal series, the analogies that connect distinct organic structures to one another. This same History will also, progressively, impose its laws on the analysis of production,

the analysis of organically structured beings, and, lastly, on the analysis of linguistic groups" (219). Historical understandings became the norm that ordered knowledge. To understand an issue, one had to first understand its history. Such a move seems benign enough, but we recognize, as does Foucault, that it involves significant consequences:

The difficulty of apprehending the network that is able to link together such diverse investigations as attempts to establish a taxonomy and microscopic observations; the necessity of recording as observed facts the conflicts between those who were fixists and those who were not, or between the experimentalists and the partisans of the system; the obligations to divide knowledge into two interwoven fabrics when in fact they were alien to one another . . . ; and above all the application of categories that are strictly anachronistic in relation to this knowledge. (127)

The historical method forces critics to understand a particular issue in a particular way. It requires a turn to the past which, we believe, constrains our approach to solving problems at hand. The historical method begins with the past as paradigm, outlining the guiding parameters for present and future decision-making. Ironically, our attempt to recall and invoke the past in an effort to avoid having history repeat itself often curses us to do precisely that simply by choice of method. Understanding a current problem in historical terms constrains our thinking—it presents us with fixed choices, and false dilemmas. ³

In his study of morals, [Nietzsche](#) arrives at the same point. He recognizes that "we need a critique of moral values, *the value of these values themselves must first be called in question*" (20). The presupposition that one finds historical evidence to justify the primacy of one value over another demonstrates the consequences of the historical method. When proceeding with this method, a critic attempts to make the past, imbued as it is with inherently dichotomous thinking, relevant to present circumstances. Significantly, this "democratic prejudice in the modern world toward all questions of origin" can create "mischief . . . especially to morality and history" (28).⁴ Further, such oppositional thinking "has permeated the realm of the spirit and disguised itself in the most spiritual forms to such a degree that today it has forced its way, has acquired the right to force its way into the strictest, apparently most objective sciences" (78).

We share with Nietzsche a skeptical approach to the historical method and advance a genealogical alternative.⁵ To elucidate our position, we first need to better understand the meaning and interplay among our primary network of terms—past, history, present, and genealogy. Importantly, we distinguish "the past" from

"history." The former is more the sum total of that which has happened—the wars, the famines, the depressions, the babies, the *praxis* of the everyday. In contrast, we use the word "history" to refer to the narrativization of "the past" which means selecting those bits and pieces from the past that the historian finds significant. History is always a story of what happened from a particular perspective written in such a way as to accomplish some purpose. As Nietzsche recognizes, we are intentionally and consciously reproducing the past for the purpose of either simply entertaining ourselves, or guiding our actions.

The pejorative understanding of terms like past, present, or future, usually involves the assumption of temporality. We maintain, however, that terms like "the present" are not merely temporal, but material states. The present of an 80-year old man is different than the present of a teenager. Different experiences and memories create two remarkably different "presents." So what makes "a present" is not the same for all of us, it is not fixed, and it is not certain. Generations are bound through their shared presents, which involve the recollection of shared experiences through collective memory.⁶ To facilitate communication between generations, and we do believe that communication is the key to draw generations together, each group must come to contextualize problems in the same structural set, or what Lyotard called the "collective imaginary." We focus on the place where imagination becomes "real," where it achieves the ontological state of being that marks it as something material.

Genealogy is a unique way of approaching the past, one that differs significantly from the historical approach. One key difference between the two approaches is the starting point of the procedure in each. With history, critics always jump back to some imaginary point of origin, and from that point of origin they trace causes and effects back toward the present position. With genealogy, on the other hand, critics start with themselves, and trace their genealogical roots backwards. Genealogy starts in the present and organizes materials of the past in a more disciplined way than history. The starting point of history is always variable. It depends on the interests and the inclinations of the particular historian who writes the narrative, and it tends to reinforce the claim that the historian advances.⁷ Instead of starting in the past and working to the point of present action, the genealogist begins with the present and works back. The genealogical approach changes the approach to the past. The past no longer becomes constraining, but a trope—and nothing more—that can be used in approaching present day problems.

We believe that the genealogical approach helps us understand the living matter, the living memory, the living person and that within the living there is a need for cross-generational communication, and persuasion, and identification. As we note above, genealogy cannot be understood as a temporal phenomenon. Living in "a present" involves not merely growing older, but freezing your psychological mindset,

freezing your take on the ideology, freezing your take on society and culture in a particular portion or fragment of your life.⁸ For us, the ballyhoo surrounding the "generation gap" is a very real problem--and possibility—rooted in a radical reinterpretation of traditional approaches to ontological inquiry.⁹

The boundaries of a generation are created not from shared time, but shared experience. As [Ortega](#) notes, "Age, then, is not a date, but a 'zone of dates'" (470). Now assuredly there are significant differences between individuals within generations, but insofar as individual identity is the product of social construction, individuals within generations share experience within similar structural and symbolic systems. Thus, even seeing a generation as a biological entity misses the point. As Ortega notes, "A generation is an integrated manner of existence, or, if you prefer, a fashion in living" (45). Thus, "at any given moment a generation is one and the same thing as human life" (67). Moreover, the "'spirit of the times' has a peculiar character not possessed by the world of individual beliefs" (39).¹⁰ As such, a generation is not a collective of individuals, but a marker for human experience. The "greatest influence which the spirit of the times . . . exerts on each individual life is exercised not by the simple fact of being there . . . but because the greater portion of my world, of my beliefs, arises out of that collective repertory, and coincides with its contents" (39-40).

In the historical approach, the key to trans-generational communication lies in telling a history and imposing that history on younger generations, feeding it to them as part of their schooling, giving it to them as a premise that cannot be denied, giving it to them as a certainty that is irrefutable. A genealogical approach involves the regeneration of a living testament, a recuperation of a "presence" through someone with direct experience. Genealogy seeks explanation of present circumstances rather than relying on fictional historical accounts to do the same. Humans have to understand their present plight, their present circumstance well enough in order to make a wise decision among a universe of possible actions. Genealogy works backwards, it is concerned with an urgency, an exigency, a need to act in some way, a problem to be solved. It is concerned less with fictional possibility, per se, but with possibility that immediately can be resolved into political *praxis*.

Hermeneutic Ontology, Representation, and Rhetorical *Praxis*

We return to an issue that we touch on above. The turn to genealogy and generations involves a far more fundamental question than simply a choice of method. It requires that we address the dilemma regarding the status of the real and the material. That issue takes us back to Gadamer and his explanation of a hermeneutic ontology. Significantly, [Gadamer](#) discusses language as a horizon in

developing his theory of the same (397-447). Gadamer earlier demonstrates that shifting structural forces in our world demand a refashioning of traditional ontology. As the material of our world changes, so must our approach to understanding this material.

With modernity, reality was something that one turned to for verification. Reality was not something that was subject to critique, deconstruction, or negotiation. Something was real or it was not. In the postmodern condition reality is not precisely up for a vote, but it is assuredly negotiable. [Lyotard](#) concurs: "Modernity, in whatever age it appears, cannot exist without a shattering of belief and without discovery of the 'lack of reality' of reality, together with the invention of other realities" (77). Indeed, [Baudrillard](#) contends that "*it is now impossible to isolate the process of the real, or to prove the real*" and, subsequently, "every principle of meaning is absorbed, every deployment of the real is impossible" (41, 65).¹¹ [Foucault](#) discusses the consequences of this transformation in an extended passage:

What came into being with Adam Smith, with the first philologists, with Jussieu, Vicq d'Azyr, or Lamarck, is a minuscule but absolutely essential displacement, which toppled the whole of Western thought: representation has lost the power to provide a foundation—with its own being, its own deployment and its power of doubling over on itself—for the links that can join its various elements together. No composition, no decomposition, no analysis into identities and differences can now justify the connection of representations one to another. (238-39)

The forces that make reality negotiable are technical visual representations which are conveyed through film, video, television, and computer. The ability to communicate visually—to bend reality while maintaining the appearance of reality—changes the ground rules and working assumptions of truth and reality. This is the point of McLuhan and Benjamin: "reproduction absorbs the process of production, changing its finalities and altering the status of product and producer" ([Baudrillard](#) 98).¹² Significantly, rapid changes in media technology accelerated and enhanced the delivery of this mediated reality. As Lyotard maintains, "Photographic and cinematographic processes can accomplish better, faster, and with a circulation a hundred thousand times larger than narrative or pictorial realism, the task which academicism had assigned to realism: to preserve various consciousnesses from doubt" (74). When the goal is to fix belief through the injection of a new, mediated reality, recent technology proves its efficiency:

Industrial photography and cinema will be superior to painting and the novel whenever the objective is to stabilize the referent, to

arrange it according to a point of view which endows it with recognizable meaning, to reproduce the syntax and vocabulary which enable the addressee to decipher images and sequences quickly, and so to arrive easily at the consciousness of his own identity as well as the approval which he therefore receives from others--since the structures of images and sequences constitute a communication code among all of them. ([Lyotard](#) 74)

Lyotard concludes, "This is the way the effects of reality, or if one prefers, the fantasies of realism, multiply" (74). The technology of reproduction legitimates itself through the manufacture of reality. "All media and the official news service," [Baudrillard](#) writes, "only exist to maintain the illusion of actuality—of the reality of the stakes, of the objectivity of the facts" (71). ¹³

The traditional critique of this position maintains that illusions are tantamount to anarchy, moral relativism, or solipsism. Indeed, this historical critique is over two millennia old. We must consider the possibility that illusions might take us to places good places, and that illusions have in many ways become our reality. We understand that this is not an entirely contemporary observation. One finds similar articulations regarding the confluence of representation, image, and power in the discourses of [Isocrates](#), ¹⁴ in the writing of [Machiavelli](#), ¹⁵ and in the modern political theory of Hobbes. ¹⁶ As McLuhan notes above, however, recent changes in media technology have substantially changed these relationships. The postmodern condition, which Lyotard hesitatingly calls nascent modernity, creates an unusual and unique combination of structure, image, discourse, and power (79).

To better understand the issues embedded in our analysis above, we turn to the theory of representation. Representation not only means that advocates re-present something semiotically as a sign, it also means that they are representing as in a representative assembly. So representation, especially in a liberal state, always already has a political cast to it. You do not simply make a film, or tell a story, you make a representation, and in so doing, you represent someone, some group, some cause, or some history. Now Foucault claims above that we live in a situation, overrun with representation, where there is no way to justify the connection between representations. Given their inextricable relations with politics and power, however, representations can and should be connected to one another. To leave this space unchallenged, to cede this ground, runs the risk of permanent unpopular control of our primary storytelling, and reality making mechanisms. Representation is inextricably linked, we believe, to political praxis, which can best be understood from a rhetorical perspective.

Our focus on *praxis*, on present and everyday action, shifts critical attention from

history to contemporary circumstance. Our focus on *praxis* also reinvigorates connections with rhetoric, given its emphasis on the intentional use of language as symbolic action.¹⁷ Thus, our quest is hermeneutic, as we suggest above, which is linked to the very issues of representation, rhetoric, and understanding. In his book *Communicative Praxis and The Space of Subjectivity*, Calvin Schrag turns to rhetoric explicitly to address the issue of critical agency (179-196). Michael Hyde and Craig Smith recognize the same point: "From the hermeneutical situation originates the primordial function of rhetoric . . . [which is] to 'make-known' meaning both *to oneself and to others*. Meaning is derived by a human being in and through the interpretive understanding of reality. Rhetoric is the process of making-known that meaning" (347-48).¹⁸

With the necessary connections in hand, we turn now to our text to illustrate our approach and, we hope, to recapture critical agency through the stimulation of rhetorical *praxis*.

***Starship Troopers* as Ideological Reconstruction**

One reviewer of Paul Verhoeven's cinematic reinterpretation of Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* commented, "Like *Star Wars*, it's ground zero for a new generation of thrill seekers." Perhaps unwittingly, this reviewer broadly summarizes our theoretical approach to this film. *Starship Troopers* is a story that recreates traditional ideological conflict. The Federation represents an interesting hybrid of liberal and fascist ideologies, while the Arachnids, a hive-like, alien collective, represent communism.¹⁹ The story, driven by historical reinterpretation while making use of the narrative flexibility afforded the future-oriented science fiction genre, quite literally is ground zero, ontologically and otherwise, for a new generation insofar as they have no direct experience with the fascism of World War II. This creates, we believe, a troublesome situation because there are no "truth" or "validity" principles, rooted in generational experience, that can check dangerous representations of fascism.²⁰

We believe that *Starship Troopers* is a dangerous text insofar as it presents key elements of fascism as palatable, even desirable. There is no attempt to disguise the reference to fascism in terms of the uniforms that are the uniforms of WWII Germany—they are gray in colour, their military emblems that designate rank are pretty clearly reminiscent of the SS symbols, the ever present logo of the Federation is very reminiscent of the swastika. We are especially interested in the ways that the four main characters, whom we believe represent teenage consciousness, become invested in the state, like Hitler's Youth.²¹ We are also interested in the ways that these characters are inculcated to fascist ideology, such as the prerequisite of military service for citizenship. This film allows us to understand the militaristic

component of fascism.

One of the more interesting confluences in the film is the relationship between the military and the educational system. Raszak, originally the teacher in the film, returns to the story as the military lieutenant leading the corps of "roughnecks" into battle. In his History and Moral Philosophy course, he essentially works through an elaborate persuasive campaign for military service, which guarantees citizenship.²² Indeed, later in his lecture he equates the right to vote, which only citizens can exercise, with political authority, force, and violence. He concludes, "naked force has resolved more issues throughout history than any other factor."²³ Significantly, it seems, the Federal government is conflated with the military, whose political authority seems assumed in all aspects of life.

A related fascistic element of the film is the way in which civilians are compared to citizens. Civilians seem indifferent, bloated, and parasitic, whereas citizens are self-sacrificing and worthy of rewards, such as the right to vote. When questioned about the moral difference between a citizen and a civilian in Raszak's course, Rico replies, "the citizen accepts personal responsibility for the safety of the body politic defending it with his life." The conclusion, of course, is that military life is preferable to civilian life since military "service guarantees citizenship."

In the film, the director uses the arachnids as a representation of a metaphor that humans have always invoked during times of war. In this case the representation is used to dehumanize an alien collective, which we note above is a metaphor for Communist ideology. It is an expanding metaphor that folds back upon itself. The insect collective, about which we receive only imagological glimpses, seems careless of an individualistic human society, it employs a variety of fantastical weapons, it respects only nuclear threats, and it is organized by its "brains," which are surreptitiously hidden. There are claims throughout the film that dehumanize the arachnids. After the attack on Buenos Aires, the Federal Network claimed, "The only good bug is a dead bug." In a later scene, upon finding a dead soldier with his brain manipulated then devoured by arachnids, Raszak decried the "dirty bugs." And when the military finally discovered an arachnid "brain," the first contact with this creature was, "you are one of those big, fat, smart bugs."

The possibility of negotiation, of rhetoric, only occurs near the end of the film when we learn that the arachnids are, in fact, sentient. Earlier, humans only knew the arachnids directly through their fighter drones, which simply blindly attack, overwhelming the humans with their size, number, and resilience. When the humans learn that they have the ability to communicate with the arachnids, at least telepathically, the celebration is not about the possibility of communication, but the realization of a new power to intimidate. When asked what the brain bug was

thinking, Carl, who was then working for military intelligence, replied, "Its afraid." This response led to wild cheers from the Troopers. The arachnids' twin weaknesses were that they could think, and that they could feel fear. Indeed, that was the premise of the newly appointed skymarshals strategic plan: "to fight the bug, we must understand the bug." To that end, once the Federation captured a brain bug, the Federal Network proudly proclaimed: "Federal scientists work around the clock to probe its secrets. Once we understand it, we will defeat it."²⁴

Starship Troopers focuses on the interaction of three contrasting and yet unified characters who illustrate the appeal of the federal service. The young hero who is not good at math, who is a star football player with all the moves, whose strengths are of body, and who fights for and rises within the mobile infantry. We have another the young man whose strengths are extraordinary, most notably his telepathy, which he uses with drive and cunning. And the young woman whose strengths are of both mind and body. She has the technical capacity to fly a huge starship with confidence, and the physical dexterity to maneuver it through tight places. Driven like the others, she seems consistently focused on the action in front of her. Significantly, we believe that the confluence of these characteristics—of mind and body—are essential to the fascist system. Yet these characters and their relationships are humanized just enough to make them appealing, which is the dangerous aspect of the text insofar as its consumers are concerned. Their actions become ordinary, usual, expected, and banal. Killing the bugs, destroying the enemy, committing to war, these are presented as natural human reflexes, which history is used to verify.²⁵

The Nazi symbolism in the film is associated with the romantic human characters. Perhaps one of the reasons why we find and allow this narrative conflation is because younger generations do not remember fascism; they do not remember Hitler. The question for the critic becomes: why do younger generations not remember Hitler? Because Hitler has no relevance to their present. And the people for whom he has presence either are being ignored, or are being ineffective in their attempt to communicate the relevance of that presence for younger people today.

This creates, as we maintain above, a dangerous situation.²⁶ It opens the door for the possibility of a rearticulation of fascism. We must remember that fascism arose in the void created by economic collapse. Contemporary political and economic circumstances recreate the fascistic possibility by changing the contours of political and economic relations. Indeed, political and economic boundaries are largely becoming anachronistic and irrelevant. Power is becoming consolidated, and the possibility of controlling that power is increasing. Almost instantaneously and randomly, nationalism can become an important force in a community, it can reemerge like a boil. Indeed, fascism has already shown its ability to adapt to

different conditions in spatial and historical ways. Fascism has arisen in cultures as different as Japan, Germany, Italy, Argentina, and Brazil. So fascism has shown its ability to deal with different nationalisms, different national histories, different racial and ethnic mixes.

Thomas Jefferson once wrote, "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." We believe that films like *Starship Troopers* demonstrate the need for increasing critical vigilance. Specifically, critics should be more attentive to the banal methods through which the narrative reached its target audience—teenage America—namely, its marketing as an action-adventure film, an "action packed, thrill-ride," and as a science fiction film, the "next *Star Wars*." We believe that its political and ideological content, which is not made obvious on the surface, needs to be made manifest and we need to pay attention to how the technology and both the action-adventure and science fiction story lines integrate the ideological narrative, as well. And we also need to understand the connection between that articulation within the film and the articulation of politics in our everyday lives so that we understand in what sense this film is a representation of contemporary human experience. Importantly, we do not believe that the issue is whether or not film critics can and will take the film to task, but whether film critics can affect everyday *praxis*, the actual means of production, by becoming or advising a film maker to do a film that responds to *Starship Troopers*, that contests the space of its representation, that contests the story that it makes, that makes a political contest out of this reconstruction.

Our challenge, then, is not to deconstruct the fictional and historical accounts embedded in the narrative structure of the film, but to contest the narrative on its own terms, genealogically, through the use of different representations. Lyotard focuses our attention to this end: the question is not are we telling stories, the question is are we telling the right stories? We must contest this film on the level of representation because this is where our target audience lives. McLuhan and Fiore recognize this important point:

The young today live mythically and in depth. But they encounter instruction in situations organized by means of classified information—subjects are unrelated, they are visually conceived in terms of a blueprint. Many of our institutions suppress all the natural direct experience of youth, who respond with untaught delight to the poetry and the beauty of the new technological environment, the environment of popular culture. (100)

Gadamer writes, "Pictorial representation is a special case of public representation" (125). Images and the media through which they are disseminated shape and massage the contours of the public sphere. Given this, we seek to reclaim our stake

in this process by reconfiguring critical agency. Polanyi and Prosch comment that "plays, films, and novels commonly speak to us in the language of ordinary communications, and we expect them to grip our attention without any effort on our part" (114). As such, we find "their visionary form unintelligible until we realize that we must not try to understand them as representing a sequence of events that hang together in the way real events do" (114). In reconfiguring this critical agency, we overturn traditional ontology, challenge the primacy of the historical method in criticism, turn from modern conceptions of reality to a theory of postmodern materialism, couple a theory of generations with genealogical criticism, and shift critical attention to the realm of representations.

Since we frame our essay by considering the possibility of illusions and dreams, we choose to close on the same point. In *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, Friedrich [Nietzsche](#) writes:

On the rare occasions when our dreams succeed and achieve perfection—most dreams are bungled—they are symbolic chains of scenes and images in place of a narrative poetic language; they circumscribe our experiences or expectations or situations with such poetic boldness and decisiveness that in the morning we are always amazed at ourselves when we remember our dreams. We use up too much artistry in our dreams—and therefore often are impoverished during the day. (194)

We hope that this project has begun the long and arduous task of recovering critical agency and human artistry through an awareness of a genealogical alternative to contemporary criticism. And in so doing, we hope that we have been able to play a small part in shaping an ethical human community, one which boldly confronts critical issues that continue to burden the everyday human condition.

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Endnotes

¹ While Gadamer rejects using the picture metaphor as an example of "aesthetic consciousness," his discussion of the hermeneutic ontology of the picture creates an important theoretical space for the argument that we advance here.

² We use the recent film version of the 1959 Heinlein story as the primary text for the purposes of our investigation. There are significant differences between Heinlein's story and this more recent reinterpretation of his work. We draw especially from the film because we believe that this text was the primary vehicle of consumption for what reviewers call "a new generation of thrill-seekers."

³ Nietzsche writes, "The existence on the earth of an animal soul turned against itself, taking sides against itself, was something so new, profound, unheard of, enigmatic, contradictory, *and pregnant with a future* that the aspect of the earth was essentially altered" (85).

⁴ In *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche writes, "Our current morality has grown on the soil of the ruling tribes and castes" (45). We act from a biased set of assumptions that tend to reinforce existing power relations.

⁵ Importantly, we rely more heavily upon Nietzsche's understanding of genealogy rather than that of Foucault.

⁶ Understanding the ontological connection within generations is critical for the argument that we advance here, we will return to better explain our position on this below.

⁷ As Ortega observes, "History . . . is not primarily the psychology of man, but the refashioning of the structure of drama which flares between man and the world" (28).

⁸ Ortega contends, "Every historic present, every 'today' involves three distinct times, three different 'todays.'" For some "'today' is the state of being twenty, for others, forty, and for still another group, sixty; and this, the fact that three such very different ways of life have the same 'today,' creates the dynamic drama, the conflict, and the collision which form the background of historic material" (42).

⁹ We note here, as does Ortega, that differences between generations also create alchemic possibilities: "Thanks to that disequilibrium, [history] moves, changes, wheels, and flows. If all of us who are contemporaries were also coevals, history would be stopped in a state of paralysis, petrified, having only one face, with no possibility of radical innovation" (43).

¹⁰ From this perspective, matter itself is an illusion, it is energy, or "spirit" in the Hegelian sense. We will return to this subject below when we outline our approach to ontological inquiry.

¹¹ Baudrillard offers an example to illustrate his claim: "All hold-ups, hijacks and the like are now as it were simulation hold-ups, in the sense that they are inscribed in advance in the decoding and orchestration rituals of the media, anticipated in their mode of presentation and possible consequences. In brief, where they function as a set of signs dedicated exclusively to their recurrence as signs, and no longer to their 'real' goal at all. But this does not make them inoffensive" (41).

¹² McLuhan and Fiore write, "The medium, or process, of our time—electric technology—is reshaping and restructuring patterns of social interdependence and every aspect of our personal life. It is forcing us to reconsider and reevaluate practically every thought, every action, and every institution formerly taken for granted" (8).

¹³ Importantly, Baudrillard makes the deference to and representation of the real a function of power: "The only weapon of power . . . is to reinject realness and referentiality everywhere, in order to convince us of the reality of the social, of the gravity of the economy and finalities of production. For that purpose it prefers the discourse of crisis" (42).

¹⁴ See, e.g., the *Antidosis*, or *Against the Sophists*.

¹⁵ We find remarkable similarities in the writing of Machiavelli and the discourses of Isocrates, especially concerning the representation of political power. See, e.g., Machiavelli's *The Prince*.

¹⁶ C.S. Peirce attributes much of his understanding regarding the theory of representation to Thomas Hobbes. See, e.g., Hobbes' *Leviathan*.

¹⁷ Kenneth Burke, of course, recognized many of the points that we make here. See, e.g., *Language as Symbolic Action*. See, also, Fredric Jameson's, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*.

¹⁸ One of the better accounts of the relationship between rhetoric, mythic reconstruction, and meaning is Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch's, *Meaning*. See, especially, their analysis of art and myth in Chapters Five through Nine.

¹⁹ Of course, the Arachnids are a metaphor for a generalized enemy, as well, not just a Communist

enemy.

²⁰ Fascism is the representation that we resist in this text. The same observation assuredly applies to most any situation, or representation.

²¹ There are two scenes in the film that demonstrate the early inculcation of civic and military values. The first scene is a recruitment advertisement on the Federal Network. It claims that everyone is doing their part with a line of soldiers verifying their commitment to the cause; the last "soldier" in line, of course, is a young boy, who proudly proclaims, "I'm doing my part, too." The more general claim in this youth-oriented propaganda is that "every schoolkid knows that arachnids are dangerous" The second scene, which seems more a "public service" announcement, shows young schoolchildren squashing bugs on the ground with a similar edifying claim: "everyone is doing their part."

²² This, of course, is a rhetorical reconstruction of modern citizenship, which teases the relation with military service, but does not make citizenship dependant on the same. Such a conflation, we believe, is fascistic.

²³ The Federation is presented as a society that is driven by violence. Claims throughout the film maintain "we're gonna fight and we're gonna win." After his hometown, Buenos Aeries, is destroyed, Rico offers a similar soundbyte on the Federal Network: "I am from Buenos Aeries and I say kill 'em all." Raszak's simple principle for military action, which Rico later repeats to his troops when he assumes command, is "everyone fights, no one quits. If you don't do the job, I'll kill you myself." The driven militaristic attitude is prevalent throughout the film. Indeed, the final line claims, "They'll keep fighting . . . and they'll win!" And one of the first comments to the newly discovered arachnid brains was "someday, someone like me is going to kill you and your whole fucking race." The "Death" tattoos obtained by Rico and others in his company demonstrate the fascination of this culture with violence.

²⁴ One of the ironic scenes in the film is the scene that we highlight above when Raszak discovers that the arachnids could get inside human brains and make their victims do almost anything. The General, the sole survivor of the attack, observed that the arachnids are "just like us, they want to know what makes us tick."

²⁵ One of the interesting differences between the novel and the film is the historical example used in the opening History and Moral Philosophy class to demonstrate the premise that violence is the only way to resolve conflict. In the film Hiroshima is substituted for Carthage, perhaps because the latter was deemed too obscure for its primary consumers, teenage America.

²⁶ Foucault warns, "There is in this hatred of the present or the immediate past a dangerous tendency to invoke a completely mythical past" (248).