

“Can the university stand for peace?”

Omar Khadr, Higher Education, and the Question of Hospitality

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I. ENCORE UN EFFORT!

We must work and insist and repeat and invent and never give up.

—Hélène Cixous, *Perpetual Peace Project*

“Can the university stand for peace?” My colleague, Susan Searls Giroux, asks this heart-ravishing question in an illuminating book that focuses on the charged nexus of race, pedagogy, and postsecondary education in the United States (2010, 21).¹ From out of her provocation tumble many more queries, and it is in that interrogative spirit that I want to proceed here before turning to the case of the Canadian child-soldier, Omar Khadr, whose tortuous decade-

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long incarceration in Guantanamo Bay, in violation of international law, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, raises compelling issues about both the ethical obligations of public universities in a time of war and how students might respond to those responsibilities. Where does the university stand, today and tomorrow, when democratic jurisprudence and human decency are not only abandoned but also impudently *shown* to be disposable, as precarious and vulnerable to injury as the casualties of war? Giroux’s question obliges the university to reckon and to self-reckon with the gravest problems of military modernity and to face up to what Judith Butler calls “the fundamental sociality of embodied life, the ways in which we are . . . implicated in lives that are not our own” (2004, 28).

In the United States, we are currently witnessing youth-led protests regarding gun violence on a scale not seen since the peace marches of the Vietnam War. In Gaza, young men and women implore a haughty military superpower to hear their pleas. Under sniper fire, they are forced to fight for their lives with whatever they have to hand. Too often, all that they have at the border, if in fact it is a border, is who they are—which is both everything and very little. As Henry Siegman observes, writing in the wake of the recent killings, “What Israel’s military restores when it quells Palestinian protests is not law and order, but illegality and oppression” (2018, 17). I would add that it matters a great deal that those protesters are mostly youth and that “illegality and oppression” are not so much masked by claims of acting in the name of “law and order” as decisive expressions of its lethal force, its capacity to organize a single, heterogeneous territory into a protected homeland and several exposed death zones. When we turn to the case of Omar Khadr in the second part of this essay, we will see how the Canadian government, given a strong “law and order” mandate by the electorate, abandoned one of its own citizens to the predations of the U.S. military tribunal in Guantanamo Bay—a space of legalized illegality and state-sponsored statelessness if there ever was one. In states of exception, whether in Cuba or Gaza or the streets of American cities, the law can choose to withdraw its protection, actively and frankly instituting lawlessness rather than slyly covering for it (Agamben 2003). Where does the university stand regarding these unforgiving realms where

youth in particular suffer and perish? Where does the university stand regarding the youth who ask not to be killed or let die, whether by torture or sniper bullets or by the myriad ways that, for example, successive Israeli regimes have starved Palestinians of their future: lack of water, food, electricity, health care, employment, or schooling? Students and youth loudly object to being cast into unlivable worlds of armed violence and the war against thought over which they have (yet) no control and for which they are deemed to be expendable. Why are those acts of dissent such a scandal to some? The protestors' vulnerability to overwhelming aggression says a very great deal; their wounded and woundable bodies constitute an incarnate demonstration, a demand for peace, in excess of their already articulate pleas for specific forms of political justice. My hope is that the universities are listening carefully and feel pressed by the nonviolent exorbitance of students' demands not to be harmed.²

We will have good reason to return to the special roles that youth today play in insisting on inhabiting a hospitable world and to the links that students in particular can forge between education and livability. But let me defer that work to honor the generative possibilities of the question with which I began. For asking "Can the university stand for peace?" is *already* to have responded to the supplication of mortal others, both human and nonhuman, the myriad creatures and all the worlds that plead for succor, understanding, and hospitality. At the university and in its name, being answerable to peace mixes promiscuously with asking after it. The university that stands for peace and that suffers the question of whether it can stand for peace are not different universities but instead a university subject to contorting differences, including foundational differences from itself. What can it mean for the university to be subject to a summons to nonviolence and to be singularized as a favored recipient of that subpoena? Is the university's calling, if it can be said to have a calling, to call for peace? And what if the university were then an emergent phenomenon, never to emerge as such, neither limited to its institutional instantiations nor to the regulatory ideals and fraught cultural desiderata by which it has always been formed and deformed, but the occasion of entreaties to others and for others who cry "Thou shalt not kill"?³ The path of higher education in this instance could hardly be said to be straight or narrow

because it is always pulled into the orbit of those—both off and on campus—seeking shelter and livability. What would a university be if it committed itself to the task of letting suffering speak?⁴ (And yet, I’m not convinced that the educational relation, which is nothing if not a matter of exposure to the supplications and the exacting urges of others and otherness, has ever been anything else.⁵) What if we experienced and understood the university to be the placeless place or utopic sanctuary, which is not the same thing as a far-off utopia, where prayers for peace are both perilously made and heard in a time of peril? I say “perilously” because of course it is in the very nature of an attestation to face the prospect of never being made or going unheard or being repealed. Nevertheless, these questions and possibilities open the university to new vistas that are also quite old, turning it not assiduously toward a destiny (when Martin Heidegger spoke of the university’s destiny, and he was perhaps the last authoritatively to do so, he asked in effect if the university could stand for war) but a *destinerrance*, a haunted detour or wandering-off that just might hit its peaceful mark.⁶

To make my case, I will take up the inaugural section of this essay arguing that attestations, wagers, and analogously uninsurable gestures of hope, and hope for hope, form the groundless rhetorical basis for a university that stands for peace. First, then, a theory of peaceable practice and of making promises to peaceable practice, followed in the second section by an exploration of an example of the practice itself. It seems reasonable to say that petitions for pacific acts of faith will almost certainly be scandalous for higher education, whose “reason for being,” as Jacques Derrida says with a smile, “has always been reason itself” (1983, 7). For who could tease apart reasonable judgments, assuming we know what those are, from a gesture of trust and an appeal to others in trust? The *raison d’être* of the university that is called by peace and that calls for peace is irreducible to reason. In Lévinasian terms, it is “otherwise than being.” That might sound alienatingly abstruse to a university manager or ministry official, but nothing could be more “materially” dense, haptically unignorable, or uncannily familiar to every one of us who profess and who pledge ourselves to the vicissitudes of education. Daily and perpetually, does the ardency of nonknowledge, the pleasures and woundedness of being-for-the-other, the exposure to myriad alterities, including but not con-

fined to other creatures, thoughts, affects, events, histories, and futures, not contest our claims to autonomy and originality and irrigate each lecture, each encounter, and each word that we read and write? Could a semester go by that wasn't jolted by what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick memorably calls "the piercing bouquet" of the other's "particularity," the mortal one who calls out in trust and who asks you to make peace, or a kind of peace, at once keen and singular, with wounding loss and the prospect of loss (2008, 23)? Perhaps the challenge and the difficulty of the university that commits to peace, which begins and begins again by both enduring and sheltering a place for exposure, thereby creating a university that turns itself inside out, is not that it is out of reach, because abstracted from things as they are or appear to be, but rather because it is too proximate, too close to be seen: as close as the face of a student, quizzical, demanding, resigned, bored, impassive, anxious, distracted, joyful, thoughtful, bereft, singular. Dismissing the call for peaceableness as improbably futural, the stuff of dreams and dreamers, amounts to an anxiously defensive strategy, not unlike a reaction formation, whose function it is to nullify through reversal and deferral what is in fact all too pressingly present. So Giroux's lure to thought (which, *as* a lure, is irreducible to thought) makes or should make lots of trouble for those of us who claim as professors to have a stake in what is sometimes too confidently named "the university." And it *is* a name, by which I mean a contingent claim, an uninsurable and reiterated supposition. The university makes and remakes a name for itself, more or less felicitously citing ideas of what it is imagined or required to be, meaning that the labor, chance, and eventfulness of poiesis shakes its foundations ceaselessly. We start to understand why the humanities, the faculty whose task it is to tarry with the churn of poieses that at once impose and depose our regulatory ideals, so often constitutes a threat that is wildly incommensurate with its actual influence, student numbers, research dollars, and practicality. The "performative university," to recall Barbara Cassin and Philippe Büttgen's apposite phrase, is all the more disquieting when professors, those who profess to profess, ask whether the university, already a pledge, can pledge itself to peace and thus to those who call for peace. A strange and unsettling weightlessness, not without its own liberatory potential, pervades the very idea of the university when it is "no longer the essence that one contemplates and that

one endeavours to realize” but is rather “the act that one performs, the university that starts all over again with each lecture course” (Cassin and Büttgen 2010, 36). And if whatever we call “the university” is at best an attestation, even and especially if it most often and even of necessity takes or mistakes that claim for a description, then “Can the university stand for peace?” is a question about an attestation *of* an attestation. The university that asks or is asked if it can promise itself to peace is produced in and through the asking. We start to see why, whenever Derrida speaks of higher education, as he so often does, he pledges himself in word and deed to “the university without condition,” referring not to an institution immune to the pressures of history, far from it, but to the groundlessness of the university’s exhortations to commit itself to commitments that can hardly be said to be its “own” or in its possession (2002b). “Without condition” here names the recursive chain of appeals and appeals to appeals, receding from thought, that routes the testamentary performance of the “university” and the profession of its commitment to education and educability through figurative turns that have no true foundation (for where would those attestations stop, each assuming another anterior pledge?) and that, strictly speaking, may not even be human. Now it should be emphasized that the unconditional university remains an institution (while being irreducible to it), as Brian Price points out. But, as he adds, citing Alexander García Düttmann, “it is, inherently, a university open to risk, to the risk of being subverted, while a university dominated by power, charlatantry, and euphemistic speech is a university that has ceased to expose itself or that seeks to minimize such exposure” (Price 2017, 52; Düttmann 2011, 45).

At the moment that the university calls for peace, thereby exposing itself to exposure, what is called the university and what calls the university begin to blur together. “Can the university stand for peace?” refers here not to an anticipated or anticipatable ability but, quite to the contrary, to the event of dispossession in the implacable face of vulnerability and the vulnerable.⁷ It means locating a nonpower at the core of the university’s understanding and representation of itself, enduring the passion or the suffering of the “uselessness” of the suffering of others,⁸ and does so not despite but because of the threat of power, indeed, overwhelming power. The university that stands for peace is not one authority pitted against another but the scene of a

forbearance or an abstention from power, as if it had a right to persevere in its own being and protect its property but elected, under the gazes of the others, not to exorcize it—a right, as it were, to rightlessness or to a form of rightlessness for which the logic of mine and thine no longer makes sense. It is a university that eschews the rectitude that the idiom of “taking a stand” ordinarily evokes and instead invites us to consider another posture altogether: not upright but altruistically inflecting itself toward others and being inflected by others, without knowing ahead of time what will come of that giving up and giving over.⁹ Now, asking the university to dally with an investment without return, and without even the speculation of a return, can feel ill-advised, without profit. With friends like these, who needs enemies? One is reminded of the story that Sir Philip Sidney tells of the two Goths, one of whom wants to burn down the library of the city that they have just sacked: “‘No,’ said another very gravely, ‘take heed what you do; for while they are busy about these toys, we shall with more leisure conquer their countries’” (1983, 139). If the university is a kind of exhortation (“I pray you believe me when I say that the university is that which can withstand the question, ‘can it stand for peace?’”), then, *as* a claim, it is always a question, always answerable to its aneconomic, improvident, and even “wasteful” origins in the testamentary. In its untenable and capitulating riskiness, standing for peace is perhaps the paradigmatic instance of what Derrida calls “a duty without debt, a debt without contract” (2007, 148). What would it mean for the university of peace to be “ours” but not to possess it?¹⁰ Or to possess it in the mode of its perpetual eviction and dispossession?

To the extent that the attestation of peace is neither intellectual property nor subject to property relations but the epitome of an open source, it remains a disruptive surplus on campus, at odds with the privatizing impulses that otherwise pulse through the social body. Our shared attestations made in the name of teaching and learning constitute the poieses of peace and contribute to the formation of what could be called an unmanaged, semiautonomous university “common,” in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s sense of the term, that is, the improvised multitude composed of “the languages we create, the social practices we establish, the modes of sociality that define our relationships” (2011, 139). As Hardt and Negri suggest, these shared makings are

inherently unstable, at once biopolitical in nature and effect, *and* irreducible to the biopolitical, because they are unfurled in time in ways that can be neither fully anticipated nor economized; it is my contention that a source of that excess on campus lies in the testamentary acts that both enable and disable the educational relation. What is taught and what is produced through research and teaching are, of course, always patentable and commodifiable quanta. But that isn't so obviously or entirely the case with the educational multitude, the restless testamentary and transitive life of teaching and learning, which helps explain why Kant insists that he teaches philosophizing, not philosophy, and why reflective judgments, which are hospitable to the unfinished and the unexpected, take on a life of their own in his work, in excess of his claim that determinate judgments are superior because they are grounded in certainty.¹¹ A university of peace affirms the importance of ideas and the attestation of ideas as essential components of a public good, which is by definition nonrivalrous and nonexcludable, meaning that no one can reasonably be barred access to them and that taking them up is never a matter of reducing their availability to others. The obligation of the public university to affirm the educational relation as part of the common good is a subject to which I will return in the second part of this essay. What bears emphasis here is the long-held nexus joining peaceable relations to the strange profitlessness that lies at the heart of pedagogical acts, the ways in which we who profess can be disowned not so much by *what* we profess (although that too is always possible) as by the fact that we profess at all. Teaching and learning are in this testamentary sense not something that is owned as much as *possessed*; we who profess our commitment to the very idea of education are but the usufructuaries of it and charged with passing it along to succeeding generations in an improved condition.¹² In the context of discussing the limits of patent law when it came to the question of intellectual property, for example, Thomas Jefferson embraced the profligacy and sustainability of teaching and learning: “He who receives an idea from me receives instruction himself without lessening mine,” he writes to Isaac McPherson, “as he who lights his taper at mine, receives light without darkening me” (1903, 333). Or, as Slavoj Žižek points out, the “paradox of knowledge” is that “through use, it doesn't get used. Knowledge is effectively an anti-capitalist commodity” (2011, 47:57).

To instruct and to attest to instructing, practices which are at once everyday and extraordinary (everyday, because they are so familiar to educators as to be all but invisible; extraordinary, because they resist commodification), is to luxuriate in a praxis resembling a gift economy, which is to say a handing over to the other without any guarantee or expectation of a return. Moreover, this generosity is irreducible to the movement of ideas between teacher and learner because it is always also a performance of something due upon a larger obligation, namely, a commitment to the very idea of sharing and of sharing education. First and foremost, teaching gives itself away to education, which is an idea and something other than an idea. To the extent that education is both that to which teaching pledges itself *and* the scene of this pledge, it must invent itself anew through a retroactive attestation. This can be said differently: one must be a teacher to be able to attest to education, but education is only produced in and through this attestation.¹³ Education is beside itself, a praxis that also claims to be a gnosis. Perhaps the disabling of property relations (as indeed of all contractual agreements) that flows from this originating exorbitance explains the current frenzy for measurable outcomes, the better to tame or at least to fantasize taming the difficulty lying at the heart of teaching and learning.

But Jefferson's remarks are also a curious mixture of blindness and insight that remind us that the classroom that stands for peace is not, strictly speaking, at peace, not while the call for nonviolence is, both off and on campus, its activating *metiér*. To be sure, in the name of education, albeit an education in which he remains the teacher rather than the taught, the one who gives light away rather than the one who receives it, Jefferson imagines a commons of ideas that is inimical to the violent logic of accumulation and dispossession. But this is also the very logic that governs his stake in the traffic in human beings. In his letter to McPherson, the by-then-former president worries the question of patents, but of course the mercantile world for which the status of intellectual property is even an issue is for him a world founded upon slavery. Slavery: the carceral *dispositif*, now much more globally pervasive than in Jefferson's day, that renders human beings into property so that their trade might be conducted in a radically *duty-free zone*, unfettered by responsibility for the suffering of others. What is missing from Jefferson's picturesque

account of the weightless and patentless flow of ideas traveling at the speed of light is, in short, the nightmare of history—the gravitas of bodies that matter, including those shuttled for profit through the ghastly relays of the middle passage, the souls for whom ideas in fact have mortal consequences and are themselves eminently perishable: ideas of justice, dignity, community, and democracy. And ideas of education and the educable, ideas about what constitutes the human, the creature who is said exemplarily to have ideas, and the less than human, presumed to have no ideas at all, the easier to be treated as a laboring thing rather than as person who demands succor and deserves to flourish. Jefferson is fantasizing a postracial world, by which I mean his ethereal image of a convocation of light reproduces the violent repression or wishing away of “the thick mesh of mutual obligations and social responsibilities” that is the criminal foundation of slavery (Eagleton 2010, 78). Jefferson imagines dispensing instruction for free but eschews being schooled by others about human freedom, the result being that a terrible covetousness haunts his vision of the not-for-profit classroom. *Not* to stand for the peace of sharing and the sharing of peace amounts to a hurtful greed that ferociously governs what could be called the distribution of the thinkable and thus the livable. Lawrence Lessig points out that “so uncritically do we accept the idea of property in ideas that we don’t even notice how monstrous it is to deny ideas to a people who are dying without them” (2004, 261). Standing for peace is taking notice, twice—it is a regard both of the mortal others’ call for peace *and* a regard of that regard, a taking in of how the educational relation, electrified by the circulation of ideas, and by the unprofitability of their use and reuse, is never not also exposed to the woundable worlds that call for nonviolence, the only worlds, after all, in which ideas can have meaning and purchase. As Hamacher says of “the fearsome” and irresistible voice of conscience in Kant that makes the subject tremble, “As something impossible to assimilate that thereby convulses the body, it determines reason as bodily reason and the body as the body of reason” (1999, 103). Can the university then profess peace the way that Kant says we who call ourselves human are pledged to respect, that is, “*exalted* above all price and therefore admits to no equivalence” (1997, 42 [4:434]; emphasis mine), his apophantic language of raising-up, speaking-out, and standing-for reminding us that the invaluableness of which he speaks is, like

the university, nothing more and nothing less than a plea to be heard and thus, moment by moment, profession by profession, exposed to the possibility that it might go unheard, wasted, or countermanded by war?¹⁴ The recent ratification of the resolution calling for the Modern Language Association (MLA) to “refrain from endorsing the boycott” of Israeli academic institutions would be a case in point, a dispiriting instance of the unwillingness of the professoriate, in the name of higher education, to stand—and in an unapologetically “partisan” manner—for nonviolence. Not surprisingly, the most recent past president of the same learned organization blamed Trumpism on the legacy of Paul de Man, a vivid instance of an academic mimicking elements of the anti-intellectualism that already thrums dangerously through the land.¹⁵ When professors wring their hands about the baneful influence of phantom “foreign” threats to the supposed sureties of common sense, they give aid and comfort to those who more openly prosecute the war on thought. And they save themselves from responding critically to actually existing forms of peril—for example, the assault and isolation that colleagues and students face at universities, businesses, homes, and public spaces of the occupied territories. Chatter about the deleterious effects of “theory” in the humanities amounts *today*, in this dark hour, to an academic version of the distractions that plague the American press, which, as Chris Hedges suggests, “drones on and on and on about empty topics such as Russian meddling and a payoff to a porn actress that have nothing to do with the daily hell that, for many, defines life in America” (2018).¹⁶ Or, we might add, that defines life in any part of the world where there is no escape from exposure to suffering. The MLA’s disappointing retreat from standing against violence and for peace—which of course can always change, depending on the shifting political conscience of the membership and the leadership of the organization—puts to us that educators must be vigilantly on guard against letting the humanities marginalize *itself* in an age whose warring temperament already grossly devalues teaching, learning, and thinking.¹⁷ For the MLA genuinely to stand for nonviolence will always mean making uncomfortable wagers about the future whose uncomfortableness cannot help but fade into utter irrelevance when compared to what the denizens of Gaza experience every day. Standing for peace means withstanding the convulsive indeterminacies of attesting to

peace—including the chance that a shared pledge against warring aggression will mutate the ones who make it. In responding to the supplication of others, we who teach and attest to education must endure the trial of the unpredictable translation of “us.” The prospect of such unseemly transformations may explain the anxious insistence, going back to the birth of the modern university at the end of the eighteenth century, that the university rationalize itself or face rationalization by others, that it be rendered or render itself productive and appeasing—an insistence that is made all the more authoritarian for having to hide a discomfiture about its day-by-day beginnings in a chain of performative acts and ungrounded testaments, that is, “the university without condition.” The educational commons lacks a foundation. That is its greatest strength and its greatest weakness, but the futural peaceful possibilities of that volatile mixture can be very hard to discern in an age for which the winners are said to take all and in which the torture and humiliation of a people is the chief sign that a state requires to prove its right to exist.

As an appeal or, to be more precise, as an appeal to a commitment, the impetus for asking the question, “Can the university stand for peace?,” is irreducible to any technocratic or managerial proficiency, as it is to any disciplinary or professional competence. No university mission statement will capture the outrageousness of its perlocutionary force, its candid stake in the vagaries of paraenesis. No motto, itself a kind of attestation, encompasses the sheer uncertainty of its incitement, spoken in earnest of the fragility and necessity of *vivre ensemble*. Before there can be peace, *if* there can be peace, there must be a plea to stand for it; but what is peace if not the passion of supplication, an entreaty to engage oneself to its summons to nonviolence, critical thinking, and flourishing interdependence? “To profess is to pledge oneself while declaring oneself, while *giving oneself out to be*, while promising this or that,” Derrida writes. “And what matters here is this promise, this pledge of responsibility, which is reducible to neither theory or practice” (2002b, 215). No peace without a trusting belief in peace; no peace without belief in taking a stand for it, a stand that is irreducible to what is called knowledge and to what is called a contribution to knowledge. No peace that isn’t also the arc of a heliotropic turn *toward* it, as Kant’s nudging preposition, *zu*, in *Zum ewigen Frieden*, quietly reminds us. The university *for* peace is the

university *of* peace, becoming what it advocates and advocating what it destinerrantly becomes. Is that then what a university *for* peace is or could be, namely, a fold in the social fabric in which an entreaty to responsibility also serves as an instance of the responsibility for which it calls, an attestation, in other words, of the attestation of peace and of peace *as* an attestation? “The university” here stands as a figure or a placeholder for a temporal flexure in which one must in some sense already embody peace to ask after it, because peace is produced and reproduced in and through the asking. Put another way, because taking a stand for peace, pledging oneself to it, can never be assured, not while it remains a commitment *to*, asking if the university can take a stand for peace is also a form of peace, albeit not the peace of an *otium* but a peace that is interminably a reckoning, at once disturbed and disturbing, an entreaty that is always vulnerable to being taken up, ignored, or countermanded.

The question at hand is unreasonable, but not because it is naive or unrealistic—both inhospitable charges that Kant nevertheless feels obliged to parry in the opening sentences of *Toward Perpetual Peace*, the pamphlet in which he makes nonviolence and hospitality (and nonviolence *as* hospitality) a specifically university worry and in which he publicly declares his professorial commitment to peaceableness under the gaze of the sovereign in what was then most militarized nation on the planet. I am tempted to characterize the question that we are contemplating together today as unnervingly *timely*, given the warring neoliberal conjuncture in which we who profess (and who profess we profess) continue to promise ourselves to the work of teaching and learning, and to invite others to do the same . . . except that there has never been a moment in the brief, tumultuous history of the modern university when Giroux’s entreaty was anything but fiercely urgent. Standing for peace and asking whether the university can stand for peace never happens in a less propitious hour than this one. The time and place of these hospitable gestures will always have been *here* and *now*. But in wartime, which is also the time of the education, can the university afford to sue for peace? Can the university risk promising itself to the promise of peace when so many forces—for example, a surge in populist anti-intellectualism, or a doubt about the validity of scientific knowledge, or an angry contempt for humanistic

inquiry, or spending billions of dollars on weapons while declaring student debt to be unforgivable, or wildly incommensurate appeals to the sureties of common sense, on the one hand, and the pacifying thoughtlessness of unreason, misrepresentations, nonsense, conspiracies, calumny, and lies, on the other—are marshaled against it and, it should be emphasized, not only from without? The temptation to appease these forms of incredulity about the very thought of education can be very strong, not to say dispiriting to some and horribly hurtful to others. How can the university offer to give itself over to being unmade by others when so many others strive to unmake and remake the university not in the name of peace but of pacification and conservation? But questions of this type, which cannot be ignored, are questions asked as if those who call for peace and who suffer or renounce violence had the luxury of time. They do not. The university does not. What comes immediately to mind is Derrida’s paradoxical injunction to teachers and students, caught as they are in the instant, the *Augenblick*, between exigency and thought, which is to say between two exigencies (because thought is also an exigency)—as between the hand that is raised and the blow that is struck, or between the sea into which you flee with your family and the prospect of drowning, or between the bombing and dismemberment of children and the sorrowful terror it produces in the survivors, or between the unending armed occupation of a territory and the humiliation, torture, and degradation of its people, or between breaking a promise to combat climate change and the war on the world, the war of the worlds, that that cruel resilement will always have been. Derrida’s injunction? “Take your time,” he implores, slowing things down to speed things up, “but be quick about it because you do not know what awaits you” (2002b, 237). Because whatever peace may be, the peace for which the university is asked if it can take a stand cannot and will not wait. The question is not “can the university stand for peace tomorrow?” but “can it stand for peace at this very instant?” “Reason looks down on and condemns war as a means of pursuing one’s rights,” Kant writes, “and makes peace an *immediate duty*” (1996, 327 [8:356]). If reason is the *raison d’être* of the university, even if all that a university is and does is irreducible to reason, then how is it not subject every day and in every way to the proximate pressure of that emergency? As educators *for* peace, we must not and cannot forget the violations and violence of

war, because war does not forget us. We ask or are asked the question, and take time to dilate upon it (as I certainly am here), but I don't need a Goth with a torch in his hand and a glint in his eye to remind me that when I toy with these thoughts, they always come too late and not fast enough. Why? Because before the university for which I claim to speak can formulate an answer, the question has itself already responded, "yes." "Yes" to those who demand peace and who demand peace of the university and that the university stand for peace, those vulnerable multitudes to whom the university exposes itself before saying or asking anything of itself or others. Before saying "yes" to peace, and before saying "yes" to standing for peace, the university endures the tear of the very interrogative that opens its diverse body to the radical exteriority of suffering and violence, whether extra- or intramurally. That rupturing moment is now, forever now, as long as war stalks the earth and the imprescriptability of peace, the nonpower that is irreducible to the human or to humanity, makes its dreamlike voice heard and its mortal presence felt. Before the university professes peace or considers whether it can profess peace, peace professes it. With each lecture and with every word that I write, with each attestation of a faith in knowledge, I stand with the university and before the other, the others, and hear an other, the third who walks beside you, the one who could be me, proclaim: *En ce moment même dans cet ouvrage me voici.*¹⁸

Speaking as a professor of more than thirty years who has taught at four universities in two countries, I find Giroux's query to be as sobering as it is irrepressible, somehow at once inescapable and enigmatic. That Kant broached an analogous question at the point of the difficult birth of the modern university around 1800 and in the midst of deadly contortions of the first total war reminds us of how closely it is twinned with the question of the existence and indeed the survival of higher education: "Can the university stand for peace?" and "Can the university stand?" are meant to be asked in the same breath and in the same spirit of intellectual courage amid the ravages of armed conflict, the war on thought, and the prospect of wars whose premises are, as Kant presciently says, "eternalized," that is, naturalized as perpetual, and as inhumanly commanding and inescapable as gravity.¹⁹ But if war is "eternal," then what is its time and the time of education? It seems to me that

education is not at all unlike other sectors of society, namely, subject to the torquing force of different threatening temporalities, different speeds of oppression. As Henry A. Giroux notes, “The assault on public education, the slow violence of teacher disenfranchisement, and the fast violence of guns can only be understood as part of a larger war on liberal democracy” (2018). Moreover, an impatience specifically with the accelerated pace of the corporatized university and subsequent calls for the “slowing” down of faculty work, while perfectly understandable, risk ignoring how the manufactured *timelessness* of a militarized cultural milieu of wars without end contributes to the disabling of dissent.²⁰ It is not only exhausting speed that is a problem for the university but also an enervating and seemingly unbounded stasis of a belligerency that knows neither fast nor slow, neither acceleration nor deceleration, neither a beginning nor a conclusion against which velocity could be meaningfully measured. And all the while, urgencies that are other than corporate press upon the professoriate and the student body. If the university cannot stand for peace, then can or should it stand? Can it survive war, including war with which it is secretly or overtly complicit, standing for it either by commission or omission? Universities have never been indemnified against militarism, and indeed they have often demonstrated their capacity to be agents of and apologists for violence. But this fact only makes the question at hand more compelling and precarious. The penalty for asking for faith is that those who claim to speak for or from the university can at any moment perjure themselves. *La trahison des clercs* haunts and cannot not haunt the university that attests to light and truth. “Can the university stand for peace?” is therefore not one query among many. It is a question *for* the university, yes, but also a question *of* the university, the interrogative opening, endlessly renewable, in the midst of which the university faces the task of recommitting itself to the question of what it is. And “what it is” may be the wrong or perhaps anxiously self-limiting question when faced with the sheer precedence of another question, namely, “*for* whom or what is it?” The peace for which the university stands or rather asks if it “can” stand is no respite from the lures and labors of thinking, no safe space, but instead the occasion of a kind of impatience and agitation out of which the university of peace coalesces and coalesces again. A great part of what makes the query, “Can the university stand

for peace?” so catalyzing is that it is not only food for thought but for also action, “*praxis*” as well as “*gnosis*,” as Sidney once said of a humanistic education motivated by an ethical sociality that he didn’t hesitate to call “poetry” (whose definition he begins by appealing to its everlasting origins in *poiein* [“to make”]), the point being to plead a case for those knowledges that are already practices, for better or worse (1983, 107). It is no accident that the *Defense of Poetry* often calls attention to itself as a testamentary act, sometimes parenthetically (“I think, and I think I think rightly,” [132] he says, as an aside) or in more encompassing meta-textual ways (“I conjure you . . . to believe . . . to believe . . . to believe” [156–57] is the predicate driving the text’s concluding petition to readers). Sidney’s repetitions, bordering upon a syntactical stutter, make the risky illocutionary force of his text, its constitutive stake in provoking, invoking, and convoking the other, legible, one of many ways in which it is an example of the poiesis that it defends. Thinking peace—and thinking of peace—is itself a work and a form of propulsive doing, not least because it can only be done *with* others and in earnest of others, and thus as a kind of renewed and renewable proclamation of faith in the irremissibility of the interdependence and heteronomy of planetary life.

In Susan Searls Giroux’s question lie several challenges to the university becoming both an incubator of new social and political thought and an unprofitable assembly of its public demonstration. Is the university willing and able to get behind peaceableness, at once advocating it and exemplifying it in the name of education and of educability, that is, not or not only affirming peace as one teaching and research initiative among many, as undeniably important as those are, but also to marshal the very idea of education to the laborious project and promise of peace? “Can the university stand for peace?” is an appeal to a commitment, and it amounts to a pledge, indeed, a pledge *to* a pledge that is irreducible to teaching and knowing. The question places the question of taking a “stand” at the heart of the university’s self-description or its self-understanding, but because it is a question, an opening to knowledge rather than a knowledge as such, the query puts to us that a peaceful university is a university that doesn’t know what it is except as a complex interrogative. As the question that the university is asked to keep asking itself, it subjects higher education to what Kant would call a reflective rather than

determinate judgment, which is to say a judgment that “generates a rule from a particular case for which there is no rule.” And as Tilottama Rajan argues, a reflective judgment “thus always opens up knowledge to new material. It is thus our only way of accommodating the unfinished and the unthought, . . . what is still becoming” (1998, 9). Of course, even to pose the question or to acknowledge that the university is that of which the question has always already been asked is to admit to the forcefulness of the various resistances, both intra- and extramural, against which it is pitched. For example, does the university de facto stand for nothing but itself, bunkered down in the funding wars of all against all, or operative in the way that a machine or a manufactory is, as an enterprise equal to the sum of its parts but no more, or very little more? If we are to ask, “Can the university stand for peace?” we must do so in the face of longstanding yet intensifying pressures to make of the institution a sheerly administered entity, an institution that does not stand for peaceableness but strives for pacification, answerable not to the suffering of others and the demand for nonviolence but to the settling of accounts, the assessment of learning outcomes, the submission to the ratio of performance indicators and analogous forms of contemporary *Gleichschaltung*. As Kant said in the 1790s, bravely professing peace during a warring age in whose wake we still struggle, if the formation and governance of less belligerent and more peaceable communities were, strictly speaking, a matter of management, then a race of intelligent devils could do the job just fine (1996, 335 [8:366]). In the intervening centuries, have we at the university then become such fiendishly bureaucratic creatures or their minions? There are dark days deep in the bowels of the university’s technocratic version of itself when I feel and fear that that is precisely the case. Yet asking Giroux’s question and allowing myself to feel its probative touch continually refreshes and gives me hope, including a hope for hope.²¹ “Can the university stand for peace?” Let us ask the question again but embracing Hamacher’s characterization of the *frage*: “A question that did not refuse an immediate answer and accept the possibility at least for an instant that it might be unanswerable would not be a question but rather a heuristic instrument for the extraction of already available information; it would be an exam question and one that in turn did not deserve to be examined” (2015, 118). Hamacher may under-estimate how

examination questions often prompt insurgent—because unexpected—responses. But his felicitous turn toward a curricular metaphor puts to us that a university founded upon a question, a question that questioned itself, endures mutations right down to the design of its courses and the nature of its testing. Can the university stand for the question, withstand its scourging force? The interrogative redounds back on itself, reminding us that to ask, much less to answer the question, means bringing a searching intelligence to bear on each of the terms forming the query, for we cannot ask “Can the university stand for peace?” unless and until we have asked again so many other urgent questions: What is a university? What is peace? What is a question? What can it mean, today, in which the very meaning of social and political practice is subject to such unforgiving and impoverishing torsions, together to “stand *for*” anything at all? We might recall that the first sentence of Kant’s *Toward Perpetual Peace* reads, “It may be left undecided . . .” (or, “We can leave open the question . . .,” or “We do not need to determine . . .,” all available translations of “*mag dahin gestellt sein* [1996, 8:343]²²), as if daring his readers under the sign of peace not to fall into the too easy trap of identifying the indeterminate with shiftlessness and inconsequentiality, the default anti-philosophical stance of which he is only too aware, and instead to see in it an invitation to join him in the difficult capaciousness of the thought of nonviolence, hospitality, and being-for-the-other. In other words, Kant begins his reflection on peace with a suspension of disbelief, which after all is a call for belief, a plea to join in a condition of shared irresolution, and a creative opening to the open in which the question must momentarily endure the passion of the unanswerable, without which it would not be a question at all.

In my dreams, I imagine committing an act of campus vandalism: I scratch out my current university’s motto, wherever it is to be found, and replace it with “Can the university stand for peace?” Good for thinking, perhaps, but bad for branding. As a sign under which to teach and conduct research Giroux’s query is more promising than where my university is today, about to supplement its long-held, if anachronistic, motto, “All things cohere in Christ,” always hidden in plain sight because left in transliterated Greek, for a variant of “Advancing human and societal health and well-being.” From the enthusiasts of STEM comes the paroxysm of the biopolitical, before which I flinch.

The slogan is meant to be a speculum in which the university sees itself and, more important, sees itself seen by others, but I wonder where in this mirror my humanities colleagues and students are expected to discern their faces. What Kant called “the conflict of the faculties” was never meant to end, much less end with the capitulation of the humanities to the ungainsayable precedence of biomedicine. Described as a part of the university’s “marketing platform,” the logo isn’t officially designed to replace the motto that has, since the nineteenth century, formed part of the university heraldry, presumably because, knowing nothing of history, it is meant to speak to and from the eternal now of the marketplace. Rather than a holy aegis safeguarding the institution, the new slogan functions as a kind of titular spirit designed to pass in a capillary fashion through the body of the university. Not a blazon of sovereign authority, then, but the sign of the diffuse regulatory power of which it is itself an instance. Now it is true that the prospect of peaceableness limns both the scriptural and the secular shibboleth, although frankly that thought had not occurred to me until I set them both against Giroux’s scrutinizing question. But where the interrogative opening of “Can the university stand for peace?” constitutes a reflective judgment, inviting the university to suffer the indignity of not being in possession of its own concept, the old and the new motto are decidedly determinative, sutured to things as they are and what we already know or will know. I cannot here address the ways in which the new motto in particular is a symptom of the neoliberal conjuncture, except to say that it almost entirely forecloses humanistic forms of inquiry and pedagogy for which, it should be said, not one term in the motto could go uncontested: from its anthropocentrism and its stake in the self-sameness and exemplarity of what is called “human”; to its resolutely forward-looking impetus, which ignores the past and present violence perpetrated under the banner of progress; to the worrisome organicism of its commitment to the homeostasis of “societal health,” which risks pathologizing difference and dissent in the name of preserving the wellness of the whole; to the way in which it figures the university primarily as the healer, favoring the palliative reassurances of restoration over the wrenching energies of critique; or to the coyness, albeit half-hearted, of figuring the university’s capitalization of biomedicine and the life sciences as altruism. Let us leave unsaid how the motto nicely

rhymes the spirit of progress with the expectation of fundraising in the gerund, “advancing.” And I will not ask the question of whether or to what degree my university, or, for that matter, any contemporary university, has had the promotion of the well-being—psychic and physical—of its own staff, faculty, students, and experimental animals at heart while it goes about the business of minding the health of the humans. In truth, both mottos make legible what all university mottos do, producing an idea of the institution and its practices through exclusionary means, over and against what is deemed to lie outside its core interests. No one can gainsay the planetary importance of health research or indeed of the university’s fundamentally important role in the pursuit of biomedical teaching and research. But a more peaceable world is a world that embraces health as a matter not only of science and technology but also of justice and education. What bears scrutiny is the significance of a university marshaling its self-representations solely to health for the purpose of boosting its global rankings and increasing its market share of students, faculty, benefactors, and research dollars. Even though I am not a Christian, I might well take “All things cohere in Christ” over the other slogan, if only because the more ancient pronouncement, for all its patent exclusivity and admonitory quality, its implicit warning that outside “Christ” lies a moral and social chaos, calls for historical memory and reminds us that the alleviation of suffering and the affirmation of peaceableness, the shared fundament of the Abrahamic confessions, needn’t be routed solely through the monetized administration of bodies and the management of life. “All things cohere in Christ” could also be understood to mean that those who suffer and who call out not to be forsaken constitute a singular multitude—“neither Jew, nor Greek”—in excess of the sovereignty of the law and the republic of property. Under the aegis of that motto, the university that stands for peace stands specifically for those who are blessed not because they long for an impossibly distant *otium* but because they labor at *making* peace now.

One way a public university can stand for peace, and one way in which it can contribute to the affirmation and creation of goods as public, is to affirm equality rights and to support the extraordinary students, faculty, and staff who are far too often treated unequally. To stand for peace means having the intellectual courage to take a stand against those who would compel

universities to let anything stand, regardless of its veracity, its ability to meet the expectations of peer review or a research ethics board, and, most important, its capacity or intent to wound others and to intensify inequality. Once the university was castigated as “the weak link” in the war against terror;²³ and now, under the banner of supposedly freeing speech on campus, it is characterized as the weak link in the preservation of fairness and indeed of democracy—although, to be clear, this is a “democracy” that is understood elementally and fantastically to be a war of equal belligerents in which the strongest words survive. Media accounts of the question often veer between largely manufactured rage at attempts by students and faculty to have a say in what gets said (and thus done on campus) and barely concealed pleasure at the prospect of an opportunity to give universities a lesson that they won’t soon forget. The weirdly overblown nature of the rhetoric vilifying universities about this question suggests that it is mostly a screen for a deeper resentment: namely, the scandal of students and faculty daring to imagine ways of organizing an educational commons that affirms interdependence and accommodation, a university polis that finds the intellectual courage to say *no* to blindly meeting the needs and worries of the autonomous liberal subject and, as if in a perpetual state of emergency, to sacrificing everything—including veracity, ethics, sociality, and human decency—so that those needs are met. In short, a university that stands for peace, not war. An unconditional university that commits itself to exposure is a university that resists staking its reputation on protecting the virile self-assertion of “free speech.” Peace in this case will mean refusing to provide a platform for hateful forms of expression under the cover of that overdetermined and vastly undertheorized regulative idea. It’s useful to recall that the charge of “attacking” free speech—the “threat” that free speech is under siege, a worry that stokes an already virulent anti-intellectualism—is used to suppress the affirmation of equality rights. Should we concern ourselves with the supposed right of speakers, including tenured professors, to be as unjust and injurious as they want to be? As a tenured professor, I’ve never understood, experienced, or deployed my academic freedom as the “right” to say or do whatever I want, as if what I said or did in the name of teaching and learning took place in an asocial vacuum. That would be to confuse “liberty” with “license,” as thinkers like Wollstonecraft and Paine

and Godwin remind us. Freedom without responsibility to others is the selfishness of privilege. In all rigor, academic freedom is not “mine,” not an inviolable possession but the site of continual contestation. The element of intellectual life is not the autonomous subject in a war of all against all but the work of attending to intricate webs of interdependence joining individuals to communities to knowledges to histories. So I am not “free” to conduct research that pollutes the environment. I am not “free” to pursue projects that hurt or could hurt human beings. (That’s why there are research ethics boards for which the respectful treatment of others takes precedence over the desiderata of scholarship.) I am not “free” to deny differently abled students their accommodations. I am not “free” to make nonhuman animals suffer or let die. I am not “free” to ignore the legacy of settler colonial violence. And I am most certainly not “free” to say things on campus or in class that are injurious to those capable students who are already disproportionately the subject of harm. While we worry about modeling the “dialogue” of ideas on campus on another grotesquely harmful fantasy, namely, the “free market,” it is worth saying that lacerating some of our students lacerates every one of them because it disfigures the very thought of education. So “free speech” on campus is not a dog whistle to which I feel especially compelled to react.

“Can the university stand for peace?” shelters yet another question for me, a question that has haunted all of my remarks, and that is whether the university can *withstand* peace. Is it prepared, institutionally, but also in its very concept, to embrace the gravity and contingency and unpredictability of the labor of peaceableness, which is neither an imagined kingdom of ends, nor something accomplished or accomplishable, but, like justice, a form of work happening today, perpetual and unforgiving in its demands? I am reminded again of Kant, about whom I have been thinking and writing and teaching for a long time, the university educator who reassures us, against warmongers and the warmongering spirit to which he could himself sometimes succumb, that we are not only *capable* of peace but, perhaps more important, that we *deserve* peace, which is to say that we are not creatures who are unworthy of peaceableness. In other words, Kant senses that the real danger in wartime is misanthropy, the contempt for human flourishing, that underwrites the skeptics, the political realists, so-called, and the military men who assume and

school others into assuming that war and warlike relations are our sole destiny. *They* say peaceableness is but a dream; Kant says that in dreams begin responsibilities, which is why he opens *Toward Perpetual Peace*, with a knowing wryness, by suggesting that he may well be one of those philosophers who “dream sweet dreams” (1996, 317 [8:343]). The *incredulous*, the ones who do not dream, are those who “eternalize” war, as Kant says; they are responsible for creating worlds of perpetual violence, naturalizing them as the only worlds that are, the worlds in which you and I are currently living and in which so many, each day, day after day, die or are left to die. Because the promise of peace cannot and could not be met as such, it is characterized as hopelessly moony when compared to what is immediately executable: war. Much better to fight, they say, and be “truer” to our nature than indulge in useless fantasies of peaceableness. But as Kant saw, the problem here, or one of the problems, is not that we cannot achieve peace (Kant repeatedly says that peace is intrinsically aspirational, something good we work *toward*), but that we find ourselves in the horrifying situation of being schooled into believing that we do not warrant peace. Better to embrace hostile nativisms, warmongering, authoritarianism, and the evacuation of the public sphere, which feel doable because *already* done, than get behind their putative opposites, which we are taught to think is impossible . . . and therefore useless.²⁴ Yet Kant insists that the university stands for peace, shows that it can and indeed must take this stand, not despite but precisely because Europe and Europe’s conquered lands are on the very threshold of what he calls, inventing a new and terrible phrase, a “war of extermination” [*Ausrottungskrieg*] (1996, 321 [8:346]). Where better place to help others unlearn their bad educations in war than a university that publicly declares that it sides with peace? Kant openly admits—indeed, this is the precarious place from where he prefaces his peace pamphlet—that it may well be that too few or perhaps no one will listen to what he has to say. Yet he says it, and says it as a member of and under the sign of the university, which he figures as a kind of inn in the text’s opening sentences, welcoming strangers (for a price, of course; with hospitality there is always a price) that includes the strangest of strangers, namely, a rigorously vigilant, thoughtful, and worked-for peace. The *destinerrant* university that stands for peace is hospitable to it and provides a sanctuary for it. And as Avital Ronell

remarks, Kant's work and his professorial example remind us "that it's the theorist's *duty* to try to open a little private war theater against the state precisely because no one cares. So it's your duty to be very loud, to say what you think, to express your sense of scandal and disappointment, and to do it with a lot of integrity even if you are convinced that no one is listening" (A. Taylor 2009, 38).

Ronell's appeal to Kant makes it seem like she is advocating a deontological indifference to consequences, preferring principled (or dutiful) rather than prudential action, that is, reasoned praxis for its own sake rather than for the sake of others. But I think that reading misses an important subtlety about the heterogeneous nature of political protest coiled up in Ronell's remarks. Here, two interconnected things are worth noting: first, the emphasis on the performative aspect of resistance, the ways in which the labor of dissent is activated not only by specific political motivations, goals, and emotions but also by the force of language—figured by Ronell as being "loud." The point is that political speech acts *act*; they show as well as tell, and the showing, the attestation, demonstrates by example a hospitality, a hosting openness, to the future rather than an anxious and conserving abandonment of it. As Bonnie Honig argues, an unruly act, "like all perlocutionary force, that meaning-producing dimension of action that exceeds the actor's agency, intention, and context and exposes even the most autonomous actor's heteronomy" (2013, 131). Those who teach us that our rebellious practices—which are, after all, acts of trusting faith, and thus made without knowing ahead of time what will come of them and or indeed if anything will come of them—are utterly inconsequential refuse the future and put the political to death. That's why it is important to recognize that the real or at least the most threatening political enemies are the enemies of the political, that is, the ones who abolish disagreement or difference in the name of the same. So, and this is my second point, Ronell is not asking protesters to be careless of consequences. Quite the opposite. Becoming consequential is exactly what taking a stand means, regardless of whether that attestation is characterized as inconsequential. The standing or fighting *for*, the trusting inclination *toward* a world of consequences that reaffirms the possibility that such worlds exist, is itself consequential and is the first step

toward creating those worlds. It is a declaration of faith in the genuinely political and never more consequentially monstrative and demonstrative (from *monstro*, to show; point out; to ordain, appoint; to inform against) than when made amid and despite an otherwise deracinated social landscape in which no future is said to exist. It reminds us again that there can be no peace without first and perpetually standing for it. Ronell thus counsels an unembarrassed rejection of the nihilism of being told or coming to believe that there are and can be *no* consequences. The condition of our attestations not being taken up or cared about is the condition of the possibility of any truly trusting act, which includes proclaiming one’s trust in trust and in the uninsurable wagers upon which an authentically political existence depends. A political life, like a university, is, of course, conditioned in myriad important ways; yet it is “founded” on a groundless ground (a “non-ground” or *Ungrund*, as Friedrich Schelling shockingly put it in his 1809 masterwork, *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom* [1936, 87]),²⁵ and to that extent it remains irremissibly *unconditional* as well. Telling a rebellious speaker or actor that “no one cares about” what you say or do craftily seeks to evacuate anything resembling a public sphere or the creation of goods—like peaceableness—as public. It forecloses the future because it denies both the existence of the political and the chance of perpetually recreating the political. But arguably there can be no more urgent reason to open spaces of resistance than being told that resistance is futile. The very act of dissent, which in effect folds the future into the present, proves that not to be the case. Why? A dissenting praxis means that one is already doing what one is going to do, namely, becoming consequential in advance of the consequences that you advance and promise to bring about. An analogously marvellous conundrum, which could be said to be the activating heart of the political, characterizes declarations of independence—that is, instituting gestures and acts of faith that exemplify the autonomy that they promise; one must in some obscure way be free to declare oneself to be free, just as one must already be “at peace” to attest to the attestation of peace.²⁶ Perhaps this scandal—which, as Geoffrey Bennington says, “must give to time a twist it is unable to think (1993, 233)—is the underlying reason why the claim (and it *is* a claim, if a claim that is passed off as a description) that “no one cares” about what you say or do is made in

the first place. To believe or to say that “no one cares” protects the present from the future that at any moment, and without any certainty of making a difference, can break out “within” it. The claim that “no one is listening” shields the present and future presents from the difference that the present is already making or open to making before any pragmatic action that makes a difference. What matters is therefore not disconnecting political causes from their effects, means from ends, but instead remembering, in the teeth of the charge of being ineffectual, that taking up, speaking out, and standing for are already effective and already an end.

“Whatever you’re meant to do, do it now” (Lessing 2013, par. 15) Doris Lessing is said to have written; “The conditions are always impossible” (par. 15).²⁷ Although today more often taken up as a new age mantra for mindfulness, Lessing’s call to action retains its disruptive potential: the summons to what is inactual or unrealized, the call to take a stand or make a pledge or meet a desire are the furthest things from the unreal because they constitute their own testamentary reality. But how does one do peaceableness? How do we become capable of peaceableness? Michael Hardt’s remarks about the once and future practice of democracy are helpful here when he reminds us that democracy is something that we must learn how to do. That learning, he points out, is already taking place in lots of different locations, often in the same spot where the demands of capital feel and are unrescindable.²⁸ Democracy, like the peaceableness it presupposes, is elementally a *pedagogical* project, putting the teaching and learning life of the university at its still-unfurling center. At a university, where of course education and the abiding faith in the educability of human beings remains irremissable, as indeed does the force of capital, you learn peaceableness by doing it. And like any lesson, any teaching and learning worthy of the name, standing for peaceableness is deeply undecidable because it seeks to do justice to the future rather than to know it. Can we who profess withstand that praxis? We learn this from Kant too: when he uses the term, “peace,” when he proclaims his faith in it, he is in effect saying, “well, the conditions are impossible, but here is what you could know about peace, these are some things that make social and political life more likely to be peaceable and less likely to be belligerent” . . . while also doing something else, *doing something*, doing peace precisely by appealing to others, saying, in

effect: “I believe in peace, I appeal to you that we are worthy of peace; it’s true, the conditions will never be right, far from it, but in the very act of using the language of peace, of returning seemingly anachronistically or dreamily or irrationally to the philosophical and educational exploration of the question of peace, I am putting myself on the side of peace, figuring myself as one who affirms it, who signs his name to it and calls for others to do the same. ‘I am a teacher full of the spirit of hope, in spite of all the signs to the contrary.’²⁹ *Encore en effort.*”

II. A CHILD IS BURNING³⁰

Sure go for it, insult every Canadian that lost their lives in Afghanistan and every Afghan veteran either Canadian or American. Since people like you refer to this man as a soldier, he should still be held as a POW, but the real story is, he is a murderer. Yeah go for it, that’s what pukey, tenured left-wing professors do. God you make me sick.

—Mike Power

You are very stupid. You are trying to reward murder. This person has committed murder, and you are trying to give him a place at a University. This is crazy. There are a lot of people trying to get into university that have not killed anyone, and yet nobody gives them a place in a university. You should be committed in a mental institution, for you are sick in the head.

—Eduardo De Oliveira

The faggot professor must have the hots for this goat fucker.

—Anonymous

To ask if the university can stand for peace is to ask if it can stand for peace and withstand peace amid war. By war I mean not only armed conflict, the projection of force of the sort that Canadians endorsed for ten bloody and ultimately ineffectual years in Afghanistan, or “the war on terror,” the permanent state of hostilities in whose name the most recently elected federal

government has now committed unprecedented sums of money,³¹ but also the belligerent social relations that Foucault describes in his 1975–76 lecture course at the Collège de France, the “race war” (as he provocatively puts it), as well as the forms of everyday societal violence that are of course anything but everyday to their victims (2003, 60). Sometimes these different species of belligerence mix in mutually reinforcing ways. For example, I live in a country in which a recent account of a Canadian sniper killing an Iraqi insurgent from a distance of more than three and a half kilometers was splashed across the front page of the nation’s newspapers.³² Beyond their propagandistic value, stories like these give permission to Canadians to experience dehumanizing bloodthirstiness as a kind of spectator sport and to revere the actions of the military with a fawning adulation ordinarily reserved for feats of athletic prowess. (Would it make a difference if we knew the name of the dead man, as we do in the case of Razan Al-Najjar, the Palestinian medic who was recently shot and killed by an Israeli sniper while trying to treat and evacuate protesters in Gaza? This is a question to which I will return at the conclusion of my remarks.) I’d like to believe that very few soldiers, including the Canadian special forces soldier who made the news, would want killing others on a battlefield to be the subject of such merriment. But of course, breathless stories of the insurgent’s death at the hands of a rifleman have little to do with actual combat and everything to do with normalizing the militarization of the homeland in which violence becomes a technical skill to be mastered and a spectacle to be savored, and never more so than when that violence is directed against the Islamic other. What’s extraordinary is how this steady and stealthy deformation of the polity at the hands of martial values is made to seem as remote from the quotidian as the “target” was from the marksman who shot him dead. For that very reason, Kant asked Europeans to stop mindlessly glorifying the annihilation of the enemy and instead to practice something utterly unexpected, namely, to ask for forgiveness. In other words, he implored the flag-waving victors to think and in particular to think about forming solidarities not out of the traffic in sadistic pleasures but out of the labor of shared responsibilities. In the aftermath of irreparable losses of the battlefield, Kant would have made that plea knowing, as Derrida argues, that one can only forgive the unforgivable.³³ It would be all but unimaginable for a

Canadian university—its students, staff, faculty, and administration, acting in concert—to make a similar supplication today, a sure sign that we live in the impoverished political landscape in which institutional quietism about war has become the thin air that we are forced to breathe. Sidney’s Goths, it seems, turn out to have been mostly right. My point is that the sniper reportage forms part of an unapologetic ambient hostility that also includes the racist demonization of Islam thrumming dangerously through the Canadian body politic, ranging from the harassment of women wearing the niqab, to protests outside neighborhood mosques in Toronto, to the formation of anti-Islamic organizations in Alberta, to an exponential surge in police reported hate crimes against Muslims and those thought to be Muslims, to flirtations with a charters of nationalist “values” in provincial and federal politics.³⁴ This discriminatory climate cannot be divorced from the horror that we witnessed in early 2017 in Quebec City, where a former university student murdered six Muslim men at prayer because they were Muslims.³⁵ In the sorrowful aftermath of those killings, an imam who proposed the creation of a Muslim cemetery in the province in which his brethren had lived and died has faced resistance from individuals for whom it is unthinkable that Muslims grieve and are grievable. Islamophobia is not a single phenomenon nor is it isolated from other forms of dehumanizing exclusion. It has a long history in Canada, as do other wars and other warring forms of belligerency, and together these intersecting structures of oppression belie the country’s self-congratulatory narratives of 150 years of “peace, order and good government.”³⁶ I live in a country whose new ten-dollar bill illustrates our commitment to social justice; the bank note features an image of the civil-rights activist Viola Desmond, a section of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, an eagle feather representing First Nations, and an illustration of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Does that showy marketing of the nation’s claim to being a land of rightfulness, literally looped through the eternal present of consumption, obscure historical trauma by pointing us only to that trauma’s seemingly fated overcoming? From the ubiquitous point of view of the currency, is there nothing more to history than the praise of Ottawa? One of the purposes of the university that stands for peace is to make Canadian counterhistories legible by whatever means necessary.

Among the most deeply troubling instances of Islamophobia in Canada—sanctioned by the highest orders of government, supported by a broad swath of the general public, largely underinvestigated by journalists, and mostly ignored by Canadian universities—is the case of the grotesque mistreatment of Omar Khadr, the Canadian citizen and former child-soldier who spent more than a decade imprisoned in the detention centers of Guantanamo Bay. Let me quickly rehearse some of the basic details of the Khadr case before turning to its public significance.³⁷ Shuttled between Pakistan and his home in Toronto as a boy, Khadr was eventually left in the custody of guerrilla fighters outside Khost, in eastern Afghanistan, where, his father believed, his knowledge of English and Pashto could serve a purpose. That was in the summer of 2002, in the aftermath of the collapse of the Taliban regime and while the country was still under a ferocious assault by U.S. and coalition forces in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. Afghanistan was an extremely dangerous place to be, but Ahmed Said Khadr, who had close ties to Al-Qaeda and who would later die in a battle with Pakistani security forces, left his youngest son in harm's way. Khadr was then but 15 years of age. On July 27, he was severely wounded in the midst of a firefight with American military forces that bombed and strafed the safe house in which he and a group of guerrillas had been discovered. That battle left Sergeant Christopher J. Speer with a severe head wound to which he succumbed two weeks later. All of the insurgents were killed. Khadr was blamed for throwing the grenade that led to Sergeant Speer's death, although no eyewitness evidence supports that claim. Under torture, Khadr confessed to the crime, assuming what happened under these wartime conditions is classifiable as a crime,³⁸ but later said that he had no recollection of the event. Sworn testimony that was accidentally released by the U.S. military in 2008 confirms that Khadr could not have been responsible for the American soldier's death, not least because of the grievous nature of his own wounds. Blinded in one eye and injured in the other, his body riven with shrapnel wounds, Khadr was shot twice in the back by American soldiers as they overran the compound. Before falling unconscious, the teenager begged to be killed. But because he made this plea in English, automatically making him an intelligence asset, his life was spared. Khadr was transported to Bagram Airfield, where he was tortured and interrogated by guards who

singled him out “for the worst treatment, payback for allegedly killing one of their own” (Shephard 2008, 90).³⁹ From Bagram he was taken to the notorious prison complex at Guantanamo Bay. During his lengthy incarceration there, Khadr was denied proper medical treatment for his wounds—including injuries for which he is only now, 13 years later, being treated in Canada (Fife, 2017b)—and was subjected to various forms of torture, including sleep deprivation, physical abuse, threats of rape, and significant stretches of solitary confinement. He was repeatedly shackled in stress positions to concrete floors and sometimes forced to use his body to wipe up his own urine. In flagrant violation of Canadian law, Canadian intelligence officials interrogated him knowing that he had been tortured with the specific intent of making him more pliable. Khadr did not speak to a lawyer for almost two years after his transportation to Guantanamo, and it would be another year after that before he was charged with war crimes (Human Rights Watch 2017). He was the prison’s youngest detainee. All other countries in the world repatriated their prisoners from Guantanamo. But seeking to appease the Bush administration, and cynically believing that abandoning a vilified Muslim to indefinite detention could only garner political support at home, the Canadian government forsook the teenager. In 2004, the U.S. Military Commission deemed Khadr to be an “unlawful enemy combatant”—meaning that the Geneva Conventions regarding the treatment of prisoners and the United Nations protocols regarding the rights of the child did not apply. Instead, Khadr was forced to endure living in a brutal state of exception with no due process, no right of appeal, no right to a trial, and where evidence gathered by torture was fully admissible. For a quarter of his young life, he suffered at the hands of a carceral system so repugnantly at odds with the principles of justice that the United States declared it illegal for any of its own citizens to be subject to its punishing force. As Michael Keefer eloquently puts it:

Omar Khadr has been the victim of a triple suspension of what ought to have been his by right—as a child, a citizen, and a human being. His father’s political fanaticism led to a suspension of the parental protection that is the normal anchorage of a child’s world, exposing him at age fifteen to the military power of an imperial state that had cast off the constraints of those international laws

which define the basic rights accruing to us as human beings—and exposing him, as well, to the betrayal of his rights as a citizen by a Canadian government that, first through cowardice and then through harsh conviction, shaped its own notions of legality to the prevailing wind. (2015, 28)

When Dennis Edney, the Canadian lawyer who eventually took on Khadr's case, and who has continued to be his tireless advocate, first met him in 2005, he described the teenager as a "broken bird," a mute and crushed boy who for years had lived with "no education, no psychological assessment, and no Canadian consular representation" (Keefer 2015, 30). Khadr's inhumane and illegal treatment is now a matter of public record, the full description of which formed part of Edney's submissions to various courts, including the Supreme Court of Canada, which three times found that his rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms had been violated. When his case finally came to trial before the U.S. Military Commission, it was the first war crimes trial in history for a minor. The unseemly spectacle of trying a child captured on a battlefield may have been the most important reason for the U.S. Military Commission's decision to accept a plea bargain and to allow Khadr to be delivered into Canadian custody a decade after his capture. In 2010, Khadr plead guilty to war crimes and was transferred to Canada, where he was expected to serve the remainder of his sentence in a maximum security prison.⁴⁰ Once in Canada, Khadr's lawyer applied for bail for his client. Over the vigorous objections of the federal government, which continued to characterize the young man as a security threat, an Alberta judge granted him bail in April 2015.

Like many Canadians, I marveled at Khadr's first public statement after his release from prison. Standing outside his lawyer's suburban Edmonton home, so far from the desperate prison cells and interrogation rooms in which he had become an adult, Khadr spoke with poise, kindness, and hospitality. He offered thanks to Canadians who had so often either turned away from his plight or who vilified him as dangerous terrorist deserving not only to be punished but also to be punished forever—never the war child but always, in Audrey Macklin's phrase, "the ageless, hyper-masculine alien unlawful combatant" (2012, 231). Khadr quietly asked that he be "given a chance." He apol-

ogized to the families of the U.S. soldiers who had been wounded in the battle in Afghanistan 13 years earlier, knowing that Speer’s widow was pursuing a wrongful death suit against him in a Utah court.⁴¹ And to then Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who had waged a sustained campaign against him, appealing every court decision favoring his protection from torture, his repatriation, and his being granted bail, Khadr said: “I’m gonna have to disappoint him. I’m better than the person he thinks I am.”⁴²

Listening carefully to Khadr’s words and observing his demeanor, I was struck by how, in wholly different circumstances, he could have been a student enrolled in one of my courses: respectful and smart, somewhat shy standing in front of an audience, a young person tentatively embracing hope in a deeply uncertain age. The question, “Can the university stand for peace?” suddenly never felt more pressing for me. So I did something that I considered to be both peaceful and that proclaimed peaceableness. And I enjoined and enjoin others to do the same because, as I have suggested, standing for peace is intrinsically for others and with others, a supplication that responds transitively to an other’s supplication. I wrote a public letter to the president and vice-chancellor of my university, suggesting that an exemplary way in which the university might attempt to answer Giroux’s question was to hold a spot open for Khadr in our first-year undergraduate class, should he be interested in attending and in a position to do so. I offered to provide Khadr any remedial education that he might need to qualify for entrance into a first-year English course and concluded by saying that a verdant place like McMaster University would not only have a great deal to offer Khadr, whose life and whose education had otherwise been subject to such sustained degradation, but also that Khadr would undoubtedly have very much to bring to us. In the back of my mind was the United Nations convention, to which Canada is a leading signatory, that calls for the rehabilitative education of child-soldiers, not their vilification, torture, criminalization and imprisonment.⁴³

Only later did I learn that at almost exactly the same time as I made my appeal to McMaster’s president, Edney had petitioned Dr. Melanie Humphreys, the president of The King’s University, a private Christian university in Edmonton, to offer Khadr a seat in its first-year class. The hope was that a letter of endorsement from President Humphreys would help convince Ma-

dame Justice June Ross, the judge considering Khadr's bail application, that he was not a security threat or a terrorist but instead a prospective student who was peaceable and who asked only to be treated peaceably. In a temporal fold that we have seen before, the university was asked to attest to Khadr's dignity and peaceableness while also describing it, in effect saying to Madame Justice Ross: "I pray you to believe me that Khadr would not be welcome in our midst if he was the danger that the Prime Minister of Canada and others in authority claim that he is; if we welcome him, he cannot be at war with us, and if he were at war with us, he would not be welcome." President Humphreys agreed to write that letter, and her hospitable gesture undoubtedly played an important part in the ruling handed down by Madame Justice Ross, who argued that keeping Khadr behind bars while he appealed his American war crimes convictions was not in the public interest. A subsequent appeal by the prime minister to overturn that decision proved unsuccessful.

Support for Khadr's bail application did not happen in isolation, for The King's University already had an extraordinary history with his case. Under the guidance of Dr. Arlette Zinck, a professor in the Department of English, the university's faculty and students had for many years given aid to him during his incarceration, offering succor and, where possible, and sometimes in secret, remedial instruction. There is perhaps no longer-distance education than that between the students and teachers of a Christian university in Edmonton and the solitary confinement of a Muslim youth held in Guantanamo Bay. In the name of the absolute sovereign for which The King's University is named, the faculty and students stood for peace and against the express wishes of worldly authority. Why couldn't an institution like my own, whose mandate is to act in the public interest, make an analogous pledge? What took place at The King's University, where, it seems, all things do cohere in Christ, confirmed my belief that the time had come, and had long since come, for other universities, particularly public universities (all but a handful of Canadian universities are public institutions) to practice peace by assuming some of the responsibility for abandoning Khadr to the predations of the war on terror. Here in our classrooms and among our students and professors, Khadr could dwell in a space of curiosity, critical thinking, hope, and, as Kant so scandalously suggests, forgiveness. And so I asked my university to take a

leap of faith, knowing that, in truth, Khadr’s welcoming words, his suffering body, and his attestation of peace had taught us before we had had a chance to teach him.

Khadr was offered admission to The King’s University, where he has since attended. The public university in which I work did not find a way to make an analogously welcoming gesture. My pledge of peace faced what any attestation must, namely, the possibility that it will go unheard or that it will fail to be taken up or that it will face opposition that is said to be insurmountable. As it was explained to me, there was simply no mechanism in place for our university to reserve a spot for a particular student. Now, I’m not convinced that that is necessarily the case. For example, under law and in practice, universities regularly make accommodations for students living with a broad range of disabilities. The Ontario Human Rights Commission notes that “Students with disabilities have the right to receive educational services in a manner that is respectful of their dignity” (2017, par. 2). What then would prevent an accommodation for former child-soldiers who had endured the violent *abrogation* of their dignity and who had lived for years in a tortuous state of rightlessness? The origins, settings, and effects of using minors for military purposes form part of the curriculum of several Canadian universities.⁴⁴ But what good is teaching about child-soldiers if we aren’t willing to teach child-soldiers who seek the education that had hitherto been cruelly denied them? To accommodate Khadr would mean momentarily abandoning the university’s stake in managerial rectitude and instead bending in meaningfully practical ways toward the supplication of the other, responding not only to the wounded boy’s plea for peace but also to the indelible marks that his torture leaves on the Canadian body politic. And after all, if the Canadian Armed Forces is about to become the first military in the world to issue formal guidelines for dealing with child-soldiers, guidelines guided throughout by the rights of hospitality, then why not a public university?⁴⁵ Why not a public university that, in the name of peace, houses a respected peace studies program and that, standing for peace, has for half a century hosted the archive of the papers of Bertrand Russell, among the twentieth century’s leading advocates of nonviolence?

Not getting traction from my own university leadership hasn't dampened my belief that public institutions can evolve to the point of discovering their better natures, beginning with the moment when responding to forms of historical violence and the suffering of others *for which Canadians are directly responsible* ceases being merely an administrative problem. What gives me hope is the much more encouraging response that I have received from students, both at McMaster and from other universities. To be sure, I am the recipient of a lot of hate mail too, which vividly demonstrates the continuing hold that the perverse enjoyment of Khadr's suffering has on the wartime imaginary.⁴⁶ And for a moment in the restless news cycle, my open letter caught the attention of the media, from radio to television to right-wing bloggers. To some he remains endlessly fascinating as the mirage of a violent Islamic insurgent living in our midst. The consistent narrative organizing these denunciations establishes the irrational belief that showing respect or compassion or hospitality toward Khadr is weak minded at best, traitorous at worst. Few things are more sobering or dispiriting than facing citizens who want to see a man not only tortured but also tortured *more*. As a teacher, what do you do with that sort of injurious thirst? Is there an educational relation capacious enough to understand it and to learn from it and to teach out of it? The very idea of Khadr being free to attend university is felt to be an affront to the dignity of Canadian soldiers who killed and were killed in Afghanistan. Those who vilify Khadr share another unfounded belief: that the U.S. Military Commission resembles a conventional court of law, and that its findings and punishments are just and reasonable, even though it has been largely discredited for its unabashed lack of impartiality, its imperial indifference to the principles of natural justice, and its immoral willingness to admit confessions made under torture. Many of the accusatory messages that I receive mix Islamophobia with anti-intellectualism; that is, they combine a scathing incredulity about the worth of higher education with a hatred of the Muslim other, an intersectionality whose features may be unique to the neoliberal conjuncture but well known to antiracist and anti-Islamophobic student groups across Canada who must struggle to make their voices heard in the no-man's land between the war on terror and the war on thought. To be sure, some media try their best to report my initiative with a modicum of objectiv-

ity. But others clearly think they smell blood. “What would you say to Sergeant Speer’s widow?” I have repeatedly been asked—not a question at all, but a kind of accusation of indecency and a commandment to shut the fuck up, when of course what is truly indecent is exploiting Speer’s unfathomable loss and conscripting it to police the distribution of the sayable and the thinkable.

It gets worse. Mouthing the words of a right-wing blogger, a television reporter suggested to me that if McMaster admitted Khadr to its first-year class, then why wouldn’t a space be held open for Paul Bernardo, the convicted sexual serial killer who videotaped the rape and murder of young women 20 years ago not far from my campus? Although I had heard it before, this forced equivalency stunned me, but I am enough of an English professor to have thought about the withered and withering way in which it worked, the anamorphic translation of the victim of vicious torture into the vicious torturer. Once again, Khadr is not experienced as an actual human being but as a kind of dreamed and disgusting object, who, while he remains a substanceless specter, attracts an animus that cannot be exhausted, to the delight of those who hate him or an idea of him. Could someone say or suggest something more cruelly inhospitable than that, I asked myself? I was standing inches away from the reporter when she made that remark and, camera rolling, I looked into her eyes and thought, well, this is what entitled hopelessness and misanthropy really looks like—the calculated foreclosure of anything like a peaceful future, without regard for the injury it causes to others or to how it diminishes all of us. When you encounter that kind of blood-thirsty cynicism about an other, cloaked in the appearance of civility and journalistic inquiry, you grasp in your bones two interrelated things: that we are living in a social setting calibrated to the pleasurable spectacle of exclusionary violence; and that we are obliged as engaged citizens to do whatever we can to mitigate its effects and to model much more humane ways of living together. That’s one of the several reasons why I initiated *The Hospitality Project*, of which more in a moment. What the easy comparison of Khadr to a sexual predator calls for is not fantasies of murderous vengeance but rigorous understanding and gestures of welcome: in short, hospitality.

I am not a rogue professor, yet another humanities scholar putatively seduced by the foreign intellectualism of “deconstructionism,” “relativism,”

“Marxism,” and so forth, although of course that is a stock villain in the cultural imaginary with which we are all familiar and probably do too little to resist. There is an important history of carefully reasoned advocacy on behalf of Khadr, and it is that work that informs my reaching out to McMaster’s president, and through him to the university community as a whole, both McMaster and other public universities in Canada. UNICEF, Amnesty International, the Canadian Bar Association, and Free Omar Khadr Now, among many other groups and organizations, have from the very beginning of Khadr’s ordeal spoken powerfully against his mistreatment. In 2012, Senator Romeo Dallaire addressed the Upper Chamber of the Canadian Parliament, making an argument for why “the case of Omar Khadr taints this government” as well as “this country and all of its citizens.”⁴⁷ Senator Dallaire, a lieutenant-general in the Canadian Armed Forces and founder of a renowned child-soldiers initiative, encouraged Canadians to focus on the violations of Khadr’s rights and on what the Canadian government’s complacency about the matter said about our country’s supposed commitment to peace and to democratic values. Consider too the words of Dr. Constance Backhouse, Distinguished University Professor of Law at the University of Ottawa: “Some cases enshrine the defining moments of their time,” she notes. “Omar Khadr’s is one. Future generations will rightly judge our shocking dereliction of responsibility in this matter” (2012, par. 4).

So my letter to McMaster’s president emerged out of an already existing history of critical advocacy for Khadr. But the turning point for me came several years ago, when I met Rebecca S. Snyder, a young Navy officer who had been appointed by the Department of Defense as Khadr’s civilian co-counsel. Snyder addressed a conference of Canadian lawyers with moving fearlessness, both criticizing the dangerously skewed judicial process into which Khadr had been thrown and describing the misinformation that had been circulated by the U.S. government about what happened on the day that he was captured. She walked us through gruesome photographs taken in the aftermath of the firefight that I had never seen before. July 27, 2002: an awful, awful day in eastern Afghanistan. Awful for the American soldiers who were wounded; awful for the family and friends of Sergeant Speer; awful for the guerillas and their loved ones, none of whose names I have ever heard spoken or read in

print; awful too because scenes like this, overflowing with killing violence, would be repeated for years to come in Afghanistan, the repercussions of which are felt today in this country. In the shadow of this injury and death, the question, it seems to me, comes down to this: do we pursue vengeance or do we pursue justice? Do we endlessly perpetuate violence or do we actively seek ways to foster humane reconciliation? Imagine the courageous professionalism that it took for Lieutenant Snyder to defend her client under these circumstances and to speak out against the most powerful military force on the planet in the panicked years following 9/11, when the U.S. government was doing anything, saying anything, to prosecute the war on terror, including repeatedly changing the operational rules of the U.S. Military Commission so that it constantly evaded legal and constitutional questions about its mistreatment of prisoners. If Lieutenant Snyder managed to do that admirable work, I could certainly write a polite letter to my university's president and vice-chancellor. It was a minor move in an enormous and proliferating panorama of belligerence, but it was meant to be taken up as sincerely meaningful. My objective was twofold: first, to offer assistance to Khadr, whom I do not know personally but who, like all young people, deserves both access to a good education and to be treated with dignity; and second, to contribute to the creation of a robust dialogue about the roles that the Canadian public university can and must play in the creation of a more just, democratic, and humane public sphere—a public sphere founded on the principle and practice of peaceableness. What's important for me is to keep the hopes and needs of Khadr front and center but also to offer Canadians a way to interrogate the fear-mongering narratives by which Khadr's life has too often been overwritten and that are ceaselessly reactivated in the form of racism, more specifically Islamophobia.

Whoever Khadr is, he is not “that ISIS kid,” as one of my neighbors recently described him to me, assuming without question that, as a fellow Canadian, I shared her skewed worldview and its anachronistic mixing of metaphors for terror. Why do students see this species of hate so more clearly than others? Perhaps it isn't surprising that they are more galvanized by the Khadr case than, say, university administrators. In ways that many of us who teach today are seeing play out in our worried and distressed classrooms, their young eyes

adjust more quickly to the darkness and are uniquely sensitive to the nexus of paranoia, violence, and militarism that acts to disable and pacify the citizenry and that specifically forecloses the futures of youth. We commit billions of dollars toward fighter jets that we do not need while so many youth struggle to find a meaningful place in Canadian society. If the universities stood for peace, their administrations and faculty would lobby the federal government to apportion part of the staggering cost of these showy monsters to retire the enormous public student debt in this country.⁴⁸ Another fraction of the cost of that phallic power could be redirected toward welcoming refugees who cling to life at this very moment, refugees who are not terrorists but willing to risk everything, including the lives of their children, to escape terror. As Kant says several times, the fortunes sunk into perpetual wars would be much better spent on educating the citizenry.⁴⁹ Having talked to many students now about the Khadr case, both privately and at public events, I'm convinced more than ever that they grasp better than anyone how Canadian universities have an abiding obligation to peaceableness because they are public. The universities have been created and sustained in the public interest, and so by rights should stand for the flourishing of shared, democratic values and against a privatizing political climate that nurses and amplifies individual fears, outrages, and worries. Because of their public mission, universities should expect to model peaceableness and make an exemplary case for peaceable coexistence in the face of war and the deforming pressures of militarism. During the decade that the armed forces were in Afghanistan, Canadian university administrations were conspicuously quiet about the war, preferring for the most part to lie low at the precise historical moment in which those universities should have labored together to foster a rigorous discussion about why, as a society, we remain invested in military values and to ask what is perhaps the most peaceable question one could ask, namely, *Why war?* After all, the wars we prosecute are fought almost entirely by youth and in regions of the world whose populations are largely composed of youth. The human costs of war are now and have perhaps always been hugely borne by young people. So it stands to reason that a university like McMaster, which wouldn't exist if it weren't for the youth that make up almost all of its student body, should be committed to ensuring that we never resort to killing force without scrupulous thought. All

Canadian universities have a lot of work to do on this front, that is, in forming part of a more conspicuously lively public sphere in which war in all its forms is subject to ongoing and unembarrassedly scouring critique. And a place where we might begin is by inviting Khadr to join any public university’s student body, and, in doing so, signal to Canadians the relevance and the challenge of the sanctuary school for all those whose lives are pulverized in wartime.

I’m not giving up on university administrations, which, all insider professional humor aside, do have coiled up within them tremendous possibilities for transformative political practices. But more recently I’ve turned my efforts away from the managers and toward students—whose addressees, after all, will always include those who govern their schools, whether they want to listen or not. And so I created *The Hospitality Project*, whose objective is to invite students—and those who were once students—to write letters of welcome to Khadr and to wish peace upon him.⁵⁰ I call students to this task as a way of affirming the irrepressible solidarities joining youth to youth. These letters can be brief or long and about any topic, but written in the spirit of hospitality and in the name of peaceableness and humane reconciliation. My objective is to post them online, have them delivered to Khadr, and let them form the basis for a discussion about the precariousness of democratic jurisprudence during wartime. Of course, it’s up to students to decide what goes into the letters: a friendly greeting, a wish for good health and prosperity; an expression of solidarity; a reflection on war; a prayer for peace; a longing for understanding; a *salut*; an apology; a request for forgiveness of the unforgivable. As we know, hospitality is an ancient cross-cultural concept and cluster of social practices that speaks to the obligation to develop a shared, porous, and welcoming world rather than the injurious, segregated, and warring one that we currently endure and to which Khadr, among so many others, including other Canadians,⁵¹ has been mercilessly exposed. In a militarized age, fueled by xenophobic fears, the warring world can feel like the overwhelmingly inevitable one—“eternalized,” as Kant says—but I do not believe for a moment that that is the case. Hopefulness would be an occupational hazard of university educators, if it weren’t also their profession. Indeed, it is impossible for me to imagine the university classroom, and thus teaching and learning in

all its myriad forms, existing or surviving if not in earnest of a more democratic and less unjust world. Otherwise, what would be the point of addressing students in the name of knowledge and being addressed in turn by them? Teaching and learning can be and should be acts of generosity or hospitality, especially when the classroom is transformed into a scene of fragile and improvised receptivity to other ideas, questions, histories, cultures, politics, futures, and forms of belonging. Without that openness and without the vulnerability that comes with that openness, teaching and learning would be only the mechanical communication of information, the very anathema of what a university stands for. So hospitality—including the hospitality of teaching and learning—represents a direct point of resistance to militaristic values, including those that govern too many of the narratives that Canadians are today compelled to adopt to describe themselves. Hospitality is not without its complexities and hostilities, to be sure, as Derrida reminds us,⁵² but it has striking contemporary relevance given the human catastrophe unfolding in Europe and the Middle East and along Canada's borders, as different nations wrestle with the question of whether or how to provide shelter to the men, women, and children who are dying in the thousands fleeing some of the most inhospitable places on Earth. The present moment burns with questions that could hardly be more pressing: What does it mean to practice hospitality toward others? What are the fatal consequences of turning our backs on those who have an imprescriptible right to live and to thrive in this world, which is the only world that is? What is "the right to hospitality," as Kant dared to ask in 1795, as Europe's armies prepared themselves for wars that would last a generation and that would, he predicted, do nothing less than cannibalize its youth (1996, 329 [8:358; 326])?

These are questions that inform my initiative regarding Khadr, who has for too long been characterized as an unwelcome enemy even and especially in the country of which he happens also to be a citizen. While Khadr does as best he can to heal his wounds, parts of the country seem bent on reopening them, especially in the wake of the (new) federal government's recent decision to compensate him and to formally apologize for its complicity in his human rights violations.⁵³ Media columnists, everyday citizens, and members of Parliament decry the settlement as odious, deliberately forgetting a point that

Maher Arar, a Canadian whose life was also arbitrarily and illegally shattered by the war on terror, makes: “Ask any victim of torture whether they’d trade their entire compensation for his life back and you will hear a loud YES.”⁵⁴ But theatrically public expressions of disgust and disdain for Khadr compete with a more hospitable political and ethical spirit in the land, as peaceable Canadians agitate against the building of walls and the creation of protection laws and the invention of enemies of the state. The universities can and must play a more and more legible role in this labor. In wartime, it’s encouraging to see Canadians asking party leaders to stop characterizing them solely as “taxpayers” and instead to speak of them as citizens of the world, which is to say citizens with worldly responsibilities toward others, both at home and abroad. Hospitality reminds us that as difficult as the logistics of welcoming newcomers and strangers might be, the act of welcome itself is not negatively a problem or a burden but, quite to the contrary, an affirmation of the importance of the other’s thriving and thus the beginning of a new and more peaceful future. What are the large and the small ways in which we can cede our place to others and in doing so become something new, something that changes the very idea of who “we” imagine ourselves to be? And let us not forget the Indigenous peoples who have ceded their cherished home, too often by brutal force, to those who so imperially call themselves “us”. Hospitality, after all, means a precarious openness to the memory and ongoing effects of historical violence as well as future peace. Hospitality stems from the incorrigible need to do justice to others and to seek practical and meaningful means to accomplish that task, a task that is intrinsically never-ending and inexhaustible. The thought of hospitality encourages those of us blessed with living in relatively peaceful and verdant conditions that the world is also a murderously unquiet place, and that we share that world and that we are obliged not to bunker down behind our borders coveting our portion of it. Hospitality means thinking and acting in earnest of unprecedented forms of belonging, and that includes the very particular form of belonging that is called “the university.”

I regularly teach selections of Derrida’s illuminating seminars on the question of hospitality to undergraduate students, and I’m always impressed by how, notwithstanding the subtlety and difficulty of the argument, and

regardless of being repeatedly told by their elders, some of them in positions of tremendous authority, that “deconstructionism” is a dangerous French obscurantism, students connect powerfully with his remarks and with the question of the obligations and, let us not forget, the forms of violence that playing a host to others also entails. In ways that I am still sorting out, hospitality as a political and ethical concept resonates unusually strongly with youth in the classroom—perhaps because those students tire and sicken of the militarized ethos in which they are compelled to live and to which they are most vulnerable, and perhaps because, in different ways, they feel like poorly treated guests in their own country, too often starved of a more hopeful future. Hospitality forms part of the curriculum for me, but it is also a question that comes up in my research work, much of which focuses on the later work of Kant, for whom hospitality was nothing less than the key to a more peaceable future, a principle and practice of reason that he mobilized against the war-mongering desires of the military-agrarian complex—desires, it should always be said, to which he could sometimes fall prey.⁵⁵ The fact that his own work came to be weaponized after his death, absorbed into the thinking of von Clausewitz, no less, is a grimly salutary reminder to all scholars that, as Derrida points out, “From now on, so long as it has the means, a military budget can invest in anything at all, in view of deferred profits: ‘basic’ scientific theory, the humanities, literary theory and philosophy” (1983, 13). But while he was alive, Kant deeply regretted seeing young men being conscripted into ever-larger armies and ever-larger wars. He saw communities indiscriminately savaged by combat that knew no bounds. He had the courage to speak against armed belligerency and against the machinery of war that had ruined governments, economies, civilian populations, and, worst of all, thinking and even righteousness itself. He wrote *Toward Perpetual Peace* as a kind of letter addressed to the sovereign, yes, but also to citizens of the world (including, he is careful to point out, all those peoples who are not citizens, those whom the Europeans haughtily and inhospitably treated as if they didn’t exist at all), calling for hospitality and peace against the dominant forces of enmity, polarization, and cruelty (1996, 329 [8:358–59]). A great deal of political theory in both Kant’s age and our own is founded upon the assumption that political life is about hurting those deemed to be “enemies” and helping those deemed to

be “friends.” That is the grim ethos of the recent war on terror, but it is also the principle of enmity that underwrites the much more longstanding politics of the reason of state. This kind of thinking plays directly into the hands of an already militarized culture, transforming Canadians into what Ian McKay and Jamie Swift call “a warrior nation,” that is, a country whose dominant narratives are activated by aggression and armed confrontation as well as largely manufactured worries about the preservation of the homeland (2012). As anti-Islamophobic organizations repeatedly point out, Canadian Muslims and those perceived to be Muslims have a great deal more to fear from other Canadians than the other way around. Who then is the “friend” and who the “enemy”? The concept and practices of hospitality offer us a different narrative with which to consider and experience the polity’s investment in the idea of creating and policing inimical life. Whatever Khadr is or is becoming (for there is no single “Khadr,” as much as those who treat him as a security threat desperately need him to be), he isn’t an “enemy,” and one small but important way of registering that fact is to write a letter of welcome to him and to wish peace upon him. He deserves respect, civility, graciousness, and understanding. He deserves warmly and concretely to be greeted, and hospitality is fundamentally about the practice of welcoming—never an uncomplicated gesture, but one that is intrinsically worthy, which is to say, impossibly and incredibly, something to be offered for its own sake and without the expectation of getting something in return. Kant’s and Derrida’s notion of hospitality mobilizes an alternative figure for belonging and coexistence, a sociality rooted in the importance of helping others, of offering others sustenance and shelter. Hospitality as such, if there is such a thing, is a kind of noble fiction we can together use to tell a truth about the problems and possibilities of an educational relation activated by standing for peace, a fiction that knows itself to be a fiction and for that reason tells the truth all the more compellingly and pertinently. In a time sullied by the circulation of lies, and the concomitant temptation to reify and sanctify what is imagined to be “fact,” it behooves humanities students and teachers to insist on the efficacy—political, ethical, and educational—of fictions, the poises, and other groundless attestations, imaginative inventions, creative wagers, and speech acts that remain elementally important to being-with-others. As any attentive student of literature

can tell you, fictions are not nothing, and they are certainly not falsehoods: a lesson that Sidney learned and taught others, as did Plato long before him, and as my students and colleagues demonstrate each and every day in their humanities classrooms.

Hospitality worthy of the name attests to the sheer precariousness not only of the guest but also of the host, whose offer of shelter is as impermanent as the shelter that is offered. Much has been made recently of Canadian universities committing themselves to the project of decolonization, which is a wholly admirable project. But what I would add to this effort is that decolonization is not only an Indigenous and settler-colonial question; it is also a matter of working to free ourselves from the contemporary ethos of militarization and hostility, which schools us into embracing authoritarianism, isolation, and an unthinking attachment to a polarized world when it is anything but. Decolonization in the twenty-first century surely means rejecting these grossly withered and withering ideas about what constitutes a polity and indeed a world. It means shedding ourselves of a country for old men and instead turning our eyes more resolutely to the hopes, needs, and desires of the nation's youth. Hospitality can be marshaled in this struggle, and where better to see it flourish than at our public universities and among our good students—students who can join others, beginning with their teachers, in creating and affirming certain elementally significant goods *as public*? My invitation to Canadian university students is designed to encourage them to reach out to Khadr in that spirit and to ask each of them, in their own inimitable way, to say to Khadr: “I refuse to be conscripted into the ‘warrior nation.’ You are worthy of being greeted and I greet you, one student to another.”

Students who wrote to me in the wake of my letter to McMaster's president most often regretted Canada's collusion, *as Canadians*, in Khadr's suffering and wanted to help alleviate it. As a specifically political emotion, regret can, under certain conditions, possess remarkably generative powers, as recent work by Price suggests (2017). Perhaps the knowing palpability of regret—which in effect requires a fold in the political subject or for him or her to be in two places at once—is why many students have said that the letters are unexpectedly difficult to compose, sometimes to the point of paralysis. Why

that might be is a topic for another essay. But I admire the frankness of the admission of regret very much, and I acknowledge that writing to a stranger whom your own country abandoned is an inherently arduous and fraught task not only because it takes steps to right a wrong but also because it unsettles the idea of ever “having” a singular country of one’s “own.” The letters are a difficult combination of private and public discourse, an expression of personal commitments and longings that are also thoroughly caught up in the structures of oppression that they address. They reach out to another but do so only by searching oneself and where one is in the tangle of those structures. They catch both the conscience and the conscience of the king, making legible how they are not the same thing but not entirely different things either; regret and hope (and regret *as* hope, each limning the other) is the admixture of political emotions that is necessary for truth and reconciliation. Certain students are eager to write letters but have perfectly understandable concerns about signing them; for example, some students are not permanent residents or citizens, while others are partners of those who live in analogously precarious circumstances. To be associated with the very name Omar Khadr was and continues to be unsafe, something that says so very much about what kind of Canada I am living in, the Canada for which I bear my share of responsibility.

Although the project remains in its youth, the letters that I have received so far are extraordinary. I warmly welcome more. Individually and collectively, as their numbers grow, they call for a close and careful analysis that must await another day. For now, snippets from a small selection must mostly speak for themselves.

Though we have never met, though our paths may never cross, please know that I and many others deeply wish you well.

Having been blessed to have been born into a peaceful region of Southeast Asia, I never had to be . . . personally involved in any aspect or even consequences of war. Oh, this is the fortune that I wish was bestowed to every child that is born into this world. What you had been through should never have happened to you and I wish that it never would have to happen to another child.

When I was around the same age you were when your dad died, I lost my own father.

You are your own individual Omar, but you are definitely not alone. Do not be afraid to speak your mind because I, and other individuals, are waiting to hear your voice.

After watching your story on CBC, I was moved to write you this letter. I debated whether or not to write a light-hearted message, understanding that you likely still spend most of your days explaining the past and reliving the atrocities you faced starting at the young age of 15. But, like you, I am a Canadian student with a mind full of questions and thoughts about the world.

We are honoured to be able to extend a small gesture of hospitality and friendship by inviting you into our home for dinner and good conversation, should you find yourself in Toronto and inclined to break bread with us (and our three wonderful cats).

Recalling remarks made by the late Svetan Todorov, Sherene H. Razack notes that “When torture is sanctioned, the mark that torture leaves spreads to all members of society.” “What mark,” she asks, “has the torture of Omar Khadr left on us, those of us who come from the country of his torturers and who acquiesced in his torture by others?” (2012, 429).⁵⁶ What mark, I ask, does the abandonment of Khadr leave specifically on the public universities in our green and pleasant land? While my university administrators talk bravely about enhancing “societal health and well-being,” I refuse to forget the boy whose wounded body and spirit were left unattended but for all to see. I’ve had several occasions to teach Ursula K. Le Guin’s “Those Who Walk Away from Omelas” (1975), her compelling short story about a great city whose serenity comes at the expense of a child being locked away in perpetual darkness and wretchedness. But in the wake of the open scandal of Khadr’s mistreatment, I’m finding it harder and harder, emotionally speaking, to build Le Guin’s tale into the curriculum at the same time that I feel more and more compelled to do so. Why? Le Guin’s narrative asks us to consider how those who remain in

a state of willful ignorance and those few who know the truth but abandon the city are indistinguishable from the point of view of the tortured child. In other words, in the face of institutionally sanctioned suffering the question she asks is: who among you walk away rather than *stand for*? The difference between, on the one hand, pretending not to know one’s complicity in causing the suffering of another and, on the other hand, forfeiting the labor of transforming the structural conditions that condone torture is meaningless to the agonized body whose supplications do not cease because no one bears witness. Each party forsakes the tortured in their own way; each indulges in a form of false consciousness that together amounts to prosecuting a war on youth on two fronts. Le Guin’s point is, after all, that those who depart Omelas do so only because they can; the privilege of freedom from violence and from the brutalities of “race war” consolidates rather than alleviates oppression if it is self-servingly confused with a libertarian fantasy of escape from the institutions, practices, and responsibilities—not to mention the unguaranteed wagers—of a political life worthy of the name. The point is to stay in Omelas and to stay in a particular manner, namely, not only calling for the state to meet its fundamental obligations but also owning up to your complicity in failing to make that call when the power to do so was in your grasp. And as Meghan Sutherland argues, there are important examples of contemporary political protests that are no less radical or pressing because they demand a thoroughgoing reformation and reactivation of existing governmentality rather than its desertion or destruction (2017). To walk *with* Omelas not *from* it and to do so in solidarity with those who were never given a choice in the first place: that is perhaps a wisdom and a practice of particular pertinence to those who do not enjoy the advantage of leaving behind a political existence that is everywhere marked by violence and inequality. The ones who walk away from Omelas could learn a great deal from the example of the Black Lives Matter movement, which insists, as Sutherland notes, that the police “uphold their duty as police, [and] that government institutions ensure the rights they promise citizens” (2017). Let us then remain in our Omelas, but this time facing up to our involvement in state-sanctioned crimes and our responsibility as educators to broadcast a warning that Le Guin would have understood: living in a political culture of endless war means that, at any moment, violence

can win over the rule of law, brutality over decency, and vilification over constitutionality. Khadr's torture and abandonment by Canadian citizens leaves traces of that warring violence on the public university that we who attest to peace cannot ignore and cannot afford to ignore. Yet letters of welcome and other hospitable acts make their own impression, and together these marks mixing culpability and hope tell an uneasy counterhistory worthy of the educational relation. Greetings are informed by a spirit of reasoned hopefulness, not the irrational hopelessness that leads people to want nothing more than for Khadr to endure more suffering and for his young adulthood to be destroyed, just as his childhood was. A personal letter meant to circulate in the open can be such a hybridly transgressive thing, "crossing the bounds of private space so as to say what cannot be said in public" (Rajan 1993, 153). There doesn't necessarily need to be a response, because the *salut* or encouraging gesture is already a response to the supplication of the other. What the letters individually say matters too, to be sure, because each student puts his or her singular stamp on them and each bears a signature (even if redacted), a sign that a real person joins Khadr in a common cause against all the fear-mongering and warmongering. Of course, any student who stands for hospitality and peaceableness faces the prospect of being vilified. Indeed, as I've said, some students contributing letters to Khadr feel unsafe doing so. Who could blame them, given the toxic, bloodthirsty vitriol that fills the airways every time Khadr's name surfaces? Who could blame them, given the dour, scolding, and anxiously patronizing reactions to recent examples of youth protests, which range from panicked declarations of the demise of "free speech" on campus at the hands of students supposedly kidnapped by the alien intelligence of "postmodernism," "feminism," "Marxism," and "deconstructionism," to public bullying of the Parkland massacre survivors and antigun activists, who are dismissed as crisis actors, felons, or dupes. The indignant rage directed at these students, linked by a willingness to stand for peace and nonviolence, stems not only from the positions they advocate but also, I'll wager, from the distressing novelty of having to face any young people telling the stories of their besieged lives as they want them to be told. The disproportionate rage that outspoken students elicit is a sure sign of having been schooled: you made this desolate world, their lesson goes, now take some

responsibility for making it livable. *That* these students speak and speak so well (meaning without apology and with hope) is as important as *what* they speak about. It’s helpful for professors like me to recall that an average tumultuous day in my engaged second-year Arts and Science course in Social and Political Thought (2A06) looks like a worrisome insurgency to those who fear youth and fear their future. We often inhabit such a diminished and diminishing simulacra of political life, one symptom of which is the endless farrago of demeaning representations of youth—from the faux smartness of *Girls* to the actual stupidity of *Jersey Shore* to the carnivorous virility of *The Hunger Games* and *The Bachelor*—as feckless, antipolitical know-nothings, that unblinkingly partisan calls to action, the sights and sounds of students gathering to rectify wrongs, feels, well, just too real. A public assembly of letters, at once welcoming and reckoning, awash with thought and ardor, risks being dismissed as offensive or harmless (and it *is* revealing that youth are treated as dangerous troublemakers *and* as harmless slackers) for similar reasons, namely, its unabashed *politicality* in a cultural landscape that can be bereft of any faith in the political, a landscape where fascistic alternatives to peaceful democracies are too often pitched, as Derrida suggests, as democratic alternatives (2005, 30–31). Student protests are outrageous not because they are anarchic but because they dare to be articulate, organized, informed, imaginative, and futural, in short, *political*. They do not walk away or threaten to walk away but instead remain where the work is to be done and where they have the greatest stake in ensuring that that work is done. What is monstrous about student demonstration is its *monstration*, the sheer impertinence of showing-forth and thus an exposure-to. What looks by turns scandalous and improbable about youth activism is the collective embrace of the contingent possibilities of the authentically political, the robust refusal of things as they are, and the risky attestation of nonviolence and peace. Let us recall students like Dalia Al-Najjar, the Palestinian attending graduate school in Turkey who has endured three major wars, who writes fearlessly from the front lines of the Middle East, and is a goodwill ambassador of Children for Peace, an Italian nongovernmental organization “founded with the express purpose of assisting children worldwide who are in need of fundamental survival support.”⁵⁷ She attests to peace and urges others across boundaries to do the same. Her

cousin, Razan Al-Najjar, a 21-year-old paramedic, was killed in Gaza on Friday, June 1, 2018, by an Israeli sniper.⁵⁸ Wearing white to mark her status as a medic, she had just helped a man wounded by a tear gas canister when she was shot in the chest. “We have one goal,” she told the *New York Times* only a week earlier, “to save lives and evacuate people. And to send a message to the world: Without weapons, we can do anything” (Abuheweila and Kershner 2018).

There are hardly words. She could have been my student. She *was* the student of many different teachers, in addition to being a daughter, a sister, a cousin, a professional, and a comrade, among so many other ways in which her life was woven into an extraordinary, singular skein of sociality, responsibility, and education. In truth she is and will always be a teacher of me. There are hardly words. So I hang on to hers: “*Without weapons*,” Razan al-Najjar says, meaning that she faced the Israeli snipers unarmed; she assembled with others to help others and she did so under the eyes of those who carried weapons and used them to maim and kill defenceless protestors. “*Without weapons*” and with others she represented and presented herself as committed but vulnerable, committed *because* vulnerable. Helping to treat and evacuate protestors and in full view of those snipers, so many of whom are youth, her very presence proclaimed and asked others around the world to proclaim that her comrades possessed lives worth living—in the knowledge that nothing infuriated the soldiers more than her surrendering that bare and irreducible fact to their eyes. The protestors, so many of whom are youth, were worthy of protection and succour, not to mention the right to have rights, even and especially if standing for these elemental requirements of a peaceful human life meant the risk of forfeiting them herself. “*Without weapons*”: to see her medic’s white smock, the flutter of her trusting and worldly openness to the Levantine skies, as an irreducible promise of nonviolence. What bears emphasizing is that al-Najjar, enduring the glare of an absolute and unremitting exposure, did not feel incapacitated, far from it: “*We can do anything.*”

These are dark, dark times in which youth are killed and where youth implore others not to be harmed; they do so with their words, their ideas, their passions, their actions, and, I have argued, with the demonstration and attestation of their very lives. That’s the mortal context in which I have imperiled hopes for the hope of *The Hospitality Project*. Consider for a moment what

could happen here: dozens of messages of gracious curiosity written by students to a student, penned by young people to a young man; letters written from a public university in the name of public values, including our shared responsibility to be hospitable toward others and to demonstrate generosity in materially significant ways at the precise historical moment in which Canadians are schooled into adopting militaristic values that dissolve the public sphere and starve us of a more just and equitable future. Let us make of the university a Shiloh, meaning a “place of peace,” remembering that peaceableness is not a sabbatical from difficult knowledge and critical thinking but the condition of their concerted and unending intensification. Let students lead the way.



NOTES

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1. I recall Sir Philip Sidney’s phrase, “heart-ravishing knowledge,” i.e., knowledge that prompts ethical action or what he calls *praxis* (1983, 106).
2. For a compelling exploration of the ways in which public assemblies of precarious bodies can constitute forms of political speech in excess of speech, see Judith Butler, *Notes towards a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015).
3. I am of course remembering a central tenet in the work of Emmanuel Lévinas: “The first word of the face is the ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ It is an order. There is a commandment in the appearance of the face, as if a master spoke to me. However, at the same time, the face of the Other is destitute; it is the poor for whom I can do all and to whom I owe all” (1995, 89).
4. After Theodor Adorno, Cornell West argues that “the condition of truth is to allow suffering to speak” (A. Taylor 2009, 2).
5. For a probing discussion about the affective life of education and of the vicissitudes of teaching and learning, see Deborah P. Britzman’s *Lost Subjects, Contested Objects: Towards*

- a *Psychoanalytic Theory of Learning* (1998) and *The Very Thought of Education: Psychoanalysis and the Impossible Professions* (2010).
6. Derrida uses his neologism, *destinerrance*, throughout his work and often in different registers. See, for example, “No Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives)” (1984, 29). Perhaps J. Hillis Miller’s definition is most apposite, most elegant: “*Destinerrance* is like a loose thread in a tangled skein that turns out to lead to the whole ball of yarn” (2009, 29).
 7. The shame of the contemporary university is its exploitation of precarious labor, but this economic war against its own teachers and researchers makes the insecure foundations of the university, the reiterated performance of its own existence, all the more legible. One precarity rhymes with another. “Can the university stand for peace?” will also mean “Can it promise itself to more equitable and humane working conditions, on campus and off?” Peace, in other words, includes labor peace.
 8. “Useless suffering,” or suffering as such, uneconomized and not explained *away*, is the subject of a memorable essay by Lévinas (1988).
 9. In *Inclinations: A Critique of Rectitude* (2016), Adriana Cavarero explores the moral implications of the difference between uprightness and the inclination toward others.
 10. I recall Michael Hardt’s recollection of Karl Marx: “Private property has made us so stupid and one-sided,’ [Marx] . . . writes, ‘that an object is only ours when we have it.’ What would it mean for something to be ours when we do not possess it? What would it mean to regard ourselves and our world not as property? Has private property made us so stupid that we cannot see that?” (2010, 139).
 11. In the last pages of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant famously remarked that “Among all rational sciences (*a priori*) . . . only mathematics can be learned, never philosophy (except historically); rather, as far as reason is concerned, we can at best learn only *to philosophize*” (1998, 694 [A837/B865]). Kant makes the distinction between forms of judgment in the introduction to *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (2000, 66–68 [5:179–5:181]). Unless otherwise noted, all references to Kant are keyed by date and page number to the Cambridge edition of *The Works of Immanuel Kant*, followed by the relevant volume and page number from *Immanuel Kants Werke* (1922).
 12. I recall Marx’s remarks in *Capital* (vol. 3, chap. 46): “From the standpoint of a higher economic form of society, private ownership of the globe by single individuals will appear quite as absurd as private ownership of one man by another. Even a whole society, a nation, or even all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the globe. They are only its possessors, its usufructuaries, and, like *boni patres familias*, they must hand it down to succeeding generations in an improved condition” (1967, 776).
 13. I am here recalling Derrida’s remarks about the aporia at the heart of declarations or attestations that produce what they also require to be what they are. In the context of a discussion of the Declaration of Independence, Derrida argues that the “people do not exist as an entity, the entity does not exist before this declaration, not as such. If it gives birth to itself, as free and independent subject, as possible signer, this can hold only in the act of the signature. The signature invents the signer” (2002a, 49). I am indebted to Geoffrey Bennington’s

- discussion of the question in “Derridabase,” especially the section entitled “Politics” (1993, 228–41).
14. Elsewhere I discuss Kant’s call for prayers for forgiveness at the conclusion of war, rather, counseling the victors against triumphantly joyful celebrations over “having annihilated a great many human beings or their happiness” (*Perpetual Peace* 328 [8:357]). *Toward Perpetual Peace* is itself an example of that entreaty, at once about peace and peaceful. See David L. Clark, “Unsocial Kant” (2010).
 15. For example, the president of the Modern Language Association, Diana Taylor, recently attributed the Trumpist penchant for untruths on the “followers of Paul de Man.” See “Becoming We” (2017).
 16. Hedges may be overstating his case. While the profitable media infatuation with “Russian meddling and a payoff to a porn actress” is reprehensible, given all the other larger issues that go unnoticed by the press, both examples are not merely “empty topics” insofar as they are symptoms of precisely some of those issues, including the erosion of democracy, the inexpugnability of the patriarchy, and the corruption of sovereign authority.
 17. See Anna Chang (2017).
 18. I recall the title of Derrida’s meditation on the meanings of “at this moment” [en ce moment] in Lévinas. See “En ce moment même dans cet ouvrage me voici” (1980) and “At This Very Moment in This Work Here I Am” (2007).
 19. “Moralizing politicians, by glossing over political principles contrary to right on the pretext that human nature is not *capable* of what is good in accord with that idea, as reason prescribes it, *make* improvement *impossible* and eternalize [*verewigen*], as far as they can, violations of right” (Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace* 341 [8:373]).
 20. See, particularly, Maggie Berg and Barbara Seeber, *The Slow Professor: Challenging the Culture of Speed in the Academy* (2016).
 21. In the one-sentence coda concluding *Toward Perpetual Peace*, Kant adopts a subject position of sheer, imperiled conditionality, i.e., a trust in trust, which is for him the very figural condition of peace: “If there is . . . a well-founded hope . . .,” he writes, meaning, in effect, “Because I cannot be certain of hope (for how can hope be certain and remain hope?), I can at best hope for hope” (*Toward Perpetual Peace* 351 [8:386]).
 22. The curious variations in the translations suggest a struggle to capture the exemplary mood of open-endedness with which Kant begins his text. It is a teachable moment, not unlike the opening gambit of Sidney’s *Defence of Poetry*, in which the early modern thinker also warns us, through a kind of joke, that he intends to attest to “poetry” as well as exemplify it. For various translations of the opening sentences of *Toward Perpetual Peace*, see *Practical Philosophy* (1996), *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History* (2006), and *On Perpetual Peace* (2015).
 23. As Henry A. Giroux points out (2016, 42), “right wing ideologues such as David Horowitz and Lynne Cheney” view the university as “the weak link’ in the war against terror and a potential fifth column.”
 24. I recall the conclusion of Theodor Adorno’s lecture on metaphysics from July 22, 1965: “One of the most dangerous errors now lurking in the collective unconscious—and the word

error is far too weak and intellectual for it—is to assume that because something is not what it promises to be, because it doesn't match its concept, it is therefore worse than its opposite, the pure immediacy which destroys it" (2001, 127–28). I thank Samir Gandesha for pointing me to this passage in Adorno.

25. For a discussion of the disruptive outrageousness of Schelling's argument that an *Ungrund* or nonground both undergirds and unsettles the nature of things, see David L. Clark (1995).
26. I recall Derrida's argument about declarations of independence and other instituting attestations (2002a).
27. The remark is widely attributed to Doris Lessing. See, for example, "Doris Lessing: Key Quotes" (2013).
28. "How do people learn democracy? . . . [Y]ou can only learn democracy by doing it" (A. Taylor 2009, 140).
29. My last sentence is from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of Freedom* (1998, 94).
30. Portions of this part of my essay are adapted from two interviews that Tyler Pollard conducted with me under the auspices of McMaster University's Public Intellectuals Project: "What Does It Mean to Welcome Omar Khadr? University Students and the Lesson of Hospitality" (2015b) and "The Canadian University and the War Against Omar Khadr" (2015a).
31. In its recent budget, the Canadian federal government committed to raising the defense budget to \$32.7 billion a year in the tenth year of the plan, up from the current level of \$18.9 billion.
32. See, e.g., Robert Fife, "Canadian Sniper's Record-Breaking Kill Shot an 'Incredible Achievement'" (2017a).
33. See Derrida, "On Forgiveness" (2001).
34. See Lynda Clarke, *Women in Niqab Speak: A Study of the Niqab in Canada* (2013); Shanifa Nasser and Amara McLaughlin, "Protesters outside Masjid Toronto Call for Ban on Islam as Muslims Pray Inside" (2017); Nikita Valerio, "Anti-Muslim Groups Should Provoke Louder Response from Our Leaders" (2017); and Statistics Canada, "Police Reported Hate Crimes" (2016). In 2013, the Parti Québécois, the then-governing party of the province of Quebec, proposed the Quebec Charter of Values (*Charte de la laïcité* or *Charte des valeurs québécoises*), part of which sought to prohibit public-sector employees from wearing or displaying "conspicuous" religious symbols. That bill was widely perceived as targeting Muslim women wearing the Niqab. That bill died when the Parti Québécois was defeated in the provincial election of 2014. In 2017, Kellie Leitch, a candidate for the Federal Conservative Party of Canada, proposed screening immigrants for "Canadian values." Widely criticized for targeting Muslim women, the Liberal government in Quebec recently passed Bill 62, which bars individuals who wear face coverings from accessing public services or from working in government jobs.
35. See Andy Riga, "A Town Divided: Muslims, Supporters Face Down Opponents of Islamic Cemetery" (2017).
36. The phrase "peace, order and good government" is found in the opening to Section 91 of the British North America Act (now the Constitution Act), 1867. As a phrase describing Parlia-

ment’s law-making ability, it is often considered to be the Canadian counterpart to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

37. My account is indebted to Williamson (2012), Shephard (2008), and Keefer (2015).
38. As Rebecca Snyder, a U.S. Navy lieutenant who was appointed one of Khadr’s civilian cocounsels, unsuccessfully argued, Khadr was “not eligible to be tried for murder as a war crime because the alleged offence occurred during a firefight under traditional laws of war.” CBC News, “Lawyers for Khadr Want Charges Dropped” (2008, par. 7).
39. Moazzam Begg, a lawyer who was Khadr’s cellmate at Bagram Airfield, goes on to say of Khadr’s guards: “Each time they walked past his cell they would yell: *Murderer! Killer! Butcher!* It was very, very hard to hear that because it was evident he was just a kid. Not only that, he was terribly wounded” (Shephard 2008, 90).
40. Khadr plead guilty to the murder of Sergeant Speer in violation of the laws of war, attempted murder in violation of the laws of war, conspiracy, two counts of providing material support for terrorism, and spying in the United States.
41. In July 2015, a Utah judge awarded Tabitha Speer and Layne Morris (the wife of a soldier injured in the firefight involving Khadr) \$134.2 million in damages.
42. For video of Khadr’s statement, see CBC News, “Omar Khadr, Free on Bail, Vows to Prove He Is ‘a Good Person’” (2015).
43. The bulk of the text of my public letter of May 8, 2015 reads as follows:

“Listening to Mr. Omar Khadr speak yesterday, graciously thanking the Canadian public—as he put it—for trusting him and for giving him a chance, I was reminded of my dear friend and colleague, Professor Susan Searls Giroux, who, in her ground-breaking book, *Between Race and Reason: Violence, Intellectual Responsibility, and the University to Come*, asks: ‘Can the university stand for peace?’ It strikes me that an exemplary way in which we might answer that question strongly in the positive is publicly to offer or to hold open a spot for Mr. Khadr in our first year undergraduate class. Let me be the first to offer my assistance. I would be pleased to teach Mr. Khadr first-year English and Cultural Studies, one-on-one and remotely, if need be, or to offer him remedial help in anticipation of taking such a course. We at McMaster have a great deal to offer Mr. Khadr. And he would undoubtedly bring so very much to us.”
44. See, e.g., Dalhousie University’s “Child Soldiers and at Risk Youth” (2017) and Wilfrid Laurier University’s “Children’s Rights” (2015).
45. See Globe and Mail, “Canadian Military to Become First to Issue Guidelines on Child Soldiers” (2017).
46. A few mild examples of this sort of mail form the epigraph to part II of this essay.
47. See Canada (2012).
48. In its latest federal budget, the Trudeau government has increased its commitment to purchasing fighter jets. The new number now stands at 88 aircraft at a cost of up to \$19 billion. Public student debt is estimated to be around \$15 billion. See Canadian Federation of Students (2013).
49. For example: “The governors of our world now have no money left over for public educational institutions or in general for anything that has to do with what is best for the world,

- because everything is always miscalculated ahead of time toward the next future war” (2007, 117 [8:28]).
50. See *The Hospitality Project: Five Hundred Letters of Welcome to Omar Khadr* (2017a; 2017b). Colleagues at different universities have invited students to write letters in different ways; e.g., tweeting out a call to a first-year class or offering students a chance to replace an assignment with a letter. For the *Project’s* website, see <http://davidlclark.net/the-hospitality-project/>.
 51. Consider, e.g., the case of Maher Arar, an engineer with dual Canadian and Syrian citizenship who was wrongly detained by U.S. Homeland Security returning home from a family vacation in Tunis in 2002. After being detained without representation, he was subject to “extraordinary rendition” and transported to Syria, where he was imprisoned and tortured for more than a year. Both the Syrian government and a Canadian Commission of Inquiry subsequently cleared him of all charges of terrorism and of being a member of Al-Qaeda. Prime Minister Stephen Harper publicly apologized for Arar’s mistreatment. The Canadian government settled out of court with Arar, paying him \$10 million. For a discussion of the Arar case, see Martin A. French and Simone A. Browne (2014, 252–54).
 52. The leitmotif running through all of Derrida’s remarks about hospitality is that it is always also a scene of exclusion and hostility. See, for example, *Of Hospitality* (2000).
 53. On July 5, 2017, sources in the federal government announced that it had reached a negotiated settlement with Khadr and would pay \$10.5 million in compensation as well as offer a formal apology.
 54. @ararmaher: “Ask any victim of torture whether they’d trade their entire compensation for his life back and you will hear a loud YES.” Twitter post. July 4, 2017, 7:40 A.M.
 55. As Anders Engberg-Pederson points out, “In his well-known discussion of cosmopolitanism that concludes the *Anthropology* [Kant’s last published book], Kant goes so far as to think of warfare as an element in the civilizing process and a step in the development of civil society” (2015, 74).
 56. Here Razack recalls Todorov’s *Torture and the War on Terror* (2009, 60).
 57. For more information about this exemplary student’s life and work, see Josephine Adeti (2017). I cite the description that Children for Peace provides on its website. See <https://www.thechildrenforpeace.org/>.
 58. For an account of the killing, see *Guardian* (2018).

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