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Pragmatism and Popular Culture: Shusterman, Popular Art, and the Challenge of Visuality

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I

In this article I will discuss Richard Shusterman's defense of popular culture. I intend to show that while his arguments are highly interesting, the entertainment industry has a dark side, which he tends to ignore. Actually, I fear that higher culture and even civilization itself might be endangered by the predominance of popular culture. I am especially skeptical of visual entertainment. Its triumph in the last decades seems to have had a negative impact on linguistic skills, lead to the decline of reading, and caused an increase in attentional deficiency among children. The relevance for educational matters should be obvious.

Let us now take a look at Shusterman's theories. It is not by chance that he defends popular culture; after all, he is one of the few aestheticians today who enjoys some popularity. As a result, his work is widely read outside of the philosophical community. The reason is simple: we all love rebels and the American philosopher is a rebel with a cause. He wants to promote art as an integral part of the ever-changing stream of life, believing that popular culture provides ways of giving art a place in everyday existence. This is an important part of Shusterman's pragmatist aesthetics. Just like his predecessor John Dewey, Shusterman stresses our active involvement with art.¹ When it all comes down to dust, it is the art of living that matters most.

Shusterman maintains that the entertainment industry speaks on behalf of the common man. Popular culture is just as important as fine arts. In actual fact, the entertainment industry is rather a provider of culture than its enemy. To this he adds that entertainment can have some positive value; it helps us relax and recharge our batteries. Such a relaxation can even heighten our sensitivity to stimuli and therefore provide for deeper learning.²

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Shusterman has not only been influenced by Dewey but also by a host of other thinkers. One of them is the well-known French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu famously maintained that the elite distinguished itself from the multitude by having a different taste; they called their own taste “refined” and the taste of the masses “vulgar.” The elite stresses form, not function. Only a formalistic approach to art is legitimate; focusing on its function in everyday life is vulgar.³ Like Bourdieu, Shusterman says that the veneration of the fine arts is class based, a part of the elite’s attempt to distance it self from “the masses.” The elite looks down upon popular culture and commerces with art in an intellectualist fashion. Relating to art in an emotional and somatic way is not really aesthetic, the elite thinks.⁴ Shusterman counters these claims and takes on highbrow criticism of popular art. This criticism can be treated roughly in terms of six charges made against popular art: the ones of (a) spuriousness, (b) passivity, (c) superficiality, (d) the lack of autonomy, (e) the lack of form, and (f) the lack of creativity. Let us take a brief glance at Shusterman’s way of countering these charges.

(a) Spuriousness: He shows that it is extremely hard to understand, let alone substantiate, the charge that popular art is spurious. The high brows claim that whatever satisfaction popular art gives is shallow or unreal. (I cannot for the life of me find any criteria for the discernment of real from unreal satisfaction.) If the alleged spuriousness consists in popular culture only being able to provide us with “washed out” or “faked sensations,” the charge is unfounded; witness the intense and absorbing experience of rock music.

(b) Passivity: The high brows maintain that we only passively receive the products of popular culture; understanding them needs no intellectual effort. To this Shusterman responds by saying that most of the high brow critics see intellectual thinking as the only game in town, the sole activity of any greater worth. But we have no reason to believe this to be the case. Besides, enjoying classical music makes one much more passive than the enjoyment of rock and roll, which often manifests itself in exhausting physical activity. To make matters worse for the high brow, we have no compelling reasons to believe that the corporeal is of less worth than the spiritual. We also have great problems in drawing a sharp dividing line between body and mind, and by implication between the corporeal and the spiritual.

(c) Superficiality: The critics maintain that popular art is superficial and ephemeral. Shusterman counters these charges by pointing out that surveys show that television audiences often respond to television entertainment in quite a sophisticated way, understanding the shows to be multilayered and ambivalent. In a similar fashion, rap or rock lyrics can be complex and ambiguous. Besides, what is wrong with being ephemeral, Shusterman asks. Transient things can have their own value, because and not despite of their transience. Brief encounters can be sweeter and more rewarding than lasting relationships.

(d) Lack of autonomy: Typically, the high brows criticize popular art for not being produced for autonomous aesthetic ends but rather being an instrument for entertainment. It does not serve Art with a capital A but rather human needs. But why should this view be accepted? It has its roots in dubious philosophical claims that art should belong to a sphere far removed from the real. Actually, art has always been used for practical purposes; witness the function of lullabies for babies or poetry for courtship. After all, life forms the substance of art and artworks inhabit the world, so can life and art really be separated?

(e) Lack of form: Popular art has been condemned for not achieving adequate form or for even being formless because solely concentrating on content. Usually it is criticized not so much for lacking formal unity but rather formal complexity. Shusterman responds by pointing out that the products of popular art very often contain complex allusions to other works of art, both popular and high art. I think that the *Simpsons* can provide some excellent examples, not least of which is a magnificent episode where allusions to Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" played a significant role.

(f) Lack of creativity: In the first place, it is simply wrong that popular culture is never original or creative. The rock video was a new, genuinely original art form, and entertainers such as the Monty Python groups did not lack creativity. Secondly, it seems strange that we should criticize popular art for being standardized and lacking originality while venerating premodern art that was made by artists who had never heard of originality. Thirdly, the cult of originality has its roots in a veneration of individuality that leads us to ignore the communal sides of art, expressed, for instance, in the beauty of Greek temples. And why criticize popular art for being standardized when the form of a sonnet is rigidly standardized? Why extol the virtues of postmodern eclectic art while condemning the eclecticism of rap? Actually, rap has a lot of the characteristics of "serious" postmodern art. It is made out of bits and pieces of older music in the best postmodern tradition at least since John Cage. The postmodern bit is of course the repudiation of originality as an all-important value. Further, like popular culture in general, rap retains vestiges of premodern art. It is communal, emotional, and body-oriented, like folk music tends to be; it can liberate our bodies. So Shusterman is blowing a fanfare for the common man and his "corpo-reality."

The upshot of Shusterman's criticism seems to be that the high brow charges against popular culture are either unwarranted or can be levelled against high art equally well. Furthermore, a lot of what we now call "high art" used to be regarded as vulgar. That was the case for Shakespeare's plays and even novels as such (witness the modern idea that television is inherently bad). Actually, the same cultural products, for instance Shakespeare's plays, have been used both as popular and as high art. These venerated plays have been staged as pure entertainment in the vaudeville fashion.

Therefore, there does not seem to be any particular reason why we should condemn popular art or regard it as completely distinct from high art.⁵ The highbrow criticism crumbles.

However, Shusterman does not think that popular art is above criticism. There is certainly no lack of popular art that is aesthetically bad and has noxious social effects, especially when consumed in a passive, all-accepting way.⁶ Shusterman emphasizes that he places himself between elitist condemnation of popular culture and wholesale celebration of it. It has enough good elements to merit being improved upon and enough faults to need improvement. Therefore, he terms his position “melioristic” because he wants to fight for the improvement of popular culture.⁷

The direct and indirect implications of Shusterman’s analysis for aesthetic education ought to be obvious. If he is right, then popular art could have educational value in at least four ways. In the first place, if the relaxation that entertainment allegedly provides leads to deeper learning, then by implication it would provide for deeper learning in the sphere of aesthetic education. Secondly, its alleged power to liberate our bodies could facilitate the teaching of dance. Thirdly, the fact that it sometimes contains complex allusions to other artworks could increase people’s knowledge of art. Fourthly, learning about popular art ought to be edifying in virtue of its intrinsic value.

It could very well be the case that popular art has these and possibly other educational virtues. But as we will see in the next section, it could do aesthetic education more harm than good.

II

As I hinted at, while Shusterman’s criticism of charges (a)-(f) is quite convincing, he ignores an important charge, which we could label (g). I am thinking about the charge of danger—that popular culture, especially visual entertainment, could be a danger to education, high culture, and civilization in general. I am going to defend this charge in the rest of this article by systematically responding to three of Shusterman’s explicit and implicit assertions: (1) Popular culture is rather a bringer of culture than a threat to it. By implication, popular culture is neither a threat to the culture of reading nor to aesthetic education. As we have already seen, he thinks that entertainment can strengthen education (“provide for higher learning”). These are partly explicit, partly implicit, assertions. (2) Since popular culture is no threat to culture, it is by implication not a threat to higher culture. In actual fact, there is nothing in Shusterman’s writings that suggests that he is against higher culture. He seems to think, rather, that popular and higher culture ought to supplement each other. Be that as it may, these assertions are also partly ex-

plicit and partly implicit. (3) Popular culture strengthens communal living. Further, it liberates our bodies. As we have seen, Shusterman has said this in no uncertain words.

I think it is pretty obvious that if (1) and (2) are wrong, then the plausibility of (g) ought to increase a lot. It is not obvious that the falsity of (3) increases this probability. But if (3) is wrong, and if popular culture actually leads to increased social isolation, teachers are facing a hard time getting their pupils to work together. And if popular culture is bad for our bodies, both teachers of dance and physical educators must brace themselves for a big challenge.

It is obvious that evaluating popular culture depends upon our value system. If we are in favor of high culture, education (both spiritual and physical), and civilization, we would hope that (g) is wrong. Well, I certainly do, and I am sure that my readers agree. Let us scrutinize assertions (1)-(3).

(1) Threat to reading: New surveys show that Americans read less than before, and several scholars maintain that this might endanger culture in the United States. A report released by the National Endowment of the Arts shows a clear drop in the reading of imaginative literature in the United States. This holds for all age groups, ethnic groups, and social classes, even the highly educated. Between 1982 and 2002, the reading of literature decreased by 18 percent in the country. In the age group 18 to 24, the drop was dramatic—28 percent. Likely culprits are the electronic, visual media, the report says.⁸ This report must have confirmed Neil Postman's worst fears; he warned against the decline of literary culture twenty years ago. Before the onslaught of popular culture, Americans were generally reasonably well read. But nowadays, as Postman wrote in 1985, they are busy amusing themselves to death.⁹ The death toll is getting higher and higher. There is no business *but* show business!

The situation is similar in other countries. In France the percentage of people who read more than twenty-five books a year has fallen from 22 percent in 1973 to 12 percent in 2003.¹⁰ Even in countries like Iceland with a strong tradition for reading, the youth read less and less.¹¹ According to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Robert Kubey, the average Western person spends twenty-one hours in front of the television each week.¹² Other surveys show that young people in the West spend in average twenty-five to thirty hours a week in front of the television or computer. They simply do not have the time to read.

The German weekly *Der Spiegel* says that there has been a sharp increase in problems of linguistic development among German three or four year olds in just a decade. Scholars think that the reason is the sudden increase in opportunities to watch TV and videos, play computer games, etc. The number of Germans who have problems with reading has also risen

dramatically; the reason seems to be that people read much less than before. *Der Spiegel* even speculates on the possibility that the present development could lead to a new barbarism.¹³ The same year Doris Lessing wrote about a new brand of educated barbarians. They do brilliantly in their own field but have no general knowledge because they have never read anything outside their own specialities.¹⁴ The “new barbarians” epitomize Max Weber’s grey vision of a future world inhabited by “Fachmenschen ohne Geist, Genußmenschen ohne Herz.”¹⁵ Maybe these barbaric specialists are so taken by visual entertainment that they do not have time to read books outside of their own field.

True, the inventors of Nintendo did not intend to pave the way for this barbarism, but this could be the unforeseen consequence of their actions. My contention is that the wordless video and computer games are cheaper to produce in a standardized fashion than games that require linguistic skills. Nonlingual games can be sold all over the world; lingual games have to be adapted to different linguistic communities. And as I suggested, chances are that this new visual, nonlingual entertainment can seriously hurt the linguistic abilities of youngsters. To make matters worse, watching TV seems to provide less mental stimulation (as measured by alpha-wave production) than reading.¹⁶ Further, Csikszentmihalyi and Kubey put forth a lot of interesting arguments in favor of the theory that TV has an addictive influence.

To their arguments I want to add two things, the first concerning education, the other genetics: In the first place, if TV has such an addictive influence, then schooling and homework might be suffering. It must be difficult to get a child who is seriously addicted to TV to concentrate on homework or even attend school. In actual fact, several scientific studies point in the direction of early television exposure increasing the probability of subsequent attentional problems in children.¹⁷ Thirty years ago American teachers of young children at all socioeconomic levels started to report on increasing difficulties their students were having in paying attention, listening, and solving problems independently. Frequently, the teachers blamed the advent of fast-paced, attention-getting children’s programming.¹⁸ My feeling is that more often than not entertainment is a stimulant rather than a means for relaxation. (Do kids really relax while playing an exciting computer game and listening to loud rock and roll?) If this is true, then Shusterman is wrong about entertainment being something relaxing. By implication there is no such thing as higher learning provided by entertainment’s purported relaxing effect. Be that as it may, we can be certain that the increased number of children suffering from attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), probably caused or made worse by entertainment, is creating yet another challenge for today’s troubled teachers.¹⁹

Secondly, we might be genetically programmed to feel attracted to certain types of visual images, while nothing in our genetic makeup predis-

poses us to like the written word. So maybe our nature is taking revenge upon culture, using the entertainment industry as its tool. Notwithstanding my genetic speculations, the visual media is perhaps the problem, while the message is not. The message (the content) of TV programs often has a lot of redeeming qualities. Think about the originality and sophisticated wit of the *Simpsons* cartoons. Nevertheless, watching the show frequently could have all the dire consequences Csikszentmihalyi and Kubey predict.

Now, language is the basic vehicle for argumentation; arguments are typically put forth in predicative sentences. There is no such thing as putting forth an argument only with the aid of visual images. So the triumph of visuality might lead to diminished abilities to engage in argumentation. It could also cause a decrease in rhetorical and poetical skills. American scholar Sven Birkerts thinks that this is the case and blames the Internet and the culture of virtuality. He says: "We are losing our grip, collectively, on the logic of complex utterance, on syntax; we are abandoning the rhythmic, poetic undercurrents of expression."²⁰

If this is the case, then aesthetic education is bound to suffer. How can a student write a decent term paper if she has limited argumentative and rhetoric skills? And how can one teach children who never read anything and are even linguistically challenged? Teaching imaginative literature to these kids must be a Herculean task indeed. Actually, Birkerts maintains that it is getting more and more difficult to teach students complex literary works, and he thinks that the electronic media is the culprit.²¹

My conclusion is that visual entertainment is a threat to the culture of reading and diminishes the ability of schoolchildren to concentrate, which does not exactly make the task of aesthetic educators any easier. Thus, assertion (1) is in all probability wrong.

(2) Threat to high culture: In light of the fact that reading skills are declining, it should not come as any surprise that it has gotten increasingly difficult to sell "serious" books around the globe.²² The manager of one of Germany's biggest publishing houses says that nowadays one can expect that 9,000 copies of books like the essays of George Steiner will be sold. A book of that kind would have sold about 20,000 copies twenty years ago.²³ At the same time, attendance at films with artistic ambitions has dropped, while profits in Hollywood skyrocket. Further, classical music is in dire straits; the market share of classical CDs is getting smaller and the attendance at concerts is dwindling. Norman Lebrecht says that before the advent of the Beatles, every fifth record sold on the planet was a classical record. In 1998 the percentage was down to 3 percent and dwindling.²⁴ Of course, this does not prove that a lower percentage of people buy classical CDs; possibly people who never bought records started to buy such merchandise in the Beatles era. And the decrease in interest in classical music could have other causes

than the strong position of pop music. Nevertheless, we cannot rule out the possibility that the ever-present pop music is vaccinating the young against the more demanding classical music.

It has been said that the classical music buffs are getting older; my experience points in that direction. The theatres suffer in a similar fashion; the average age of Broadway audiences is forty-five years. No wonder that Rob Graham seriously speculates in the possibility of theatre's demise.²⁵

It seems intuitively plausible that the decline of high culture makes the task of aesthetic educators more difficult, unless one removes high culture from the curriculum. In any case, the burden of proof is upon those who think that assertion (2) is true.

(3) Threat to communal living: As stated above, Shusterman maintains that popular culture encourages communal living and liberates our bodies. But he is in all probability wrong. Sitting in front of the TV or a computer screen all day certainly does not liberate one's body, even though rap can. Kids today are getting fatter and fatter; obesity certainly is not liberating their bodies. The eating of fast food and the consumption of soft drinks are also important parts of the problem. Notice that fast food and soft drinks are parts of today's popular culture; the young watch TV while eating hamburgers and drinking soft drinks.²⁶ And to make matters worse, there is evidence pointing in the direction of this kind of food increasing whatever attention deficiencies young people might be suffering from.²⁷ The kids are *not* all right.²⁸

Sociologist Robert D. Putnam has put forth compelling evidence in favor of the contention that TV and related electronic media are responsible for a sharp increase in social isolation in the United States. One part of this process is the disappearance of civic activities. Before the advent of television, Americans were much more active in political and social organizations than now.²⁹ The National Endowment report corroborates these findings indirectly. The more people read of literature, the more likely they are to take part in civic activities. The decline in reading causes a decline in such activities.³⁰ A recent study of American teenagers confirms that there is a link between isolation and the use of electronic media. They spend on average 3.5 hours a day, completely alone, more often than not absorbed by computer games, Internet surfing, or the television.³¹ The culture of narcissism is being replaced by the culture of autism.

Now, how can virtual autists or narcissists work together in a classroom? And are not teachers of dance and physical education facing a formidable challenge in the obesity of today's kids? The conclusion is that we have no reason to believe in (3).

We have seen that assertions (1)-(3) are not convincing—rather the opposite. I can only conclude that charge (g), that of popular culture representing a threat to high culture, education, and civilization is well founded.

But of course there might be other reasons for the intellectual decline of the West. The problem may be the triumph of hedonism, which in its turn caused the dominance of entertainment (this dominance made matters worse). Life in the Western world is nowadays easy compared to olden times. It has created a generation of people who want instant gratification. This leads in the first place to the triumph of visual culture over linguistic culture. Impatient modern man wants stories to be told in a hurry, and visual media tell stories much faster than books do. This was actually one of the reasons the German children *Der Spiegel* interviewed gave for preferring visual culture.³² Secondly, it increases the tendency of people to shy away from the intellectually demanding experience of high culture, including classical music. Therefore, they become the easy prey of the entertainment industry and become "new barbarians."

Certainly, the triumph of hedonism is a danger to aesthetic education. How can a pupil probe the depths of a difficult subject if he tends to shy away from demanding intellectual experiences because he is used to leading an easy life? We have also seen in this section that the dominance of visual entertainment can be a threat to the teaching of imaginative literature and to education in general. The dominant position of pop music seems to be hurting classical music, which must make the teaching of that form of music more difficult than before.

III

We have seen in this article that Shusterman defends popular culture in quite an inspiring way. He demolishes the arguments of the high brows against popular art. But his handling of empirical issues leaves a lot to be desired. We have discovered that some of his empirical assertions can be easily refuted. To make matters worse, he seems oblivious to the danger of visual entertainment. The problem is perhaps not the triumph of entertainment as such but rather the victory of visuality over the written and spoken word. This victory certainly is a challenge to Shusterman's position.

Further, he does not quite grasp the fact that hedonism has prevailed. He apparently thinks that Puritanism is still a problem in the Western world like it was before the 1960s. And as I said above, he seems to think that the high brows still rule. But the only place to find bona fide intellectual snobs these days is in the *Frasier* sitcom; nonvirtual high brows virtually disappeared in the 1960s, the decade during which hedonism triumphed. Interestingly enough, most of the high brows Shusterman criticizes wrote their books before the advent of the Beatles.³³ So his criticism of the puritans and the high brows seems a bit dated. The beatnik has beaten the high brow; the

rapper has rapped the thinker. Low brow entertainment rules, making the tasks of aesthetic educators increasingly difficult.

Shusterman does not seem to realize this. To make matters worse, he extrapolates in an unjustifiable manner from rock and rap to all forms of popular culture. He objectifies the concept of popular art; he argues that such disparate phenomena as rap music and TV soap operas share a common essence. He does not see that though rap music might liberate our bodies, watching TV soaps all day certainly does not. Actually, this implicit essentialism goes against the grain of his skepticism toward the objectification of concepts.³⁴ So there are not only empirical but also logical deficiencies in Shusterman's argumentation. Nevertheless, he is a very interesting philosopher, young enough to improve his analyses and cultural comments.

NOTES

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1. John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigree Books, 1934).
2. Richard Shusterman, "Art as Dramatization," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59, no. 4 (2001): 371; Richard Shusterman "Entertainment: A Question for Aesthetics," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 43, no. 3 (2003): 289-307.
3. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).
4. Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 201-35; see also Richard Shusterman, "Rap Remix: Pragmatism, Post-modernism, and Other Issues in the House," *Critical Inquiry* 22 (1995): 150-58; and *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 131-56.
5. Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 169-200; and "Don't Believe the Hype: Animadversions on the Critique of Popular Art," *Poetics Today* 14, no. 1 (1993): 101-22.
6. Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 172; and "Don't Believe the Hype," 103.
7. Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 177.
8. Mark Bauerlein, Tom Bradshaw, and Bonnie Nichols, *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America* (Washington, DC: National Endowment of the Arts, 2004).
9. Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (New York: Viking, 1985), 31-43.
10. Antoine Schwartz, "Le règne des livres sans qualités" [The Rule of Books without Quality], *Le Monde diplomatique* (May 2006) : 30.
11. Þorbjörn Broddason, "A Wasted Miracle? Literacy and the New Media," in *Børn, unge og medier* [Children, Youth and the Media], ed. C. L. Christensen (Gothenburg: Nordicom, 1999), 175-91.
12. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and Robery Kubey, "Television Addiction," *Mind*, special edition of *Scientific American* 14, no. 1, (2004): 50.
13. "Vorwärts in die Barbarei?" [Towards Barbarism?] *Der Spiegel* 41 (1998): 272-78.
14. Doris Lessing, "Love of Reading," in *Literacy Is Not Enough*, ed. B. Cox (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), 47-50.

15. "Specialists without spirituality, heartless hedonists" (my translation). Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie. Religionssoziologie I. Die Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* [The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism] (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1920-23), 204.
16. Csikszentmihalyi and Kubey, "Television Addiction," 50.
17. Dmitri A. Christakis, David L. DiGiuseppe, Carolyn A. McCarty, and Frederick J. Zimmerman, "Early Television Exposure and Subsequent Attentional Problems in Children," *Pediatrics* 113, no. 4 (2004): 708-13.
18. Jane M. Healy, "Commentary: Early Television Exposure and Subsequent Attention Problems in Children," *Pediatrics* 113, no. 4 (2004): 917-18.
19. Of course, I am not saying that we know with certainty that entertainment is to blame. And even if it were true, parents must take some of the responsibility; after all, they ought to have the power to decide whether or not their children watch television. Further, there is evidence in favor of there being a genetic component in ADHD (Healy, "Commentary").
20. Sven Birkerts, "Sense and Semblance: The Implication of Virtuality," in *Literacy Is Not Enough*, ed. B. Cox (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998), 24.
21. Sven Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age* (Boston and London: Faber and Faber, 1994), 17-21.
22. *Ibid.*, 28.
23. He said this in an interview with the German weekly *Die Zeit*, September 16, 1999, 45-46.
24. Norman Lebrecht, *Who Killed Classical Music? Maestros, Managers and Corporate Politics* (Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, 2000).
25. Rob Graham, *Theatre: A Crash Course* (Leicester: Silverdale Books, 1999), 136.
26. Of course, the picture is not as simple as this. Herscher, Tartamella, and Woolston are probably right about poverty and the long working hours of parents also playing a role, alongside visual entertainment and fast food. Elaine Herscher, Lisa Tartamella, and Chris Woolston, *Generation Extra Large: Rescuing our Children from the Epidemic of Obesity* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).
27. R. Brandmeier, J. Egger, A. Merckenschlager, and T. Uhlig, "Topographic Mapping of Brain Electrical Activity in Children with Food-Induced Attention Deficit Hyperkinetic Disorder," *European Journal of Pediatrics* 156, no. 7 (2004): 557-61.
28. I am alluding to the famous song "The Kids Are All Right," sung by The Who.
29. Robert D. Putnam, "The Strange Disappearance of Civic America" *American Prospect* 7, no. 24 (1996): 34-48.
30. Bauerlein, Bradshaw, and Nichols, *Reading at Risk*, 5-6.
31. Barbara Kantrowitz and Pat Wigert, "Beyond Littleton: How Well Do You Know Your Kid?" *Newsweek*, no. 19 (1999): 36-40.
32. "Vorwärts in die Barbarei?"
33. This can be seen from his list of references, for instance, in "Don't Believe the Hype," 120-123. More than a decade later he is still criticizing the outdated, as can be seen from his recent criticism of an age-old high brow paper by Hannah Arendt ("Entertainment," 305-7). For his defence of hedonism, see for instance Shusterman, *Performing Lives* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000).
34. For his scepticism of essentialism, see for instance *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 70.