

Digging Deeper VIII: Maintaining the present order

For more than a year, United for Peace of Pierce County has been conducting “Digging Deeper,” a Monday night book discussion group, often in the form of a study circle around a group of books, copies of which participants read, pass around, and discuss. Topics of study circles have included peak oil, climate change, and the corporation, as well as abiding themes of war and peace. Continuing in this tradition, on August 15, 2005, *Digging Deeper VII* will begin a four-week study circle examining a number of diverse works touching on a common theme: ***What mechanisms of social control maintain the current order?***

- **Geraldine Brooks, *Nine Parts of Desire: The Hidden World of Islamic Women* (Anchor, 1995):** “Ms. Brooks is a talented writer and it was a pleasure to read her work. Her six years living in the Middle East and associating with Muslim women from all levels of society and in many countries gave her fascinating insights into everyday Muslim women's lives. Some reviewers here did not like the book because Brooks expresses negative opinions on some practices in Islamic countries; perhaps they are expecting a glossing over of these things in order to shed nothing but a rosy light on women's lives in Islam? In fact, this book presented some aspects of Muslim women's lives in a far more positive light than I expected. For instance, I read Azar Nafisi's book “Reading Lolita in Tehran” before reading this book, and was surprised to find Brook's examples of life for women in Iran to be far less bleak than what Nafisi showed (Nafisi's book is also great and I recommend it)” (a reader from Chicago). The author spent six years covering the Middle East for the Wall Street Journal .
- **Kalle Lasn, *Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge — And Why We Must* (Perennial, 2000).** *Publisher's Weekly:* “With a courageous and compelling voice, Lasn deconstructs the advertising culture and our fixation on icons and brand names. And he shows how to organize resistance against the power trust that manages the brands by ‘uncooling’ consumer items, by ‘dermarketing’ fashions and celebrities, and by breaking the ‘media trance’ of our TV-addicted age. A powerful manifesto by a leading media activist, *Culture Jam* lays the foundations for . . . a movement that can change the world and the way we think and live.” The author publishes *Adbusters* magazine and lives in Vancouver, Canada.
- **Derrick Jensen, *The Culture of Make Believe* (Chelsea Green, 2004; orig. ed. 2002).** *Publisher's Weekly:* “Writing with the same driven passion and intense intelligence as his critically acclaimed *A Language Older Than Words*, which examined the interconnections between personal and social violence, Jensen says this book ‘is more about racism and far more broadly hate as it manifests itself in our Western world.’ As in the earlier work, Jensen paints on a huge canvas he details American racism from the genocidal slave trade through lynchings to the 2000 murder of Amadou Diallo by NYC police, and covers a wide range of other cultural horrors as well: the massacres of Native American people, the Holocaust, the 8,000 deaths from the 1984 Union Carbide gas leak in India, and the deaths of 500,000 children in Iraq. The book is packed full of startling details. . . . But the uniqueness and enormous power of Jensen's work is his ability to forge these events into an emotionally compelling and devastating critique of the intellectual, psychological, emotional and social structures of Western culture.” Derrick Jensen is a prolific writer and activist.
- **Emma Larkin, *Finding George Orwell in Burma* (Penguin, 2005).** *Publisher's Weekly:* “The author, an American journalist fluent in Burmese, writing under a pseudonym, notes that there's a joke in Burma (now Myanmar) that Orwell wrote not one novel about the country, but three: *Burmese Days*, *Animal Farm* and *1984*. The first takes place during the British colonial days, while the latter two, Larkin argues, more closely reflect the situation there today. . . . Larkin encounters a nation bristling with informants and paranoia. Her language skills, however, allow her to glean information and mingle with the country's reserved and cautious intelligentsia. . . . Larkin's prose is striking and understated, and she allows the people she meets to speak their parts without editorializing. . . . Her efforts have resulted in a lucid and insightful illustration of truly Orwellian circumstances.” Emma Larkin is a pseudonym for an American journalist based in Bangkok.
- **Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (Random House, 2005).** *Publisher's Weekly:* “Robert Pape has collected groundbreaking evidence to explain the strategic, social, and individual factors responsible for this growing threat. One of the world's foremost authorities on the subject, Professor Pape has created the first comprehensive database of every suicide terrorist attack in the world from 1980 until today. With striking clarity and precision, Professor Pape uses this unprecedented research to debunk widely held misconceptions about the nature of suicide terrorism and provide a new lens that makes sense of the threat we face. . . . In this wide-ranging analysis, Professor Pape offers the essential tools to forecast when some groups are likely to resort to suicide terrorism and when they are not. He also provides the first comprehensive demographic profile of modern suicide terrorist attackers. With data from more than 460 such attackers — including the names of 333 — we now know that these individuals are not mainly poor, desperate criminals or uneducated religious fanatics but are often well-educated, middle-class political activists.” The author teaches political science at the University of Chicago.

MEETING SCHEDULE — Mondays from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on August 15, 22, & 29, and September 5 at the Mandolin Café, 3923 S. 12th St., Tacoma, WA.

Books are available for borrowing or purchase; there is no charge for participation. Contact Mark Jensen at jensenmk@plu.edu or 253-756-7519, or Ted Nation at tedn5@yahoo.com or 253-983-8997.