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Ender's Beginning: Battling the Military in Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game*

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■ Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* has been interpreted as a Johnny-got-his-gun story, a simple militaristic document (Saunders), a complex religious narrative (Collings), and an argument for fascism.[1] The text shows that Card engages in a critique of the late twentieth-century military paradigm. Interwoven with the critique is a meditation on the power and control the individual may or may not possess. Card delineates the military paradigm, its assumptions, and operations. Once he has constructed the paradigm, Card focuses on one individual who is forced to become a professional warrior if he is to survive. The process of Ender's transformation from civilian to warrior is intricate. The results of such a transformation are disastrous to the self: Ender is nearly destroyed by the pressure the military exerts on his paradigm. Card hints at a replacement for the military paradigm. This article traces Card's development of the military paradigm and that of the warrior who lives inside it.

Arms and the Child

> The main foundations of every state, new states as well as ancient or composite ones, are good laws and good arms; and because you cannot have good laws without good arms, and where there are good arms, good laws inevitably follow, I shall not discuss laws but give my attention to arms.
>
> —Machiavelli, *The Prince*

> Strength lies not in defense but in attack.
>
> —Hitler, *Mein Kampf*

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Ender lives in a military paradigm which assumes humans are malleable, controllable objects. Control resides in large institutions, not individuals or parochial units. The military paradigm abides by a strict utilitarian philosophy in which ends overcome any and all means; human costs are unimportant. Within the paradigm is an accepted paradox that the individual must be sacrificed in order to maintain the rights of other individuals. Because it accepts its own built-in flaws, the military paradigm is extremely robust. Graff lectures Ender: "The Earth is deep, and right to the heart it's alive, Ender. We people only live on the top, like the bugs that live on the scum of the still water near the shore" (267). Graff's aerial view distances him from the unpleasant decisions he must make if the war is to be won. There is no room for doubt that all wars, or contests, must be won—especially when these "bugs" cling so tenaciously to life (the word "bugs" is loaded with meaning; Card uses it to refer both to humans and "buggers" [37]). Graff is proud of, rather than ashamed of, the power that allows the military to "requisition" Ender (25). At the core of the military paradigm is a mechanistic view of humans, who are to be shaped to the purposes of the machine. Anderson expresses the utilitarian military code tersely: "All right. We're saving the world, after all. Take him" (1); he picks up Ender as one might choose a tool from a tool kit.

Much of the paradigm's invulnerability comes from the fact that the characters are aware of their roles in the machine. The reader feels sympathy for them because they have thought through their beliefs; they don't blindly follow a creed. Yet their humane qualities—emotion and heart—never interfere with their decision to sacrifice anything necessary to keep the mechanism functioning. Graff directs us to practicalities—"We're trying to save the world, not heal the wounded heart" (71)—and provokes a further exchange:

> "General Levy has no pity for anyone. All the videos say so. But don't hurt this boy."
>
> "Are you joking?"
>
> "I mean, don't hurt him more than you have to." (71)

In a utilitarian world a plea to leave Ender untouched is not only irrelevant, it is potentially treasonous. Physical and psychological pain are necessary if Ender is to be deformed for the machine's uses. The amount of pain indicates the degree of injustice the individual meets at the hands of the system; and in Ender's case, both the pain and injustice are severe. The military is purposefully structured to be unjust, breaking those who cannot rise above injustice fast enough. Those who survive the injustices will become commanders—they will be given the power to inflict pain. The children in the Battle Room raise "a tumult of complaint

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that it wasn't fair how Bernard and Alai had shot them all when they weren't ready" (66). The military world has no patience for those who demand fairness; Graff notes bluntly, "Fairness is a wonderful attribute, Major Anderson. It has nothing to do with war" (106).

Card prevents the reader from making quick judgements about Graff and Anderson. At first the two men seem dangerously smug about their roles ("We promise gingerbread, but we eat the little bastards alive" [9]). The utilitarian *seems* to forget he is dealing with humans, cold-bloodedly informing Ender that "maybe you're not going to work out for us, and maybe you are. Maybe you'll break down under pressure, maybe it'll ruin your life, maybe you'll hate me for coming here to your house today" (26). Graff's ability to speak such truths impresses Ender, who otherwise would not be lured away. Graff's honesty is not a sham; in private he notes ominously that "this time if we lose there won't be any criticism of us at all" (39). Accustomed to serving the machine, Graff and Anderson slide unhesitatingly into the worst Machiavellian tactics to achieve their goals. Petra warns Ender to "remember this.... They never tell you any more truth than they have to," a fact all the children promptly forget (89). Graff and Anderson, the two Machiavels, prepare to trap Ender:

> "So what are you going to do?"
> "Persuade him that he wants to come with us more than he wants to stay with her."
> "How will you do that?"
> "I'll lie to him."
> "And if that doesn't work?"
> "Then I'll tell him the truth. We're allowed to do that in emergencies. We can't plan for everything, you know." (16)

There is gleeful madness in this speech; the two most "practical" characters are quick to accept the interchangeability of lies and truth. It is impossible, apparently, to detect Graff's and Anderson's true feelings. The latter notes grimly, "Sometimes I think you enjoy breaking these little geniuses," recognizing that Graff, like Anderson, has a favorite game (28). Anderson's concern—"what kind of man would heal a broken child... just so he could throw him back into battle again"—maintains our faith in the two commanders (169). Card forces the reader to move between two viewpoints: that of the suspicious, manipulated child and that of the paranoid, utilitarian machine worker.

The phrase "the good of the whole" sanctions military atrocities. Ender's relationship with Valentine is like one of "billions of... connections between human beings. That's what [he's] fighting to keep alive" (267). The reader is one such unit, for the audience may be forced to

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approve of—even as it dislikes—Graff. Each individual must surrender the self completely. The post of officer, or supreme commander, does not make Ender an individual; it simply gives him a higher function in the machine. Graff has made peace with the possibility that "we might both do despicable things, Ender," because "if humankind survives, then we were good tools" (37). Ender begins to realize the magnitude of his sacrifice, asking, "Is that all? Just tools?" And he elicits the utilitarian answer from Graff, "Individual human beings are all tools, that the others use to help us all survive" (37). Here is the paradox of one stripped of his individuality in order to protect the ideal of individuality.

Games, game theory, and simulation are an integral part of the mechanistic Machiavellian world; surprises or spontaneity are dangerous because they are organic. Graff notes brusquely, "as for toys—there's only one game" (27). The supremacy of the game and the Battle Room is total; those who believe in endless rehearsal refuse to draw the line between simulation and reality for the child-warriors (24). The principal danger of game theory is that reality becomes blurred, making human costs appear inconsequential. Anderson is angry that Graff has played one of his games "betting [Anderson's] life on it" (58). It comes as an unwelcome—and ironic—shock for a gamer to discover that he too is on the playing board.[2]

The military paradigm consisting of a utilitarian stance, belief in the good of the whole, subordination of the individual, and simulation of reality takes great pleasure in its rituals and makes a religion out of war. It is extremely dangerous that "status, identity, purpose, name; all that makes these children who they are comes out of this game" (106). The children have become ciphers. It follows that if the ritual of the game is not upheld, the identities of whole groups may be erased. Particularly striking is Card's revision of Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. Bonzo accepts Ender into his army and begins a ritual war chant:

> "We are still—"
> "Salamander!" cried the soldiers in one voice...
> "We are the fire that will consume them, belly and bowel, head and heart, many flames of us, but one fire."
> "Salamander!" they cried again.
> "Even this one will not weaken us." (83)

The ritual call-and-response nature of this chorus is an example of the unity Anderson strives to instill in all his recruits: alone they are flames, but together they are a fire that overwhelms others.[3] The philosophy may be rooted in the past, but the military is firmly webbed to the future—specifically technology. The military sees technology as a mystical force allowing basic laws of nature to be revoked, such as gravity and

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time (89, 273, 281). It also relies on machines to explore human minds. Ender charges the two commanders, "You're the ones with the computer games that play with people's minds. You tell *me*" (208). Dink is simultaneously correct and incorrect when he claims that "the Battle Room doesn't create *anything*. It just destroys" (119). The Battle Room destroys individuality while it creates a unitary killing machine.

Of the tools the military paradigm uses to manipulate individuals, isolation is the most powerful. Ender must be prevented from being "at home" or able to "adopt the system we have here," because as soon as Ender finds a surrogate family the military will lose their leverage on him (28). Isolation makes dependence on others impossible; Ender is forced to fall back on and develop his own resources. Graff argues defensively that "isolation is—the optimum environment for creativity. It was *his* ideas we wanted, not the—never mind" (162–63). Graff cuts off the admission that isolation may well bring madness and alienation, not creativity. Ender sees the machine at work and knows instinctively that "this wasn't the way the show was supposed to go. Graff was supposed to pick on him, not set him up. . . . They were supposed to be against each other at first, so they could become friends later" (33). Neither Ender nor Graff realizes that isolation will, simultaneously, ostracize Ender from the human race and create an unbreakable bond with an alien one. Graff panics when Ender's isolation excludes the commanders and the military. Upset with Major Imbu, Graff notes that there is nothing in the manuals "about the End of the World. We don't have any experience with it" (131). Card's irony underlines just how much the military is fixated on simulation. Here is one scenario they cannot countenance, nor can they go to Ender and display their ignorance. Panic turns to anger as Graff barks, "I don't want Ender being comfortable with the end of the world" (131). Graff's comment indicates how much he has underestimated Ender.

Truth and trust are also useful tools. Graff uses Machiavellian means to further utilitarian ends. Ender consistently swallows Graff's lies regarding Stilson and Bonzo. Doubt nags at Ender because he has equated trust and friendship with the fact that the Colonel "didn't lie." Graff answers, "I won't lie to you now, either. . . . My job isn't to be friends. My job is to produce the best soldiers in the world" (36). What Graff never fully explains are the enormous personal costs Ender faces. Graff understands the risk of being able "to decide the fate of Ender Wiggin," but the utilitarian in him triumphs as he lashes out at Major Anderson: "Of course I mind [the interference], you meddlesome ass. This is something to be decided by people who know what they're doing, not these frightened politicians" (107). Military belief in specialization and expertise overrides Anderson's concerns. The military organizes the pieces

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of events it needs to provide useful truths. Ender has internalized the commander's law: no soldier can rise above the others because "it spoils the symmetry. You must get him in line, break him down, isolate him, beat him until he gets in line with everyone else" (184).

In the service of manipulation of the individual, the military abolishes parents (40). Friends can only provide *part* of the reassurance a parent offers the child. Dink sees pieces of truth: "The game is everything. Win win win. It amounts to nothing" (117). The military has declared what is and is not to be important in these children's lives. Dink notes caustically, "*They* decided I was right for the program, but nobody ever asked if the program was right for me" (117–18). Parental authority is replaced by dependence on the self; Ender "must believe that no matter what happens, no adult will ever, ever step in to help him in any way. He must believe, to the core of his soul, that he can only do what he and the other children work out for themselves" (220).

Manipulation of truth continues when the military takes charge of the media. Free speech is an acceptable concept, as long as the true bastions of power are not attacked. Ender cannot figure out why, if "students in the Battle School had much to learn from Mazer Rackham . . . [everything] was concealed from view" (207). Due to military caginess (or vanity), the truth—that nobody understands Rackham's victory, except perhaps Rackham himself—does not come out until it is almost too late. Ender feels the full impact of media handling when he receives Valentine's letter but must force himself to discount it: "Even if she wrote it in her own blood, it isn't the real thing because they made her write it. She'd written before, and they didn't let any of those letters through. Those might have been real, but this was asked for, this was part of their manipulation" (165). The manipulation of Valentine by the military teaches Ender more than Dink can ever tell him about their "skills" with communication. Ender notes succinctly, "So the whole war is because we can't talk to each other" (278). This exchange between Ender and Graff recalls one of the most striking scenes in Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War:* "The 1143-year-long war had begun on false pretenses and only continued because the two races were unable to communicate. Once they could talk, the first question was 'Why did you start this thing?' and the answer was 'Me?'" (122). Both Card and Haldeman stress that energy would be better spent on communication than on war games. The military *appears* to be using force out of desperation, just as Ender does when fighting Stilson and Bonzo, but it may simply prefer the role of aggressor. Even if the latter is the correct motive, it is cloaked by the former.

The military regularly pawns off horrible responsibilities to generals in the front line. For example, when Ender asks whether the Molecular

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Detachment Device (M.D. Device, a.k.a. the Little Doctor) works on a planet and "Mazer's face [goes] rigid. 'Ender, the buggers never attacked a civilian population in either invasion. You decide whether it would be wise to adopt a strategy that would invite reprisals'" (320). Like those who flew the *Enola Gay,* Ender becomes much more than an accomplice to the military's most unconscionable acts. There is no hypocrisy from the military; Graff and Rackham believe Ender had saved them all (326). Typically, Mazer Rackham pushes both victory and genocide on Ender: "You made the hard choice, boy. All or nothing" (326). In Haldeman's *The Forever War,* Potter and Mandella sum up the feeling of being abandoned by the military:

> "It's so dirty."
> I shrugged. "It's so army." (122)

The military paradigm withstands severe attacks without fracturing. The pressure forces Graff to comment sourly that his "eagerness to sacrifice little children in order to save mankind is wearing thin" (190). The incredible speed with which Ender becomes a commander leads Bean to guess that "the system is breaking up. No doubt about it. Either somebody at the top is going crazy, or something's gone wrong with the war, the real war, the bugger war" (245). None of these pressures divert Graff, Anderson, or Rackham from their course. With victory, the paradigm snaps back into shape. Graff recounts that after Ender's "rights" had been explained "it was simple. The exigencies of war" explain everything (336). If anything, there is increased faith in game theory—the system *has* worked. Anderson notes wistfully, "Now that the wars are over, it's time to play games again" (337). The military would rather not handle shades of grey. The Major notes, "It's too deep for me, Graff. Give me the game. Nice neat rules. Referees. Beginnings and ending. Winners and losers and then everybody goes home to their wives" (339). During the lifetime of Ender's tyrant brother Peter, the military paradigm continues to exist. Only later, when Ender has grown in power, does he provide an answer in the form of a religious paradigm which is constructed around the concept of the Speaker for the Dead. The Speaker is a figure who gives an account of an individual's ethical role in life and society. Before he can achieve that stage, Ender's own paradigm must be tested and purified. It is ironic that the military's most successful creation will also bring the eventual downfall of the paradigm.

War in Peaces

> Lord Naoshige said, "The Way of the Samurai is in desperateness. Ten men or more cannot kill such a man. Common sense will not accomplish great things. Simply become insane and desperate.

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"In the Way of the Samurai, if one uses discrimination, he will fall behind. One needs neither loyalty nor devotion, but simply to become desperate in the Way. Loyalty and devotion are of themselves within desperation."

—Yamamoto, *Hagakure*

Card endows each of the three Wiggin children with a particular strength: Peter is a conqueror, another Alexander; Valentine is an empath; and Ender is a warrior who hates fighting but must win.

Given this trinity it is not hard to separate the three and then join them into one. Ender functions as a cross between the head and the heart, with Peter as the head and Valentine as the heart. Fitting the three into a Freudian schema is possible with a bit of manipulation. The three children, all equally powerful in their own way (250), form a sort of trinity: the head (Ender), the heart (Valentine), and the unknown, unconscious self, the Id (Peter). Perhaps the three fit more easily into a Jungian pattern, with Ender as the ego, Peter as the shadow, and Valentine as Ender's anima. As Ender absorbs each of these he eventually becomes the wise old man (331). Even further afield is the possibility that the three form a religious Trinity. Rather than push any of these readings on the characters, attempting to make them into one, the author accepts the fact that Card saw fit to write three separate characters, where each listens to, and learns from, the others. It seems wiser and more useful, in terms of opening the text, to consider them as three discrete individuals, each representing a separate paradigm.

Ender's pacifism separates him from the other soldiers, the military, and his society. His apparently fatalistic attitude toward beating others is remarkably similar to what Eastern philosophy would call *Bushido,* or the Way of the Warrior (Samurai). Ender represents an elite, powerful warrior class which is at heart pacific but often fights in order to prevent further battles. Ender is a triple outcast. On Earth he is an "outcaste," wanting "to scream at [his father], I know I'm a Third. I know it" (15). Ender is a *persona non grata* who "has no rights" (17); and at the Battle School his excellence and isolation ensure his outcast status. For a long time even Ender rejects himself: "[Ender] didn't like Peter's kind, the strong against the weak, and he didn't like his own kind either, the smart against the stupid" (21). Balancing his alien status is Ender's possession of something unique for a soldier, a name. After a victory he thinks, "[I] may be short, but they know [my] name" (88). Mick, a fellow student, notices the implications right away: "Not a bad name. Ender. Finisher. Hey" (44). Finishing things is Ender's way of attempting to gain peace: "Knocking him down won the first fight. I wanted to win all the next ones, too, right then, so they'd leave me alone" (19). He wins not for the sake of winning, but so he needn't "fight every day

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[until] it . . . gets worse and worse" (8). Anderson comes to the realization that "Ender Wiggin isn't a killer. He just wins—thoroughly" (247). Ender admits ashamedly, "I didn't fight with honor . . . I fought to win" (243). For Ender finishing *is* winning. Learning to rely only on "his own head and hands" (105), Ender embodies the archetype of the individual who maintains his identity in the face of a hostile society and environment.

Card uses the Battle Room as a metaphor for life. Winning does not mean peace; it simply means one is allowed to play again. Ender catches on late that what he plays are no longer games; "It stopped being a game when they threw away the rules" (236). The events in and outside the Battle Room are "sometimes games, sometimes—not games" (260). Ender has been aged by the constant threat of annihilation: he must be able to end each game, otherwise his life is worthless. He notes desperately that losing is "'the worst that could happen. I can't lose *any*. . . . Because if I lose *any'*—He didn't explain himself" (216). Ender is more strategist than aggressor. While the children are "all wondering if [Stilson] was dead. . . . [Ender] was trying to figure out a way to forestall vengeance" (7). Discussing similar strategy, Yamamoto comments, "In the 'Notes on Martial Laws' it is written that: The phrase, 'Win first, fight later,' can be summed up in the two words 'Win beforehand.'" (153).

Ender's perpetual attempts to co-opt the system, to "use the system, and even excel" (51), are symptomatic of his lifelong obsession with preparedness. In order to work free of the commanders' power, Ender must prepare more than he ever has. Obedience is not a Manichean issue, as Dink suggests it is (111). Ender is vulnerable, as the military knows, to pressure exerted on Valentine. In his Earth school he's left alone because "he always knew the answer, even when [the teacher] thought he wasn't paying attention" (5). Preparation and risk-taking give Ender an ability to adapt to and master any given situation. The result is that he never makes the same mistake twice. Faced by the challenging Battle Room, he plunges in: "Better get started" (59). But even here he is prepared. During the shuttle flight to Battle School, Ender has observed that "Gravity could go any which way. However [he] want[s] it to go" (32). All things are a prelude to battle: "If one makes a distinction between public places and one's sleeping quarters, or between being on the battlefield and on the *tatami,* when the moment comes there will not be time for making amends. There is only the matter of constant awareness. If it were not for men who demonstrate valor on the *tatami,* one could not find them on the battlefield either" (Yamamoto 76). Ender scrutinizes his environment, noticing on the shuttle "how Graff and the other officers were watching them. Analyzing. Everything we do means something, Ender realized. Them laughing. Me

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not laughing" (29). Ender's mind automatically produces strategic analyses. Traded from Salamander, "Ender listed things in his mind as he undressed. . . . The enemy's gate is down. Use my legs as a shield. . . . And soldiers can sometimes make decisions that are smarter than the orders they've been given" (104). Such dispassionate analysis gives Ender the necessary information he needs to win his coming battles. The more he understands how he works, the more he sees that emotions, particularly anger, interfere with decision making. Ender instructs his class, "If you ever want to make your enemy crazy, shout that kind of stuff at them. It makes them do dumb things. . . . But *we* don't get mad" (123). Ender's ability to calculate probabilities makes him appear as canny as the adults around him. They treat him so well he wonders, "How important am I. . . . And like a whisper of Peter's voice inside his mind, he heard the question, How can I use this?" (268).

Part of the warrior's way is to *use,* not *be* used. Valentine's letter makes him lose hope because "he had no control over his own life. They ran everything. They made all the choices" (165). Despite his wish to deny his human fragility, Ender eventually incorporates his flaws, reassuring himself that "although he had never sought power, he had always had it. But he decided that it was power born of excellence, not manipulation" (269). He accepts that he has power over others, just as others have power over him; however, he can control a great deal of power. Ender "could see Bonzo's anger growing hot. Ender's anger was cold, and he could use it. Bonzo's anger was hot, and so it used him" (94). Ender cannot afford to lose control once. He uses a meditation trick to distract himself, and when he returns to his thoughts "the pain was gone. The tears were gone. He would not cry" (46). Things that affect him after this make "him sorrowful, but Ender did not weep. He was done with that," and using his anger "he decided he was strong enough to defeat them [all]" (188). Ender relinquishes his trust in adults, learning to show them "the lying face he presented to Mother and Father" (47). Ender's isolation goes beyond anything Graff could have dreamed of. Confronted by Petra's plea for forgiveness ("Sometimes we make mistakes"), it is the warrior in Ender who answers coldly, "And sometimes we don't" (312). Meditation, cold anger, hidden emotion, lack of forgiveness, and utter solitude are superb defenses against a deadly world as well as trademarks of a blind form of Puritanism. The Puritan vein in Ender explains why and how he manages to live without love, loyalty, and companionship. Through the bars of his cell, Ender sees that "they knew about everything and to them Val was just one more tool to use to control him, just one more trick to play" (166). The biggest mistake he can make is to show emotion and reveal a desire. As a commander, Ender does not fool himself that his soldiers are loyal to

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him; they are in awe of him, revere him, but he won't (perhaps with the exception of Bean) allow them to be loyal to him. Love and loyalty are vulnerabilities that neither the Samurai nor the Puritan warrior can afford.

Nor can the warrior conceive of spontaneous acts of affection. When Graff touches Ender's hand, Ender decides "Graff was creating a commander out of a little boy. No doubt Unit 17 in the course of studies included an affectionate gesture from the teacher" (270). Similarly, he cannot trust Valentine's childish affection any longer (257). Loyalty is replaced by obedience; Ender notes calmly in the face of his peers' disbelief, "I obey orders" (100). When his army "attempt[s] to start a chant of Dragon, Dragon," Ender puts a stop to it (196). Tribal rituals suggest tribal loyalty, and Ender knows that he may face any member of his army in the Battle Room one day. Loyalty, like all emotion, clouds strategy and preparedness; but obedience does not.

It is also necessary that the warrior cultivate empathy, particularly the ability to empathize with the enemy. Peter notes proleptically, "They meant you to be human, little Third, but you're really a bugger" (12). Collings notes that "Ender cannot become fully human" because "he is constantly manipulated by others" ("The Rational" 8). Ender points out to Valentine, the empath, that "every time, I've won because I could understand the way my enemy thought. From what they *did*. . . . I'm very good at that. Understanding how other people think" (260–61). Empathy allows Ender to exchange his worldview for the enemy's, see the internal vulnerabilities, and attack in precisely the right spot.

The final and most important part of the warrior's paradigm is the complete acceptance of death. Learning to fight each battle as if it were the last, the warrior must face "lots of deaths. . . . That was OK, games were like that, you died a lot until you got the hang of it" (67). And in getting "the hang of it," the individual becomes accustomed to dying (not an unfamiliar theme for Card)[4]. Death means a release from the battles of life and is, therefore, much desired by Ender. The combination of readiness and relaxation (193) prepares Ender's troops to "win beforehand." They are relaxed because they are ready to die. As Yamamoto states: "There is something to be learned from a rainstorm. When meeting with a sudden shower, you try not to get wet and run quickly along the road. But doing such things as passing under the eaves of houses, you still get wet. When you are resolved from the beginning, you will not be perplexed, though you still get the same soaking. This understanding extends to everything." (Yamamoto 38). Stoicism and resolution of this nature are crucial to the Puritan warrior who is self-sufficient; he is not a fighter, but he wins battles when and where he must; he is not a joiner, but he is ready to lead; he is not anxious, but he is always prepared;

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most of all, he hates power, but he is supremely capable of handling it. Such self-reliance gives the warrior the strength to deny love and loyalty, understand the enemy, and accept death unhesitatingly. The rugged individualist who lives his own life and relies on his neighbors to do the same is caught in a terrible vice when his community demands his help.

Thrown into the morass of deciding which is more important, the needs of the one or the needs of the many, the warrior must make a judgement while feeling "lonely, afraid, angry, untrusting" (184). Unconsciously socialized into the role of protector, the warrior accedes to communal wishes: "I'll do it because I choose to, not because you tricked me, you sly bastard" (277). In order to save Valentine, Ender must serve the whole community: for all his dislike of the military practice, Ender is "in favor of surviving" (279).[5] The cost of survival is very high. Ender's need to *finish* lays Stilson out; it "didn't occur to [Ender] that Stilson didn't take a fight like this seriously, that he wasn't prepared for a truly desperate blow" (7). Yamamoto remarks, "Ten men or more cannot kill such a man.... 'One needs to become desperate in the Way'"(45). The reader is at once thrilled and disgusted that Ender carries out the fight long after it seems to be over. Ender knows that "only an animal" would strike a helpless opponent (8); he uses just such a beating as an object lesson for the others: "'You might be having some idea about ganging up on me. You could probably beat me up pretty bad. But just remember what I do to people who try to hurt me. From then on you'd be wondering when I'd get you, and how bad it would be.' He kicked Stilson in the face. Blood from his nose spattered the ground nearby. 'It wouldn't be this bad,' Ender said. 'It would be worse'" (8).

Here is an instance of "winning beforehand." It is, paradoxically, a state of rational desperation: "If I'm to walk away from here, I have to win quickly, and permanently" (229). Ender's displays of ferocity are always followed by revulsion, the empath's true remorse (35, 233). But his empathy for the enemy does not prevent the warrior from winning; he would "rather not be the unhappiest at the end" (7). His dictum when facing the worst odds follows that of the warrior Naoshige: "Win first, ask questions later" (Yamamoto 210). The limitless extent of Ender's desperation is shown when he smashes Bonzo into pulp, hitting, "again and again until the will to fight was finished. The only way to end things completely was to hurt Bonzo enough that his fear was stronger than his hate" (231). The delicate balance between terror and hatred in Bonzo is so utterly destroyed by Ender that Bonzo's survival is impossible; mind and body have been crushed. Ender's desperation, his strict adherence to the Way, to a severe code of self-government, are all passed on to his army, and the many benefit from the power of the one. A

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modern American warrior, Vietnam veteran Al Santoli recalled, "I never had the opportunity to directly save people's lives. My responsibility was to kill and in the process of killing to be so good at it that I indirectly saved my men's lives" (132).

Lured to Battle School with the visions of brotherhood and fantasies of "just living," Ender bows to the good of the whole and takes charge of an army (80). Once in command, Ender must internalize all his memories of friendship and love: "The kiss, the word, the peace were with him still. I am only what I remember, and Alai is my friend in memory so intense that they can't tear him out. Like Valentine, the strongest memory of all" (188). Ender's crucial exchange with Bean (who is set aside, just as Ender was) points out Ender's new attitude which demands both obedience and subordination:

> "Ho, Bean."
> "Ho, Ender."
> Pause.
> "*Sir*," Ender said softly. (181)

Ender's insistence on the commander's honorific puts him on an irreversible course. He must act like a strategist, deciding cooly to "let the boys learn that leniency comes from their toon leaders, and harshness from their commander—it will bind them better in the small, tight knots of this fabric" (197). The boys are no longer individuals; they are loose threads he will weave into the cloth of an army. "Now in command, he was the master soldier, and he was completely, utterly alone" (153). The power of command forces him to reappraise Peter's beliefs: "Peter had been right, always right; the power to cause pain is the only power that matters, the power to kill and destroy, because if you can't kill then you are always subject to those who can, and nothing and no one will ever save you" (232). The logical extension of Peter's selfish philosophy is genocide, since every living being poses a threat. Ender is unable to see his implicit danger.

Ender "finishes" what he starts because he is willing to break the game. He never expects an attack to work twice, so he is constantly in search of new ways to defeat the rules (307). His rebellion at the injustice of the Giant's Drink ("I hate this game. It isn't fair. It's stupid" [69]) destroyed the game as "he kicked one [glass] over, then the other," and the Giant complained "Cheater, cheater" (69). Ender can live in a world of malleable rules. His all-out suicide rush into the Battle Room, following Bonzo's order, is just a beginning, and "Word got around. From now on no one could take five or ten or fifteen seconds in the corridor to size things up. The game had changed" (116). The warrior refuses to

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accept an inferior position and grasps the whole mechanism, turning it to his advantage.

Ender's willingness to break the game threatens the structure of the Battle School. Fighting little battles, rather than one orchestrated war, means that Ender "was not planning to do anything that had been done before... he trained his toon leaders to use their small units effectively in achieving limited goals" (191). Ender's adoption of guerilla tactics removes all possiblity of honor and courtliness from the war. Ender tells Bean that "most boys in this school think the game is important *for itself,* but it isn't," hinting that the object of the game is to break the game (215). The warrior acts calmly when faced with a situation where "the rules could be anything and the objective... known to [the authorities] alone. So he wouldn't play. He also refused to get angry" (286). Card underlines that there are some situations in which passivity is an act of aggression.

Preparing for the worst, Ender studied the vids and "began to see how well the buggers used seemingly random flight paths to create confusion, how they used decoys and false retreats to draw the I.F. ships into traps" (205). Graff and Anderson are made uneasy by Ender's new practice, as they should be. Cast out of Earth as a Third, cast out of his family, and cast out of the Battle School as an unbeatable enemy, Ender studies those closest to him—other aliens. Ender must "learn strategy, of course" (209) if he is to survive in a world of three races—Humans, Buggers, and Ender. The two commanders are nervous that Ender may not remain loyal to "humans," and Graff and Anderson have been relying on the threat to humanity to keep Ender motivated. Of the others, only Mazer Rackham understands: "There is no teacher but the enemy. No one but the enemy will ever tell you what the enemy is going to do. No one but the enemy will ever teach you how to destroy and conquer. Only the enemy shows you where you are weak. Only the enemy tells you where he is strong. And the only rules of the game are what you can do to him and what you can stop him from doing to you" (288). Rackham puts into words something Ender has known for a long time: If the enemy is to be beaten, he must be embraced. Rackham does not know that Ender, having lived with Peter, has already faced the situation where "from now on the enemy is more clever than you. From now on the enemy is stronger than you. From now on you are always about to lose" (289). Rackham's anger with Ender ("You cannot absorb losses!" [308]) ends when the pragmatic warrior replies, "I can't win battles if I'm so terrified of losing... that I never take any risks" (309). Rackham is now sure that Ender, prepared to die, cannot be beaten.

Bean is the catalyst for Ender's ambivalence about his life as a warrior. Graff tells Ender he was intended "to be half Peter and half Valentine"

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(25) and that, "as far as we can tell," the mix was successful (25). Ender knows that he must confront the conquering sadist in him. Ender unthinkingly employs the arrogant conqueror's tactics to shape his army, focusing on Bean: "'At least I have one soldier who can figure things out.' Ender could see resentment growing . . . the way they avoided looking at Bean. Why am I doing this . . . making one boy the target of all the others?" (177). In Bean Ender sees himself. He also sees Peter in himself, nagged by suspicions, Ender wonders, "what was this thing with Bean? Why had he gone for the smallest, weakest, and possibly the brightest of the boys? Why had he done to Bean what had been done to Ender by the commanders that he despised[?]" (183). Ender excuses the hurt he causes Bean because pain will work "to make [him] a better soldier. . . . To sharpen [his] wit" (184). But Ender repeatedly hurts people, bringing him face to face with Peter who lives for others' pain. Ender thinks he has chosen to become more like Peter in order to protect Valentine (27). His emotions tell Ender otherwise when he panics, "'I am Peter. I'm just like him. . . . I am not a killer,' Ender said to himself over and over. 'I am not Peter. No matter what he says, I wouldn't. I'm not. I was defending myself'" (35). This is a constant refrain as Ender faces Stilson (8), thugs in the Battle Room (126), and the myriad terrors of the Giant's Drink (70). Ender's fear is ignited by the knowledge "that he *was* a killer, only better at it than Peter ever was" (129). The empathy that allows him to understand others makes him a better killer. Anguished, he tells Valentine:

> In the moment when I truly understand my enemy, understand him well enough to defeat him, then in that very moment I also love him. I think it's impossible to really understand somebody . . . and not love them the way they love themselves. And then, in that very moment when I *love* them . . . I *destroy* them. I make it impossible for them to ever hurt me again. I grind them and grind them until they don't *exist*. (261)

Each death becomes Ender's death. His love and empathy make him into his own enemy, and then Ender—no longer Ender—kills himself, the enemy. No one can protect him from the killer in him, for "in the darkness he did not have his army" (224); in the darkness he faces the specter of a saddened Valentine (224). Confused and dismayed by the new Ender she meets, she is scared that while "Peter has mellowed, [Ender has been] made . . . into a killer. Two sides of the same coin, but which is which?" (261). Contact with Valentine renews Ender's self-scrutiny. A massive upheaval in Ender's paradigm signals its arrival when he admits that "he had never, except perhaps with Bean, used his power to hurt someone" (269). This first small admission of the infliction of pain opens the way for a full confrontation of that part he loathes

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in himself most—Peter. Other pressures squeeze Ender. Graff underestimates the complete effect the isolation will have on Ender. Ender's childlike belief that "the teachers got me into this—they can keep me safe" (an oft-repeated litany [36, 213, 225]) fails him. His faith in the state, in his parents, in all adults, and in most of his peers is ground down by the friction of the events. Neither child nor adult, Ender, without friends and separated from Valentine, becomes as alien and dangerous as the hive-queen.

Ender's paradigm cracks and finally shatters from the pressure it bears. Doubt about games puts stress along the fault line between illusion (games) and reality (killing). Doubts about the military paradigm begin to surface: "The I.F. controlled a lot of things, but it didn't control the videos and the nets. . . . Ender knew that lies could not last long in America. So he believed. Believed, but the seed of doubt was there" (121). Hesitancy grows from this seed of doubt. In the warrior's paradigm of swift and lethal action, hesitation is fatal. Very late in the game, Ender tries vainly to convince himself that "they need me, and if I fail there might not be any home to return to. But he did not believe it" (321). He finally asks, "Why are we fighting the buggers?" (277). The unquestioning mind of the warrior begins to falter, and with it the paradigm.

Doubt, alien to the warrior, causes Ender to take any escape, even if it is as limited as a video village in the Giant's Drink (80). The Giant's Drink is a Rosetta stone for Ender; when he despairs, "I'm trapped here . . . at the End of the World with no way out" (154), he is being prepared for the end of this game with the buggers.[6] Ender's feeling of trapped despair increases when Valentine confronts him with her version of his "duty." His anguish is palpable: "I'm a killer no matter what" (265). He is terrified of calling on all the power available to him, knowing that much of it comes from the murderer in him (265). Ender's dreams put more pressure on the paradigm. He sees himself buried and "dried out . . . a home for buggers, like the Giant was" (317). Here two powerful images are united, that of the digger-wasp and the Giant's skeleton (the buggers understand enough about him to send him these mental pictures). Ender reflects brokenly, "I think that Bonzo died. I dreamed about it last night" (315). Pressure begins to fog his mind and the rules of the Way. Ender starts to disintegrate, trying "to remember how old he was. Eleven. How many years ago did he turn eleven? How many days?" (321). The paradigm's erosion nearly destroys Ender: "In my dreams . . . I'm never sure whether I'm really me" (315).

All of Ender's doubts and fears are confirmed and the paradigm smashed when he is told bluntly that it has all been "real. Not a game" (327). This unthinkable betrayal severs Ender from his warrior paradigm,

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his world, and his race. Ender must accept all the deaths: "I killed them all, didn't I? . . . All their queens . . . all their children, all of everything" (328). Such inconceivable slaughter destroys Ender's ability to justify his actions. The others have long since understood that "someone with that much compassion could never be the killer [the I.F.] needed" (328). The empathic Valentine in Ender has been used by the murderous Peter. Ender is amused by the ridiculous concern over a few human deaths: "In battle I killed ten billion buggers, who were as alive and wise as any man, who had not even launched a third attack against us, and no one thinks to call it a crime" (340). Having come to these realizations, Ender lets go of all he has been, talking with Alai:

> Ender noticed the way he spoke in the past. I *was* good.
> "What am I *now,* Alai?"
> "Still good."
> "At what?"
> "At—anything." (333)

Ender must discover what he *is* good for, now that he has discarded the warrior's life. It has not occurred to the military that "this twelve-year-old boy might be as gifted at peace as he was at war" (341). Atonement and the peace of death lead Ender to build a new paradigm. He tells Valentine, his greatest human love, that he will travel and live on, not for her sake, but for the souls of his victims (346). He turns the warrior's paradigm away from the desperation of survival and toward the peace of repentance. Collings makes a similar observation: "At this point [after the bugger genocide] Ender's mission shifts from temporal salvation to spiritual enlightenment. [Ender] becomes a focus for redemption ("Rational" 8). In the alien mind he finds a true fellow and image of himself—"We are like you; the thought pressed into his mind" (353). Above all, there is a chance for peace without games: "How were we to know?" the aliens plead. "We could live with you in peace. Believe us, believe us, believe us" (354).

It is an indication of the complete disintegration of Ender's paradigm that he takes the word of his enemy before all others (354). The construction of a new paradigm is not immediate (Card uses *Speaker for the Dead* to outline the new paradigm). The Speaker's paradigm will be completed and life will begin only when he has found a starting place for the hive-queen. The words "atonement," "repentance," "forgiveness," and "peace" all carry religious associations. It is Ender's new paradigm of truth-sayer, of Speaking for the Dead, that will eventually give him the right to continue life. Over a very long time the new paradigm will have massive societal and political consequences. Ironically the military creates the instrument of its own destruction. The shocking crisis in the

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warrior's paradigm spreads to the other paradigms, reforming all of them.

Card has not merely produced an excellent adventure novel, but he has written a meditation on political, social, and ethical behavior. This large book about a little boy challenges theories of militarism which many Westerners take for granted. Can the audience ever pardon the military for what they have done? How are we to view Ender? With loathing? Pity? Rather than provide facile answers to these questions, Card throws the audience back on all its differing beliefs; out of the discussion which Card initiates between "Locke" and "Demosthenes," readers must review their own paradigms. Such a review produces wildly diverse reactions to the novel, as seen at the start of this article. Card's purpose on one issue is very clear: Ender must not go on. Ender must end and be replaced by some new form of human wise enough to reject the military paradigm, no matter what it offers.

Notes

1. Elaine Radford, "Ender and Hitler: Sympathy for the Superman." Radford bases much of her argument on odd coincidences (ages, number of children in the family, marriage ages) to prove that Card is an apologist for Hitler. This "eccentric" reading [as Card was to call it] is less than convincing.
2. This article avoids an outright discussion of the many divisions between appearance and reality that plague the characters in the book. However, the schizophrenic universe Card lays out is well worthy of Heraclitus and Zeno. The divisions between Appearance and Reality, Seeming and Being, Illusion and illusion, the One and the Many are constantly examined by Card. They are paradoxes that reflect Ender's life and the "American Dream" of the individual's position as simultaneous master of, and servant in, civil society.
3. The *E Pluribus Unum* theme recalls the image of Hobbes's Leviathan.
4. One of Card's earliest and most difficult stories concerns a man who is "killed" repeatedly in an attempt to break his mind, similar to the function of Orwell's Room 101 in *Nineteen Eighty-Four.* The title, "A Thousand Deaths," is taken from the lines "the coward dies a thousand deaths, the hero dies but one," drawn from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar:* "Cowards die many times before their deaths; / The valiant never taste of death but once" (2.2. 32–33). This can be found in Card's first collection of short stories, *Capitol.* New York: Ace Books, 1979.
5. Collings argues that although the line "And Jesus died to save all men, of course" was struck from the novel, it provides the key to the text. On the other hand, Collings quotes Card on this subject: "If anyone cares to hear about my church, I'll be glad to tell him or her, in a personal conversation. But in my stories, I am not out to support any particular institution. My moral beliefs are inseparable from my work: my theology and institutional membership have no place in it." Michael R. Collings, "Orson Scott Card: A Profile." *Norwescon Programme* (1987): 13.
6. Interestingly, one of the options Ender has is suicide, which he attempts in the game by picking up the snake and kissing it. This "death" awards him a new lease on life, a remarkable mixture of death / rebirth and Christian imagery.

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