

THE OTHER BILL AND TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE:
CREATIVITY, INNOVATION, CRITIQUE,
AND THE HUMANITIES

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All things counter, original, spare, strange....

–Gerard Manley Hopkins (31)

One of the box-office hits of 1989 that has remained relatively popular among video renters is *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*, an American buddy saga that may be at least as good an indicator of the state of Western culture in the 'nineties as *Easy Rider* (1969) was in the 'sixties and early 'seventies. Set in the fictional town of San Dimas, California, *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* concerns two callow young men--Ted Theodore Logan and Bill S. Preston, Esquire – who must pass a history assignment in order to remain in high school, avoid enrolment in a military academy, and continue playing in their garage band, which is wishfully named "Wild Stallion." Since, in their own words, the sum total of their knowledge of history is that "the world has great history ... the world is full of history," their rescue is no mean feat and, indeed, accomplished only through the intervention of a *deus ex machina* named Rufus who arrives in the nick of time in a telephone booth from a future society that has improbably developed around Bill and Ted's execrable music and the foundational propositions encapsulated in their two oft-repeated mottoes: "Be excellent to each other" and "Party on, dudes!" With the help of Rufus and his time machine, Bill and Ted visit several historical eras, bringing back with them an array of "important figures" such as Socrates, Napoleon, Freud, Billy the Kid, and Abraham Lincoln to enliven their oral report, which, of course, is a spectacular success. En route to the report, all the historical figures show themselves to be utterly enthralled by the malls, water slides, aerobics classes, consumer goods, and young people that they encounter in San Dimas, and at the movie's climax Lincoln not only thanks Bill and Ted for bringing him on such an "excellent adventure," but also endorses the tenets of their caring yet hedonistic philosophy. The movie ends with Rufus explaining that a future society

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