

## Career Choices

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I first encountered Marc Bousquet's work from a distance. I was in the MLA Delegate Assembly in the mid-nineties, and there was someone, at the ready at one of the mikes toward the front, who kept jumping up from his seat to speak whenever job issues were on the floor. He was taller than average, but he looked more like a slightly rumpled Ivy type than a union organizer—or at least than union organizers I've known in construction or in corrections. However, he did have the same tenacity, and he made clear he represented the Graduate Student Caucus. One could see that Phyllis Franklin treated him at best with the patience an adult musters for an impertinent adolescent, although sometimes she slipped to irritation, regarding him more as a burr on her seat.

He particularly objected to the phrase "the job market." At first I did not see the force of his objection. I understood that he wanted to shake the blitheness of MLA and senior faculty about the "market," which they seemed to view as a natural force (cloudy today, but the sun is bound to come out tomorrow!), or as he puts it in one of his essays here, with the cursory knowledge of someone who has read a chapter of Adam Smith. But I still thought "market" captured something of the lived experience of job hunting, when one feels reification directly (as we say, like a piece of meat), and served as a reminder that academe was not a sacrosanct realm but subject to capitalism. There is considerable distortion separating academe from that recognition, which especially showed itself in the faculty response to the Yale graduate student strike. The faculty, in the dubious special MLA publication of letters, held that the university was a space apart, outside the normal operation of market enterprises (in effect a patronage system), so unions were not appropriate. While one might supportably claim a separate status to justify the freedom to pursue certain kinds of intellectual work, this misrecognized graduate students' role as labor, which rendered their only recourse an appeal to the beneficence of patronage. Marc Bousquet's foremost contribution has been to tirelessly expose that misrecognition.

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Instead of “job market,” he unrelentingly moved that “job system” be substituted in every relevant MLA statement. On first hearing it, I thought “system” dulled some of the bluntness of “market.” The “free market,” after all, is synonymous with capitalism, whereas “system” seemed a more abstract and neutral descriptor. It also suggested the language of high tech, and I feared that it was a post-modernist redescription of capitalism, revelling in the complexity of its interrelations rather than its stakes of profit and loss, winners and losers, rich and poor.

That was before I started hearing Marc Bousquet’s talks at various conferences, such as MLG’s summer institute, reading some of it for *minnesota review*, and finally seeing it in print, notably his *Social Text* essay, “The Waste Product of Graduate Education.” The strength of that essay is that it shows the current position of academic labor is the systematic effect of managerial policies that call for the perpetuation of inexpensive graduate student teachers. The originality of that essay is that it lays bare the magical thinking attendant upon the invocation of the “market,” thinking which issued a long wave of predictions that there would be plenteous academic jobs and which in turn disabled any effectual response. In a sense, Bousquet applies the tools of the literary trade to the “market,” showing how it functions rhetorically rather than factually; it purports the legitimacy of a technical, economic explanation, casting the configuration of jobs as the inevitable result of a cycle that has a natural equilibrium, rather than as the result of the systematic action of managers that will right itself only through the concerted action of workers. I stand persuaded.

One way to see the force of Bousquet’s analysis is in comparison to John Guillory’s vaunted essay, “Preprofessionalism: What Graduate Students Want,” which has been widely cited since it first appeared in the *ADE Bulletin* in 1996 and taken the status of an official MLA statement on the topic. Guillory starts with the same general problem as Bousquet—the precarious position of graduate students—but he focuses primarily on their psychic life, as the Freudian allusion of his subtitle indicates, contingent on their desire for a job. For Guillory, graduate students have been forced “prematurely” to publish and establish professional research credentials—hence “preprofessionalism”—in order to get a job. The strength of Guillory’s essay is that it calls attention to the draconian pressures on graduate students, and the originality that it offers an analysis of the “sociology of the profession,” as he calls it, or more precisely the social pathology of the profession (in his diagnosis, “graduate students are condemned to suffer most the symptoms of a pathology that afflicts the profession universally” [5]). However, for all its nuance about professionalization, Guillory’s argument is remarkably unnuanced about labor economics. This leads him to read the symptom but misdiagnose the cause.

This happens in a few ways. Guillory unblinkingly assumes the kind of economistic thinking that Bousquet exposes, of the ineluctable logic of the market and its putative balance of supply and demand. From the fact of downsizing, he posits that there is

lessened demand, in turn resulting in an oversupply or “surplus” of PhDs. From this, following Bérubé and Nelson’s proposal in *Higher Education under Fire*, he adduces that the only solution is to reduce graduate programs: “As for the overproduction of PhDs, there is only one thing we can do, and that is to produce fewer” (7). While this seems a reasonable response, it is actually based on flawed logic: downsizing does not indicate a lessened need or demand for college teachers, but the reconfiguration of labor, as Bousquet shows in his essay on “EMOs,” in managerial terms, as just-in-time, transitory positions rather than full positions. (This is especially clear in the number of students we have crowding our composition classes; the problem is not that there is a lessened demand for teachers, but, as I like to repeat to fatalistic administrators, the greater extrapolation of labor from teachers.) In “The Waste Product of Graduate Education,” Bousquet puts paid to the shibboleth of demand: “Even a modest ‘reconversion’ plan designed to re-create jobs out of part-time piecework would swiftly generate a real shortage of degreed persons” (96). While one might argue for the pragmatic efficacy of reducing graduate programs, it is at best a stopgap reform that does not change the current system of labor, and it is surely not the “only thing to do.”<sup>1</sup> To change the system of labor, one thing to do is to organize to gain full employment. Assuming the equilibrium of the “market” (and he frequently uses the metaphor of a pool and its natural level), Guillory in effect resigns himself to the current structuring of jobs, so the only advice he can then give is not political, to struggle to increase jobs or change university management, but attitudinal, to change professional expectations and desires. At heart, Bousquet’s writing turns on a refusal of such political resignation.

There is a further permutation of Guillory’s analysis of demand. He attributes the scarcity of jobs in some measure to the weakened professional legitimation of literary study. This is a more nuanced argument than the default assumption of the market, and more striking, adapting Guillory’s innovative account from *Cultural Capital* that literature no longer provides the cultural distinction essential in forming the middle class, but I think it finally swerves off course in two ways. First, it tends to collapse the problem to one of English. The problem, however, is not unique to those of us in literature and applies across the disciplines, reflecting, as Bousquet underscores, the reconfiguration of university labor overall. Given the ever bruited importance of a college degree, it would be hard to see the university as delegitimated, and while it might be true that *literature* no longer holds the same cultural position it once did, it is not true that literature *departments* are marginal. They are in fact typically among the largest on campus, with the greatest number of FTEs—obviously because of composition classes, as well as in the capacious construal of “English,” from tech writing to film.<sup>2</sup> Guillory might find the growth of rhetoric and composition further evidence for his narrative of professional decline, but one might argue conversely that rhetoric and composition have always been the ground of English in the U.S.<sup>3</sup> They are

certainly its material ground, upon which research has piggy-backed. Whatever its purported legitimating idea, the compelling fact is that literature departments are largely self-sustaining within the university and thus have a certain material legitimacy. For instance, at the University of Missouri, English accounts for 85-90% of its operating budget through its FTEs, among the highest of all departments; as a point of comparison, Education accounts for only 50% of its budget through teaching (hard not to see some irony there), thus doing a great deal more piggybacking on other funds and making it much more vulnerable under administrative mandates for fiscal accountability. In a sense, the legitimization argument propounds a metaphysics of the university, presupposing that its legitimating idea is its ground, rather than seeing its ground as its material practice, from which we adduce its legitimization.

Guillory does tease out some of the complications of English's status in the university, but the swerve toward framing the problem as specific to English exemplifies what I would call the humanities warp, which is a common tendency of much of the scholarship on the university. That scholarship is largely a humanistic domain, from Kant to Newman to Readings, whose "ideas of the university" tend to see the university as grounded upon and an offshoot of the humanities. The second swerve I would call the professionalist warp, which tends to define the university and its operation in terms of professional self-definition. Guillory frames the problem primarily in professionalist terms—of legitimization, expectations, prestige, and professional interests—rather than in terms of labor—actual tasks in most departments, work hours, and so on, not to mention, say, student hours, activities, and interests. This is especially clear in his account of teaching, which seems barely to exist in his universe, except perhaps as a residue of research. The professionalist tropism toward research over teaching is why Guillory has no alternative to downsizing except to exercise professional controls to reduce grad programs, rather than labor organizing to increase viable jobs (which function not just for the sake of teachers' interests but for students' interests). This tendency is not unique to Guillory but reflects a tension of professionalism, that defines professions as autonomous, controlling their own cadre internally, rather than in terms of labor, negotiated externally. A problem of unionization is that it gives up a certain measure of professional distinction, recognizing our position as wage laborers rather than as quasi-aristocratic guild members. The sense of autonomy is codified in professional contracts, which are individual and negotiated one at a time, whereas union contracts are in concert, placing the individual in a labor class. In a sense, the professionalist argument, like the legitimization argument, resorts to a metaphysics that posits that our material position arises from our professional rationale. Pace Guillory, it is a fantasy of professionalism that we believe that we determine our positions through the self-definitions that we issue to the world.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately the world does not always comply.

A professionalist metaphysics is perhaps most apparent in Guillory's tacit construal of departmental positions. Assuming the self-definition of research, Guillory distinguishes two possible positions: professors as researchers and graduate students as nascent researchers. Thus the problem that he diagnoses is not that graduate students teach too much, but that they prematurely accede to the position of researcher. This essentially reproduces the traditional model of apprenticeship—in other words, the same as that of the Yale faculty, with the same solution, that graduate students recognize their true position, which would enable them to mature properly. Bousquet's frame places graduate students first in the roles they hold as teaching labor—they are not "preprofessional," but already accomplished as *professional teachers*, and they are not apprentices, but super-exploited. Further, Bousquet's frame also accounts for the tiered structure that we now have, of junior and senior graduate students, "post-docs" or extended grad student teachers, lecturers, part-timers, and so on. In Guillory's professionalist frame, these other roles simply disappear because they don't fit except as aberrations; one compelling insight of Bousquet's analysis is that they are not aberrations but in fact normative positions generated by the current system.

Part of the reason that Guillory defines graduate students in this way is that he assumes a narrow, elite model of the profession, based on elite graduate programs where graduate students teach very few courses. But this model does not account for the vast majority of graduate students—in big state programs that produce the majority of PhD's—who do a great deal of teaching. For instance, at the University of Missouri, we often hire people from Harvard, Chicago, Duke, and other elite schools where they have taught, without exaggeration, one or two classes before becoming professors, whereas our own graduate students, with a 2-2 course-load (and you don't finish in five years with a 2-2), have likely taught fifteen or twenty courses before finishing. It is a somewhat bitter irony of the hierarchy of the profession that our graduate students have taught more courses in grad school than their presumably more mature professors have at tenure time. Guillory purports to do a sociology of the profession, but it is a skewed sociology, weighted from the rarefied top (again, this is not unique to Guillory but common to many, though not all, accounts of professionalism). Against this tendency, Bousquet has stubbornly exposed the submerged iceberg of the profession and its material conditions of existence, from the bottom up rather than the top down. One might call it a physics rather than metaphysics of the current university.

I think that Guillory's essay has received so much attention, bruit-ed by the MLA-powers-that-be and forwarded as a kind of official knowledge of the fate of graduate education, because it purports a sophisticated knowledge but leaves things in place: it subtly analyzes a psychic condition but accepts the inevitability of the market and the normative hierarchy of the profession, which cause that condition. And, in putting its stress on the "pathology" of graduate

students, it locates the problem with their “misrecognition.” The pressing need is not a better psychoanalysis of graduate education but a better politics and labor policy for university teachers; as Bousquet puts it in his *JAC* article, what a graduate student or “adjunct” “really wants” is not to be treated as a colleague, but instead to *be* colleagues” (516). Scarcity might induce a “pathology,” but we might well call it alienation and reification that is a deliberate function of the managerial system, and the only way to change it is through control of the workplace. Bousquet, in his writing as well as other tasks, such as founding the online journal *Workplace*, has put the question of labor front and center, but I somehow doubt he will be taken up as an MLA spokesperson to the degree Guillory has.

What I find particularly impressive about Marc Bousquet’s criticism is how, from its initial engagement in the graduate unionization struggle, it has developed a concerted critique extending to the managerial policies and practices that structure the university, from WPAs in composition to provosts at desktops, coalescing in his dystopian portrait of the privatized “EMO.” The motor of Bousquet’s critique is his exposure of various misrecognitions, like the rusty idea of “apprenticeship,” or the “helping” role of rhet/comp administrators, or “demand.” We typically place high value on criticism that debunks commonplace views of literature—on interpretations that are “counter-intuitive,” adducing yet more savvily nuanced interpretations—but tend not to turn our critical lights on the actual work of literature departments. That work falls into the grinding realm of service, and we prefer to imagine that we live in the more imaginative realm of research. Like doing the laundry or the ironing, the less said the better about the dirty laundry of labor, particularly of “service” courses. Marc Bousquet has helped to change that. To be sure, he has not been alone, and his writing is part of a wave of work, done by people like Richard Ohmann, Evan Watkins, Cary Nelson, Stanley Aronowitz, and many of the contributors here, who have redirected the default of academic topics to jobs and the status of the university.

Lest this sound too much like a retirement dinner speech—and Marc Bousquet is hardly ready to retire to the pleasures of golf and solace of TiVo, or whatever it is one does when one retires—there is a challenge that I think remains: what is a strong, prescriptive model of the university that we might imagine and advocate? To put it another way, what is our expectation of the university (in the sense of “horizon of expectation” that the reception theorist Hans Robert Jauss uses), that its current instantiation falls short of and that thus generates our criticism? While we have pinpointed many of the problems of the current policy and practice of the university, I think our underlying expectation—as heuristic if not utopian image—is much less clear.

I would distinguish four extant models and images that inform current expectations of the university: (1) a refugium or humanistic enclave. This draws on the legacy of the medieval university, which

constructed a religious space apart from state power, and was dominant through the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century American college, which were primarily formed under the auspices of Protestant denominations.<sup>5</sup> It receives its most famous articulation in Newman's *Idea of a University* (1851), which eschews any utilitarian rationale but expands the content of education beyond religion to the more capacious liberal arts.<sup>6</sup> It is certainly still with us, especially in the notoriously useless liberal arts and in the colloquial image of the ivory tower.

(2) A place of civic training. This is the Jeffersonian model outlined in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, to produce citizens of the democracy, not simply to follow their predilections as Newman proposes (although Newman's model assumes that resulting "gentlemen" would be good citizens), nor to train workers. It accords with the early formation of state universities, particularly after the American Revolution. It too is still with us, though often to very different ends, for instance in the bombastic nationalism of Chenevogue pronouncements and in the progressive hope of Freirean process.

(3) A place of vocational training. This is the model promulgated by late nineteenth-century college presidents like Harvard's Charles W. Eliot or Cornell's A. D. White, adapting the university to train those who would build new industries, particularly "brain workers" like engineers, and to serve the concordant rise of an American middle class.<sup>7</sup> Though the early American college operated for "the manufacture of ministers," in the words of the historian Russel Nye, the vocational model is a permutation of the shift from the religious college to secular, state universities, especially in the mid to late nineteenth century rise of land-grant universities. In my surmise, it is still prominent in public mandates and particularly in student expectations.

(4) A wing of corporate life. This is inherent in the land grant model, but was concretized by Vannevar Bush, James Bryant Conant, and others on the National Defense Research Committee, who marshalled the exponential expansion of the university after World War II.<sup>8</sup> Underwritten by the massive expansion of the welfare state, this model fully integrates the university with the so-called military-industrial complex of the Cold War years and now the overall corporate complex (not so much rocket science anymore, but "Big Pharma," agri-business, and so on), converting the university from a primarily educational function to a research one.<sup>9</sup> Though elite liberal arts colleges still largely retain Newman's model, and community and lesser small colleges bluntly aim for job training, the corporate model seems predominant now.

This scheme is not exhaustive, but these four models capture the primary aims of the actual American university through its history, so I think they have a certain efficacy and representative force.<sup>10</sup> They are also not entirely separable and in fact meld at most universities, as a reading of the mission statements of any state university will show, which typically cover all bases, from personal exploration to business synergy. Part of the problem of thinking

about the university is that these models frequently exist contradictorily but symbiotically (the classics department in a small corner down the hall from engineering), which lends a certain incoherence, but also a certain flexibility, accounting for the resilience of the institution.

Many people, myself included, have criticized the present corporatization of the university, by which we usually mean both the accelerating dominance of corporate interests in university space (in their R & D colonizing our labs and their products monopolizing every service from food to banking) and universities themselves operating according to profit-accruing protocols (in labor, in student services, and in saleable products whether patents or t-shirts). But I have come to think there are several gnawing problems with that critique, not because it is misdirected and, like Dr. Strangelove, we should embrace corporate life, but because it is limited by our horizon of expectation of the university.

One significant problem is that, while we have strong critiques, we tend to present weak positive visions or alternative models. To take one recent example, Stanley Aronowitz's *The Knowledge Factory* surveys the modern American higher educational system, providing both an innovative socio-historical account (for instance, explaining the growth of the system as a way to acculturate successive waves of immigration) and issuing a pointed critique (of the stress on training over "true higher learning," as well as of labor and administrative practices). But his solution, presented in the final chapter, is finally a revived humanistic plan not all that far from Cardinal Newman. It essentially reinstitutes a core curriculum—it is a progressive curriculum, encompassing world history and literature as well as familiar Euro-American classics—that would fit the St. John's great books or Columbia humanities-contemporary civilization plan. It is not that this is a bad plan—and to his credit Aronowitz puts his money down and works out an alternative—but it is hardly a radical rethinking of the university, as Ivan Illich's provocative but now barely read *Deschooling Society* is.<sup>11</sup> In that book, Illich finds little hope in the formal, institutional educational system we have and thus proposes to abandon it. One suggestion he makes, to counter the dull instrumentality of our current structure and to foster genuine learning in the sense Aronowitz invokes, is:

Creative, exploratory learning requires peers currently puzzled about the same terms or problems. Large universities make the futile attempt to match them by multiplying their courses, and they generally fail since they are bound to curriculum, course structure, and bureaucratic administration. In schools, including universities, most resources are spent to purchase the time and motivation of a limited number of people to take up predetermined problems in a ritually defined setting. The most radical alternative to school would be a network or service which gave each man [or woman] the same opportunity to share his current concern with others motivated by the same concern.(19)



While this might seem a utopian proposal befitting the 1960s, and, like the effort to levitate the Pentagon led by Abbie Hoffman in 1968, we would dismiss it as flatly unrealistic, my point is that there is now a relative impoverishment of envisioning what higher education, or simply adult learning, might be, and where and how it might take place. Given the troubled state of the university, there is a march to be stolen in presenting new models or images, alongside pragmatic reforms, to counter the corporate tide. (I mean models not in a foundational sense but in a politically prescriptive sense, for it is images and their prospect for a future that win hearts and minds.)

Beside his obvious relevance, I use the example of Aronowitz because he shares some of the same progressive coordinates as Marc Bousquet, and in fact one could see them as part of a school, germinating from CUNY and the graduate labor movement there to include people like Randy Martin, who gathered the *Social Text* issue and book collection *Chalk Lines: The Politics of Work in the Managed University*, Cary Nelson, Barbara Bowen, and others.<sup>12</sup> (To give it a name, one might call it the labor school.) Like Aronowitz, Bousquet conducts a trenchant critique of the corporatized university, showing how corporate protocols have been internalized by the university—in his memorable appellation the EMO—resulting in the pernicious labor policies we now have, particularly for non-permanent faculty, although also encompassing administrators (who, as Frederick Douglass noted of masters in slavery, are also brought low by the system they manage) down to undergraduate students. But less clear is what model Bousquet holds out instead. I note this not as an irredeemable flaw but, again, as a challenge.

As I take it, Bousquet's alternative waivers between a pragmatic labor model and a refugium model. Through his analyses, he persistently advocates better labor terms, conditions, and policies to deal with the corporate university. This might be construed as a guild model, to take back control of our own labor, but primarily it assumes the corporate model, with which it negotiates. This might be the best alternative we have, but it is a reformist rather than revolutionary model. At other points, though, Bousquet implicitly evokes a refugium model. The refugium seems a natural counter to the corporate model because it harkens a noncommercial horizon, and thus most critiques tend to gravitate toward it. In my view, however, the refugium is a trap, and it poses the second significant problem with the corporate critique.

The refugium comes closest to the surface in Bousquet's discussion of undergraduate labor. He describes the situation at the University of Louisville where undergraduates live in a dorm owned by UPS and work the night shift in exchange for housing and wage. This he analogizes to prison labor, and it does suggest a disreputable prospect in which students are conscripted, similar to "back-to-work" welfare, as forced labor. But there is another way to think of the arrangement with UPS: as a unionized job with fair pay (which prevents them from being indentured through stu-

dent loans, not to mention charge cards). The issue then is not that students work, but that their working violates the traditional sense of college as a refuge. Students, like anyone else, should be protected from exploitation, but I do not believe that there is any inherently good reason why they should be exempt from labor or that education should be divorced from other kinds of work. In fact, I think that there are better reasons why they should do other kinds of work. I say this thinking of alternative university models, such as at Antioch, where students have to work a set amount of hours per week in a cooperative, for instance in food service, to sustain the day-to-day operation of the college, or in Cuba, where students have to work half-time. We need a way to reintegrate work with education, effecting not a privileged refuge but a class cooperative.

While it projects a prospect outside the operation of commerce, the model of the refugium actually rests on upward redistribution and class privilege. Historically, it is a legacy of upper class exemption from the vagaries of work in early adulthood. In a certain sense, it models itself on what Raymond Williams called the "structure of feeling" of a privileged life. One could argue that those privileges should be extended to all of us, but even the extension in state universities relies on upward redistribution. As Marx observed of the budding American land grant system in the nineteenth century, "If in some states of the latter country higher educational institutions are also 'free' that only means in fact defraying the cost of the education of the upper [and I would now add professional managerial] classes from the general tax receipts" (539). This is borne out in current statistics which show that those who go to college, even under the auspices of affirmative action, largely come from middle or upper classes (see Sacks). I would not want entirely to vacate the concept of a space resistant to certain capitalist forms, but the reality is that the university that we inhabit fundamentally reproduces them.

A related problem of the refugium is that it is almost solely available to young adults. The only extant alternatives are the impoverished ones of "adult education," which might entail BOCES classes at a high school, or the occasional retiree who enrolls at state university. Rather than a youthful hiatus, we might instead think of education as, in another of Raymond Williams's phrases, a "permanent education," integrated with working life and not a privilege of prolonged adolescence of the middle class. An alternative proposal might be that one has a sabbatical from one's job every decade, thus spreading out the four years, threaded through one's working life. Or more radically in the spirit of Illich's proposal, one might do away with the rigid structure of colleges, instead implementing networks of people working together on a common interest or problem, without regard for age—which is the final frontier of categories of bias in access to education. These proposals might seem far-fetched, but they are not impossible.

Lastly, I think there is a more general theoretical problem with the model of the refugium. It frames the university on a spatial

dichotomy, the university constituting an inside and the world (whether state or corporate) an outside. The violation of the corporate university, in this frame, is that it externalizes university space and conversely that it internalizes corporate space to the university. But this dichotomy is untenable, abstractly and historically. Foregoing copious citation of Derrida, I think it's obvious that the inside and outside always bleed over, and the university through its history has continuously negotiated with its diverse outsides. This dichotomy is also undesirable, insofar as it closes the university to its civic role in the Jeffersonian model. The problem is not that the university is open to the world, but that civic or public interest is construed as being served by the corporate world (they beneficently give us jobs and consummable goods). The argument to be made, then, is not that the university should be enclosed, but that corporate goals do not sufficiently serve the public interest.

The question of the separate status of the university leads to what I see as the third significant problem with the corporate critique: the tension, mostly unrecognized, of universities as quintessential corporate bodies. The anti-corporate argument tends to cast corporations as a foreign invasion visited upon the sanctuary of the university. However, the legal standing of corporations is literally inseparable from the history of the U.S. university, beginning with the 1819 Supreme Court decision of *The Trustees of Dartmouth College v. Woodward*. That case confirmed both the independent status of private colleges and established the case law for corporations, in one famous passage defining corporations with the legal standing of an individual.<sup>13</sup>

The case pitted Jeffersonian Republicans, who were radical democrats and believed in a strong sense of public institutions, against Federalists, who believed in the sanctity of individual rights and private property (more akin to contemporary Republicans). The Republicans had conducted a hostile takeover, wresting Dartmouth away from John Wheelock, the son of the founder Eleazor Wheelock (hence Wheelock Hall at the center of campus), to establish Dartmouth as a state university. The Supreme Court trial turned on the interpretation of the original 1767 charter stipulating Dartmouth as a public corporation.

Daniel Webster, a Dartmouth alumnus, represented the Trustees (Woodward was a former treasurer who had gone over to the Republican side) and argued that universities were like churches and charities and thus operated independently of the state. Rather, they operated according to the will of their donors. In other words, he appealed to a certain American sensibility—bear in mind that this was not long after the War of 1812 as well as the War of Independence—of mistrust for governmental interference. He expostulated:

The corporation in question is not a civil, although it is a lay, corporation. It is an eleemosynary corporation. It is a private charity, originally founded and endowed by an individual, with a charter obtained for it at his

request, for the better administration of his charity...  
 Eleemosynary corporations are for the management of  
 private property, according to the will of the donors.  
 They are private corporations. (Hofstadter 205)

From this, the legendary Chief Justice Marshall gave us Coca-Cola and Nike, ruling that:

A corporation is an artificial being, invisible, intangible, and existing only in contemplation of law. Being the mere creature of law, it possesses only those properties which the charter of its creation confers upon it ... Among the most important are immortality, and, if the expression may be allowed, individuality; properties by which a perpetual succession of many persons are considered the same, and may act as a single individual. (Hofstadter 216)

Just as a church might continue over time as “one body” without state interference, so too could Dartmouth, and so too could a corporate business. For Marshall, the rights of an individual contract overrode the charter, and in fact he nullified the charter, a vestige of British law, as follows:

The management and application of the funds of this eleemosynary institution, which are placed by the donors in the hands of trustees named in the charter, and empowered to perpetuate themselves, are placed by this act under the control of the government of the state. The will of the state is substituted for the will of the donors, in every essential operation of the college... This system is totally changed. The charter of 1769 no longer exists ... it is not according to the will of the donors, and is subversive of that contract, on the faith of which their property was given. (219)

In other words, universities formed a quinessential model for the corporation. Though they are distinguished as charitable rather than profitable, they are indelibly a function of private property, existing not to serve the public but the will of the donors.

Where does this leave us? One possible avenue is that we assert the distinction between eleemosynary institutions—“of religion, of charity, or of education,” in Webster’s histrionic cadence—and profit-seeking institutions. However, the rub is that this coheres with the post-Reagan evacuation of public programs, so that all welfare, broadly construed, is foisted off on charity rather than on a collective tax base. This is probably not the most dependable possibility for the university. Another avenue—though it’s hard to imagine without revolution—is that we reassert the sense of a public charter, even for private corporations, that they be beholden not to the donors or shareholders, but the social body which grants them their charter to exist. It is strange to think that, had the 1819

ruling followed the dissent of Justice Duvall and sustained the strong sense of a charter, there would be no private colleges in the U.S. but all public universities, or for that matter there would be no private corporations but all public ones.

A few closing words about career choices. Although we might consult a mentor or regale our friends with our thoughts and worries about such choices, we don't usually formally analyze "career choices." Rather, we sort through a person's "arguments" or "views" on an acknowledged literary topic. If we purport a particular politics, we usually enact them in that work. While we might fret about immediate choices in front of us, we rarely think about the final destination; once we embark, the track is already laid, and we just try to catch on at the station of a tenure-track job, with a stop at tenure, where we, reasonably enough, hope not to be escorted off for bad behavior.

I started with Marc Bousquet's work in the delegate assembly not simply as a rhetorical entryway but to bring up the question of what constitutes our work and the choices we make in doing it. What I find exemplary about Bousquet's work is not just the power of his analyses, but that it has arisen organically from his work with the Graduate Student Caucus, which he helped put front and center on the MLA agenda, and with the online journal, *Workplace*, which has forged some of the institutional channels and structures to get that work done.

Bousquet, as I take it, has made a deliberate choice: to spend his time and energy primarily on these, rather than on publishing the usual book in a literary field. To be sure, alongside the essays here, Bousquet has published several good essays on 19th century American literature, which have accredited him as a competent literary scholar in a recognizable field. But his choice to devote so much to these various projects—again, not just writing but doing the work to set up the work, such as organizing or editing—represents something of a risk, even after attaining tenure at Louisville in making himself "marketable" for other jobs. (Despite the seeming omnipresence of cultural studies, there are no jobs that I am aware of in university labor or professional practices.)

This is not the kind of advice one would find in an MLA handbook on job seeking. It is certainly not the advice that Guillory purveys, which, I can only surmise, would be to read extensively in a field, make the most of seminars, and mature into a professional researcher. Then as the cliché goes, one can do what one wants after tenure. But, as C. Wright Mills pithily remarked:

Yet the deepest problem of freedom for teachers is not the occasional ousting of a professor, but a vague general fear—sometimes politely known as "discretion," "good taste," or "balanced judgment." It is a fear which leads to self-intimidation and finally becomes so habitual that the scholar is unaware of it. The real restraints are not so much external prohibitions as control of the insurgent by the agreements of academic gentlemen. (297)

The process, in other words, is self-selecting and self-perpetuating. Marc Bousquet, from his early work on the Graduate Student Caucus to the present, could never quite stay in his seat and cede to the agreement of academic gentlemen or women. This is not the way to land jobs and gain the approval of the powers-that-be, but I find it exemplary.

In "The Author as Producer," a text that bears rereading in the age of cultural studies, Walter Benjamin gives some advice to those who purport an oppositional politics. Originally an address to an organization against fascism, the essay does a surprising turnabout, instead of praising the politics of the group questioning their actual effect. He argues that our political roles are determined not by our statements, but by our positions in production. In contrast to the view that a leftist work is leftist because it shows a certain tendency or attitude, he reasons, "Rather than ask, 'What is the *attitude* of a work to the relations of production of its time?' I should like to ask, 'What is its *position* in them?' This question directly concerns the function the work has within the literary relations of production of its time" (222). And he concludes, contrary to the idea that "the conception of the 'intellectual,' as a type defined by his opinions, attitudes, or dispositions," "the place of the intellectual in the class struggle can be identified, or, better, chosen, only on the basis of his position in the process of production" (228).

Our profession is structured, in the research protocol, on purveying our opinions, attitudes, and dispositions, rather than on changing our positions in, and the relations of, the process of production. We reward the former, but rarely the latter. To try to change the relations of production carries a cost, and Marc Bousquet, in choosing to be a political burr and in doing the work to aid, abet, and build organizations, as well as in plying his analytical tools on the university under our feet, has anted up the cost. For its courage, political conscience, intellectual force, sacrifice, and probably sheer stubbornness, I think that Marc Bousquet's career choice is something to admire, and more consequentially to emulate.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Against the reformist view, Andrew Ross argues that "graduate education ... presents an opportunity to train a political class, quite frankly. Where those cadres work is less important than the fact that there continue to be institutional sites for training radical intellectuals. We should not be in the business of producing a job bourgeoisie, which is the traditional career academic model. And so it is imperative not to accept the shrinkage injunction that has been presented as a response, in some left circles, to the job crunch. Graduate education must continue to be an expansionary project, if only because it is one of the few places where the work of training a generation of radical intellectuals can occur... The alternative is marginalization and self-exclusion" (282).

<sup>2</sup>Evan Watkins's view in *Work Time: English Departments and the Circulation of Cultural Value* serves as an telling contrast to Guillory's. Watkins and Guillory are probably the two critics who have most absorbed the lessons of Pierre Bourdieu and examine the sociology of literature in the U.S. But Watkins's understanding of the role of English is much different from Guillory's. He sees English departments not as fulfilling a marginal role, without public use; rather, they are central to the circulation of work *within the university*. That is, their public use is not preparation for an "external" field, like engineering, but as a kind of personnel department for the university itself—which is not ancillary but a major institution in modern social life.

<sup>3</sup>The humanities curriculum in the nineteenth century was grounded on rhetoric—oratory and writing—which morphed in the twentieth century to literature and language (as Harvard's department is still called). See the sample curriculum in Nye's chapter, "The Idea of an American University."

<sup>4</sup>See Gregg Lambert's pointed analysis of Guillory's psychoanalytic moves, which turns them back on Guillory, in effect reading his fantasies.

<sup>5</sup>In his history of the early American college, Russel Nye notes that "Early American colleges were predominantly religious in aim," (171) but that, after the Revolution, there arose a wave of state institutions oriented not toward producing ministers but "useful, intelligent, patriotic citizens" (176). This abated when a "wave of evangelistic fervor that swept over American churches during the first forty years of the nineteenth century," (178) and the latter part of the century saw a competition between sectarian and state models.

<sup>6</sup>In one way, it is surprising that Newman, given his standing as a bishop, expressly advocates a secular learning. His rationale is a liberal Catholic one, that learning serves religious ends in the scheme of things, though it might also reflect his subtle negotiation between the British Anglican church, which he had left in controversy, and the Catholic church.

<sup>7</sup>The phrase "brain work" comes from Burton Bledstein's *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America*. Bledstein's standard account traces the exponential growth of American universities to serve these needs from the late nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries.

<sup>8</sup>Clyde Barrow, in a complement to Bledstein's survey, traces the growing influence of business, which "reconstructed" the university in the early years of the twentieth century. However, I believe the predominant model before World War II was still vocational, as the university was still relatively small and served the professional classes. See R. C. Lewontin's tour de force explanation of the post-war expansion of the university (otherwise underfunded during the Depression), as well as Roger L. Geiger's standard *Research and Relevant Knowledge*.

<sup>9</sup>Though now it seems that the welfare state has been repealed, it has been repealed on the level of social programs but not on the

level of what Lewontin calls “the massive socialization” of research and other costs for corporations.

<sup>10</sup>In his celebrated *University in Ruins*, Bill Readings asserts two root ideas of the university, the disciplinary model from Kant (based on “Reason”) and the nationalistic model from von Humboldt. The central flaw of that book, I believe, is that it relies on an extremely schematic and abstract history, which barely references the actual history of the American college and university. See Dominick LaCapra’s analysis of Readings, which is the best rebuttal to date.

In my view, the Jeffersonian and land grant models are much more formative for and relevant to the specific development of the American university—and thus more influential given the dominance of the American university—than the Humboldtian model. That model applies to the German university, which is relatively unrepresentative insofar as it is only available to a small portion of the population and until very recently was solely a state institution, and thus much more directly beholden to nationalist goals. The American system is a far more unruly amalgam. For a corrective of the “myth” of the German model, see Turner and Bernard.

Regarding Kant, Reason is the abstract idea governing the university, which adjudicates among the disciplines. However, in my view the Kantian model might more aptly be seen as that of an enclave; the practical aim of Kant’s argument is not simply to institute Reason in thinking (which would be a necessity of cognition in any case), but for faculty autonomy from external—state rather than corporate—interests. As the opening 1794 letter to King Frederick William II prefacing *The Conflict of Faculties* makes clear, Kant argues for the exemption of philosophy in effect to escape governmental mandates (he had been censured for his questionable religious speculations). Readings sees these ideas as lost and thus the university deracinated; while there is a certain power to his dramatic narrative of a fall, I see Readings’ construal of these ideas as skewed, and in any case not as a metaphysical ground from which the university arises but as operative heuristics that recur and recombine.

For a variant on models of the university, see Robert Paul Wolff’s radical—published in 1969—but now underread analysis in *The Ideal of the University*, which specifies four current models: (1) “the university as sanctuary of scholarship;” (2) “as a training camp for the professions;” (3) “as a social service station;” and (4) “as an assembly line for Establishment Man.” His first accords with my distinction of an enclave, but I would probably collapse his latter three to vocationalism.

<sup>11</sup>Illich (1926-2001) was a radical Catholic thinker who worked largely in Latin America, where he founded the Center for Intercultural Documentation in Cuernavaca in the 1960s. He was affiliated with other radical Catholics like Paulo Freire; although Freire is probably more recognizable to those of us in the humanities today, Illich was prominent from the 60s—*Deschooling Society* appeared serially in the *New York Review of Books* in the late 60s—through the early 80s through his critiques of major institutions, besides school notably of medicine in *Medical Nemesis*.



<sup>12</sup>See Bousquet's comments on *The Knowledge Factory* ("Will the Real Howard Roark?").

<sup>13</sup>For a very readable exposition of the case and its background, see Menand 238-43.

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