

Afterword

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The main after-word for me to utter is “thanks.” Thanks to Patty Harkin and David Downing for organizing this project; to Jim Sonoski for orchestrating and rendering continuous our online conversation; to Jan Radway, David Shumway, Barbara Foley, and all the other good friends here represented, for explaining better than I could what I’ve been up to these several decades; and to Ryan Moeller, Luana Uluave, and Megan Marie—younger scholars, I presume, who have followed leads from from my work into places I could not myself have gone. I am honored—not to say childishly delighted. How many people in our (or any) line of work ever have such a satisfaction? Everyone should. After the revolution, everyone will. Oh—except for certain evildoers in high places who shall remain nameless, in case they are spying on this issue of *Works and Days*, and who will instead spend long stretches of time in reeducation camps. You heard it here first.

Merciless historicizer that I am, I want now to give my warm thanks an historical twist. I read this issue of *Works and Days* as of a piece with other issues, in carrying forward the critique of received academic truths, methods, and social relations that entered the university via late 60s and early 70s movements; fought for legitimacy there; and set up camp in the research agenda, in professional institutions, and in the curriculum itself. Famously, the New Right saw this encampment as a scandal—which is to say a counterhegemonic threat—and funded a network of think tanks, retrograde scholarly organizations, and guerrilla fighters, to reopen the battle for control of academic and intellectual life.

Much of this effort is pathetic. In a resolution at the 2005 meetings of the Modern Language Association, the Radical Caucus rightly called David Horowitz’s unctuous Academic Bill of Rights an effort to “enforce the teaching of conservative ideas that cannot win support through their own merit.” The Delegate Assembly deleted this slightly mischievous clause, but passed the resolution as amended, thus putting MLA on record as condemning the latest sally of the organized academic Right. The American Historical Society did likewise, and probably other associations, too. I read

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such small, activist victories, along with the gathering of intellectuals in volumes like this one and many other venues, as part of a running defense of the critical academy against thirty years of conservative culture wars. In short, my thanks to those who have honored me also express solidarity with them as companions in an historical project.

How is that project going? My own view (considered Panglossian by some in this company) is that in spite of big money from Scaifes, Olins, Coorses, Mellons, and their like, and in spite of the David Horowitzes and Lynne Cheneys and Hilton Kramers and student spies they bankroll, our ground in the university is pretty secure, because our opponents can generally be argued or even laughed out of court, so thinly disguised is their allegiance to inequality and injustice. But the transformative forces to which they contribute their petulant voices are a very different matter. Flexible capitalism is a hydra-headed antagonist that comes at us via the casualization of academic labor, the outsourcing of intellectual work to wherever it may be most cheaply bought, the privatizing of knowledge, the pressure on students to imagine higher education only as training that will pay off in credentials and jobs, the relentless dismantling of the welfare state, and—under present U.S. management—the rescripting of imperial dreams and renewal of fierce nationalism. You could extend the list. My point is that our Lynne Cheneys are little more than termites chewing at the base of the academic institution, while our Dick Cheneys are helping big capital bulldoze it flat. Conferences and courses and MLA resolutions won't by themselves do much against that historical force.

Luana Uluave's revealing and scary essay opens a window on the insidious destruction, which turns the academic profession to rubble at its margins while advancing on its center. Marc Bousquet, Barbara Foley, and other activists have pressed MLA and CCCC to shame those who run our adjunct plantations. But although this effort has in my view brought solid gains, for-profits like Uluave's "Hybrid University" do business quite beyond the reach of professional sanctions. In that corner of the universal market, no ambiguity and no shred of guild autonomy can hide the nakedness of the teacher as employee, with the student-customer always right, and with no incentive for the employer to foster critical thinking. Punctually comes, today, January 21, a front page article in the *New York Times*, with news that New York State has placed a moratorium on the founding of for-profits, recognizing that the hundreds already in place, though they enroll only 7 percent of the state's college students, have run away with 17 percent of state aid, sometimes stretching the law to entice low-achieving students into dubious programs. Gaming the system apart, the expansion of this sector seems inexorable. From 2001 to 2004, its share of all enrollments in New York grew four times as fast as did that of the non-profits. Marc Bousquet's own essay, here, examines another erasure of traditional boundaries: the conversion of the undergraduate student into worker. We all could cite more instances. Through and around and behind the back of old relations in higher education,

global capital drives its local changes, until perhaps a quantitative shift becomes a qualitative transformation.

But wait—have I historicized my thanks all the way to gloomy paralysis? I'll end by letting editor Downing point a more hopeful direction. Before his overview of the historical frames within which we work, David proposes that "we must forge some new kinds of professional solidarity, based much less on the demarcations of a disciplinary field of knowledge, or on a canon of texts or methods ...[than on] clear articulations of shared problems that everyone in the field must, by necessity, negotiate..." I have said more than enough about what I take to be our main shared problem. It can unite us—you, younger friends—with many people in and outside our field. That's an alliance worth working on.

