The Student as Organic Intellectual

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The dynamics of "student resistance" have long provided both welcome and troubling subject matter for critical educators. We welcome resistance because it seems to signify opposition to the acculturative pressures of higher education (Lu; Miraglia), yet we find it troubling when it frustrates our ostensibly liberatory goals (Shor). For some students, our ideas of liberation represent the very acculturation they wish to reject (Miller, S; Gallagher; Flynn). This may be due, in part, to our tendency to privilege a critical tradition of "resistance texts" to the texts and political agendas generated by students themselves (Wallace; Farmer). However, in pedagogies that call for self-conscious analysis rather than suppression of classroom conflict, student texts and agendas frequently constitute principal foci (Zavarzadeh; Himley; Fitts, Production). While these student rhetorics sometimes reproduce dominant ideologies of class, race, gender, and sexuality, at other times they offer vivid critiques of those ideologies. Such critiques suggest that no matter how deeply complicit higher education is with the suppression of dissent in contemporary America, theories of ideological reproduction cannot fully explain what is occurring in our classes and on our campuses. As Joe Marshall Hardin contends in *Opening Spaces*, resistance discourse often counters the overemphasis of reproduction theories on institutional structure, suggesting that total normalization is not inevitable. Many of us would like to believe that resistance in the classroom translates to critical agency in larger social spheres, and for some students it probably does. Yet despite persistent encouragement from radical teachers like Richard Ohmann to link class activities to street-level struggles against domination, we have drawn few linkages thus far. While applauding current pedagogical efforts to locate potential for resistance in student rhetoric, I argue that we often inadvertently limit that resistance to the walls of the classroom. If critical writing teachers are to construct students' writing as work that matters not just in personal but in social and material ways (Horner, *Terms*), we

might encourage them to situate their oppositional rhetorics in relation to student-based social movements against material exploitation. This does not mean coercing them to practice protest for a grade, nor does it mean installing social movement literature as part of a critical tradition to which they must become acclimated. It means that students who value critical consciousness, and who wish to contest ideological reproduction within and beyond the academy, might learn from student activists about the rhetorical savvy and political commitment necessary to sustain resistance.

In order to demonstrate student power outside the classroom, I will examine the recent alliance between United Students against Sweatshops and the Graduate Students Organizing Committee at New York University. The analysis will therefore focus on a specific kind of resistance that emerges from and opposes the casualization of labor in contemporary capitalism. It is vital that this resistance emanates from student collectives, for as Marc Bousquet reminds us in "The Informal Economy of the Information University," students and young people constitute much of the part-time, temporary, vastly underpaid labor that helps sustain capital's global hegemony. The anti-sweatshop movement is based in part on the identification of young people in the American academy with exploited youth in the global south. Though the exploitation of youth is generally more acute in southern locales than in most places in North America, capital's strategic casualization of labor depends on young, compliant workers across the geographical spectrum. Young people in higher education rarely escape this trend, as many find themselves performing part-time and temporary work in order to finance their education. Some of these students now recognize how universities accumulate wealth through contracts with apparel companies that rely on the cheap, offshore labor of teenagers. That recognition has led to the creation of United Student Against Sweatshops, and to an increasing use of the term "sweatshop" as a rhetoric of shame, an expression of resistance to the university's investment in globalization. USAS defines "sweatshop" broadly, applying the term to all workplaces that refuse to endorse and/or pay a living wage to employees, and to those that refuse to recognize labor unions. With this definition in mind, many institutions of higher learning might be said not only to support sweatshops but to be sweatshops themselves. When NYU administrators chose not to bargain with the incipient union known as the Graduate Students Organizing Committee in 2001, USAS charged the university with engaging in sweatshop-like practices. This rhetorical thrust, along with the organized effort to ensure that undergraduates would not cross graduate picket lines in the event of a strike, helped to speed NYU's recognition of GSOC as a bargaining unit—indeed, the first graduate student labor union at a private university (Krupat, *Out*; Eaton). By introducing such subject matter into the classroom, we might add the dimension of public activism to our current conceptions of and pedagogical approaches to student resistance. Rather than being a way of aestheticizing resistance and/or confining it to the time and space of

our courses, examining organized opposition to the exploitation of youth might help our students contextualize their anger. For some, it may even provide the impetus to collective action.

Social Difference and Material Resistance

Before the USAS/GSOC partnership can broaden our pedagogical understanding of resistance to include student worker activism, and before we can begin to take public action based on that understanding, it is necessary to examine the current grounding of resistance theory in the dynamic relations among rhetoric, environment, and social difference. Such an examination reveals that the rhetoric of organized labor is highly compatible with—yet largely excluded from—resistance discourse. By rectifying the exclusion, educators and their students can re-frame resistance as a rhetorical practice with potentially dramatic material consequences for their working lives within and beyond the academy.

In "Composition and Cultural Studies," James Berlin reminds us that rhetorics are always internally contested, always laden with ongoing struggles over meaning. Part of the role of critical education, for Berlin, is to scrutinize these rhetorics and examine how their embedded power struggles influence the identities of teachers and students. He asks whether we can persuade our students to negotiate and even resist the ideological undercurrents of their language, thereby contributing to a larger struggle for social equity. Various rhetoricians have answered that any such process of negotiation and resistance must foreground the particular material conditions in which it unfolds (Ritchie; Lu; Kirsch; Horner, Resisting). Drawing on the work of Adrienne Rich, Andrea Greenbaum represents this emphasis on material specificity as the "politics of location," suggesting that ethical pedagogy depends on our recognition of the interrelations among students' literacy and their social environment (*Emancipatory*). While Greenbaum and others have placed fresh emphasis on these interrelations, Paulo Freire described them over thirty years ago in his theory of *conscientizacao*—which implies both coming to class consciousness and acting on that awareness. Like the marxist discourse in which it is grounded, *conscientizacao* insists on the move from theory to praxis, from abstraction to action. He argues that such action must emerge from and address specific relations of production in order to bring social change. For Freire, transformative politics are necessarily politics of location.

In order to imagine possibilities for change within local environments, rhetoric and composition scholars are paying greater attention to social difference, the sense of alienation it often produces, and the political leverage it might provide. They have focused particularly on the cultural differences and power differentials attendant upon constructions of race (Gilyard), gender (Jarratt), and sexuality (Kopelson). Though many have adopted the Foucauldian insight that we are constituted by these multiple and competing discursive categories, few argue that we are entirely determined by

them. The idea of postmodern discursivity may be politically debilitating if conceptualized as the all-encompassing play of signification and thereby abstracted from bodily experience and the potential for embodied resistance. As a way of countering the sheer play of ludic postmodernism, Claire Alexander imports Teresa Ebert's idea of a "resisting postmodernism" into her pedagogy, arguing that even if identity is always fluid and in process, we might nevertheless assume tactical identities for purposes of situated opposition to injustice. Even if differences are constructions, those constructions produce real suffering and pleasure, real alienation and struggle. In "Interrupting Our Way to Agency," Nedra Reynolds wonders if we can trust postmodernist dismissal of totalities, arguing that global regimes like patriarchy represent totalizing ideologies whether or not we choose to acknowledge them as such. She implies that we must interrupt unjust totalities with ethical ones, citing militant feminism as an urgent and necessary mode of agency. In this context, difference becomes a fulcrum with which to push against domination.

Ohmann holds in "Accountability and the Conditions for Curricular Change" that existing studies of difference in the academy have emerged largely in response to the student movements of the 1960s and early 70s, and that they are even now under threat. They exist not because of the benevolence of academic management, he implies, but because students have fought for them in various local contexts across the country. Yet as higher education has begun to pay heed to race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, it has largely excluded materialist articulations of difference. If Ohmann is right that students hold power to alter curriculum through identity-based collective action, what power might they hold to alter conditions of work surrounding and infusing their schools? If they were to recognize their difference as producers of surplus value, what previously unforeseen solidarities might arise?

Such an understanding of difference may hold power to draw other resistances into a multiply reinforced counterpower. If student movements constituted through varied histories of domination and repression were to embrace their working class commonalities, their distinction from the capitalist overclass might indeed provide the basis for unity, for ethical totality. The most disruptive politics, as Gramsci observed in his *Prison Notebooks*, are those that arise from the specifically-located intellectual work of the exploited. Inasmuch as the thought-work of student resistance is organic to a constituency of casualized labor, it exemplifies the agency to be gained from a politics of location. In locating the potential for agency in the intellectual production of contingent workers, I mean both to resist the appropriation of Gramsci by isolated modes of identity politics and to cast his thought as a call to militant, internally-diverse class solidarity.

Though the enormous numbers of existing part-time and temporary student workers already seem to hold the collective power to determine the conditions of their labor, they sometimes fail to recognize their common situation as flexible employees. If, as Bill

Hendricks has observed in *Workplace: A Journal for Academic Labor,* there is hesitancy among otherwise progressive educators to "make a place for labor," there is often at least as much hesitancy among students. While contending that the affiliation of writing teachers with organized labor might have a great deal more transformative impact than classroom critique of the hidden workings of ideology, Hendricks acknowledges that many teachers find the latter more comfortable. Students whose lives are overfilled with work both within and outside school may find the prospect of committing to labor struggle even more daunting than their teachers. The strenuous working conditions that can radicalize students can also deplete their activist energies, so that even those who recognize the necessity for social action may not be able to bridge theory and praxis. Freirean *conscientizacao* itself represents a relentless kind of labor.

We should not assume, however, that our students will necessarily avoid such labor, or that their interest in the politics of rhetoric is limited to our class and driven only by grades. While *conscientizacao* requires arduous work, those who perform it demonstrate commitment to, rather than alienation from, their own production. This commitment is at once an *anomaly within* and a *challenge to* the system in which the function of work is to generate value for capital. It is potentially the practice of freedom. Despite the often exhausting regimen of life in flexible capitalism, students who desire such freedom frequently make time for activism. Henry Giroux's *The Abandoned Generation* suggests that many of them even make a place for labor. Contrary to the prevalent view that "Generation Y" has cynically surrendered to the authority of capital, Giroux points to student organizations that have held hunger strikes, blocked traffic in protest of rampant commercialism, occupied university presidents' offices, and demonstrated against the World Trade Organization in Seattle. He also points to students' organized protest of the international exploitation of young workers by a college apparel industry that generates more than $2.5 billion in profit. These events suggest that our students are finding other forums than our classrooms to engage in resistance and sharpen their rhetorical acumen. Joe Marshall Hardin encourages us not only to introduce students to radical social thought but to make the critical site of author a practical possibility for them. One way to accomplish this might be to help raise their awareness of the radical rhetorical work being done by students already, and to examine how that work has emerged in response to the corporatization of higher education. The rhetoric of the "sweatshop," for example, may signify students' discovery of their latent agency, and their application of that rhetoric to higher education may signal a recognition that local change is not only the prerogative of academic administrators.

In preparing to discuss current forms of student activism, resistance pedagogies might question why labor is so often excluded from interrogations of social difference and oppression. Since such pedagogies often construe difference as a basis for solidarity, and

consequently a means for challenging ideologies of privilege, it becomes important to consider whether labor constitutes a legitimate form of difference. Does the recognition that most of the world's population produces surplus value, while a small contingent of global capitalists horde the benefit, suggest grounds for solidarity? If so, is this solidarity compatible with other forms of difference-based resistance? To contextualize these questions, writing teachers could encourage students to read texts like Deborah Kelsh's "Critiquing the 'Culture' of Feminism and Composition: Toward a Red Feminism," Robin D. G. Kelley's "The Proletariat Goes to College," and Kitty Krupat and Patrick McCreery's *Out at Work: Building a Gay-Labor Alliance*. Kelsh contributes to feminist thinking about resistance by foregrounding the often overlooked detail that 70% of the world's women are highly exploited and deeply impoverished workers. Showing similar concern for the relations between bodily oppression and labor exploitation, Kelley combines critical race politics with worker consciousness by exposing the over-reliance of higher education on non-white service workers. Krupat and McCreery's edited volume chronicles the emergence of gay-labor alliance in America, paying specific attention to how that alliance has fought workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation. Teachers might invite students to write about real and potential alliances among these varied forms of resistance, and to enrich their writing by researching American labor history. While countering the frequent exclusion of worker solidarity from discussions of resistance, such research may reveal recurring tensions within labor movements over how to organize diverse and democratic collectives within workplaces that have historically privileged white male employees.

While studying labor and social difference can provide students with a context for considering their own roles as embodied workers, many of them have already experienced or observed discrimination and other forms of oppression in the workplace. If teachers can persuade students to narrate those experiences and to theorize ways of resisting them in the future, they can help students adopt a "politics of location" with potentially transformative effects. Situating their ideas of resistance both historically and in their current material circumstances, students will produce writing for a larger audience—and with larger stakes—than their classroom alone. They can also begin to consider how their schools exacerbate the problem of labor exploitation by underpaying and exhausting student service workers, forming alliances with labor-busting businesses, and relying on part-time teachers, non-tenure-track faculty, and graduate students to teach their courses (to name a few of the more prevalent injustices). Writing about labor and difference, then, provides a foundation for interrogating postsecondary schools as institutions that claim to value diversity while striving to cut costs amid competitive capitalism. This foundation can help them interpret the complex interaction of global and local politics surrounding and permeating the United Students Against Sweatshops. By examining USAS's work with the Graduate

Students Organizing Committee at NYU, in particular, students will encounter some of the street-level consequences of getting active.

Anti-Sweatshop Rhetorics and Transgressive Solidarities

In the case of the USAS/GSOC alliance, the material consequences of activism can be traced, at least in part, to the provocative and often misunderstood rhetoric of the "sweatshop." According to Medea Benjamin, the rhetoric gained some early political traction in the summer of 1997, when students from Yale, Duke, Columbia, NYU, and Rutgers decided to examine how, where, and under what conditions university apparel was produced. They found that their universities earn royalties by licensing companies to make clothing bearing school logos, and that the licensed companies contract out much of the labor to overseas manufacturers. This production scenario often leads to "sweatshop" conditions because the licensees face few restrictions on their overseas contracting and therefore seek the cheapest global bidder. Classic sweatshop conditions include uncertainty of future work, low pay, long and irregular hours, limited or no benefits, and physical abuse in the factory. After learning that their clothes were often produced in these very circumstances, outraged students insisted that their universities create codes of conduct that would compel licensees to avoid sweatshop labor. The codes were meant to mandate a living wage, limit the number of hours worked, protect the right to unionize, and create standards for workplace safety. Students also called for "full public disclosure" of their universities' licensing agreements, including the locations of all production factories.

Out of this agitation sprang United Students Against Sweatshops, an organization that formalized the opposition to higher education's accumulation of revenue through the exploitation of apparel workers. In 1998, USAS began a campaign against Nike's production practices in Asia. Along with Kathie Lee Gifford's profiting from Honduran workers, Liz Claiborne's 13-hour per day/ 7-day per week regimen in El Salvador, and Disney's support of 16-hour workdays in China, Nike's abuse of young Asian women presented an injustice that angered many students enough to render them activists. According to Benjamin, the protest of Nike was especially jarring because over 200 schools had endorsed the corporation in exchange for athletic clothing and financial contributions to their sports programs. Rather than respond to their students' demands for a living wage and full public disclosure, however, many universities joined the Fair Labor Association as a pretense at social conscience. In *Students Against Sweatshops*, Liza Featherstone argues that the FLA's known complicity with the agenda of manufacturers undermines efforts to hold university-corporate alliances to any real standard of justice. Fully aware of this, a USAS contingent at Duke staged a 31-hour sit-in in the university president's office to demand that the school commit to publicly disclose its contracts and thereby clarify whether or not it supported

sweatshop labor. Once Duke conceded student demands, similar protests occurred at campuses like Wisconsin-Madison, Michigan, and North Carolina. In Featherstone's view, students at those campuses and others have been "politicized by disappointment" (32). Expecting their schools to be places where "humane values at least compete with the bottom line," they found instead that school presidents self-identify as CEOs and that higher education serves as a corporate training ground while acting like a private company. Distrustful of their schools' affiliation with the regressive FLA, they organized the Workers' Rights Consortium as an alternative body that would hold college administrations responsible for public disclosure and for licensees' payment of fair wages to workers. Though 35 schools had joined the WRC by 2000, students are still struggling with academic managers who prefer the "flexibility" of the FLA.

That struggle is part of a larger effort to standardize humane working conditions on an international scale. Though initially focused on the collusion of higher education with the apparel industry, USAS recognizes that "sweatshop" conditions exist in multiple forms of manufacturing and in various factories around the world. The organization may have gained public notoriety through its anti-Nike stance, but it has maintained and even expanded its power through pro-worker internationalism. In its website, USAS emphasizes its broad and inclusive definition of the "sweatshop," recognizing its diverse forms and geographical range:

> The abuse of sweatshop labor is among the most blatant examples of the excesses and exploitation of the global economy. We recognize, however, that the term "sweatshop" is not limited to the apparel industry as traditionally conceived; sweatshop conditions exist in the fields, in the prisons, on our campuses, in the power relations of a flawed system…Thus, we consider all struggles against the systemic problems of the global economy to be directly or by analogy a struggle against sweatshops.

For USAS, resistance to sweatshops means resistance to corporate globalization. Though it originally represented an objection to the hidden abuses of what Giroux calls the "brand name society," anti-sweatshop rhetoric has become a rallying cry for those who recognize their difference as generators of surplus value. As Bousquet understands it, USAS's call for worker solidarity suggests that this particular form of student resistance "wants to be a labor movement." If the political mission articulated in the USAS website is any indicator, their desired form of labor collectivity has potentially radical implications. For are not "the power relations of a flawed system" also the infrastructure of capitalism? If it is not only Nike but the system that is fundamentally "flawed," might any indictment of sweatshops double as an indictment of capitalist relations of production? For a social justice organization that draws students from across the ideological spectrum, such questions have proven

divisive. It is no wonder that the website features the phrase "flawed system" rather than the more direct "capitalism," nor is it surprising that the softened rhetoric is fairly embedded in the organization's definition of "sweatshop." Yet even in the politic subtlety of USAS's rhetoric exists the possibility for a radical rethinking of the status quo. It is surely not lost on the intellectual militants of USAS what is at stake when they take on "systemic problems of the global economy." There is in such language an implicit urge toward what Adrienne Russell calls "grassroots globalization," or what is more commonly called "globalization from below." There are, however, problems of ethos inherent in this logic. If USAS works on behalf of others, largely ignoring the working conditions of its own members, can it ever be a resistance "from below?" Can the intellectual production and material resistances of USAS ever be fully organic?

Bousquet argues that the student as organic intellectual cannot merely be *for* labor but must instead *be* labor. While American students provide a great deal of the country's part-time and temporary work, and while the emergence of USAS suggests that they have emotional affinities for exploited factory workers in other countries, they often fail to recognize the university as a "knowledge factory" in which they produce a labor pool and reproduce their own capitalist subjectivities (Aronowitz). While advocating labor rights for sweatshop workers in impoverished countries, USAS members often provide service and clerical work for their schools, temp labor for the fast food industry, and package handling for the mammoth shipping companies who provide tuition funding in exchange for a constantly rotating assembly of young bodies. Bousquet categorizes these variously contingent forms of labor as the "informatic mode" of work, holding that students' consent to this mode makes the knowledge factory run. Given that corporate managers often view labor as information rather than human exertion, the casualization of labor constitutes an efficient use of that information. Insofar as academic administrations believe that full-time students will gladly (and rightly) provide part-time, graveyard-shift staffing at local parcel companies in return for tuition payments, they reveal their own tendency to privilege abstract efficiency over healthy working conditions.

While Stanley Aronowitz attaches a grim irony to the idea of higher education as a "knowledge factory," he argues that Clark Kerr's matter-of-fact and even celebratory inflection of the idea in the 1960s has now become commonplace. Kerr's *The Uses of the University* sparked intense student resistance after its initial release, prompting Berkeley activist Mario Savio to make his famed speech against the "machinery" of higher education. "There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart," he lamented:

> that you can't take part; you can't even passively take part, and you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop. And you've

> got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it, that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all!

Yet many of today's undergraduate orators, while they may locate their protest on campus grounds, do not attend to the ways the corporate university compromises their own freedoms. Since so many students are themselves casual labor, a pedagogy of resistance might question why they downplay their exploitation. Is it because their conditions of work seem quite comfortable relative to those of many women and young people in Honduras, for example? Or is it that protest of Honduran sweatshops is finally less threatening to the knowledge factory, and therefore less personally dangerous for the protester, than public resistance to *local* alliances between the academy and corporate capital? It is finally those localized resistances to immediate problems that define the work of organic intellectualism, and it is only through a "politics of location" that students can avoid paternalism and begin to control the conditions of their labor.

The solidarity between USAS and the NYU Graduate Students Organizing Committee in 2001 exemplifies an organic localization of anti-sweatshop politics, and may suggest a fresh direction for student activism. Bousquet encourages us not to think of such coalitions in terms of an essentializing student/teaching assistant binary, but to view them instead as the political bonding of students as labor. For Tony Scott, this view requires no imaginative stretch, but rather acknowledges the structural realities that link undergraduate and graduate work. In his introduction to the "Composition as Management Science" issue of *Workplace*, he argues that TAs resemble undergraduates in that they often hold part-time jobs outside the university and must strive to balance the requirements of work on and off campus. According to Scott, their part-time jobs "are unstable, offer little or no hope of advancement, and tend to alienate workers from each other and the hierarchies through which they are managed." A significant characteristic of contingent labor is that it is easier to control—and easier to commodify—when it is unorganized. GSOC's demand for recognition as a bargaining unit represents, among other things, the interests of students *as* labor rather than *for* labor. USAS's support of GSOC stems from the general recognition of their common condition as casualized workers and the more particular insight that graduate students' working conditions are undergraduates' learning conditions. Rather than being another instance of USAS standing up for abused workers in distant regions, the bonding of USAS and GSOC, even if temporary, produced a local and highly successful labor action by variously positioned student-workers.

Charlie Eaton, a member of the USAS coordinating committee in 2001, holds that NYU's initial refusal to recognize GSOC as a bargaining unit fit his organizations' broad definition of sweatshop activities. In order to maintain its integrity as an anti-sweatshop movement, the USAS contingent at NYU felt it necessary not only to oppose the university as a financier of offshore labor exploita-

tion, but also to take on the university as employer. Although the university regularly constructs graduate students as apprentices rather than as employees that teach much of the undergraduate course-load for low pay, limited benefits, and no role in institutional governance, both GSOC and USAS recognize how contingent graduate workers foster university accumulation. The generation of surplus value through graduate labor enhances campus "excellence," a strategically nebulous quality that Bill Readings has associated with the agenda of advanced capitalism, and which often means the expansion of building, advertising, and administrative expenses. While such expenses include increased hiring and payment of university managers, they also consist of financial programs that protect administrative prerogative. In the case of NYU, Eaton points out that some administrative expenses take the form of union-busting, citing as an example the university's payment of over $4 million to the law firm of Proskauer and Rose to combat campus organizing. This is money, he contends, that could have been better spent on education. In supporting GSOC, USAS clarifies many students' expectation that schools will fund education first and foremost, and that colleges and universities will strive for democratic engagement rather than concentration of power at the top. Noting commonalities between graduate and undergraduate students similar to those outlined by Scott, Eaton argues that the groups are bound by their exclusion from the decision-making processes that affect their labor. By comparing NYU to sweatshops where workers have no say over conditions of production, USAS suggests that the university accumulates wealth based on the sort of anti-democratic principles supported by its licensed apparel companies. Eaton holds that the application of the "sweatshop" rhetoric to NYU's employment practices frightened the administration because it could damage their campaign toward ivy-league status. Although this argument is partly undermined by the reality that ivies like Yale are among the most accomplished union-busters in the country (see Nelson), it is nevertheless clear that NYU wished to avoid a public scandal. Even if they had been willing to bear such scandal, their chances of winning the battle against GSOC were largely diminished by the fact that many undergraduates expressed unwillingness to cross student picket lines. According to Eaton, there was finally no need for pickets because the threat of combined resistance by graduate and undergraduate students was itself enough to win bargaining rights for GSOC. Soon after the Student Labor Day of Action, on which USAS made plans to occupy a campus building in demand for recognition of the graduate union, NYU conceded. Thus the coalition of students "won without even going to war" (Eaton 3).

This victory was made possible by a solidarity that is transgressive in at least two senses. First of all, the students bonded across the constructed teacher/student boundary in order to expose and contest a variation of sweatshop managerialism that affects their own working conditions. Based on the recognition that graduate teaching circumstances and undergraduate learning environment

are frequently identical, they re-imagined their "politics of location" and increased the size and force of their resistance. Secondly, the students organized around their difference as producers of surplus value, thereby transgressing limits on the intermingling of labor consciousness with other kinds of embodied political awareness. Their alliance runs against what Hendricks has noted as a cultural unwillingness to "make a place for labor," and is remarkable for its success as well as its rarity.

One of the ideological phenomena that a pedagogy of resistance might *resist* is the suppression of labor consciousness in the academy. Working from Hendricks' article, students can begin to "make a place for labor" by writing about the relationship between higher education and work. Such writing could help reveal why students submit to a system where their access to higher education so frequently depends on their willingness to serve as part-time and/or temporary labor while taking classes. Stanley Aronowitz's *The Knowledge Factory* might provide discussion and research material, since it sheds light both on the conditions of work surrounding undergraduate experience and the importance of that experience to the sustainability of capitalism. The book also draws critical attention toward university-corporate partnerships, and could therefore help students interrogate the often mutually supportive relationships—and even the dissolving boundaries—between educational institutions and labor for capital. Writing about the intersections of school and work can include analyses of the rhetoric of advertisements and other promotional literature connected with university-corporate alliances. Based on this promotional rhetoric, writers can consider whether the alliances serve students' interests or merely depend on their acquiescence to preserve the authority of capital. In a class concerning the politics of resistance, writers might further consider the consequences of refusal to acquiesce. What happens when students resist university-corporate alliances as individuals? How do the consequences change when they resist collectively?

The USAS/GSOC alliance cannot provide conclusive or generalizable answers to questions of the efficacy of collective resistance, but it nevertheless offers a context-specific example of student solidarity as a political force. It can also continue to raise public awareness of how higher education has adopted the management practices of many other industries in fast capitalism, especially if resistant educators foreground the story of the alliance in their classrooms. In a resistance pedagogy that examines the relations of school and work, analyzing USAS and GSOC might help generate critical interest in the role of higher education in an era of globalization. A variety of questions, each worthy of classroom discussion and student research, might follow: Are there contradictions between the progressive claims of many schools and the forms of labor they support both at home and abroad? Can the "sweatshop" rhetoric that students use to describe offshore working conditions be justifiably applied to graduate teaching and/or other forms of campus labor? What does any of this have to do with historical

forms of oppression such as racism and sexism? Finally, should the purpose of student-based labor activism be a better version of capitalism or a radical alternative to it? To address these last two questions, teachers and students might make previously-mentioned texts by Benjamin, Eaton, Featherstone, and Bousquet the stuff of weekly conversation. In so doing, they might reconstruct the idea of resistance not only as organized activism but as something that occurs within and among organizations. As students' understandings of resistance change, they should weigh their theoretical insights against their own experiences in the workplace. If critical educators consistently encourage reflection on the local applicability of course texts, they can help students view the readings not in the context of a critical tradition but as part of a potential activist strategy. As the student labor movement at NYU indicates, cooperative strategies of resistance require internal debate and ongoing negotiation of difference to fairly represent the varied perspectives of their membership.

Interior Resistances

In addition to exemplifying a successful politics of location, the brief history of USAS and its tactical partnership with GSOC provides evidence of how interior differences impact collective struggle. While documenting USAS's role in the creation of the Workers' Rights Consortium and applauding its support of graduate labor, Featherstone also describes particular organizational tensions surrounding race and gender. Despite USAS's growing diversity, it still receives criticism for engaging in a kind of resistance that is "safe" for white male students. Featherstone recounts the frustrations of various students with the failure of USAS members to recognize their own privileges. Justin Higgins, for example, claims that "if there had been black students in Seattle, there would have been real bullets instead of rubber ones" (64). Erica Smiley adds that "USAS gets so much recognition for being cute white kids protesting injustices that are *far away*" (66). Such critiques suggest that anti-corporate protest is not only physically safer for whites than people of color, but that it provides an external enemy that distracts them from their complicity with racism at home. Some USAS members also suggest that anti-sweatshop rhetoric distracts the organization from its own patriarchal tendencies, claiming that the organization frequently constructs women working overseas as victims while remaining indifferent to the labors of its own women members (70). As a student movement that "wants to be a labor movement," USAS responds to these critiques by attempting to combat the power hierarchies of its local constituency. The organization now raises awareness of how the least desirable work in the global economy frequently falls to people of color and women, while resisting its earlier tendencies to construct those workers as victims rather than struggling agents. In these ways, it tries to realize its unmet potential for diversity and shared governance. By planning risky local actions in support of GSOC, USAS has begun to answer

the charge of "safe" benevolence toward overseas workers. It remains unclear, however, whether targeting the university as employer will lead to an analysis of the gendered and racial character of academic labor exploitation. Such an analysis might initiate a larger examination of the way that capitalism depends on racism and sexism to secure the authority of the white male managerial class. Yet a critical examination of capitalism is not one that all members of the alliance are prepared to make.

In "A Network for Campus Democracy: Reflections on NYU and the Academic Labor Movement," NYU graduate organizers Kitty Krupat and Laura Tanenbaum report that "to some extent, students steer clear of anticapitalist rhetoric to avoid alienating liberal and conservative students who don't like sweatshops any more than rads do" (44). To ensure a larger membership and ostensibly increase student power, USAS often challenges "corporate greed" rather than capitalism. When interviewed by Krupat and Tanenbaum, Eaton held that capitalism is a "stigmatized" word that is good neither for organizing nor analysis. While acknowledging the importance of USAS's organizing strategy to the GSOC victory, the interviewers read the hesitancy to interrogate capitalism as typical of many campus activists: "They detest injustice born of greed and exploitation but they don't necessarily detest the free enterprise system, which many will enter quite happily after they graduate from college" (44). This observation, good-natured though it is, may point to a rift between those committed to a more just corporatism and those who read the very system that fosters corporate competition as an unjust totality. While Eaton views the latter idea as "stigmatized" and alienating to a substantial portion of the USAS membership, it may be necessary for a robust anti-sweatshop politics not to avoid the idea but to ask *why* it alienates. A pedagogy of resistance might ask, more directly, whether its stigma serves anyone other than the managerial contingent that benefits most from sweatshop labor. It is not at all clear that such labor is an instance of a corrupted capitalism that ethical corporations can set right through greater social compassion. I would argue instead that laboring under that broad definition of "sweatshop" featured in the USAS website represents at once the most common experience of work in capitalism and the norm toward which it tends. Put bluntly, capitalism thrives on sweatshop labor. Where the freedom of the market eclipses all other freedoms, a cheap, insecure, and unorganized workforce provides a competitive edge for management (Castells; Harvey). Where analysis of capitalism is stigmatized, management retains its prerogative.

Krupat and Tanenbaum's muted critique of the rhetoric of anticorporatism implies that at least some members of the USAS/GSOC alliance can imagine a more radical language of resistance. It remains to be seen whether interior resistances among students over the question of capitalism will impact the direction of anti-sweatshop or graduate labor movements. USAS, in particular, might opt to avoid such stigmatized signifiers in the interest of maintaining its considerable membership. Yet, in the organization's

definition of "sweatshop" as a condition that emerges from the "power relations of a flawed system" there exists the kernel of structural critique—a critique that can be productively articulated to the critical race consciousness and feminisms that have recently enriched anti-sweatshop activism. While tensions between these standpoints will likely arise, the movement's capacity to endure disagreement will be the test of its democratic aspirations.

Keeping in mind the often diverse and internally contentious character of organizations like USAS and GSOC, student writers can seek "resistant" collectives on or around campus and examine how they maintain solidarity. As writers investigate how the USAS/GSOC alliance bears on questions of race, gender, and capitalism, they might expand their investigation to include groups of more local relevance to their concerns as workers. While attempting to clarify the kinds of change sought by these organizations, students can interrogate rhetorics of resistance occurring in the groups' literature and/or public demonstrations. Based on these rhetorics, students might examine how the social collective gains its membership, maintains a sense of cohesion, articulates its goals, and (perhaps most significantly for the purposes of the class) defines resistance. Describing the interior tensions that characterize oppositional organizations as heterogeneous and dynamic rather than dogmatic may prove as useful for understanding resistance as delineating targets of organizational protest. From the wide-ranging, gradually unfolding debate within and among diverse constituencies emerge complex theories of alternative social arrangement, and only through such materially situated negotiation can the rhetoric of *protest* become a rhetoric of *possibility*.

Beyond the Tragic Mode

In his contribution to Andrea Greenbaum's *Insurrections: Approaches to Resistance in the Composition Classroom*, John Trimbur notes how "resistance" has largely become a "tragic trope" in higher education. He contends that critical educators often take pleasure in students' resistance to the requirements and dominant ideas of their classes, and that such pleasure indicates a fondness for the lifelong rebel, the "beautiful loser" (13). We are drawn to the rebel, he surmises, because she or he reminds us of our own resistances to the institutions where we work. Trimbur recognizes in our rebellious sympathies a quiet tendency toward defeatism, a sense that our nonconformity is warranted but ultimately doomed. Associating this defeatism with the tragic themes of noble suffering and victory through death, he argues that we aestheticize failure and thereby depoliticize resistance. "The danger," he explains, is in "finding victory *only* in defeat" (13). His challenge to us is to help students "manage a tragic sense of the social order that refuses to accept either its claims or their own alienation" (14). By drawing their attention toward student movements for labor justice, we can begin to answer this challenge, and perhaps to move beyond the

tragic mode altogether. The alliance of USAS and GSOC gives evidence of organized students who are neither content in their alienation nor submissive to the exploitative structure of corporate academia. They have begun to form solidarities based on their difference as casualized generators of surplus value, they have effected local change with the help of anti-sweatshop rhetoric, and they have striven to democratize decision-making both on campus and in their own ranks. These manifestations of resistance represent not "victory in defeat" but local victories won through ongoing collective struggle.

While they are promising developments in the history of student resistance, these victories are neither easily won nor commonly achieved. The idea of resistance resonates with tragedy because it so often meets overwhelming countermeasures. The success of the USAS/GSOC alliance looks all the more significant against a background of quelled uprisings and unrealized student power. Although Mark Boren carefully documents capital's attempts to suppress student dissent in *Student Resistance: A History of the Unruly Subject*, one need look no further than Yale's continuing refusal to recognize its graduate union to find evidence of such suppression. Any honest approach to teaching about student mobilization against the socioeconomic status quo must address capitalism's immense capacity to neutralize and/or absorb opposition. But to get past the tragic mode of resistance, teachers might foster discussion and writing about the movements that have won concessions from capital's institutions, paying particular attention to how rhetorical moves like the "sweatshop" accusation helped secure those concessions.

Critics of such a pedagogy might argue that it exploits incendiary rhetorics for the purposes of sensationalizing American labor exploitation. They might suggest that American labor conditions do not easily compare with those in Honduras, and that USAS, GSOC, and many critical educators force such parallels in order to justify their unwarranted dissent. I anticipate these criticisms based on similar responses to Freire's idea of "problem-posing education." The logic runs that an educational strategy that works for peasants in Brazil is misplaced in the American academy. Richard Miller, for example, suggests that although teaching Brazilian workers to pose problems rather than remain docile in school may help them achieve a modicum of political power, American students mostly want to learn how to succeed within the system rather than challenge it. Hardin holds, however, that "the argument that critical literacy programs and critical pedagogy based on a Freirean model have failed because they are out of context is too glibly made" (103). He notes that there may exist a "grain of truth" in the argument, but worries that without challenges to the American regime by students, teachers, and the larger public we might inadvertently allow the same sort of authoritarianism that plagued Brazil when Freire first published *A Pedagogy of Hope*. For evidence of this lurking authoritarianism, Hardin invites us to remember how quickly the government deployed the national guard to suppress

student rebellion in the 1960s and 70s, and to observe the presently expanding gap between the rich and poor in American society. Giroux resembles Hardin in his reading of the social functions of Freirean critical pedagogy, emphasizing its preemptive resistances as well as its confrontation with the status quo (*Stealing*). This last confrontation must not be overlooked. Freire's thought not only helps us imagine ways to prevent the future degradation of our freedoms, it helps us imagine ways to improve our current circumstances. The suppression of student rebellion and the wildly inequitable distribution of wealth cited by Hardin present two compelling instances of our present condition—not of what *might* happen if we aren't careful. Students in the United States are even now denied recognition as organized labor while their institutions foster an expanding class hierarchy. Though today's America and today's American schools may not everywhere include working conditions parallel to 1970s Brazil or present-day Honduras, their injustices should not therefore be dismissed as negligible. Nor should students be sweepingly characterized as complacent in the face of those injustices. Such a characterization disregards the work of current student movements like USAS and GSOC.

Yet teachers who foster discussion of those movements will likely be charged with their own forms of authoritarianism. When such teachers set an agenda that highlights collective resistance and asks students to question current socioeconomic conditions, they might well be accused of coercing students to adopt positions they might not otherwise take. As a way to combat this abuse of pedagogical power, Wallace and Ewald encourage us to strive toward "mutuality" among students and educators in determining and examining course topics. Students then would not be bound by their teachers' political agendas, but could negotiate and write about concerns most vital to their own experiences. Contrary to those critics that link resistance pedagogies to coercion, I contend that discussing the rhetoric of student-based movements for labor justice is compatible with efforts toward mutuality. While some students will resist discussing collective resistance due to their political orientation, and others because they have seen such talk suppressed throughout their education, it is nevertheless possible to address these topics without resorting to authoritarianism. It might be accomplished, first of all, if we can work alongside our students to create an environment where dissensus is viewed as productive rather than dangerous, and where dissenting voices meet with respect if not agreement. In this environment, students reveal complicities with and resistances to the status quo that might not emerge in less openly interactive courses.

Teachers will also feel it necessary, rather than disruptive, to introduce their own valued issues into class discussion. While I grant that writing teachers' politics are invested with a certain authority in writing classrooms, I also agree with Giroux's redaction of Freire's work, which suggests that any pedagogy that equates authority with domination renders itself complicit with the status quo (*Stealing*). Teachers who renounce their own authority,

Giroux reminds us, often "remain silent in the face of injustice" (154). He claims that Freire gives authority an "emancipatory register" by emphasizing our power, both as teachers and students, to author alternatives to what we consider unjust. Giroux further explains that while Freire's work would gradually move beyond the vanguardism that positions educators as prophetic, it would not resign the notion of authority. His theory of *conscientizacao* involves bringing authority to bear both on classroom discourse and the larger sphere of our public actions and interactions. USAS and GSOC provide striking examples of how students have used their authority to spark local change. Although teachers might highlight these examples, they ultimately cannot determine the class's responses to them. They can neither demand affirmation of the movement against sweatshops nor infuse class participants with power to transform their all-too-common condition as casual labor in the flexible economy. Students must grasp that authority for themselves.

And let us not forget the frequent scenario in which the critical educator is also an exploited student. It takes but little imagination, for example, to picture a GSOC activist as the writing instructor of USAS undergrads. Since composition departments rely heavily on graduate and adjunct labor to staff their core courses, it is indeed quite likely that graduate assistants and anti-sweatshop activists have met at the scene of critical education. What might we learn from such a convergence? It provides, at the very least, an opportunity to fashion a politics of location that is mutually beneficial to students who are positioned differently in the institution. The USAS member might teach the instructor and the class about the exploitation of youth and student work in an era of corporate globalization, drawing particular attention to how higher education contributes to this exploitation through its apparel contracts. In response, the instructor might point to how the academy justifies its under-compensation of teaching assistants by appealing to their status as "students"—a signifier which school administrations regularly equate with "apprentices" but which more precisely serves as a euphemism for "contingent workers." Such discussion would be resistant not only in its challenge to corporate perspectives but in its potential to link that challenge to public struggles that have yet to be subsumed by a sense of tragedy.

While not everywhere replicable, such a pedagogy might begin to answer Ohmann's repeated calls to connect classroom resistance to social justice movements. Even for classes without experienced activist participants, discussing and writing about the convergences between graduate and undergraduate labor can provide a way to alert students to worker exploitation in and around the academy. More pointedly, these activities can help them imagine immediate ways to resist the exploitation of their own work. Studying USAS and GSOC might also clarify how labor activism is often fraught with questions about how to avoid gendered power imbalances and racialized paternalism. Many of us ask these same questions of our classes already. The alliance's uncertainty over

how to address capitalism, however, raises questions that people are frequently reluctant to ask. While systemic analysis might be alienating to portions of the USAS constituency as well as our students, it can help us move beyond the interpretation of sweatshop labor as merely an effect of corporate ambition. As evidence of a market freed from social consciousness, sweatshop labor may be the epitome of how capitalism works. Our frequent inability to imagine an outside to capitalism confines us to the tragic mode of resistance. In their public critique of the "relations of a flawed system," student movements against labor exploitation demonstrate potential to eclipse the tragic mode. While USAS has historically advocated improved circumstances for overseas labor, its recent self-recognition as a group of local students struggling to improve their own working conditions exemplifies some of the best hopes of critical education. In its alliance with GSOC, USAS demonstrates the material efficacy of organic intellectualism.

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