What's an English Professor To Do with the *Politics of Knowledge*?

David B. Downing

> Everyone…is willy-nilly involved in a contest over the understanding of history. (59)
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> History cannot tell anything. But we can tell history so as to locate a present situation within a large narrative; then we can project how that situation will change if the main story goes as expected. (86)
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> —Richard Ohmann, *Politics of Knowledge*

The first answer to the question I have posed for this essay is pretty obvious: read it! Indeed, Ohmann's title registers one more sign of what David Harvey called the "sea change" in economic and geo-political conditions that has affected anyone in the profession of English studies, or anyone in the humanities generally, or anyone working in and around the university, or, for that matter, anyone working just about anywhere on this planet. And that is the point: the simple recommendation (obligation even) to read Ohmann is a sign of the responsibility educators now have to locate themselves and their work within the institutional frames that extend from their local day-to-day disciplinary specialties to the global reaches of late capitalism. Knowledge workers are everywhere, in and out of the university, and it has become nearly impossible to draw any boundaries between higher education and capitalism as knowledge itself becomes the most precious commodity.

As many in this volume attest, Richard Ohmann was one of the first and has remained one of the most persistent cultural critics to articulate the historical connections between English studies and global capitalism. David Shumway argues persuasively in this volume that Ohmann ought to serve as an exemplary figure for cultural studies because of his ability to actually write history while doing theory, and vice versa. But for most of us, the efforts to resist the disciplinary specializations that drain knowledge production of

its own history of production have proven more difficult to practice than to theorize. If the social and political turn of intellectual work in the humanities over the last few decades is to mean anything, then history will have to become part of our institutional lives in perhaps different (or deeper) ways than it has thus far.

Of course, part of the problem is that the American university worked out its own peculiar compromise between power and knowledge, and a lot of people are not very happy about the way it's working these days. As Christopher Newfield tells it, corporate/managers and teacher/scholars divided things up as if power and knowledge really were two completely different orders of being. The long-standing academic principle of "divided governance" turned control of resources over to management while leaving faculty with only relative control over the disciplinary organization of knowledge. Under these conditions, naturally enough, economic forces have determined the shape of academic re-structuring without much input from faculty or students. Even as the politics of knowledge has become a more open question in all of our work, whether explicitly or implicitly, the benefits seem marginal and "dispersed into more specialized campaigns" (*Politics* 220), rather than the basis for any tangible solidarity in larger social movements. We have some new courses, interdisciplinary area studies, and many new theories aimed at exposing various forms of oppression.

Despite this intellectual expansion and its many real gains, working conditions for most of us in the university have noticeably deteriorated. And of course it is not just public university workers who are struggling in the increasingly privatized economy. Despite our historically divided academic selves, Ohmann understands that teachers/scholars/students are as much in the world as any other workers. And one would be hard-pressed to imagine a time when it was more self-destructive to pretend that, just because academic workers still manage to contract for some relative freedom from the pressures of profit, their compensations for their labor are of a different order than that for other kinds of workers. If that's the case, then one would also have to imagine that it has now become a professional obligation for *all* practitioners of English studies to explore the social, historical, political, and institutional parameters of how, why, and where we work. I mean this quite literally: graduate programs need to develop curricular space for the self-reflexive study of their own training and disciplinary history; English departments need to revise majors programs to include such institutional and historical introductions to the profession; and for those of us who did not find this material part of our education or professional growth, some necessary re-tooling is in order.

The field of English studies is no longer, if it ever was, self-explanatory, and for all of us the loss of any clearly defined disciplinary object ("literature" or "grammar") affects what it is we could or should be doing. The social obligation has a very material basis. The old humanist rationales for the preservation of cultural canons no longer justify the salaries for most of us in public edu-

cation: we don't sell very well in the marketplace, except as a service function, the grammarians for corporate memos. We have not succeeded in creating new kinds of public accountability for the value of what it is we do beyond the minimalist cost-effectiveness ratios of getting our commas in the right place. The fact that every practitioner of English studies shares, to varying degrees of course, these kinds of problems means that we must now build into and across our many sub-disciplinary specialties a kind of institutional and professional self-reflexivity.

The corollary is my assumption that since this knowledge is not as widely shared as we sometimes assume, there are considerable tactical problems about where to begin and how to organize one's time even by those willing to explore these issues. Disciplinary kinds of training are of course one large part of the problem: the vast set of inter- and cross-disciplinary scholarly materials that have been developed over recent years do not easily line up in any field-specific data base. No anthologies or guidebooks have yet been written. I confront these practical problems regularly because, for instance, in my own graduate seminar on the "History and Theory of Criticism," I compiled a bibliography on Institutional Studies of English and the University and it runs to 10 pages single-spaced with more than 200 entries. And I still present this list to the seminar participants as "selective" rather than exhaustive!

This essay draws on my own practical experience of trying to lead both undergraduate and graduate students into these areas without feeling completely overwhelmed. And it is precisely from this experience that I have found Ohmann's work to be so immensely helpful. More specifically, Ohmann is the only critic I know who successfully links what I will call the three main overlapping historical frames by which we might come to understand contemporary working conditions and social obligations for English professors: the story of capitalism, the story of the university, and the story of English.

The obligation to know something about all three frames cuts across all our sub-disciplinary specialties, the "patterned isolations" that drive composition, literature, creative writing, rhetoric, communication, and linguistics into isolated campgrounds fending for themselves against an often unseen enemy of economic changes and institutional restructuring over which we seem to have lost almost any agency to resist or change. In these times, the historical study of the "politics of knowledge" names a social, institutional, and intellectual condition that few professors in the humanities can work well without knowing something about.

My aim in what follows is based on my assumption 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. Rather, we need some clear articulations of shared problems that everyone in the field must, by necessity, negotiate despite our disciplinary specialties. These problems engage rather than sever the relations between epistemology and labor simply because the quality of working conditions directly

determines the quality of knowledge produced. In this essay, each historical frame represents an overlapping set of problems each of us must negotiate from the different positions we occupy within some quite deeply shared narratives that determine the relations among knowledge, power, politics, and culture.

Regardless of one's politics or tastes, none of us can simply deny the material reality of the historical events referred to in these frames, no matter what spin we put on the cause and effect analysis of those events. Of course, my analysis of cause and effect follows Ohmann's, so the dialogue it opens is one where alternative explanations would be challenged to account equally well for those same events. The gist of it is to recover some cross-disciplinary access to the material grounds of history: where once the mode of production could be concealed from our ostensible work in the humanities, most teacher/scholars can no longer live safely with those mystifications.

Failure to account for the relations among the economy, the university, and the discipline is a liability for any academic worker at any level except of course for the elite private universities and colleges that remain relatively isolated from the economic turbulence. For the rest of us, and remember about eighty percent of the students in higher education in America still attend public universities rather than private colleges, we need to build these coalitions through a shared understanding of our common historical problems. Of course, we ought to follow our bliss in terms of career choices, wherever that takes us, but as Richard Ohmann has so eloquently put it, the personal and the social are deeply interdependent: "The personal is the political, yes, and I want to emphasize how social it has been for me, how saturated with affinities and alliances and conflicts both real and (no doubt) fanciful" (*Politics* 219). The work of fast capital has appropriated the discourse of differences, identity politics, disciplinary fragmentation so effectively as to undermine almost any sense of solidarity and "veer" us "away from disclosures that might strengthen a universalist solidarity or even point toward coalitions" (221). The Right-wing has entered this vacuum through the discourse of standardization as social control, a powerful move that re-enforces and exacerbates racial and class differences.

Now I confess to considerable hubris in this essay since I have tried to imagine some alternative grounds of professional solidarity and consensus by inserting history into our workplaces without effacing the differences and idioms characteristic of the multicultural worlds we inhabit. No one individual can really do this outside the dialogic engagement with others collectively engaged with these issues. But on an even more incriminating note, I risk the presumption and arrogance of the insider, the one prescribing the agenda, the canon, the syllabus, simply because it all grows out of my own personal experience of working in the area of institutional studies for many years now. I can't help but conceive of what follows as a kind of initial stab at a mini-guidebook, bibliographic essay, or organized foray into these important issues for those

whose specialties are not, like my own, in the history and theory of criticism. But I am not alone with this problem: the necessity of moving from our specialties to broader cross-disciplinary audiences mirrors in a small scale our need to reach even further from academic to more broadly public audiences. I take those institutional needs as an obligation for all of us who have been teaching and writing in these areas. We need more than ever to construct maps of how best for those in other sub-disciplines to work with this material.

I refer to the historical domains as "frames" to highlight the artificial, constructed, heuristic nature of my boundary demarcations. Also, I call them frames rather than stories to complicate any simple linear narrative about cause and effect even though the three-part narrative of capitalism represented by Frame 1 marks the periodization for the three-part narratives in the other frames. Of course, depending on the angle and point at which one enters the frame, one will tell a somewhat different story. Frames may also unfortunately suggest sharp demarcations between inner and outer contents, but the focus ought to be on the links between rather than the boundaries between the frames. For convenience, I will first offer my brief overviews of each of the three overlapping frames:

> 1) *The socio-economic frame*: the large scale, socio-cultural histories of the changing conditions of colonialism, capitalism, and the nation state, with a focus on the shifts from entrepreneurial, to monopoly, to transnational capitalism;
> 2) *The university frame*: the history and role of the university over the last 200 years with a focus on the shifts from the classical liberal arts colleges, to the modern disciplinary research university, to the contemporary economic restructuring of the "multiversity" in the global economy;
> 3) *The field-specific frame of English studies*: the adaptation of disciplinarity to the sub-disciplines of the field in the shift from rhetoric and philology to English as an academic discipline, to the recent theoretical, social, and economic challenges to the disciplinary status of the field, with a special attention to the institutionalized splits between reading and writing, literature and composition.

In the next three sections, I offer an overview of each respective frame. I develop the articulations for each section from my reading of *Politics of Knowledge* based on my belief that this book effectively describes the connections among the three frames. I begin each section with a list of suggested books (many articles could supplement these sources), but I do so with some trepidation. That is, the list does have a kind of sequence, in that I have recommended to students and colleagues that they might approach this material in the order in which I have listed them (to some extent,

more accessible, less specialized texts come earlier). But the order represents only a strategic sequence rather than a hierarchy of intrinsic value since in many cases I might actually have more disagreements with some of the works earlier in the lists than ones that come later. Even more, the whole order of the frames could be reversed, beginning with English studies. How far or deeply one reads in each book or each frame depends, of course, on the situation of the reader. My focus on the American university determines the context, which would of course have to shift for other non-U.S., and especially non-Western educational systems. The advantage of reading *Politics* first is that all of the key terms in each of the three historical frames will already have been introduced there, so the reading into the frames is a thickening of the analysis.

Here's another caveat: although highlighting specific texts appears like a canon-building enterprise to define a discipline, I have had to conceive of the sketchy summarizing that follows in other terms. That's partly because my focus is on the problems, not the texts I reference as sources, and I leave it to readers to judge whether my presumption is viable. Similarly, one might well imagine what follows as a kind of updating of the tradition (if not the gender) of the post-Renaissance "man of letters" as a secular version of erudition and literacy, except that in what follows my emphasis is not on individual consciousness and subjectivity so much as on institutional practices and working conditions that call out for solidarity and change.[1] I also assume that English studies has already been stretched to encompass a wide range of practices related to the reading and writing of cultures: how specific curricula take shape within these general parameters can vary considerably depending on the institution and context. But I am claiming that these three frames now need to be factored into any curricular design for both undergraduate and graduate programs.

The most noticeable factor, then, is that the content of these frames is so strikingly not "literature" and my point is that literature, along with composition, creative writing, and the other sub-disciplines will no longer serve, by themselves, as effective organizing principles for our work. The traditional areas of study do not disappear, as some have feared, but they do become resituated in relation to the historical frames and related disciplines. In fact, Frames 1 & 2 would be basically the same for practitioners in other fields, especially in the humanities and social sciences, but also in the sciences: cross-disciplinary understanding is simply fundamental to our deeply networked worlds.[2]

Although I don't specify them in this essay, there are, of course, very real curricular consequences for the way we integrate our sub-disciplinary specialties of literature, composition, creative writing, linguistics, etc. At the same time, I do not view what follows as a course syllabus (although many of these books can be so adapted, as I have done), partly because the material is more than any one course can withstand, and partly because to so reduce it defeats the broader aims of professional solidarity that stretch beyond the material for any isolated course. While I have designed the lists as

provisional maps of access to each historical frame, the sources do not necessarily follow any chronological order, as if earlier historical moments should come earlier in the list: again, that is why I call them frames rather than narratives.

I have also chosen not to list prominent kinds of background texts that no doubt inform the practical theory (I'm thinking, say, of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, or Althusser's *Reading Capital*). However helpful, I have found that these texts are not necessary to an understanding of the historical frames themselves. I confess, therefore, to an odd mix of audacity and modesty: the audacity stemming from the scope of the problems I'm willing to conceptualize in quite simplified, schematic ways; the modesty stemming from my admission that this is at best only one possible stab in the direction of trying to draw up no more than a kind of experimental guide for others to use as a wider group of teachers, students, and scholars share understandings of the social and political realities that we all confront. I'm also keenly aware that many readers of *Works and Days* already know everything that I summarize in what follows, so I risk preaching to the choir, but my hope is that even if one (now meaning anyone who actually happens to read this essay) has a good sense of these frames, one must also begin to find ways of stretching our audience so as to construct more effective coalitions across a broader reach of academic practitioners including the non-specialists in theory and institutional studies. The purpose of any such shared understandings is, after all, only a riff on Marx's famous line in the "Theses on Feuerbach" that the purpose of philosophy (or history?) is not to just to interpret the world but to change it.

Historical Frame 1: The Rise of the Nation-State and the Transformations of Capital

> Texts: James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*; Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America*; Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Market, and Class at the Turn of the Century*; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*; James Paul Gee, Glynda Hull, Colin Lankshear, *The New Work Order: Behind the Language of the New Capitalism*; Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents*; Rey Chow, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism*; Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony and Survival: America's Quest for Global Domination*.

Any effort to conceptualize this general historical frame confronts a massive educational problem. Many faculty outside the field of history merely lament rather than actively transform the problem of historical misrepresentation that has been schooled into most of our students for many years. We know how history has been distorted by the official stories, but Loewen's book reveals the

depth of the remarkable degree of historical mystification, heroification, and just plain mis-information that has been drilled into American high school history classes. It is a shocking demonstration, for many still, of how thoroughly hegemony has turned complex and dynamic historical conflicts into dull facts, drudgery, and boring dates to be memorized. The chapters on Native Americans, race, and class, in particular, provide dramatic re-presentations of the historical formation of the Americas, the rise of the United States as a powerful nation-state out of the colonialist enterprise, and a general historical overview that undergraduate students also find quite engaging.

However deeply entwined, epistemology and politics are not synonymous, but in many instances there is an *as if* factor. When distortion, misrepresentation, and just plain lies have been part of the official story, presenting historical and sociological data as forms of truth-telling tends to have quite explicitly political effects on students: it opens their (and our) eyes to events, ideas, and realities that they had been misinformed about in their own education. Consider, for instance, Loewen's explanation of how remarkably silent our history textbooks have been with regard to social class in America: "There is almost nothing in any of these textbooks about class inequalities or barriers of any kind to social mobility" (203). He offers a wonderful sociological account of how ideology shapes ideology, or how "social class determines how people think about social class" (205). Even in crude terms, the survey data is revealing: "55 percent of Republicans blamed the poor for their poverty, while only 13 percent blamed the system; 68 percent of Democrats, on the other hand, blamed the system, while only 5 percent blamed the poor" (205). Similar statistics mark the differences between business and labor leaders. In the general frame of capitalism, the sheer absence of class analysis stems, of course, from the American Dream ideology, the rags to riches kinds of social progress model based on individualism that eviscerates any systemic or institutional understanding of economic differences. Loewen's analysis is striking in this regard for many students, and prepares them to begin to understand how transformations at the economic level have produced the massive social injustices that configure social life in America as well as globally. Loewen highlights many disparities in American wealth, so that, for example, in one study of developed nations, America was ranked 14th out of 14th in terms of economic equality. He also provides an overview of the dramatic increases in the redistribution of U.S. wealth since the Reagan-Bush years, which provides an empirical basis for understanding the shift from monopoly to transnational capital. Without this kind of knowledge in (especially American) literature classes, it becomes difficult to engage students in the social, political, and class relations that so characterize literacy across the spectrum of genres and texts they are likely to encounter and compose.

Todorov's *The Conquest of America* is a superb sequel because it offers, first, a remarkable study of the European colonization of the

Americas that ever since has determined the shape of geopolitical realities we confront every day in our postcolonial worlds. Secondly, the book is a brilliant exemplification of how a literary scholar turned his own interpretive skills regarding language, representation, and symbolization into the specific tasks of writing history. In constructing his interpretation of the conquest of the Americas in the 16th century, Todorov describes his own general subject as "the discovery *self* makes of the *other*" (3), thus framing his own historical work within the most general activity of the humanities. His historical premise is that "the sixteenth century perpetrated the greatest genocide in history" and that "the conquest of America…heralds and establishes our present identity" (5).[3] With respect to the power/knowledge equation, Todorov argues that "The relation of knowledge to power, as we were able to observe on the occasion of the conquest, is not contingent but constitutive" (181). Although many have argued that we live in an information age, Todorov shows that even in the 16th century, "the function of information is an essential social function" (182).

But Todorov does not just paint the conquest and genocide and the imposition of "a European organization on American knowledge" (233), without also documenting the attempts at cultural syncretism and hybridity. His detailed examinations of the remarkable hybrid texts of the Dominican monk Diego Durán and the Franciscan monk Bernardino de Sahagún "heralded, without fully achieving, the dialogue of cultures that characterizes our age and which is incarnated by ethnology, at once the child of colonialism and the proof of its death throes: a dialogue in which no one has the last word, in which neither voice is reduced to the status of a simple object, and in which we gain advantage from our externality to the other" (250). Understanding the advent of the world-historical process of colonialism is crucial to our own situation where, as Todorov writes, "this period of European history is, in its turn, coming to an end today. The representatives of Western civilization no longer believe so naively in its superiority [although the current administration goes a long way towards discrediting that claim], and the movement of assimilation is running down in that quarter, even if the recent or ancient nations of the Third World still want to live like the Europeans" (249).

Today, for many of us, "we aspire to reap the benefits of the egalitarian model and of the hierarchical model; we aspire to rediscover the meaning of the social without losing the quality of the individual" (249). Since 9/11, we have seen a return of right wing fundamentalism that seeks more hierarchy than equality, which is only to say that the struggle over these issues of understanding and engaging the other remains with us as ever. Todorov's general project makes very clear that educators and intellectuals in these times have social obligations to relate their disciplinary specialties to the historical study of how groups of people have discovered each other through the strenuous efforts of learning to (or violently refusing to) read, write, and interpret what they say and do. The tasks of literacy, the rhetorics of composing, and the acts of reading both lit-

erary and non-literary texts are, of course, all situated within this history.

The formation of the nation-state and the world-historical processes of colonization were, of course, part of the history of capitalism. Loewen's and Todorov's books make the concern for gold, riches, and power central to their historical narratives, so the turn to the periodized study of the transformations of capitalism follows logically. As Ohmann puts it, we need "to understand where we all are in the history of capitalism, and where we might be heading" (*Politics* xviii). Towards this end, there are of course so many sources that the question of where to begin can be overwhelming. Given that *Politics* already introduces the three stages of entrepreneurial, monopoly, and agile capitalism, I have found that in *Selling Culture* Ohmann provides a clear, innovative, and nuanced account of the shift from entrepreneurial to monopoly capitalism (see also Shumway; Moeller; in this volume). Ohmann sets out to describe "a transformative moment in the history of the United States, the history of culture, the history of capitalism," a transformation that "reestablished the American social order on a new basis" (*Selling* vii). Given the complexity of the historical changes, Ohmann acknowledges the theoretical problem of telling its history: "All the vexed issues of historical causation (including whether there is such a thing) threaten to stop the inquiry before it starts" (31). Such reflexive caution, which can only be deeply magnified in the superficial historical glosses of this essay, is a wise moment of humility, but one that does not stop Ohmann from undertaking the crucial tasks of attempting to construct such understandings that "connect human action to social structure as both cause and effect" (38).

The keys are in his detailed descriptions of the simultaneous emergence of mass culture and a new professional managerial class identified as both the producers and consumers of that culture. As Shumway argues, Ohmann reformulated Marxist analysis of class from the binary bourgeois/proletariat conflict to a recognition of the emergence of a new social class, the PMC, situated between the owners of capital and the labor of the working class. More specifically, *Selling Culture* offers a compelling account of the rapidly expanding mass market magazine culture that linked capitalist modes of production, reading habits of the American public, and the rise of a consumer culture based on the circulation of advertising and marketing of products in the new print media. The PMC emerged, largely, from the advertising industry: the rise of professionals who had the specialized knowledge necessary to market goods in an unstable world. In Ohmann's story, "the PMC did not exist as a recognizable or conscious formation in 1880, but was well organized and purposeful in 1910" (*Selling* 119).

But the PMC, of course, also became the class both serving in and served by the modern American university, and as such members of the PMC often sought to distinguish their (our) own professional kind of "calling" from the realms of labor. The pious retreats from contemporaneous reality represented by the classical curric-

ula of the old denominational colleges gave way to the secular, professional version of the public university (see Frame 2). Indeed, the PMC "grounded its social authority in science and expertise; its rectitude derived from certified knowledge rather than from piety" (*Selling* 221). The many studies of professionalism we now have (see esp. Larson, Bledstein) have made it clear how much (as well as how little) labor was created, sustained, and performed by the PMC. According to Ohmann's calculations, by 1910 the PMC "made up perhaps a tenth of the population…more like a fifth in 1960, and still more in the 1980s" (*Politics* 92). More importantly perhaps, the PMC "attained effective class consciousness and coherent agency only twice, I think: in the two decades before World War I and those right after World War II. If I am right about pressures brought to bear on it now, there is little chance for it to come forward again as a class-for-itself" (*Politics* 121).

The pivotal moments in the third phase of capitalism occur at the same time as the large-scale social movements of the 1960s and 70s. Ohmann is particularly good at explaining the significance of these movements in the university (*English in America* [1976] being a landmark study, of course), but always by relating them to the material history. Ever since the Arab oil embargo of 1973, the challenges to social authority from environmentalism, feminism, Civil Rights, gay liberation, etc., occurred at the same time as the dramatic increase in the national debt, the shift of the trade balance, the deregulation of the economy, and the defunding of public education. As I elaborate in Frame 2, the intellectual eruption that affected higher education as new area studies, new demographics, and new theories swept through the academy happened at the exact time that economic pressures began to cut ever more deeply into the academy.

With the shift from monopoly to transnational capital, one of the most observable class differences has been the relative breakdown of monopoly capital's class structure, especially with respect to the function of the PMC. Understanding this shift can well begin with Part II of David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity* where he provides a widely cited overview of the shift from monopoly to transnational capitalism, or as he describes it, from Fordist regimes of mass production to post-Fordist modes of "flexible accumulation." One of the most significant practical effects of this transformation of capital has been the production of a dual labor market of secure (or tenured?) core workers and a swelling of peripheral, flex workers on part-time, temporary, insecure contracts. As Ohmann puts it, what has been exacerbated is "a two-class world system, with the much heralded gap between rich and poor continuing to widen" (*Politics* 119). "The dual labor market in this country has always been divided in part racially; now the global division of labor reproduces the color line and of course the feminization of cheap, peripheral, flexible labor" (34). And here's the key point for university workers: the new dual labor market cuts through and across the lines of the PMC rather than simply

between the owners of capital and the workers who supply the labor.

Consequently, we have witnessed an increased fragmentation of any form of professional-managerial class solidarity since class differences are now so vast within the professions rather than between professional and non-professional forms of work. Ohmann explains that "flexible capitalism has put in similar positions all sorts of people who were previously divided by lines of guild, union, education, gender, class, and political commitment. The welfare mother and the former steelworker share with the teaching assistant in rhetoric a likely future of insecure, ill-paid, part-time jobs" (*Politics* xxiii). Class differences become reconfigured: "The point is that agile capital has erased some old social fault lines. Professors and managers can be downsized along with line workers" (xxiv). When profit and capital themselves seek flexibility to move in and out of local, niche markets, such fragmentation can also make any kind of political solidarity difficult to achieve. Moreover, when progressive educators attempt to break from dominant, monopolized forms of disciplinary learning and research ("banking education") to more deeply contextualized, ad hoc forms of distributed learning, experiential inquiry, it can become difficult to distinguish between the market adaptability of capital and the contextual adaptability of learning.

On exactly this point, *The New Work Order* follows well upon Harvey's book because it uses discourse analysis to articulate the changing global conditions of what they call the "new work order" in both educational and corporate settings. Like Ohmann's study, it therefore links very clearly the concrete, day-to-day lived experiences of workers to far-reaching socio-economic conditions. Gee, et. al. recognize some degree of "promise—amid these perils—of more meaningful work, the valuing of diversity, the dispersal of centralized authority and hegemony, and the wider distribution of knowledge" (xii), while recognizing the exploitive powers of "on time/on demand" (26) services and products when profit becomes the prime motive for each adaptation. What they are particularly good at pointing out is that "very often the 'localism' and 'smallness' of the new capitalism are a false impression" (29). The main reason is that "the new capitalism has itself coopted a good deal of the language and many of the themes of ostensibly opposing movements [such as contextualized and distributed learning, etc.]…the new capitalism pre-empts radical postmodern themes and attitudes" (68).

They offer a compelling critique of the widely popular literature of the "fast capitalists" who champion the new economy, the new flexibility, the new challenges, etc. and their call for "empowered workers" whose "empowerment" it turns out is only skin deep and manifested only in dedication to the terms of the corporation. As Gee, et. al. put it, "global competition can sometimes mean global exploitation, and 'worker empowerment' and 'flat hierarchies' can sometimes mean high-touch and high-tech control" (150). Their key distinction is to "argue for the reinvigoration of the local

as against the 'faux' local of the new capitalism" (166). Just as Ohmann argues: "expertise and concern run more into small local channels than you might have wished" (*Politics* 64). What this means is that the narrowing into disciplinary specialties can weaken our political solidarity and agency. Any narrowly conceived return to literary aestheticism and formalism or back-to-basics grammar tests runs exactly this risk. If "capital in the regime of flexible accumulation" has found many "ways to commodify what professionals do too" (115), it has also found many ways to de-commodify (or de-value) literary aestheticism: teaching (only) the "appreciation" of literature will never fare well in these times. There are better alternatives than insisting on the old rationales.

I round off this whirlwind tour through the first historical frame with three books that respectively provide sharp articulations of key issues: globalization and technology, the biopolitics of racial/ethnic control, and the recent history of American imperialism. Saskia Sassen's study of globalization highlights the links between global capital and the telecommunications revolution where cyberspace now serves "as a major new theater for capital accumulation and the operations of global capital" (190). Although Rey Chow's theoretical sophistication can make for difficult reading, *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism* provides a piercing critique of the dominant neoliberal economic discourse of tolerance, diversity, affirmative action, and cultural difference that often shields the violence of its own implicit forms of racial/ethnic stereotyping. In contrast to Chow's poststructuralist theoretical commitments, Noam Chomsky believes deeply in the coincidence of politics and epistemology so he provides clear examples of what it means to follow his motto, "tell the truth, and expose lies." In *Hegemony and Survival* he presents some compelling facts about twentieth century history. Harkening back to Loewen's analysis of the recent history of terrorism (see *Lies*, Chapt. 8), Chomsky's account of U.S. state interventions in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Latin America considerably bolsters Ohmann's claim that "American military and economic dominance fostered academic insularity and arrogance as well" (11). In the contemporary world situation, Chomsky challenges us to rethink basic issues of democracy, freedom, and human rights even as some pretty compelling historical data gets daily swept under the ideological rugs of the official stories about America's place in the world. As Chomsky puts it, right-wing mandarins now "declare that it is unpatriotic and disruptive to question the workings of authority—but patriotic to institute harsh and regressive policies that benefit the wealthy, undermine social programs that serve the needs of the great majority, and subordinate a frightened population to increased state control" (217). Even those ready to trash Chomsky better be ready to confront some of the basic facts he presents.

Frame 2: The History of the University and the Rise and Fall of Professionalism

Texts: Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of Faculties*; John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*; Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*; Laurence Veysey, *The Rise of the American University*; Clyde Barrow, *Universities and the Capitalist State*; Christopher Newfield, *Ivy and Industry*; Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University*; Sheila Slaugher and Larry Leslie, *Academic Capitalism*; Gary Rhoades, *Managed Professionals*; Marc Bousquet, *How the University Works*; Cary Nelson and Dilip Goankar, *Disciplinarity and Dissent in Cultural Studies*; Stanley Aronowitz, *The Knowledge Factory*; David Noble, *Digital Diploma Mills*; Corynne McSherry, *Who Owns Academic Work?*

Within the context of Frame 1, the history of the university clearly takes place in the shift from entrepreneurial to monopoly capitalism, from mostly denominational liberal arts colleges to secular versions of the modern university. The latter was thus one phase in the production of the emergent professional-managerial class. That we may now be witnessing the fragmentation and the undoing of professional autonomy over the production of knowledge makes it all the more important to understand what gains were made, what unfortunate compromises went along with those gains, and what kind of historical agency professional academic workers might begin to assert in the contemporary moment.

I begin this frame with sections of two classic books, Kant's *Conflict of Faculties*, and John Henry Newman's *The Idea of the University*. Kant's book set the philosophical rationale for the founding of the modern university, at least to the extent that reason could be made central to an educational institution. Newman's book has become one of the most often-cited texts for the liberal arts basis of higher education, and Kant and Newman both articulated the key virtues of the idealized university for the disinterested pursuit of knowledge and the inculcation of civic virtue. I then turn to Readings' now famous book not because I agree with everything he says, but because it offers a convenient way to frame the history of the university in three stages: the university of reason, the university of culture, and the university of excellence. And of course those three stages correspond to the three stages of capitalism; the first two stages also correspond, respectively, to Kant's articulation of the ideal of reason, and Newman's description of the modern version of culture and knowledge. As Jeffrey Williams explained, "part of the reason for the success of Readings' book is that it encapsulated the history of the university in broad strokes and told a simple story" ("History as a Challenge" 2). Williams is also correct in seeing Readings' analysis as based on a more abstract history of ideas that can obscure the workings of material history, but when Readings's story is framed by the history of capi-

talism, it is not difficult to remedy the metaphysical idealism. Although the university of reason, for instance, may never have existed in any true Kantian form, the most compelling thing about Readings analysis is his focus on the third stage of excellence. Virtually every student who has read this book has been struck by the rhetorical trigger Readings hit upon when he highlighted the ways "excellence" now flies around higher education. One crucial corrective is necessary here: as Patricia Harkin has argued, the trope of excellence is not simply "dereferentialized" as an ideologically empty signifier, as Readings tells the story, but much to the contrary, "the content of the word 'excellence' is competition, and its referent is winning" ("Excellence" 4). In short, it is a remarkably convenient handle for fast capital managers to get excellence in short-term profit planning scenarios.

Reading Veysey after Readings highlights the rhetorical and conceptual differences between a theorist and an historian. Veysey's book has become a standard history of the university, and selective readings of this book clearly explain the remarkable shift from the liberal arts colleges, the rise of professionalism, and the emergent departmental structure of the modern university. Veysey documents how rapidly it was that in the two decades between 1890 and 1910 the 20th century departmental structure of the university came into being almost simultaneously in most of the universities in the country: "Bureaucratic administration was the structural device which made possible the new epoch of institutional empire-building without recourse to specific shared values" 311). He coined the term "patterned isolation" whereby "people continually talk past each other, failing to listen to what others were actually saying" (338).

Barrow's book is a great sequel because more than any other study of the rise of the American university, Barrow documents the ties between higher education and corporate capitalism. Whereas many traditionalist arguments about the university have represented it as an enclave, "refugium," or epistemological space severed from corporate interests, as Jeffrey Williams explains, "the anti-corporate arguments assume corporatization is exogenous to the university; however, corporatization is in fact indigenous, and the legal standing of corporations is literally inseparable from the history of the US university, beginning with the 1819 Supreme Court decision of The Trustees of Dartmouth College v. Woodward" ("History as a Challenge" 13).

One of the most consistent ideological fangs of postmodernism has been its critique of the tradition of humanism. The latter's versions of universal truths and poetic transcendence have been deeply subjected to the anti-humanist critique. The virtue of Newfield's study is that he provides a much more nuanced account of the radical as well as traditionalist versions of humanism, and demonstrates how the historical ties between business interests and academic institutions have more complicated relations than might at first appear to be the case under the anti-humanist lens. He explains the historical roots of the "divided governance" that char-

acterizes the institutional arrangement made by the academy. This divided arrangement distinguished academy administration from strict business management of corporations where the rule of capital goes all the way down. Newfield focuses primarily on the second phase of capitalism, saving more detailed analysis of the university under late capitalism for a future volume.

A fine sociological analysis of the third phase of "academic capitalism" can be found in Slaughter and Leslie's study. They argue that the current restructuring of higher education is at least as significant as the formative moments in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The focus of their analysis provides great detail about the ways in which "the center of the academy has shifted from a liberal arts core to an entrepreneurial periphery" (208). Their colleague, Gary Rhoades, expands their analysis through a striking account of the tensions between management and faculty in higher education, focusing on the successes and failures of the academic labor movement in its attempts to negotiate those tensions.

Rhoades's study provides background for Marc Bousquet's stunning analysis of working conditions in the contemporary university. He explains that in the Education Management Organization (EMO), labor itself functions as if it were in the mode of information: flex workers appear instantly, on-demand, and disappear when the job is over and the work no longer needed by management. Bousquet also offered the first analysis of why our troubles should not just be conceived as market problems: things will get better if we just wait out the downturn in the market. Market logic is itself just a "*rhetoric of the labor system and not a description of it*," so that "the ideology of the market returns to frame the solution, blocking the transformative potential of analysis that otherwise demonstrates the necessity of non-market responses" ("Rhetoric" 209). Nelson's and Gaonkar's volume, *Disciplinarity and Dissent in Cultural Studies*, offers a good collection of essays on disciplinary problems; it follows well after Bousquet because it highlights specific links between disciplinary practices and working conditions in higher education.

I will round up this outline of Frame 2 by pointing to three books that focus on specific problems: Stanley Aronowitz provides a highly readable account of the vocationalization and capitalization of higher education, and he offers a kind of nostalgic, but still provocative account of an alternative curriculum by ramping up the "great books" tradition, even if such work might only be accessible to a small cadre of students. Noble's book is now a classic assessment of the destructive effects of the telecommunications revolution and its abuses in distance education as exploited by management. Coynne McSheery offers a compelling analylsis of the shifting relations among intellectual property, technology transfer, and academic freedom. In any case, a good overview of the past decades' remarkable proliferation of writings on the university can be found in Jeffrey Williams provocative description of "The Post-Welfare University." Williams captures the significance of the

large-scale defunding of public education as one phase in the general right-wing attack on the welfare state. Ohmann summarizes the general situation we confront quite well: the "erosion of support from tax revenues has been steady and widespread for nearly three decades" (*Politics* 96), and it become increasingly hard for one to escape that defunding on a daily basis.

Now this all sounds quite depressing. But amidst these transformations of academic capitalism, Ohmann paints both the downside and the potential upside. On the causes for pessimism, he understands that, under flexible accumulation: "The profession, however radicalized, is not well equipped to resist such developments. Organized as it is to regulate careers and maintain hierarchies of status among practitioners and institutions, the profession is all but unable to act in solidarity with its most weakly positioned members" (*Politics* 25). This structural liability is the key issue we now need to face, collectively in all areas of our working lives—reenvision education, learning, teaching, and scholarship that serves new kinds of diverse public needs in new ways. Since professionalism will not go away, transformation of its definition, function, and powers of agency will have to be reworked, at the very least. And however pessimistic he may claim to be, Ohmann never abandons the charge. Indeed, in his assessement, "Critical intellectuals are in fact far more active and consequential now than in the early sixties…" The struggle we now confront is "how to be consciously political agents, both in the narrowest professional sites…and in negotiating alliances beyond your certified competence and beyond the academy" (75). This still seems exactly right as a plan of action, even though it can no doubt be daunting to re-create the work of higher education in these times. Although economic pressure joins with academic orthodoxy to enforce homogeneity, we should not also forget that "critical thought sometimes spills out of universities, rather than always being neutralized within them" (74).

Frame 3: The Stories of English Departments

Texts: Robert Scholes, *The Rise and Fall of English*; Stephen North, *Refiguring the Ph.D. in English*; James Berlin, *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Culture*; Richard Ohmann, *English in America*; Susan Miller, *Textual Carnivals*; Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History*; James Sosnoski, *Token Professionals and Master Critics: A Critique of Orthodoxy*; Peter Elbow, *What Is English?*; Patricia Harkin and John Schilb, *Contending with Words*; Michael Bérubé, *The Employment of English*; W. Ross Winterowd, *The English Department*; Evan Watkins, *Work Time*; Joseph Harris, *A Teaching Subject*; Marc Bousquet, Leo Parascondola, and Tony Scott, *Tenured Bosses and Disposable Teachers*; David Shumway and Craig Dionne, *Disciplining English*. Michael Blitz and C. Mark Hurlbert, *Letters for the Living*; James C.

Raymond, *English as a Discipline*; Robert Conners, *Composition-Rhetoric*; Jeffrey Williams, *The Institution of Literature*; Derek Owens, *Composition and Sustainability*; Anthony Easthope, *Literary into Cultural Studies*; Sharon Crowley, *Composition in the University*; Lester Faigley, *Fragments of Rationality*; David Downing, Claude Mark Hurlbert, and Paula A. Mathieu, *Beyond English, Inc.: Curricular Revision in a Global Economy*; Eileen Schell and Patricia Stock, *Moving a Mountain*; Peter Herman, Day Late, Dollar Short; John Guillory, *Cultural Capital*; Eileen Schell, *Gypsy Academics*; James Raymond, *The Discipline of English*; Bruce Horner, *Terms of Work in Composition*.

I am going to proceed a bit differently in drawing the contours of our (my) home field of English studies. Even the above list of texts is so long (though still quite selective) that it would be counter-productive to overview each one in the space of this essay. I justify the relatively extensive length of the list simply because we need more depth with respect to our home territories, but also because, perhaps more than any other discipline, English studies has produced more scholarly histories of its own formation and evolution than any other field. The passages from rhetoric and belles lettres of the liberal arts colleges, to the departmental formation of English, to its contemporary disaggregated (Leitch) collection of diverse subfields has been told in many accounts. Why that happens to be the case is partly because of the positioning of English within the other historical frames—its relation to capitalism and its function within liberal arts curricula in the modern university. As Ohmann explains, the changes affecting English did not happen to the same extent in other fields. Beginning during the days of the social Movement of the 1960s, issues of power and authority were admitted into the conversations of English studies "that had been muted or absent since the 1930s. New professional terrain, new rules of engagement" (*Politics* 15) affected the relative complacency of literary and composition studies. Nevertheless, "no such perturbations shook the foundations of other fields, not even American history" (15).

Given the extensive body of disciplinary self-reflexivity that has developed over the last 40 years, I have still tried to list them in one possible reading order primarily to highlight a central historical and theoretical contention. A common feature of many histories of English studies is that they tend to treat the field as if it were a literature department, which thus misses one of the key divisions that most characterizes the formation of the field itself: the split between literature and composition, reading and writing. For that reason, my list highlights, right away, those studies that have very deliberately tried to combat the focus on one subdivision rather than another. Subsequent selections often alternate the focus on literature and composition.

My plan for this section will be to draw primarily on Ohmann's articulations in *Politics of Knowledge* because his study represents

one of the most powerful considerations of exactly that key division between literature and composition, reading and writing. He keenly understands that the split between the disciplinary research axis of the field (literature) and the service component of the field (composition) originated early, in the late 19th century, built into the formation of English departments as management units in the modern university. But he also understands that composition and rhetoric have struggled in the last 35 years to establish their own disciplinary formation, area of research, and prestige as an academic discipline. Given the sketch of Frames 1 & 2, it thus becomes immediately clear that composition has struggled to gain disciplinary recognition at a time when professional autonomy and disciplinary borders have been quite violently disrupted by economic restructuring. The conflicts posed by the institutional transformations of composition and rhetoric into legitimate disciplinary entities deeply challenge any efforts directed at reconstructing English studies when the problems are conceived exclusively as trying to make the move from literary to cultural studies with the focus on reading practices and an exclusion of writing practices.

To gloss the historical background: Even before the post-Civil War advent of the modern American university, the lit/comp divide had its roots in the battles between aesthetics and politics, rhetoric and poetics that took material shape in the liberal arts colleges. These discursive conflicts developed especially with the British and German Romantics in roughly speaking the years between 1770 and 1830 during the first phase of capitalism. Taking, for instance, Wordsworth or Shelley as spokesman for the movement, their aesthetic/poetic commitments claimed to be a powerful form of resistance to the crass materialism of industrial capitalism as well as the oppressive elitism of the landed aristocracy.

Given that gloss of a complex social change, the separation of aesthetics from politics aided the formation of English departments something like this: Once upon a time it was virtually the sine-qua non of work in belles lettres to work outside of, or transcendently beyond, the historical and political contaminants that always threatened the idealized moments of aesthetic beauty, form, and appreciation. English departments were particularly prone to rescript the belles lettres rationale into viable forms of disciplinary argumentation and knowledge production. The easiest way to do this was to shift from complex aesthetic ideas about beauty to more objectifiable, formal properties of texts. As Gerald Graff documents in *Professing Literature*, it was a long battle of competing interests in the contradictory efforts to fit English into the parameters of a university discipline. But most agree the New Critics (1930s to 50s) achieved perhaps the best version of disciplinary stability because their general doctrines (even if not for every practitioner of the orientation) posed a view of meaning "in" the text, as if it could be effectively severed from historical context and rhetorical situation. As Ohmann puts it: "Real history was someone else's business" (*Politics* 4).

Under these conditions, English departments actually greased the skids for the effective "concealment and mystification of con-

flict, power, and privilege: in literary theory and criticism, in the curriculum, in departments and professional organizations, in writing instruction, in pedagogy" (*Politics* 11). Here's the key point: no longer can we do this; no longer can we avoid this head in the sand approach to the institution and profession, a pattern of intellectual behavior that was once almost the fundamental requirement for work in the humanities.

In the recent phase of turbocapitalism, disciplinary divisions have been leveraged to exacerbate internal professional class differences: "The two-class system thus created—our own local version of peripheral and core labor—works to perpetuate the invidious opposition between literature and composition" (*Politics* 25). This is a key point—any new vision of intellectual work in the academy has to begin by actively negotiating new ways of resisting this disastrous two-class system. In these terms, a central problem in the history of English studies has been composition's "eighty-year subordination to literary studies; the failure of English to theorize composition; and its exclusion of *pedagogy* from a place among its professional secrets—as if medicine had left clinical practice to the whims of individual physicians!" (81). And there's no hope in returning to the "pastoral enclave" of the old disciplinary models of disinterested inquiry, so new kinds of contractual relations will have to be worked out in the changing circumstances. Collective bargaining and curricular reform have to become linked rather than severed.

Ohmann's analysis helps us to imagine the alternative potential offered in the institutional struggles over the professionalization of composition. The hope hinges on the remarkable historical conjunction in which the social activism of the 1960s and 70s enters the field (and the university) at the very moments when composition actively sought its transformtation to professional status. The historical conjunction thus provides a potential opportunity to reverse the tendency of 19th century versions of professionalism, often configured precisely as a severing of politics and epistemology. As Ohmann suggests, "composition never did agree upon a single 'informing discipline' or theory but has made do with a shifting assortment of issues and texts that frame the professional discourse" (*Politics* 82). Many practitioners in the field, in their struggle with disciplinary autonomy posed key questions: "Composition was airing unseemly questions about neutrality, detachment, and partisanship, and even about whether to act like a profession" (83). During the last 40 years when history and politics have been pressing upon disciplinary isolationism, composition alone among the new competitors for academic credibility posed the possibility of building the social and political domains directly into its professional formation as well as granting equal respect to the social function of teaching as to research.

Ohmann was, I believe, the first to pose the question this way: "Can one say that the professional internalized the political? That composition took social conflict as part of its domain, rather than exiling it or offering to resolve it through the ministrations of experts, as with economics and political science earlier?…

Moreover, the profession seems to me to have taken sides in social conflict—taken sides, broadly speaking, with the less privileged and against centers of power" (*Politics* 84). While so many of us in literary and cultural studies were advocating exactly this kind of work, composition was the potentially first field in higher education to build this dimension into its mission from its founding moments as a profession.

But the sad truth is that at this moment, the task remains largely incomplete. "The professionalization of composition, while installing the usual apparatus (journals, conferences, a professional society, graduate programs and degrees), bringing a great advance in theoretical sophistication, and winning job security and good compensation for advanced practitioners, has made little if any difference in who does the front line work, under what regimen, for what pay, and so on" (*Politics* 133). The problem is understandable: pressures from all directions make the necessary work of establishing disciplinary research credentials paramount in the formation of disciplinary credibility, while those very practices are the traditional means of separating research from teaching, politics from knowledge, literature from composition. The likely disciplinary gains are then not widely shared when management appreciates that only a small cadre of disciplinary researchers in composition are necessary because it is cheaper to staff most intro writing courses with part-time, flex-labor, gen ed instructors. And the terrible irony is that the history of the profession has valorized its own work force in exactly that way. The more innovative work of writing specialists to reform professional labor gets compromised at the get go when only the elite cadre of disciplinary researchers gets accredited, and the dual labor force finds even more grist for its "flexible accumulation" mill. Marc Bousquet's ground-breaking work in these areas has been troublesome and provocative for many, but the force of his analysis should not be buried under fears of a critique levied not against personal and ethical alliances as against the structural relations of the labor of writing instructors. Collaborative efforts to improve working conditions for everyone in English studies will best begin in solidarity with the most vulnerable members of the profession.

Afterthoughts, or Towards Another Beginning

Freedom, academic or otherwise, is what education is about, as progressive educators have long been arguing. What it is and how to get it is the problem. Since there are no obvious easy answers to these problems, let me just sign off by making one contentious claim that flies in the face of most versions of American individualism. One can more easily create spaces outside capital, free from the press of profit, than one can find "individual" spaces outside the social and political. And that's a good thing. That is, where once the function of disciplinary professionals in the university was to create knowledge "for its own sake," it would now be more accurate, and more possible, to say "for social and political sake, rather than exclusively for capital's sake." That is, "capital's sake" clearly

designates the interests of the wealthy, the owners of capital, so that we can define "social and political sake" as in the interests of a much broader range of citizens. This is more than a merely semantic distinction: the relative zones of autonomy crucial to free inquiry, learning, and debate always have social significance even when they don't directly produce symbolic or real capital. We are interdependent with others even in our private lives. The flourishing of creativity, imagination, and peace between human beings works outside, and beside (as well as sometimes with) the regimes of profit, even as those seeking to sustain such domains must inevitably enter the contractual world of commodity exchange. In other words, it is also the case that academic freedom, at all levels, must be funded, whether by public revenue or private capital. This is not a contradiction but a distinction. There is no version of freedom that does not include freedom from massive debt, hunger, and deprivation. These differences can be articulated, created, and organized.

Richard Ohmann's entire career has been aiding us in the project of social and educational freedom. But to conclude on one particular point in this project, one can understand Ohmann's explanation of the strong point of professionalism this way: "Professions do well when they are understood, and understand themselves, as politically neutral and acting in the interests of everyone" (*Politics* 122). I would probably want to reword this a bit by saying that professions work best when they create working spaces that are (relatively speaking) "economically neutral," sustaining relatively autonomous spaces of not-capital where participant judgment, not just profit, guides qualitative decision-making. Recall that in a more recent essay, Ohmann described his own sense of how social the personal was for him, as in the feminist slogan, "the personal is the political," and the same dynamics are at work here.

At best, the ordinary meaning of politically neutral might mean neutral with respect to the special interests of particular individuals, groups, or nations, for that matter. From the other direction, "acting in the interests of everyone" is also not neutral, but partisan, invested, posed against forms of exclusivity such as racism, totalitarianism, sexism, ethnocentrism, and so forth. Thus, for instance, the famous 1940 AAUP Statement of Principles of Academic Freedom and Tenure argues for the "common good:" "*Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole*" (AAUP). The common ground, of course, does not appear magically, but only under social and political conditions free from relative coercion by special interests, but certainly not free of social and political consequences. "Political neutrality" has too often meant education that doesn't disturb the status quo. As Louis Menand recently put it, "As always, the invitation to academics is to assist in the construction of the intellectual armature of the status quo. This is an invitation we should decline without regrets" (17).

Any version of political neutrality has, "willy nilly" (one of Ohmann's favorite colloquialisms), political effects. Of course, it is

also true that professions formed as ways to gain control over specific markets, but this is a relational matter, not an exclusively epistemological matter: that is, autonomy over knowledge domains required freedom from direct capital (and narrow political) interests from those outside the discipline. Indeed, everyone's hatred of HMOs is that capital has reached deeply into the decision-making processes of physicians who ought to be able to use health rather than profit criteria in treatment decisions. And that autonomy from capital has tangible social benefits that also affect the way we politically administer those benefits "for everyone," at least everyone seeking medical attention if not for the owners of the HMOs and pharmaceuticals.

Can we imagine some degree of freedom from the current phase of capitalism? Well, Ohmann puts it this way: "globalizing capital's dominance will not last forever. Opposition is out there. Resistance happens now; it will become smarter and more organized. Many will join it because many are harmed by globalization…What will save academic freedom from obsolescence will be actual alliances of teachers with other workers in the university and with knowledge workers of all kinds, here and abroad" (Politics 165). I too hope we can become "smarter and more organized" so that each of the historical frames I have thinly outlined in this essay can play significant roles in our professional work by saving some indispensable elements of that history and invent others. For that to happen, we will have to reorganize our professional and disciplinary priorities to better negotiate for humane working conditions even under the current, destabilizing conditions of global capitalism.

Notes

[1] I thank Jeffrey Williams for pointing out this link to the "man of letters" tradition.

[2] One way of working these materials into an undergraduate liberal arts curriculum is obviously to collaborate with colleagues from history, sociology, etc., as if one were developing a "learning community" (see Gabelnick, et.al., *Learning Communities*; Graff, *Beyond the Culture Wars*).

[3] Todorov provides the evidence of genocide: "in 1500 the world population is approximately 400 million, of whom 80 million inhabit the Americas. By the middle of the sixteenth century, out of these 80 million, there remain ten. Or limiting ourselves to Mexico: on the eve of the conquest, its population is about 25 million; in 1600, it is one million" (133).

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