On Theory and Resistence:
From an Epistemological
to an Ontological Project

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The 1979 inaugural issue of *Works and Days* is a remarkable arti-fact. The pages of the issue are yellowed with time, bound by two staples, and appear to be Xeroxed. The type is that of an early dot matrix printer. A small insert tucked between the cover and the title page lists the "errata" in the issue: "p.4: for 'renumeration' read 're-muneration.'" The texture and thickness of the paper is not unlike resume paper. This selection suggests an assumption of longevity by the editors. To choose cheaper paper would imbue the issue with a disposable characteristic. An acknowledgment page hints at the ma-terial processes and labor of the issue's production. The editors thank the English Department at SUNY Buffalo, the Graduate Student As-sociation, and Sub-Board One, Inc.—a not-for-profit student print shop that published the issue—for helping to fund the endeavor. They also note "Media Studies and the English Department have al-lowed us computer time" (n.p.). We can assume several hours of labor by the editors went into typing and editing the issue at the com-puter—or computers—made available to them. This requires not just interaction with the hardware of the computer, but also interfacing with the software of a word processing program. Issue One of *Works and Days* was made possible by the intersection of intellectual and physical labor, technologies of textual production and reproduction, and economic and material resources available to the editors through their institutional situatedness.

The materiality of this first issue is significant for two related reasons. The title of the journal *Works and Days* is taken from Hesiod's classic of the same name. In the introduction, subtitled "A Note on Discourse in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"—a riff on Ben-jamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduc-

tion"—the editors note Hesiod's *Works and Days* is a "pragmatic and earth-bound work" that is "often dismissed as a matter-of-fact handbook on the basics of arable farming . . . as well as an almanac of days of the month and year which are best suited for carrying out various activities" (*i*). The editors, however, find the relationship between people and the material processes of production, labor, and human activity to be of profound significance. Processes of production and human activity shape the self and social relations. The interdependent practices of living and production generate a way of knowing and thus also produce authority. Hesiod's text was written at the advent of the iron age and calls on a prodigal brother to remember the familial and communal ways of an agricultural past. Hesiod's *Works and Days* calls attention to the changing practices, knowledges, and authority of a given historical moment. The editors liken this work to a discourse of disenfranchisement that comes when new technologies abruptly alter social and political relations. They imagine their own contemporaneous moment within a similar framework of disenfranchisement. They argue that as new and ever-faster communication technologies intersect with systems of knowledge production, the authority of the "expert" is fetishized. Their observation is related to both Adorno and Horkheimer's concept of the culture industry in which managed processes and standardized mass cultural production turn us into passive consumers rather than producers of culture, art, and knowledge of our own realities and to Naomi Klein's concept of "magical thinking," a line of reasoning that believes the climate crisis can be solved by the same market-based system that caused the crisis in the first place. The age of the expert assumes all social and political problems can be fixed with technocratic solutions and experts, the editors argue, "meticulously [and] scrupulously rehearse and preform their public roles as delegated managers" (*iii*). The systems of knowledge and expert control reorient social functions and isolate individuals from networks and social labor that produces joint social action.

Works and Days, from its inception, challenges the knowledge systems and the authority of expertise within its various systems. Indeed, the journal's production process manufactured a network that realigned associations within the institution and created new relationships among people, departments, and technologies. This new network manufactured a space for communicative labor and joint inquiry that produces new knowledge that confronts the authority of

the expert. The mission of *Works and Days* was to produce criticism in both its negative and positive formulations. It was not just to critique; it was also to use inquiry as a vehicle for theory and to produce new knowledge about the social and historical implications for systems of knowledge production including the institutional discourses and methods of the university. Throughout the 35 volumes of *Works and Days*, theorization becomes its vehicle for understanding the tension between the production and circulation of discourse and technologies that change our practices of living and authority. From the acceleration of capitalism, the advent of the internet, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the global financial crisis of 2008, *Works and Days* has responded to substantial technological and ideological shifts in our lived realities. This essay will review how the journal has taken up theory in response to these changes over the course of its history and conclude by suggesting why theory remains important for future scholarship and resistance.

The Early Years

In what David Downing describes as the first series of *Works and Days*, the editors assume responsibility for theorizing the consequences of modes of knowledge production in their contemporaneous moment. They assume responsibility for critiquing systems in which knowledge is produced and how those systems shape the cultures we inhabit. The University was not exempt from this critique. The first issue stands apart in this critique in that among academic articles it includes selected proceedings from a symposium held at SUNY Buffalo titled "The University and the Arts: Are They Compatible?" The participants included Robert Buck, John Cage, Robert Creeley, Merce Cunningham, and Morton Feldman, an eclectic group of postmodern artists, choreographers, writers, and music composers. Most of the speakers' comments emphasized a conflicted relationship between the arts and the University. The institutionalization and structure of a curriculum was, in many ways, anathema to creative production. Robert Creeley, for example, argues that the "pattern of our semesters, our course structures, proposes that after a person has taken a course in this or that activity he or she will be capable of some distinct performance" (69). The "social enterprise" of a university, his argument suggests, is a process of producing people with a set of skills with which s/he can perform, rather than social

(inter)action (69). Similarly, Merce Cunningham argues that institutionalization necessarily creates conformity and turns art instruction into a process that reproduces art. Morton Feldman clarifies Cunningham's point by suggesting that there is a difference between teaching an object (art) as the experience and teaching experiences of doing and producing as art.

The discussion of the symposium coincides with the concerns raised by the editors in the introduction. The character of discourse in the age of the expert individuates people. The speakers worry that art—broadly speaking—and what counts as art is codified in curricular spaces and thus students' experience of art is mediated through the (expert) teacher. Likewise, when we fetishize expertize, the spaces for interaction and joint human activity diminish. Both situations disenfranchise. The student is disenfranchised from participating in knowledge production. The non-expert is disenfranchised from political authority. Many of the speakers were teachers at Black Mountain College, a short-lived experimental arts college in North Carolina, and their descriptions of it and the learning environment contrast the situation they describe in formal academia. John Cage describes that "what actually happened at Black Mountain was that many things were taught without there being any assigned times for that exchange to take place. It really took place when people were together, and they were together primarily when they were hungry" (77). Robert Creeley responds to Cage by reminiscing that "the faculty and students had the responsibility for and direction of [the colleges] activities" and recalls that "Charles Olson would quite usually begin a class at seven in the evening and be going at one o'clock the next afternoon" (77–78). The point Creeley makes is that classes and instruction were not limited to predetermined course content but "went as long as there was an engagement of active interest and something left to work with" (78). Creeley and Cage, among others, agree, specialization in the context of the university is "extraordinarily divisive" (78).

The concerns raised by the editors and the symposium participants required attention and in many ways the articles published in the first series use theory and theoretical perspectives to bridge the divisiveness of institutions and break barriers that prevent experiences and communicative action that allows us to know and understand our worlds. In the pages of *Works and Days*, theory plays an important role in breaking barriers and dissolving divides that are established in systems that privilege expertise. In fact, many of the jour-

nal's early contributors imagine what editor David Downing later described as a period of "high theory" as liberating for interpretation and the generation of new knowledge. There is a feeling of excitement in the pages of *Works and Days* as new theory and interpretive methods unfetter scholars. Steven Jones' "Dispersing Circles: Textualism, the Practices of Criticism, and the Horizons Left Behind," appearing in Issue 3, captures this excitement via the new possibilities for interpretation and critique. Jones begins his essay writing: "In recent years, not suddenly, there has appeared among literary critics and others another 'topos', call it 'textualism,' which frankly disavows the presence of qualitative or distinguishing traits among types or categories of texts" (65). For Jones, the "scientific" prescriptions of formal hermeneutics limit a text to the objective representation of reality. Textualism denies such prescriptions. It, as he writes, puts a "crack in the mirror [of] several previous concepts of *mimesis*" (emphasis in original 65).

Jones' interpretation of textuality elides the systems of knowing in the age of expertise that is described by the editors in Issue 1 and rearticulated by Brian Caraher in a revision of the introduction that opens Issue 3, which came after a five-year hiatus of the journal. Jones' interpretation relies heavily on Barthes' "The Death of the Author" and Foucault's "What is an Author?" Both, he argues, are critical of criticism that simply wishes to recover the author and instead, he argues, their works reorient interpretive practices toward the "indeterminate 'play' of a text's signifiers" (66). The poststructural and deconstructive groundings of textualism subverts not only the authority of the author and point of origin of a text, but it also elides the authority of the literary expert who ascribes the "true" meaning of a text. Jones imagines that by eschewing the isolated and individuated authority of the author and the critic, interpretation becomes a social and collaborative practice. When we imagine a text as not self-contained, for example, the practice of interpretation enters a plurivocal environment in which there is an interplay among written texts and social worlds (71). Within this mode of interpretation, context is an important constituent of the text. The intertextual elements place the text within a social sphere in which multiple meanings are possible through associations and repetitions of "normative and transvaluative naming practices" (72). Textualism unmoors the conformity of knowledge and art wrought through institutionalization that Merce Cunningham describes in the symposium and creates the

potential of a reciprocal exchange between the text and the interpreter-critic. Jones' projection of textualism recognizes a potential for this process to circumvent systems of knowledge production and produce a new social text that transforms discourses which circulate and shape the world.

If Issues 1 and 3 set the journal's agenda to dissolve borders and recuperate the recognition of collective interest and possibility for social action within institutional frameworks, both inside and outside the academy, the subsequent issue implicitly situates this agenda as a process not yet realized, but already underway. This issue includes essays that are both retrospective and forward-looking. Robert Wess's review of Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious*, titled "A New Hermeneutic in Old Clothes," finds the book important not so much for what it does for contemporaneous Marxist theory, but for where Jameson is going with it. Jameson "writes with one foot in the discourse of Hegelian Marxism, [and] also with one foot out" (58). The foot that is "out" is Jameson's take on narrative theory and class consciousness and, for Wess, the most promising aspect of Jameson's book. Jameson reimagines the consciousness-raising narrative not as something that emerges from a "centered subject" who suddenly realizes her/himself as a commodity, but as a narrative that preexists the subject and makes possible the "articulation of subjectivity" (62). By fostering the collective nature of narratives, individual relationships to modes of production will dissolve and a positive hermeneutic for community building and solidarity emerges. Jameson's text, writes Wess, depicts Marxist theory as evolving and responding to changes within systems of production.

The production of reality via text is not limited to Marxists takes on narrative, but also extended to objects of art. Leonard Folgarait's "Cubism and the Suppression of Metaphor" presents Cubism as an early example of art challenging the idea of objective reality. Cubism, Folgarait argues, fuses form with the void of space and is a "purposefully arbitrary blending of given separate categories of the natural world" (9). Because categories for seeing and knowing the world are not explicitly separate, cubism claims a different reality. That cubism's deflation of space and categories of "things" make such a different reality also calls on the viewer to realize pre-cubist painting was also an assemblage of materials and the painting as just another object in the world. Folgarait argues that cubism pushes against "capitalist-industrialization and the social structures it partnered" because

changes in production necessarily changes meaning (12). Cubism's materiality and mode of production articulates a new artistic language that produces an experience for the viewer and, in relief, makes apparent implicit cultural processes of knowledge production that are crafted through systems of production. Though Folgarait does not say as much, the experience of viewing a cubist painting and the interaction with the material object is pedagogical. It, like Wess' emphasis on Jameson's revised narrative theory, offer points of disruption to automated processes of knowledge production within a cultural milieu of expertise and control.

Much later, in Issue 16, devoted to the intersections between theory and pedagogy, Paul A. Bové examines the purpose of theory in scholarship. He cites a conversation between Foucault and Deluze from 1972 in which Foucault suggests theory is a form of struggle against power, "a struggle aimed at revealing and undermining power where it is most insidious" (qtd. from Bové 15). Bové continues to cite Foucault writing that for him the purpose of theory "is not to awaken consciousness . . . but to sap power, to take power" (qtd. from Bové 15). One cannot escape power, but theory makes power visible and changes relations of power. The description of Foucault's account of theory and power suggests also that theory acts in the world when it becomes useful to people in their struggles. In this sense, theory belongs to people and, as Bové relates, Foucault understands there is "indignity of speaking for others" (qtd. from Bové 15). For Bové, theorization is animating. To use theory for its disruptive potential of received knowledges from automated systems critiques the world as it is. To use theory as a vehicle to reorganize structures of power imagines the world as it could be.

Bové's formulation of theory reflects a broader maturation of a field that has used theory to extend the scope of the humanities into the terrain of politically conscious cultural criticism. An earlier special issue of *Works and Days* marks the beginning of this transition through self-critique that attempts to chart a trajectory for the intersections of theory, cultural criticism, and literary studies. The issue specifically tackles the broader political implications of cultural criticism. The purpose, David Downing relates in the introduction, "was to explore from several perspectives the growing concern within the profession to transform the act of literary criticism into a more politically self-conscious cultural criticism" (7). Cultural criticism lends itself to the original agenda of *Works and Days* to dissolve the bound-

aries of institutional systems that codify knowledge and produce static and strained social relations.[1] Downing explains that cultural criticism necessitates the "circumscri[ption] [of] a relatively new field of interdisciplinary studies encompassing a wide range of disciplines and materials" (7). Downing's view, however, is that too often interdisciplinary work "simply mix traditional models of inquiry rather than reconstitute the objects and functions of the social production of knowledge" (8). That is, the appropriation of new theory and methods of inquiry are molded in ways to reproduce the work already taking place.

The contributors to the issue all see the goals of cultural criticism as innately political. The theories invested in cultural criticism, for the contributors, are not beyond the realm of the political, but are bound with politics and when brought within the discipline are incorporated with practices and systems of social reproduction. Evan Watkins, for example, argues that cultural studies make apparent how literary studies are aligned with social structures of power. The discipline, he writes, has a tendency to "feed on change" yet not change itself (11). Evans turns to Gramasci's *Prison Notebooks* and the role of traditional and organic intellectuals on cultural production. Gramsci argues the traditional intellectual, those of us in the academy, are self-deceived into thinking that we are independent and autonomous from class determinations and ideology. Evans sees a similar self-deception in the promise of cultural studies. We must view our work as the cultural (re)productions of a professional class (27–28). Evans writes, the "would-be radical programs for change originate from a relatively privileged class position" (28). His comments echo those of Foucault above: there is an indignity in speaking for others. The indignity is greater when the cultural work and production of cultural skills of a privileged class are defended or go unnoticed. Evans imagines that cultural criticism should offer a revisionist self-history: our theories should be used to explore the ambivalence and antagonisms of class struggles of which we are a part and perpetuate.

Complimenting this call for greater theoretical-self-critique, David Shumway offers a perspective of how the field should take up theory. Like the other contributors, Shumway understands that, by virtue of being in the university, our use and study of theory is always already political. Shumway recognizes that the self-reflexive critiques by the other contributors is important for the "discussion of *what* we want to do as well as *how* we do it" (emphasis in original 88). Though

the work of theory and criticism is innately political, Shumway cautions us that "short-term political goals should not be the overriding concern of scholarly enterprises" (84). For Shumway, no matter the theory one uses to produce scholarship, it should always look toward a horizon. Theory both sees the world as it is, but also imagines and works toward the world as it could be through political action and social change. Shumway advances Foucault's argument above about theory and power. If for Foucault, theory alters relationships of power, Shumway's understanding and argument suggests the ends of theory should be to expose the operation of power and change the structures that perpetuate that power. Theory, he argues, should "re-describ[e] the culture itself and [be used] for rethinking its future" (88). Theory makes visible alternative social and political arrangements.

The project for theory advanced by Shumway came to a head in the Spring of 1991 when *Works and Days* devoted the issue to responding to the culture wars. The issue defends teaching and teaching practices as they have changed along with the curriculum, canon, and theory. Don Kraemer's contribution explores what are now well-trod criticisms of the social relations of the radical classroom. Kraemer concedes the actual project of radical pedagogy can never be realized in a university classroom, but argues that "distorting relations" helps to both understand implicit power relationships and changes them differently in each class in "unpredictable and hopeful ways" (26). Laura L. Doan's contribution describes how she uses feminist theory and pedagogy to teach her students, who mostly come from "white, upper-middle class suburbs" who think they "can be unique by being Greek," to teach difference (29). The feminist classroom, she writes, "destabilizes students' familiar environments" enough that students can come to see "Otherness" represented in their texts and how "difference poses an immense threat to white, patriarchal hegemony" (35). Although these essays are grounded in the praxis of theory and teaching practices, the issue highlights an important aspect of theory as its been taken up in the first series of *Works and Days*: Theory can alter social circulations and contest socio-historic constructions of race, class, gender, and sexuality, and in so doing it can expose how these identity categories are exploited to uphold inequality. At the very least, theory makes visible alternative social arrangements that do not replicate the status quo. Because we can conceive of a different future, it is the first step toward making that future possible. The-

ory is a speculative project that makes possible the conception of alternative social and political arrangements. In both the outward focus through the study of literature, art, and culture and the self-reflexive inward focus on the conditions of how we produce theory and criticism, the articles and essays serve to critique and remake institutionalized systems of knowledge production. The new knowledges theory helps produce provide new, enfranchising discourses that grant new authority for confronting systems of (re)production within which we are imbricated.

The Middle Years

In 1994, the journal made an abrupt transition in response to "the electronic revolution" and began what David Downing and James Sosnoski call the second series of *Works and Days* (9). This series is devoted entirely to the emergence of digital technologies and computers in our daily lives and within academia. As with Hesiod's time, as with the contemporaneous moment of the first issue, Downing and Sosnoski see the advent of computers and the internet as another period of transition in which technological changes reorient cultures, social arrangements, labor, and the (re)production of discourse. The explosion of digital media and digital technology radically altered systems of production and practices of labor and living. This radical alteration produced new forms of expertise and changed the structures through which authority and power are exercised. Downing and Sosnoski's introduction emphasizes that the kinds of interpersonal exchanges made possible in "cyberspace" create new experiences for learning and generating knowledge.

Critical theory does not so much play a role in the volumes that make up series two. Theory, in these issues, takes what Downing and Sosnoski describe as a "postmodern" turn (24). The ethic of inward critique found in the first series is maintained in the second, yet while the traditional mode of producing scholarship as a query in which "well-defined terms derived from conceptual systems" are applied to gain knowledge and meaning, in the new postmodern online environment, the process of inquiry is a positive formulation and comes from the bottom up, rather from the top down. Much of the second series is devoted to theorizing the potential of new discursive networks to develop new knowledges through the formation of new associations among academics, institutions, and technologies.

Knowledge produced about the potential and practical applications for communicative social action are generated through reflection and narrative of the writer/researcher's experiments and experiences of participating in online environments and projects. As David Schaafsma writes in the forward to volumes 17 and 18 (1999-2000), stories are "sites of rich descriptive detail, grounded as they are in particular contexts, vehicles help us to think about the real from a constructed exchange of perspectives" (11). Indeed, narrative is the vehicle that allowed Hesiod to examine the cultural and political consequences of the new Iron Age. Here, too, narrative is the vehicle for theorizing the changes wrought by the new digital age.

The second series is a return of sorts to the beginnings of the journal, though not without difference. The early issues of series one focused on dissolving existing discursive boundaries that entrenched knowledge and authority and prevented social exchange and action. The newness of cyberspace presented sites of exchange in which new social formations and human activity could be formed and explored. Gian Pagnucci and Nicholas Mauriello in Volumes 17/18 (1999-2000), for example, recognize the potential of online narrative writing to produce new methods and practices for meaning-making while bridging disciplinary boundaries that separate literacy studies, narrative theory, and technology studies.[2] For Downing and Sosnoski, the "dialogic and open-ended character of work in cyberspace" is remarkably similar to the kinds of spontaneous and fluid exchanges the symposium speakers from Issue 1 found important for teaching and learning art (11). The promise of cyberspace is an unstructured environment of exchange. Forums, listservs, online discussion groups, and social media create spaces and opportunities for exchange that are ongoing and without artificial end. Like Charles Olson's classes, they end when there is nothing else left to say. The internet creates the potential for new networks of exchange and the production of new knowledges that are otherwise not possible within traditional institutional frameworks. The value placed on publications and articles produces a system that focuses on product and a "mode of inquiry" that is detached and in which "scholars first answer the questions they raise in the classroom, then later present their conclusions" at conferences and in university presses (20). The process described here is an individual pursuit of knowledge in which findings are only shared when the process is complete. Downing and Sosnoski imagine that the openness of the internet produces environments

that promote alternative processes of mutual inquiry and an ongoing and dialogic development of knowledges. The new social situation changes not only how knowledge is produced, but what knowledge is possible to produce.

Importantly, though, the editors recognize that access to electronic environments "opens new possibilities for freedom as well as oppression" (10). For all the internet offers, there is, they see, dangerous potential of the electronic age to maintain and exacerbate existing hegemonies that the project of cultural criticism tried to abate. Demonstrating incredible foresight, Downing and Sosnoski argue against a "cyberutopian" view that new digital technologies will bring freedom and liberation from constraints and control. They write: "To expect that technological innovations will simply trickle down from cyberspaces to social spaces is to rely on the very market economy that re-enforces … social inequalities" (17). The generation of capital relies on the circulation of discourses and literacies important to the knowledge economy. In *Literacy in American Lives*, Deborah Brandt argues that literacy is inexorably bound to the economy, technological change, and political and social systems and those that have access to literacies of dominant economies reap the rewards of capitalism (43). Downing and Sosnoski understand this condition of literacy and recognize that the "increased use of technology is likely to intensify existing disparities" of class, race, gender, age, and ethnicity based on access, or lack thereof, to digital technologies and online spaces (17-18). There was no doubt in Downing's and Sosnoski's minds that culture, social relationships, and the economy were undergoing immense changes because of new technologies. The transition in *Works and Days* was in part a felt ethical responsibility to theorize and examine the consequences of this shift and develop strategies to use emerging technologies as tools for positive action.

Most of this theorizing plays out through reflection on the work accomplished in online discursive networks of academics and reflection on the development of digital pedagogies through the incorporation of digital technologies in the classroom. Volume 15 (1997), for example, is devoted to conversations about the failed attempt of the TICTOC Project (Teaching in Cyberspace Through Online Courses). The project intended to implement an electronic English department and online courses at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) where James Sosnoski was at the time. The experiment of the project was to use online discussion spaces to link and invite other

scholars who were not at UIC, but interested in online pedagogies, to participate in the development of this program by identifying issues and problems and working toward resolving them prior to implementation. The plan was to archive the discussions on a website and use UIC's electronic English department as a resource and model for implementing similar programs elsewhere. Although the plan to produce a fully functioning online department with course offerings failed, through his reflection on the project Downing is able to posit an understanding of how the ad hoc nature of online collaboration actually functions: "a network of affiliations that lives, grows, and dies, and is reborn as the needs of constituents shift" (7). He likens this situation to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "rhizome," calling the online environment a "space for work that grows and subsides as the interests of participants change" (7). What stands out from Downing's description is the mutability of online discursive spaces. Unlike the Burkean parlor in which discourse and argument are constrained by linearity and rational norms, the organic quality of online discursive spaces allows for shifting authority, relations, expertise, all of which are dispersed across evolving networks.

Reflection on the TICTOC Project also offers a mode for theorizing the incongruous meeting between virtual networks and material and institutional restrictions. Ken McAllister's contribution is a narrative of the project from inception to completion and includes synopses of the various public discussions that took place on the project's listservs and webpage and synopses of the "backroom" conversations of the project's organizers. McAllister recognizes that one of the problems that lead the project to failure was that the online collaborative project was a "complex and open-ended task" but that the actual goal was to institute a very real entirely electronic English department at UIC (5). The institutional realities at UIC undermined the visions of the project organizers and ideas generated through the online forums. McAllister sums up this discrepancy writing that while administrators want "faculty, staff, and students to engage in creative, cutting-edge technological solutions" they want the same people to "behave traditionally" as they do in regular classroom settings (2). The institutional norms and structured environment of universities and departments require the replication of traditional face-to-face classes in an online setting. The problem McAllister identifies is the same problem identified by Robert Creeley earlier in this essay: that because of the structure of our programs, the goal of coursework

and education is the credentialing of students. The problem extends to the level of faculty and what counts as research, how should this work be rewarded, and how should it be measured against "traditional" forms of scholarship? McAllister's reflection recognizes that the elastic spaces for discourse and the possibility for new forms of collaborative knowledge making described by Downing are still tethered to institutionalized knowledge systems that act as gatekeeper for discourse and the work that can be accomplished. Importantly, reflections on the TICTOC Project make visible implicit institutional constraints on discursive action and opens space for theorizing the productive use of digital collaborative environments to dissolve institutional boundaries.

While the TICTOC Project was devoted to creating a virtual department, Volume 16 (1998) is dedicated to broad projects implementing digital technologies in the classroom. The essays included in the volume are all classroom reflections from participants in the New Media Classroom Project sponsored by the CUNY Graduate School and the American Studies Association's Crossroads Project. The projects brought together a cohort of faculty from around the country "interested in experimenting with new technologies in their classrooms" (Bass and Enyon 12). These projects focused on the processes of teaching courses using experimental online components and the role technology played in changing learning and the learning environment. Like the volume devoted to the TICTOC Project, most of the knowledge generated about online, its potential and its pitfalls, comes from reflection on experimentation and experience. Tracy Weiss, for instance, incorporated online discussion threads into a 200-level elective for History majors and Women Studies minors titled "Women in U.S. History." Weiss found that by establishing a framework and protocol for questions and responses, the "technological tools helped [her] to establish a dialectic tone . . . and to engage some students in a critical and creative reflection of the course texts between class sessions" (267). Weiss's incorporation of technology is representative of the kinds of projects written about in the volume. While, from the contemporary perspective, there is nothing novel to what Weiss describes or the other experiments included in the issue, 20 years ago this work required risk and a lot of thoughtfulness.

James Farrell's response that comes at the end of the issue, to me, strikes at the core of *Works and Days'* focus on the internet and online learning environments. Farrell writes that the incorporation

of new technologies have us "confront the big questions of education by considering the broader purposes of what we are doing" (376). His statement is reminiscent of David Shumway's contribution reflecting on the work of cultural criticism. Farrell's essay utilizes the same modes of self-critique. His essay, like the issue in which Shumway's piece appears, reflects a moment of maturation with a new direction in the field. The essay asks us to consider our own goals as educators in the humanities and what we are trying to accomplish through our engagement with digital technologies towards those goals. He writes that it is important to remember that "other people—and not just technology—are working with implicit goals for technology that may undermine or complicate our pedagogical aims" (384). Technophiles, like experts in systems of mechanical reproduction, assume the fix to social problems will be addressed through technological fixes that organize and streamline services and people which includes education delivery. Farrell's essay rewrites Hesiod's story. It recognizes that "technology powers not just machines, but people and their culture, and that education and other cultural institutions are caught inevitably" in the trap of progress that, in the age of the digital "technophiliac," "is essentially the commodification and commercialization of human improvement" (384). If we are not careful, new technologies will be technologies of disenfranchisement.

Farrell's essay and much of series two reflects on current realities so that future paths may be charted. As an American Studies scholar, Farrell argues that the discipline is "rooted" in experience and it is from experience from which we draw knowledge" (381-382). Experience in digital environments draws forth knowledge about how our discourse is produced and the potential for that discourse within and against overlapping systems of economic and cultural production. Farrell recognizes invisible parameters of control that may define our disciplines and our pedagogies for us. Yet, in recognizing the parameters of control, he also recognizes potential,l less-restricted pedagogical spaces and practices within which students and teachers can "play" with ideas in open-ended ways that circumvent centralized control and the received knowledge of those systems (383). Similarly, it is only through reflection and the story he tells himself and the reader of the (maybe) failed TICTOC Project that David Downing can analyze the actual potential of the ad hoc environment of online interaction and the extent to what can actually be accomplished in those settings. By reflecting on and telling stories about the experi-

ments with incorporating online components into classes, the contributors to Volume 16 can analyze how students learn and what kinds of knowledge they can produce for themselves and each other within the strict institutional contexts of academia. Much of the second series still holds forth promise for change. Though the broad strokes of the second series recognize that institutional and contextual restraints limit the disruptive potential of the internet and online environments, many contributors recognize a potential for alternative forms a writing and interacting. This potential reveals a horizon toward which we can continue to explore projects that challenge the status quo and work for change.

The 21st Century

In 2002, *Works and Days* took another turn in response to neoliberal globalization. Although there is not an introduction from the editors explaining the reasons for the drastic turn as there was for the second series, Mike Sell's introduction to Volume 20 (2002) serves well to explain the necessity of this transition. He writes:

We live in an era when more and more things, people, language, and ideas are moving across borders—national, cultural, and environmental borders being the most significant—than ever before. Oil, guns, pop music, brand-name knock-offs, cheap labor, and soldiers are the commodities *du jour* (8).

As Sell's statement indicates, global markets dissolve borders and produce new circulations of goods, people, capital, and ideas. The new circulations and networks reorient institutions, governments, and people within the market order of capitalism. In short, the fetishizing of global free-market capitalism produces new authorities and relegates the management of social and political policy issues to market experts. The free-market as a technology disenfranchises significant populations of people as knowledge, authority, and human activity are abruptly transformed on a global scale. Sell argues that it is necessary to theorize this new age and the ways in which it shapes us and our practices of living and work so that our theories "might be used in turn to shape the forces of globalization" (7). Revelatory of this forward-looking moment and its continued relevance, Sell later revised and re-edited the collection into a book titled *Avant-Garde Performance and Material Exchange: Vectors of the Radical*, published in 2011. It is not surprising, then, that *Works and Days* picked up Sell's call in

the aftermath of 9/11 and at an historical moment when the advancement of global capitalism was intensified through the deployment of military technologies and global military movements.

Thematically, the third series can be organized under the banner of resistance. Aihwa Ong observes that neoliberalism rearticulates elements of citizenship such as entitlements and benefits according to neoliberal criteria that privilege self-enterprising and geographically mobile subjects and "constructs political spaces that are differently regulated and linked to global circuits [of economic production]" (9). The global neoliberal order reconstitutes people as economic subjects operating within the flows of global capital and reduces the capacity for the kinds of political agency and action encompassed within Hannah Arendt's concept of *vita activa*. Much of the resistance found in the third series is intended to reclaim political agency lost to systems of global capitalism by challenging the social and cultural consequences of the free-market system. In this series, theorization is used both to examine how new associations produce discourses and narratives of resistance to capitalist oppression and is used to expose and challenge dominant, hegemonic narratives. As in the earlier issues of *Works and Days*, narrative makes visible the interdependent relationships among labor, institutional situatedness, practices of living, and culture. In series three, narrative makes visible the varied material consequences of economic globalization as neoliberalism both blends and clashes with local cultures, histories, and practices of living. It allows us to theorize and resist systems that, as Ong writes, includes some populations into spaces of economic productivity while simultaneously excluding other populations. Necessarily, theory took a spatial turn at the time of the transition to series three. The uneven appropriation of theory across contexts mirrors the uneven implementation and practices of neoliberalism in local contexts. The variegated terrain of neoliberalism requires geographic metaphors for theorizing resistance in particular moments and places.

Harking to the first issues of *Works and Days*, Volume 20 analyzes how the movement of ideas and theoretical perspectives across boundaries produces communicative action that allows people to know and understand their world. This special issue examines how the ideas and texts of Fannon, Sarte, de Beauvoir, and Malcolm X, among others, circulated and moved across borders and inspired resistance to oppression during the 1960s. The radicalism of the 1960s, Sell writes, "can't be understood without careful consideration of the

production, circulation, and translation of texts across boundaries of all sorts" (9). Historical reflection of this period is important for theorizing resistance to neoliberalism not only because it represents a moment in which there was a global resistance movement to capitalist interventions, but also because radical ideas were transmitted through the same channels opened by the capitalist interventions. Sell writes that the "Cold-war-funded cultural exchanges between nations" made it easier for journalists, researchers, students, and translators to cross boundaries and as a result, global culture was transformed as "concepts, experiences, theory, practices, and embodied experiences were passed across national, ethnic, and ideological boundaries" (9). To understand how theory, texts, and ideas were transmitted and taken up across contexts is important for understanding how theory breeds resistance to the forces of economic globalism of our time. Sell writes "text is a crossroads" and argues that theory constantly evolves and transforms across cultural contexts and must constantly be retheorized and reevaluated (22). His metaphor suggests that theory or ideas circulated via a text are engagements by which meaning of one's circumstances can be constructed through a new lens and that theory gains and loses strength as it's transformed across spatial and temporal contexts.

As counterpart to Sell's recognition of the mutability of theory across spatial contexts, David William Foster offers an account of how Argentinian's in the 1960s appropriated Western texts to illuminate their own lived realities. He argues that despite government repression, Argentina of the 1960s was a "period of intense intellectual energy" (136). Economic interests in Latin America opened channels for cultural exchange between Argentina, the U.S., Europe and other Latin American and Caribbean nations. As ideas circulated into Argentina, they were appropriated within contexts specific to Argentina. Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, for example, was "reallegorized in terms of Argentines sociohistorical realities, both the witch hunts of the Peronistas in the 1940s and the 1950s and the later witch hunts of the military" (126). Foster relates that dramatist work by Miller along with other American playwrights like Tennessee Williams and Eugene O'Neill allowed for plays to be read within "ethnic and class tensions" and for "queer spaces of meaning" (126). These readings were aided by the translation and circulation of French Structural theorists like Barthes, Jakobson, and Lèvi-Strauss, among others that gave a discourse for viewing culture as a system and for theater and other cul-

tural and artistic productions to push against it. The global exchange of ideas transmitted through text made possible new circuits of knowledge production. As Evan Watkins calls for in the first series, theory should promote discourses for critical self-reflection and the production of a revisionist self-history. Although the 1960s are marked by brutal oppression and violence during this period of economic intervention and transformation, the Argentinian's in Foster's piece used exposure to theory, texts, and ideas to construct narratives of resistance according to specific, local contexts, histories, and circumstances.

That global capitalism transforms institutions and subjects into productive economic entities and agents, it is not surprising that several of the volumes of series three are dedicated to theorizing and resisting capitalism's restructuring of the university. Following Sell's lead of looking to the past to critically examine our present and to collectively move forward in new, ethical directions, Volume 23 (2005) is a retrospective dedicated to Richard Ohmann's influence on English studies. As the volume's editor Patricia Harkin explains, Ohmann's work "changed our understandings of ourselves as members of the academy . . . [and how we] attend to the ways in which texts work in the world" and relate to power (7). Ohmann's landmark 1976 book *English in America* elucidates the professionalization of literary and composition studies and our complicity in producing bureaucratic laborers for an industrial economy. Ohmann's critique, never not relevant, gains new bearing in a time of what Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades call "academic capitalism." Their concept, described in *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy*, neatly depicts the structural changes of the University in the era of global capitalism. They write that the change is not so much the result of "corporatization" from the outside, rather "faculty, students, administrators, and other academic professionals use a variety of state resources to create new circuits of knowledge that link higher education institutions to the new economy . . . [and] develop new networks that intermediate between private and public sector" (1). The practices of the twenty-first century American university are fully enmeshed in capital production of the global knowledge economy.

The contributors to this volume theorize the similarities between these moments and the contemporary consequences of academic capitalism through narratives examining our roles in the university and linkages to the economy. Linda Bergman argues one of

Ohmann's greatest contributions to a critical understanding of our work is his interpretation of the professionalization of composition "as an historical development reflecting the particular needs of American society at that time" (64). This is not just the result of systematic pressures to train students for technical professions, but also a result of the linkages between writing, literacy, and mechanisms that maintain social hegemony. Marc Bousquet's contribution examines the hegemonic social consequences of the marketization of the universities and students and the production of an economic class of exploited college-educated workers indentured to debt. His response, like Ohmann, is to question our belief in the links between education and democracy and ask: "can we really expect right education to create equality? Or do we need to make *equality* in order to have right education?" (emphasis in original 116). Bousquet's answer is to identify the agencies of inequality in our lives and locate spaces for solidarity across a field of other exploited workers. That is, to create equality requires us to produce narratives about ourselves and our places within a system in order to develop shared meanings and unite with others inside and outside our institutions through the identification of shared problems.

Much later, Volume 30 (2012), the journal attempts to accomplish this call for solidarity across institutional boundaries by jointly producing the issue with the online journal *Cultural Logic: Marxist Theory and Practice*.[3] This move both resists the entrenchment of academic capitalism and produces new networks of knowledge production designed to enact equality and social justice. This special issue devoted to theorizing the Occupy Movement and Joseph Ramsey's introduction examines the potential for theory to write narratives of activist movements that also counter and expose hegemonic narratives of capitalism. Like the production of the issue itself, Ramsey's contribution continues the early project of series one to use critical theory to develop a politically conscious cultural criticism and realizes it within the project of series three by situating it in a specific historical and spatial moment. Citing Alain Badiou, Ramsey argues Occupy is an "Event;" it has "created a major rupture in the prevailing culture and discourse, giving a name and a visibility to an aspect of existence which has long been present and yet largely buried and denied" (12). The movement's questioning of the foundations of capitalism demonstrate the extent of capitalism's entrenchment in our lives. For Ramsey, that there were no "demands" of what occupiers wanted

changed is precisely the point. There is no policy fix or single demand that can address the applications of neoliberal power across sites. Ramsey argues that regardless of the theoretical perspective one uses for critical analysis—Marxism, queer theory, feminist theory, ecosocialism—it should be used in a "properly Marxist spirit" (14). Theory, he continues, should approach a particular object in relation to its "contemporary social and political situation" (14). Theory should uncover the structures of power that organize the interdependent relationships of human activity, labor, and technology. It should produce narratives that make visible current realities while making possible the exchange of radical discourse and ideas that reorganize social and political associations among people.

While Sell and Ramsey use theory for negative critique and to produce critical discourses for resistance, other contributors provide a complimentary form of positive critique to theorize how marginalized populations form new associations that allow them to reclaim and exercise forms of political agency. Juan Poblete (2006), for example, turns to Latino migrant workers in the U.S. to theorize how a largely invisible population claimed political agency through producing alternative narratives about their position within the national imagination. Poblete describes Latinos as a "newly globalized population" acted on by global economic structures that "pressure [Latinos] to displace themselves to the United States by the combined effect of the destructuration of their living conditions in their countries of origin and the demands of cheap labor in the country of destination" (246). In the U.S., this population is rendered largely invisible by occupying the service tier of a two-tiered economy in which service positions provide for the immediate needs of the top-tier global sector. This position individuates migrant workers and renders them politically invisible in a system that privileges workers and economic actors of the top-tier. Yet, Poblete explains, by recognizing the interdependence of the tiers, migrant workers recognized a mutual identity based on their place within the functioning of the state and "create[d] new spaces for political agency" (262). The new identity renders Latino migrants visible and configures competing discourses and a counter-narrative in which Latino migrants are not only consequential in the culture and politics of the state, but can exercise that consequence.

The positive critique stemming from theorizing lived practices of resistance within specific contexts also allows us to reimagine our

critical theories. Rosemary Hennessy's (2011) examination of how women-led social movements in rural Mexico leveraged marginalized subject positions also exposes possibilities for new forms of feminist action. These women-led movements participate in what Hennessey calls "gender adjustments," which she describes as "practices that transgress or revise gender norms in the particular everyday situations" of the lives of women and men (183). Hennessey relates that as the agricultural economy of rural Mexico was restructured to meet the needs of capitalism, men were feminized through dispossession. Consequently, because of gendered divisions of labor, women took on greater responsibility to meet the needs of families and communities. This process revises traditional gender roles and "adjusts a hierarchically ordered cultural system of gendered difference" (197). In these instances, the feminine subject position gained a new form of political subjectivity and both women and men involved in women-led coalitions utilized the new authority of this position to confront the capitalist-state for the community's collective interest.

Series three amends the earlier theoretical projects of *Works and Days* to account for the rapid social, political, and cultural changes brought by the acceleration of capitalism in the 21st century. The global flows of people, discourse, capital, and goods manifest differently in local contexts and differently constitute and disenfranchise subjects. To theorize and resist the advancing global economic order required both the top-down critique of the global economic system and the bottom-up generation of knowledge culled from lived experiences. Although the sites of inquiry and methods for theorization vary across volumes of series three, the goal of theory remains consistent throughout *Works and Days*. Theory is a hopeful and speculative project. Like David Shumway's call in series one, theoretical and critical engagements should look toward a horizon. Theory is a technology that reorients intellectual activity, human practices, and social and political organizations and identities. It produces enfranchising discourses and counter-narratives with the potential to produce new forms of political agency within systems of power that disenfranchise subjects.

Conclusion

The discourses of disenfranchisement that the original editors read in Hesiod's *Works and Days* is the discourse of resistance found

in the recent volumes of this journal. The discourse of disenfranchisement need not be a lament, though. Jeffrey Walker reads Hesiod as a work of epideictic rhetoric. Walker locates the eloquence of Hesiod's work in the unconventional use of this form of rhetoric. He argues that epideictic can be defined in positive terms. In this view, he writes, "'epideictic' appears as that which shapes and cultivates the basic codes of value and belief by which society and culture lives" (9). Rather than entrenching cultural beliefs and values through praise and blame, Hesiod's use of epideictic is generative. Its purpose is to produce new insights that transform and/or create beliefs. Hesiod's *Works and Days* is not an elegy for bygone yesteryears. It is an attempt to shape cultural values and community identity within changing cultural and political structures brought by technological advancement. It is a work that understands transformation is inevitable, but also understands that we can determine how we change in response to it.

The thirty-five volumes that make up *Works and Days* can also be read as producing generative discourse. Resistance is an exclamation of who we want to be and how we want to live together. This exclamation is paralleled in Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything* around which the symposium that inspired this special issue was organized. In some ways, Klein's text is an extension of her earlier work, *The Shock Doctrine*. In that work, Klein makes clear crisis of all kinds—from economic meltdowns, terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and wars—have long served to entrench and advance capitalism through implementing policies that that would otherwise be politically difficult to pass. In *This Changes Everything* she succinctly explains that "for four decades corporate interests have systematically exploited these various forms of crisis to ream through policies that enrich a small elite—by lifting regulations, cutting social spending, and forcing large-scale privatization of the public sphere" (8). While *The Shock Doctrine* exposes a concerted and systemic effort to advance neoliberal capitalism and the national, supranational, and corporate structures that make it possible, *This Changes Everything* focuses on the inseparable relationship between capitalism and the climate crisis and calls on us to resist capitalism in order to save life on the planet. This call is particularly strong in her section on "blockadia." In this section Klein brings the reader to the front lines of protests across the globe in which everyday people are standing up to states and the neoliberal global order. Blockadia "is not a specific location on a map but rather a roving transnational conflict zone that is cropping up with increas-

ing frequency and intensity" against industrial activities that damage the environment and health of people living in those areas (294). Klein locates Blockadia at protest sites around Greece where citizens rail against austerity measures implemented after the financial crisis of 2008, in the work of indigenous groups and tribes along the US/Canadian border opposing the Keystone pipeline, in Mongolia where herders fight the Chinese government over coal mining. At the local level, Blockadia protests work to reclaim the public sphere. The protesters assert a political identity and demand greater democratic control over their communities. At the global level, Blockadia represents an autonomous global movement that creates new networks and associations. Protesters are joined in a common struggle and mutual identity. A lesson to pull from this movement, and maybe a lesson provided by Klein, is that globalization is inevitable, yet how we are organized and what that means for our lived realities is up to us. The narratives produced by resistance can shape our values and, like the quote from Mike Sell, above, "shape the forces of globalization."

Blockadia is a response to both the climate crisis and crises caused by the unsustainable advancement of capitalism. Crises provide exigent moments. Much like the local and global contexts of Blockadia, crises provide opportunities for transformation. We have again reached another of these moments. Several people in popular media and academia have declared we are now in a "post-truth" era. The assumption of "post-truth" is that truth and objective facts do not matter anymore. The assumption continues that beliefs are grounded in something else and the problem of our contemporary moment is that we cannot communicate with one another because we cannot agree on a common reality. Critics point to social media bubbles and echo chambers perpetuated by 24-hour news channels and the internet. This is too simple an explanation. The era of post-truth is more nuanced and the result of deconstructing and destabilizing dominant narratives and hegemonic structures. It is best, perhaps, to view the "problem" of post-truth as a success of the counter-narrative/epistemological project broadly found in the humanities and in the pages of *Works and Days*. This moment, then, is more akin to Hesiod's than we may realize. It provides us with the opportunity to decide the values that organize our lived experiences of labor and joint human activity.

Moving forward, however, requires transitioning theory from an epistemological to an ontological project. There is a role for biopolitics in this turn. It requires organizing bodies into new productive

networks. Much like Paul Bové, cited above, recognizes within Foucualt's theories of power, power is a productive force from which we can never escape. Foucault's conceptualization of biopolitcs recognizes that it is that manipulation of populations that produce and maintain neoliberalism. In this system of power, governing apparatuses extend the "economic model of supply and demand and of investments-costs-profit so as to make it a model of social relations" (242). What Foucault calls the neoliberal milieu organizes human activity and connectivity within a grid of economic practices. The habituated economic behavior of actors within the grid are productive for the circulation of capital. Biopolitics, like power, are neither positive nor negative. The trajectory for theorization should include biopolitical interventions that place bodies in new associative networks and new points of connection that generate other forms of lived practices. We see the start of these practices already in Blockadia, in Occupy Wall Street, in the protests at Standing Rock. These practices and communicative labor of activists in these movements create the possibility for imagining a collective future. The projects of our theory should build from these movements. As we transition to a new era, the goal should be to intervene in the biopolitical milieu so that more bodies are included into practices that allow for imagination and possibilities of alternative futures.

Notes

[1] The project to challenge the boundaries and institutionalization of knowledge is also taken up in a special double-issue volume from 1988 titled *Image and Ideology in Modern/Postmodern Discourse*. Downing and the issue's associate-editor Susan Bazargan expanded and re-edited the collection into a book of the same title. The issue resists the institutionalization of post-modern thought and criticism's commitment to opposition, disruption and permanent change and instead attempts to recuperate the political implications of postmodern theory that make visible the ideological bonds that shape representation and interpretation.

[2] The special issue edited by Pagnucci and Mauriello is titled *Project UNLOC: Understanding Narratives, Literacy, and Ourselves in Cyberspace*. This issue developed from a collaborative symposium held at IUP, home of *Works and Days*, inspired a monograph by Pagnucci and Mauriello called *Remapping Narrative: Technology's Impact on the Way We Write*.

[3] *Works and Days* also paired with *Cultural Logic: Marxist Theory and Practice* for volume 31 and the double-volume 33/34, *Education as Revolution* (2013), and *Scholactivism* (2016-2017).

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