Afterword:

The Concrete University

Marc Bousquet

Together with the staff and board of Works and Days, David Downing and Teresa Derrickson have given all of the contributors the gift of their labor, attention, and care. David's sponsorship of the material presented here puts it in the company of the remarkable work the journal has put together for many of its other special issues. Teresa's overall commitment to the project requires special recognition, together with her unusually acute and deft editorial contributions to everyone's work. I personally feel tremendously grateful to them. I feel deeply grateful to my co-contributors, as well as to Cary Nelson for his characteristically kind, committed, and thoughtful remarks. Nearly everyone involved in this issue is active in the movement to make the university productive for society, rather than profitable for capital. The generous and insightful character of the contributions or responses by the activist intellectuals in this issue is testimony to the continuing best possiblities of the university as the location of critical thought and oppositional commitment. Right now, the diverse but collective inheritances of culture and the common property of science are steadily being enclosed and administered for private gain and ever-increasing inequality. Perhaps in time through political action, solidarity with other workers, and wresting control of our professional institutions from the grasp of career management, we will be able to bring this gross feeding frenzy to an end. Perhaps not. In either case, for whatever remains of the best hopes of the university, the future will owe a profound debt to persons who share the aims of the activist intellectuals collected here. I am honored by their company.

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In thinking about how to reply to the essays here, I was struck by how they differ from the dominant "idea of the university" tradition of writing about higher education, from Newman to Kerr and Bok. The writers gathered here are struggling to describe higher education concretely—not merely as a place where "future" citizens and workers are "produced," but as the location of actual citizenship and labor by students, staff, faculty, and administration. Part of the urgency driving this trend to the concrete is the experience of the more than fifteen million students currently enrolled in higher ed, as well as the tens of millions who have recently left (with degrees or not). Graduate students and undergraduates alike work longer hours in school, spend more years in school, and can take several years to find stable employment after obtaining their degrees. Undergraduates and recent school leavers, whether degree holders or not, now commonly live with their parents well beyond the age of legal adulthood, often into their late 20s. Many graduate students leave school without their degrees when they discover that their period of "study" is in fact a period of employment as cheap labor. Among those who complete degrees and seek secure academic employment, the fraction that find it generally do so about the age of 40: thirty years ago, most academics were tenured by that age. A University of Chicago survey conducted in 2003 found that the majority of Americans now think that adulthood begins no earlier than 26—a popular conception of student life as "delayed adulthood" reflected in such notions as "30 is the new 20" and "40 is the new 30" (Irvine). The fatuousness of these representations is confounded by looking at the other end of one's employment life: few people are finding that in terms of employability after downsizing that "50 is the new 40"—persons who lose their jobs in their 50s often find themselves unemployable. What are the economic consequences for a person whose productive career can begin in their middle 30s or later, and end at 50 or sooner? This pattern presents real obstacles for both women and men wishing to raise a family. Yet media representations of extended schooling and the associated period of insecure employment are often cheery, suggesting that it's a stroke of good fortune, an extended youth free of such unwelcome responsibilities as home ownership, child-rearing, and visits to health-care providers. In this idealistic media fantasy, more time in higher education means more time to party—construing an extended youth as a prolonged stretch of otherwise empty time unmarked by the accountabilities of adulthood.

But concretely the apparently empty time of involuntarily extended youth associated with higher education is really quite full. It's full of feelings—the feelings of desperation, betrayal, and anxiety, the sense that Cary Nelson has captured for graduate employees under the heading of Will Teach for Food. Where these feelings have produced oppositional consciousness and organized resistance, university employers have sought to mobilize all the directly repressive apparatus of the state, from police power and influence with lawmakers, the judiciary, and the executive (hoping, e.g., that a Bush-packed NLRB will overturn the landmark NYU rul-

ing permitting the organization of graduate employees on private campuses), as well as its own institutional powers to expel, interfere with present employment and future careers, etc. But there is an ideological and affective apparatus as well. Chris Drew, Donna Strickland and their coauthors thoughtfully relate the suppression of oppositional student feeling, especially anger and resistance, to the more general psychopathology of the American workplace observed by Lynn Worsham in "Going Postal." Pursuing Worsham's observation that workers are taught to internalize the objective conditions of structural exploitation, and then compelled to stifle their rage at institutionalized humiliation, so that transformative energies are "derailed in the pathos of the personal," Drew and his graduate employee coauthors collaborated with Strickland, a young assistant professor and the direct supervisor of their work, to attempt something that might be called, with apologies to Jameson, "affective mapping," the narration of the production of affect through the interlocking systems of disciplinarity, collegiality, the status economy, and the law. As Paul Lauter's essay shows, the teaching that is most important to a university may not take place in a classroom: "When a great university with an $11 billion endowment by using outsourcing to push down dining hall wages… it teaches who is important and who is not. The American city in which a great university carries out its advanced bio-medical research has a higher infant-mortality rate than Costa Rica, lessons about priorities are being delivered."

Importantly, the affective map sketched by Drew, Strickland, et. al. inevitably led them to very specific employment practices: the amount of graduate employee stipends, the nature of their health insurance, the semi-formality of their status as workers under the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act. The "empty time" of extended youth-cum-"student employment" is also full of concrete employment realities, specifically those of hyperexploitation. Joe Berry's discussion of four decades of change in the objective reality of the academic labor process maps the movement from simple exploitation (wage labor) to the hyper-exploitation of contingent work, so that today the true "majority faculty" is by far the proletarianized class of persons who do not enjoy the privileges, salary, security, participation in campus governance or intellectual freedoms of the professoriate. As Joe makes clear, the mass, unreasoning acceptance of downward mobility by this group of academic workers is fueled by their special vulnerability to education ideology, "higher education's version of the Horatio Alger myth," which "leads them to frequently pursue, sometimes for years and even decades, the search for individual solutions and personal recognition of their 'merit.'"

There is a rich and varied menu of affects that actively cement the association of youth with contingent forms of the work process. The proletarian character of contingent work that Joe describes is perfectly visible in persons who are "older," and all but unrecognizable in persons we are able to describe as "young." Think about it: the image of a 25-year-old adjunct comes pre-loaded with

images of propriety (she's "learning," "getting experience," "figuring out what she wants to do with her life," "giving back to the community," etc). The image of a 45-year-old adjunct bears a very different load ("he's crazy;" "how sad;" "something oughta be done;" "he oughta move on for his own sake"). One of the salient affects of today's extended concept of youth is the pressure to donate or partially donate one's labor, under the sign of "learning," "training," "apprenticeship," "opportunity," "enjoyment," or "service," to accept an extended period of undercompensation and insecurity in the promise of an (increasingly distant) future "real wage." As the embodied cost of the concrete conditions of employment mount—for one of Drew's coauthors "all this began with a toothache"—a consciousness grounded in the objective conditions of employment struggles to emerge against the entrenched affects of disciplinarity and subordination, and against what one Drew coauthor, agreeing with Joe Berry, dubs the affective "opiates" of "prestige and recognition."

The Drew, Strickland coauthors eventually pursue Kathi Weeks' materialist and feminist insistence that the attainment even of a revolutionary consciousness is "an insufficient achievement," that political becoming can't be reduced to a transformation in consciousness. Even with the emergence of oppositional consciousness, the problem of collective political subjectivity remains "how to move from consciousness to action." Gordon Lafer's account of the graduate-employee union movement is a compelling discussion of this problem. The discourse of graduate student organizing commonly traces the daily obstacles internal to solidarity (such as the problems that come up between students with different future job prospects, traditional levels of compensation, and forms of student employment, from laboratory bench assistant to autonomous teacher). Most of those internal obstacles can be overcome by reasoning and communicative action, as is evidenced by the tendency of union card drives to succeed: the differences between graduate employees are generally subject to a talking cure. What is helpful about Lafer's discussion is its focus on the external obstacles that a collective political subject experiences in its attempt to realize worker agency concretely, in specific transformation of an academic workplace. Underscoring the economic reliance of the university on student workers, Lafer traces the bullying of students and sympathetic faculty by union-busting administrators, both through direct reprisals and the commitment of massive energies to the propping up of legal fictions, such as the semi-formality of "student employment."

Arduous as these obstacles have been, Lafer's account shows that unionization can work on behalf of the whole community, not just for those who have organized themselves. While the first wave of academic unionism by tenurable faculty has been very slow to react in material ways to casualization and the abuse of the apprentice system, graduate employee unionism has tended to reach out to other campus worker groups, both of staff (as at Yale) and of contingent teachers, as well as activist groups in the com-

munity at large (as in Penn's GET-UP). Eileen Schell describes the best promise and likeliest future of academic labor organizing in her discussion of contingent labor's increasingly cross-sectorial organizing strategy. Partially supported by a coalition of the largest unions of tenured faculty, Campus Equity Week expresses the vigorous new "metropolitan organizing" strategy of COCAL, which borrows the coalition tactics of Jobs With Justice and seeks to involve all of the campuses in a region, together with activist groups committed to workplace justice or to higher education. With an increasingly inventive commitment to creating opposition culture and coups of activist theater, the comparison that Schell (with Gary Zabel and Barbara Gottfried) make to the culture and tactics of the IWW seems more justified every year.

Schell's call for an activist labor scholarship to address the "basic illiteracy about the state of academic labor politics," is equally crucial. It is this basic illiteracy which devils even the most earnest practitioners of "critical management theory," such as Grabill, et. al. The rhetorical moves of Grabill's essay might find an audience with professional and managerial compositionists, but it is hard to see what their position has to offer the ninety percent of compositionists who work on a disposable basis. To quote Marx, Harvey, Dewey and Cornel West in favor of a "methodology" of "institutional critique" that locates agency with management rather than the self-organization of workers is a form of propagandizing, similar to Joseph Harris's eccentric use of the term "class consciousness," but it is ultimately a form of managerial idealism or internal propaganda, aimed at promoting the solidarity of the minority of tenured compositionists ("we are misunderstood"), and relying on a strong mischaracterization of friendly critics such as myself. Even though my essay clearly repudiates any effort to blame casualization on rhet-comp or its practitioners, including WPAs, Grabill, et. al. devote most of their essay to refuting an imaginary charge that I "blame" rhet-comp for the labor system, suggesting that I'd not have blamed rhet-comp if I'd spent more time drawing out the complicity of the literature establishment, and creating other strawman arguments (Bousquet writes "as if" all institutions and managers are all alike, but institutions and managers are not all alike! Bousquet writes as if all administrators are corrupt and oppressive, but not all administrators are corrupt and oppressive!), as well as attacking other bogeys with which they choose to associate me (especially "master critics," though I admit to being flattered by that last characterization; perhaps one day I'll feel that I've earned such a promotion). Taking the most generous view, I'd say that after clearing away the rhetorical smoke aimed at friends and supposed enemies in the tenure stream, Grabill, et. al. just haven't spoken to the concerns of the compositionist without health insurance or a pension and a wage of fifty bucks a head, except to offer the fairly slim promise that an occasional administrator might run counter to the pressures of their position and offer some "actively passive" support. Taking a more pointed tack, I'd observe that their essay is riddled with inaccuracy, not only regarding my work, but the facts

and lived reality of the politics of academic labor—at one point claiming that the NYU decision means that the right of graduate employees "to organize is no longer disputed in either public or private universities." That would be news to the many campuses where administrations continue to actively oppose organizing, especially to the students of Penn's GET-UP, the appeal of whose election under a Bush NLRB has been widely reported as possibly the basis of overturning the NYU decision.

Indeed, it seems clear that the fantasy of "passive action," like Richard Miller's notion of "canny bureaucracy," is targeted at the emotional life of administrators, for whom it provides the sense of doing the right thing with little risk, and for whom—themselves tenured, financially secure, working in a clean, comfortable office, and enjoying decent health care for themselves and their families—it is possible to wonder if the university can "afford" to treat others the way they expect to be treated themselves. For the administrative subject, it becomes convenient and even necessary to adopt the "appalling" managerial rhetoric of the "flex force field" that Greg Meyerson so carefully analyzes, so that even one-time professors of labor law and advocates of a community-directed unionism such as Derek Bok (who in 1970 observed the irony that the aims of unionism were understood in inverse relation to education, so that the best-educated were the most ignorant on the subject) to oppose collective bargaining as Harvard president, and laud the "lessons" universities can learn from corporations. In the heteroglossia and blur of management-speak, as Greg underscores, management can indeed quote Marx for its own purposes. As Randy Martin puts it, "managerialism already understands what it needs to appropriate (and what it needs to exclude) of the radical project."

The extent to which managerialism also attempts to appropriate the feminist project is Laura Bartlett's concern in her discussion of the ways that disciplinarity functions not only in the gross inequities of a sexual division of labor, but to establish a gendered relationship between composition management and composition labor that is deeply disempowering to the latter. In cementing the managerial relation, the process of disciplinarization in rhet-comp has achieved the perquisites traditionally associated with "the masculine professions" for managers only, while intensifying the feminized exploitation of composition labor. Drawing on the insight by critical feminists in the writing administration discourse such as Jeanne Gunner, Lynn Worsham, and Donna Strickland, she notes the way that composition management appropriates the exploitated experience of composition labor to make claims for itself, an appropriation she finds the more troubling in the context of viewing composition managers as "masculinized" in relation to the feminization of composition labor. Particularly important is Laura's understanding of the way graduate education in rhet-comp draws energy from, and also reproduces, the exploitive gendered economy, leading to her skepticism of claims for a "feminist" managerialism. Inevitably, critical readers will be drawn to the compelling

parallels that Kelli Custer draws between the unionization of feminized medical labor—nurses—and the need for similar self-organization by feminized academic labor. In the EMO as in the HMO, the motivating force for improved service in the general public interest has not been management but instead the organized efforts of the most exploited sectors of the work force, whose everyday commitment to the care and wellbeing of others is in many cases a stronger motivation for organizing than self-interest.

Understanding the ways in which the exploitation of academic labor and the pedagogy to which this exploitation gives rise are feminist issues, leads us inevitably to the question of agency. In a social institution so vast as higher education, interpellating nearly 60% of the population directly (and the remainder by exclusion), the possibilities for a productive and political intersection are enormous. Chris Carter's essay on the undergraduate student as organic intellectual explores what may well be the most important (if as yet least explored) agency for transformation in the business-university complex. Considering the meaning as well as the merits of the activism for others enacted by the undergraduate anti-sweatshop movement, Chris considers the degree to which this resistance proceeds from the situation of students themselves—an actual citizenship proceeding from an actual positioning in the relation between capital and labor. Exploring the concrete relationship between undergraduate anti-sweatshop activists and graduate-employee unionists at NYU, Carter suggests several ways in which these emergent practices of "making a place for labor" in the student consciousness "may signal a recognition that local change is not only the prerogative of academic administrators."

Randy Martin's continuing exploration of the politics of academic labor proceeds both by class analysis and by rhetorical investigation. Asking us to observe how the university reproduces and circulates labor power on behalf of capital accumulation, he also asks us to observe the opportunities that this function provides, to organize not just for bread and butter issues such as wages and health insurance (as important as these are), but to organize for a different world: "the scope of what to bargain for is as significant as the opportunity to do so." Just as the actually existing relations of university production are a form of pedagogy-for-capital, Martin argues, the self-organization of academic labor can become a pedagogy-against-capital, an opportunity to address "more historically ambitious" plans for transformation and to reconfigure the "larger social relations that bring people to and from" schooling. In doing so, he agrees with Jeff Williams that the classical model of the "refugium" is a rhetorical and practical trap for activist intellectuals and organizers.

In asking all of us to think past the model of the "refugium" in theorizing and re-organizing the academy, to be concrete in imagining a just relationship of education to the relations of production, Jeff is capturing the sense of Dewey's meditations on vocationalism in education. Dewey's complaint about the evacuation of education represented by "vocational training" wasn't a complaint about

vocationalism per se. Indeed, he was happy to point out that the "liberal" education (of the "ivory tower" or refuge) was really a form of training for membership in the ruling class—one designed to make elite youth "fit for directive power." It was in this sense "essentially vocational" in all the same ways that education for wage labor was vocational—only the vocation was for the " pursuits of ruling and of enjoying" particular to the ruling class (312). In Dewey's mind, failure to recognize the vocational dimensions of liberal education was a way of conserving "aristocratic ideals of the past" (319).

On the other hand: recognizing that liberal education is made possible by the accumulation of social wealth, Dewey vigorously opposed anything but equality in the distribution of educational weath. To "split the system," as he put it, and give a liberal education to what he called the "directive" class and only "specific trade preparation" for the rest was "to treat the schools as an agency" for the proliferation of existing inequalities. So there are at least a couple of reasonable ways for us to accept the logic of Jeff's challenge. We could imagine a world in which the advantages of the refugium were equally distributed, leading us to ask whether the notion of a "refuge for everyone" is really a kind of social utopianism a la David Harvey or resurgent universalism (or "good terror") a la Slavoj Zizek, rather than a conservation of privilege. This would be accepting and extending Jeff's compelling argument to ensure that everyone enjoys the privileges of tenure, dignity, and regular sabbaticals. Or we might also, without contradiction, pursue Dewey's hint that the liberal privileges of the refugium (which the Harry Potter novels have allegorized as magic) are the arts of the ruling class. What if the extension of the privileges of the refugium to everyone were understood as the extension of the vocation to rule to everyone? In the universalization of the arts of rule, would we not also abolish the class relation, of ruler and ruled? In the spirit of Jeff's willingness to levitate the Pentagon, or attempt the far more difficult feat of "reassert[ing] the sense of a public charter, even for private corporations," making them beholden "to the social body" which permits their existence, we would be asking for a dictatorship of the people over private interest. Together with a generalized dignity, security, and just distribution of leisure, we would hope for education to help secure the most just expression of democracy itself.

One of the lines that Jeff best loves to retail from his mentor, the late Michael Sprinker, is that "After the revolution, we'll all drive cool cars." Which is to say: in the best materialist tradition, we have travelled into the ideal. To return to the actual, let's at least accept the wisdom of Paul Lauter's career-long practice of academic unionism as not just an instrument of concrete amelioration, but as a pedagogy. For Lauter, the material consequences of the campus presence of unions, the organized left, and consciously working-class institutions have "as much to do with their cultural functions" as improved wages and benefits. Concretely, left-labor thought and practice "opens up alternatives" to the ruling ortho-

doxy, and creates the very possibility of "discovering what terms like 'solidarity' might mean." I can think of no discovery that I'd rather make than that. Perhaps you'll send me an email if you find out first.

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Contributors

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Kelli Custer completed her BA and MA in English at Idaho State University and is currently a PhD candidate in English – Composition at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. In over a

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Steven Leek is a second-year MFA in poetry at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, who by virture of age, and work experience outside academia, recognized the exploitive nature of the GTA program immediately, and became loud and disruptive. Most of his cohort found him ranging between amusing and annoying, but a year later, they understand why he was so upset.

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Donna Strickland is an assistant professor of English at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. In addition to several articles and review essays in journals such as *College English*, *JAC*, and *Composition Studies*, she has published chapters in two recent collections: *Tenured Bosses, Disposable Teachers: Writing Instruction in the Managed University* (edited by Marc Bousquet, Tony Scott and Leo Parascondola) and *A Way to Move: Rhetorics of Emotion and Composition Studies* (edited by Dale Jacobs and Laura R. Micciche).

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Jeffrey Williams has published widely on the novel, literary theory, and the university. His most recent books are the edited collections *The Institution of Literature* (SUNY P, 2002) and *Critics at Work: Interviews 1993-2003*. He also serves as an editor of the *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* and since 1993 has been editor of *the minnesota review*.


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