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This journal represents an attempt to explore issues, ideas, and problems that lie at the intersection between the academic disciplines of social science and the body of thought and political practice that has constituted Marxism over the last 150 years. New Proposals is a journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry that is dedicated to the radical transformation of the contemporary world order. We see our role as providing a platform for research, commentary, and debate of the highest scholarly quality that contributes to the struggle to create a more just and humane world, in which the systematic and continuous exploitation, oppression, and fratricidal struggles that characterize the contemporary sociopolitical order no longer exist.

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*Cover: No a Balonya.* Poster for student protest rally at the Universitat de Barcelona, 2008.

# New Proposals

Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry

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*Special Issue*

Universities, Corporatization and Resistance

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## Introduction

# New Perspectives on the Business University

Sharon R. Roseman

*New Proposals Editorial Collective*

While everybody knew that EMU's new Mission had something to do with making money and not much to do with education, the exact form of words for saying this without causing offence had not been found [...]. In the end, Callum Wormleighton had suggested what they'd all suspected from the beginning, that the meaningless challenge of framing EMU's Mission in a few choice and memorable words and then writing the text around it that rang with laudable hyperbole [...] was yet another task that might best be handed over to the V-C's favourite team of management consultants. (Oakley 1999:89-90)

In her satirical novel *Overheads*, Ann Oakley weaves a story about people caught up in the intensified corporatization of a British university in the 1990s. A novelist and sociologist with first-hand experience in academia on which to draw, Ann Oakley provides a cleverly executed critique of this process through the lens of fiction. The last few decades have generated a variety of other, mostly non-fiction, writings about how corporatization is being instituted in universities around the world, the intersections between changes in the organization of universities and other aspects of the workings of global capitalism, and resistance to both. In one section of his book *Universities for Sale*, Neil Tudiver defines "the corporate university" as a structure that "replaces the traditional learning centre concept of providing services with a profit centre model of selling commodities" (Tudiver 1999:155). On the same page, he reminds his readers that the struggle against

this process is not all that new, citing Harold Innis' 1946 statement that "the descent of the university into the market place reflects the lie in the soul of modern society" (Innis 1946:76). Andrea Levy also recently recalled E. P. Thompson's "The Business University" (Levy 2005:17) in which he addresses the question of conflict and student protest at the University of Warwick in 1970. Thompson notes that "it might be thought that we have here already, very nearly, the 'private university,' in symbiotic relationship with the aims and ethos of industrial capitalism, but built within a shell of public money and public legitimation" (Thompson 1970:304). He describes a 1968 contract to "a firm of industrial consultants" whose job it was "to carry out an investigation into the administrative structure at Warwick" (Thompson 1970:303). Among their observations was this conclusion:

Taken as a whole, the university is certainly inefficient by normal commercial or industrial standards [...]. Assuming for no stated reason that the university's policy demanded a rapid rate of expansion it cautiously recommended 'economies' to further this by means of an increase in the ratio of students to staff. [Thompson 1970:303]

All of this sounds very familiar in 2010. Thompson's eloquent description of the effect that this kind of assault on labour and education (under the guise of rhetoric such as 'improvements' and 'new policies') can have also reminds me of many informal descriptions I have heard of people's experiences of

the current period:

Until recently the system was so opaque that few can be accused of seeing it in more than an episodic way. The staff could only see its consequences—these rows, these frustrations, this or that administrative hang-up. Collectively, all of us—all we liberal academics—were struck with a paralysis of will as the system not only grew round us, but built us into its own body-walls. Once inside there it looked as if we were running our bit of the show: but the show itself was being directed towards other ends. [Thompson 1970:303]

Following Power (1994), Shore and Wright (2000) would say that another way of describing this process is that individuals and units have played an active role in making their institutions “into an auditable commodity” (Shore and Wright 2000:72). Many recent publications have examined the impact of specific pressures to shift the focus in universities from teaching, learning, and research to other priorities. These pressures have included an emphasis on: the commercialization of research, the search for corporate donations and private-public ‘partnerships’ to fund basic university infrastructure as well as specific programs and research projects, the expansion of tiers of insecurely-employed instructors and staff, the search for new ways of competing with other universities and units for student tuition money, and attempts to promote self-interested individualism and competition among workers. As Shore and Wright (2000) point out, we must look in part to the role played by individuals and units within universities as part of the structural transformation of the university. An example common on many North American university campuses is faculty members taking on simplistic and often flawed auditing practices as valid instruments for assessing merit and need. One particularly insidious instance of this kind of competition is faculty members’ attempts to manipulate the results of industrially-produced (and commoditized) course evaluation systems to make themselves look better than their colleagues. This is particularly insidious because of its potentially damaging impact on students as well as colleagues. It is discouraging that faculty members who were socialized (in some measure) to provide students with access to training in critical thinking and to promote collegiality

are colluding so thoroughly with universities’ structural push to maintain and increase tuition income partially through grade inflation and reduced standards. This collusion has been occurring even though academic labour unions have sought to protect workers from having to engage in it; for instance, many collective agreements have language that protects the standard of scholarly competence in teaching. Another example is when colleagues fall into university administrations’ attempts to ‘divide and rule’ units such as departments and faculties by encouraging a sometimes destructive competition for student enrollment, donations, contracts, and other ‘auditable’ measures (after Shore and Wright 2000:72) with the structural lure of potential resources.

Neil Tudiver (1999) and others have demonstrated how forms of corporatization are linked to reduced public funding for post-secondary institutions in many countries; they have also discussed the serious detrimental effects these forms have on those who labour and study in universities, and the importance of resistance. Opponents of corporatization in Canada and other countries have also closely scrutinized the sort of shifts that Thompson (1970), Oakley (1999), Shore and Wright (2000) and others traced for the case of British universities—the impact of corporatization on the way universities are reorganized internally (e.g. Whiteley, Aguiar, and Marten 2008).

In a recent issue of the mainstream Canadian news magazine *Maclean’s*, former university consultant W. D. Smith points to a recent study using Statistics Canada data on the budgets of 25 of the country’s universities with the highest enrollments which demonstrates a serious decline in the percentage of universities’ operating funds spent on “instruction and non-sponsored research” (Smith 2010:50). This figure has gone from 65 per cent of operating expenses in 1988 to 58 per cent in 2009 (2010:50). Smith indicates that the gap has likely been spent on the ballooning university bureaucracies found throughout the country, noting that this trend may parallel patterns elsewhere in the world and is tied to universities having “appointed highly driven executives who, in turn, have built burgeoning support teams” (Smith 2010:50).

This reorganization has led to the growing reli-

ance on “flexible” “contingent faculty” (e.g. Turk 2008: 299); shifts in the relationships between management, workers, and students; reduced roles for bodies such as university senates; and even destructive changes in the collegial relationships among education workers. This situation has led to increased labour and student militancy in some contexts.

In this issue of *New Proposals*, all of the contributors address both the institutionalization of corporatization and ways to resist it. The arresting poster represented on the front cover of this issue was generously provided to us by one of the participants in the student protest movement discussed by Eburne Bagué, Núria Comerma, and Ignasi Terradas. In their proposal, they provide a compelling analysis of the impact of neoliberal reforms being instituted in European universities in the context of the demonstrations and occupation of the Chancellor’s Office at the University of Barcelona that occurred in late fall of 2008. The reforms being protested vehemently by these students are associated with “The Bologna Declaration” which was signed by 29 countries in 1999 with the broad goal of converging their education systems. The number of signatories grew to reach 49 countries by the spring of 2009. The implementation phase is known as the “Bologna process” and has generated strong resistance.<sup>1</sup> Drawing on theoretical concepts from Marx, Foucault, and de Tocqueville, the authors of this proposal demonstrate how current attempts to intensively restructure universities in Europe can be examined through concepts such as technologies, alienation, formal and real subsumption and democratic despotism. They argue that “we are now at a turning point in history” and that such

1 Another example is the series of protests throughout Austria in fall of 2009 which also culminated with occupations including the taking over of locations such as the largest lecture hall in the country, the Audimax at the University of Vienna in October (Salzmann and Stern 2009). Demonstrations and occupations against restructuring have also taken place during this same time period on other continents, such as those at the University of California, Santa Cruz and other campuses in the University of California system where students are protesting, among other things, a 32 per cent hike in their tuition fees. As in the situation at the University of Barcelona, police force has been used to confront protesters (Cohen 2009).

analysis is necessary to undo and resist the “increasing bias which conflates the right to study with the conjunctural needs of capital” (p. 10). In their Addendum, they report on the violent clashes with police that occurred on March 18, 2009.

Andrew J. Rihn’s original intervention into debates about corporatization is written from the perspective of an undergraduate student who acts in a peer tutoring capacity in his university. He argues that facilities such as the Writing Center he works in represent “borderlands” where he and his colleagues gain insight into “when students are served by their institution and when they are not” (p. 20). Moreover, because writing centers “can serve as safe places for students afflicted in the classroom,” he notes, “they can also serve as points of agitation to the system and, by their very nature, resist the corporate model” (p. 22). The examples he provides of resistance, including the distribution of condoms and fresh fruit and the initiation of conversations about racism and sexism on campus, along with advice about writing, demonstrate how individuals and units can help remake universities.

The inspired and insightful article by John F. Welsh, E. Wayne Ross, and Kevin D. Vinson builds on some of the theoretical work of Foucault and Debord to examine the restructuring of postsecondary education in American states such as Kentucky, Kansas, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Montana since the late 1990s. They argue that key elements of such restructuring were the institution of forms of increased surveillance and what they term “the spectacularization of reform” (p. 25). Moreover, “in the contemporary milieu of advanced capitalism, the fusion of surveillance and spectacle produces, maintains, and propagates controlling images” (p. 27). They explain, for example, that “performance indicators and categorical funding programs” became “hegemonic images” that are “celebrations of the domination of social life and the educational process by capital and the state” (p. 34). They then turn to Foucault’s and Debord’s ideas about resistance, such as the “logic of revolt,” *dérive* and *détournement* and how these might be applied in the context of postsecondary institutions.

In his essay, Charles R. Menzies uses critical

autoethnography to develop an analysis of the emergence and impact of the “university of excellence.” His chronologically-organized account helpfully tracks how specific structural shifts from the 1980s to the present paralleled his own historical movement from student to faculty activist. He provides a detailed analysis of how individuals’ class backgrounds and personal experiences with various forms of activism, as well as their structural positions within university institutions, affect their approaches to radical action and solidarity during specific moments. One of the detailed examples he recounts is the 1990 student strike and occupation at CUNY when he was a doctoral student. He discusses how his own engagement with working class and indigenous struggles from the time of his childhood and adolescence gave him and some of his classmates a different perspective on “radical democratic practice” and the importance of solidarity and concrete ties with other students, trade unions, and other local movements than those participants who practiced what he came to term “militant liberalism.”

This issue concludes with two book reviews which are linked to the overall focus. In the first review, I discuss Peter Worsley’s book about his life and work: *An Academic Skating on Thin Ice* (Berghahn Books, 2009). The second review by Dianne West addresses the contributions to a recent collection edited by Adrienne S. Chan and Donald Fisher entitled *The Exchange University: Corporatization of Academic Culture* (University of British Columbia Press, 2008).

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# An Analytical Proposal for Understanding the “Higher Education European Space”: A View from the University of Barcelona

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## The Context and a Theoretical Framework for Understanding the Situation at the University of Barcelona<sup>1</sup>

The present situation (January 20, 2009) derives from a series of events which have occurred since November 13th, 2008. These included a dem-

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1 The authors of this article are students and a professor in the area of social anthropology who have actively participated in the campaign against the neoliberal reforms currently taking place in the University of Barcelona. This article mainly draws from the following sources: six formal interviews with academic officials; numerous informal conversations with professors and students of several departments and faculties within the University of Barcelona; participant observation in meetings convened by the Commission for “new degrees,” departmental meetings, student assemblies and finally, in the assembly held in the premises of the Chancellorship of the University of Barcelona which began on November 20 2008 and continues to the date of writing, January 20th, 2009. We have also used other sources including documentation from official agencies, student unions and assemblies’ reports; the reports from the Spanish lobbies promoting “Entrepreneurship” and Education; manifestos and other publications issued by University staff, students, booksellers, editors and free-lance writers. Among them we can list the following: ENQA 2005; Bricall 1998; Capella 2009; Carreras 2006; Corominas 2008; Moreno 2008 & 2009; Ministerio de Educación 2003, 2007; Narotzky 2008; Pardo 2008, Universitat de Barcelona 2007, 2008; Vázquez 2008. We acknowledge the helpful collaboration of Joan Roura, Pere Morell and all of the people interviewed.

onstration against two laws, the LUC (*Llei Catalana d’Universitats*, Generalitat de Catalunya 2003)<sup>2</sup> and the LOU (*Ley Orgánica de Universidades*, Government of Spain 2007) which was closely followed by another demonstration held on November 20th which was organized to take place at a pan-European level. This culminated in Barcelona with the occupation of the Chancellorship of the University of Barcelona. The decision to organize the occupation was reached by a large assembly of approximately 500 students. From that point onward, the stipulations of the students were articulated in three main demands: 1) The abolition of disciplinary measures used against students in previous protests at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. 2) The call for a referendum for the faculty members, students and the whole staff of public universities. 3) A moratorium on the Bologna plan or implementation of the Higher Education European Space.<sup>3</sup> The aim of these demands is to develop a model of a public university that fulfils the needs of society, needs that should not be reduced to and confused with the needs of the business sector.

The occupation of the Chancellorship of the University of Barcelona aims to fulfill three functions: 1) To disseminate the students’ message to society at

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2 Autonomous government of Catalonia.

3 Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior (EEES). See <http://www.eees.es/es> and <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna/>.

large; 2) To discuss and study the present situation with the aim of ensuring the rights of students, professors and staff; 3) To strengthen the co-ordination between students' assemblies and different faculties and other universities within Catalunya. During 2008, there was an intensification of students' protests against the Higher Education European Space, the *Ley Orgánica de Universidades* (Government of Spain 2007) and the *Llei Catalana d'Universitats* (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2003). In these protests, the students utilized the existing apparatus for representing their viewpoints and also the spontaneous assemblies which soon became coordinated and established as the platform for opposition. The existing forms of representation have proved themselves to lack the dynamism needed to successfully challenge the neo-liberal reforms. In contrast, the actions of the students that have emerged from the assemblies have re-created the kind of strength that can oppose the inertia of bureaucratic bodies.

We are now at a turning point in history. We have an opportunity to radically reform the existing model of education. Such a reform will necessitate a conscious detour from an increasing bias which conflates the right to study with the conjunctural needs of capital.

In order to understand the events which are currently taking place, we propose the relevance of several theoretical concepts. We begin by using the concepts of technologies, programs and strategies developed by John Gledhill (1994)<sup>4</sup> in his rendering of Foucault's ideas. We will use also three categories

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4 Although Gledhill recognizes in Foucault's concepts the "somewhat vague (meaning) when abstracted from his concrete reconstructions of historical transformations," he renders a clear theoretical statement for Foucault's concepts. Gledhill bases his reading of Foucault mainly on Foucault 1980b. Other sources quoted by Gledhill are Foucault 1979 and 1985. We have consulted the original French collection of Foucault's works other than books to find that the most precise typology of power relations are given in terms very close to Gledhill's synthesis. Thus, Foucault acknowledges *le système des différenciations, le type d'objets, les modalités instrumentales, les formes d'institutionnalisation, les degrés de rationalisation* (1980a:240). However, we feel that the concepts offered by Gledhill give us a better analysis and understanding of power relations in our object of study.

formulated by Marx: alienation, fetishism, and formal and real subsumption.<sup>5</sup> Lastly, we will use the concept of "democratic despotism" from Tocqueville (1961).

## Technologies

According to Gledhill, we understand the concept of technologies as practical devices used to survey, discipline, administrate and mould people. In the application of these technologies, we can see theory being converted into practice. At the present time, the main technical devices being put into operation at the University of Barcelona consist of operative concepts closely connected to computer applications. This means that professors and students are subjected to compulsory categories which determine the learning methodology and, as a consequence, interpret the fields of study. Here the ideological offensive is unmercifully systematic. The government and the chancellorships of the universities have created agencies of ideas such as "innovation," and "quality." They are control mechanisms—Foucault's *modalités instrumentales* (Foucault 1980a:240; Gledhill 1994:126, 147-150)—which are designed to perform the role of technologies of power. The use of computerized application forms restricts professors' academic-instructional freedom (in Spain: *libertad de cátedra*) and the right to education accorded by the Spanish Constitution. Students and professors have to adapt their minds to the conceptual categories introduced by these technologies in their courses. These categories do not permit professors to accommodate the teaching and learning needs specific to each discipline. They try to put all courses on the same low

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5 We use the Marxist concept of 'alienation' and the associated concept of fetishism as described in Fromm 1962 and Marx 1974. For the sociological consequences of Marx's theory of alienation we rely mainly on Schaff 1979. For a general philosophy of history implicated in the same theory, we refer to Mészáros 1975. These works have helped us to construct a theory of alienation which has contributed to an understanding of the interrelationship between power and economic interests. In the present historical case, this offers us a deeper understanding of neoliberalism. The theory of formal and real subsumption originates from the Marxist analysis of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. It has mainly been expounded by Godelier 1991.

level of learning.<sup>6</sup> Lobbies of pedagogues (mainly organized in “Institutes of Educational Sciences”) have become university police who ensure that this new low level of Culture and University Studies is adhered to. They coerce the teaching staff into taking their courses on instruction and applying their ideology. This is because a part of the salary of the professors depends on attendance at these courses. The ideology attempts to equalize the level of university teaching with that of elementary school teaching. The university student is treated as though he or she is a permanently immature individual who has to be pragmatically guided and submitted to the labour market in the most efficient way. This new University Education is designed to make people exploitable in the market arena, educating them in enacting formal social relations, in how to manage a particular public presentation of the self, one that fits the image they learn from curricula, and all the typical forms of capitalist alienation. In fact, anything instead of the conscious and critical knowledge of the world around them. In addition, grants are increasingly given to perform administrative tasks. For example, in order to become a professor or researcher, the student must learn how to submit themselves to administrative and managerial tasks. The contents of study and research are abandoned and replaced by administrative constructs that have been created to discipline people within a formalistic void. Several manifestos, such as *Propostes per a un millor govern de la Universitat de Barcelona* (University Of Barcelona, 2008) have appeared criticizing these undertakings, but the Education agencies defend their “democratically elected” authoritarian impositions (since they

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6 To pedagogically achieve these aims it is stated that learning has to supersede teaching, redefining professors as tutor-managers or coordinators of autonomous learning (Cf. interviews with the Vice-chancellor of several things including “European convergence” and the book *Propuestas para el cambio docente en la Universidad* (Martínez Martín et al. 2006). The creative side of the proposal masks the actual low intellectual level of the proposed assistance. For instance, the courses of the ICE (the lobby and institution of pedagogues) are not competent to instruct professors to manage the specific databases of their fields of knowledge, or to construct useful websites for their courses. Rather, they simply show them how to assemble websites found through Google searches.

are assigned by democratically elected politicians). Here emerges a rude contradiction: bureaucracy expands into a system that incorporates increasingly complex and expensive technologies of power, but, at the same time, the entrepreneurial ideology would seem to claim that education should be developed without the assistance of such bureaucratic policing and mess.

This perversion of the University is not just the result of the strength of neoliberal policies issued by governments but is also a consequence of a servile choice taken by professors. There are three main inducements for professors to join the neoliberal offensive against the University: The first is the offer of managerial posts as opposed to “tiring” teaching and research tasks. These posts are not subjected to academic evaluations, thus it is only a matter of putting in time in order to collect the extra salary. The second inducement is the upward political career path awarded to top university managers who fulfill the goals of the neoliberal offensive, just like private sector managers who are rewarded after dismissing employees or relocating the firm to countries with fewer workers’ rights. The third and final inducement is the commitment of the University to the neoliberal ideology that allows professors both to conduct research as a mere business activity as opposed to a form of academic investigation, and to do only business for the sake of the University. We think that these inducements explain statements made by top administrators at the University of Barcelona and the Polytechnical University of Barcelona such as “It is an opportunity we cannot lose” and “We have to perform our duty as any responsible manager of a private firm.” The current motto is “It doesn’t matter if you don’t like it, it is the future for everything anyway.” There is no longer a chance to reform rogue or savage capitalism but to yield entirely to its “fascination.”

### Programs

The Programs target a specific object in social reality in order to obtain a wholly new functionality and rationality.<sup>7</sup> In this case, the University as an institu-

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7 Cf “*les degrés de rationalisation*” in Foucault 1980:240 and Gledhill 1994:126, 147-150.

tion is the object being targeted for radical change. The programs that aim to achieve this change are twofold. First, there is the statement of what is the true meaningful nature of the institution and secondly the deployment of tools (strategies which will be discussed in the next section) that ensure the persistence of this statement. Neoliberalism defines the true, meaningful nature of the University as an institution vitiated by a permanent budget deficit, a great deal of useless learning and a lack of fitting with the market. Thus the University becomes defined by a lack of functionality and a supposed failure to listen and respond to that permanent euphemism for private profit in a changing market led by oligopolistic economic powers, the “needs of society.” The main point of the program consists of the conceptualisation of the University as an economic institution and as performing a kind of betrayal for not fulfilling what is supposed to be its main duty: to serve private profit in the market arena. The solution to this betrayal comes from an audit contract aimed at getting the University as an organization to be inspired by the ethos of private business. At the University of Barcelona this idea was originally voiced in the “Bricall Report” (Bricall 1998). This report echoes similar initiatives taken by universities all around the world, usually known as “New Public Management.” The report does not proceed on the basis of researching the reality of the University (cultural, human and social) but from an analysis of the structure of its financial accounts under the idea that these have to be brought in line with the rationale that drives private business accountancy.

This displacement of the social and cultural aspects of the University is matched by a discourse on equality. It is stressed that equality will come from the application of the rationality of private profit, in the sense that the new University will reach more people. But what is being seen here are an increase in registration fees and an accumulation of new accreditation titles (also increasingly expensive). The adaptation to the rationality of private business has brought a “new idea” to the new University managers: to justify the introduction of new titles in response to purported specific demands whereas at the same time it is admitted that degrees have to be general and adapted

to a market demand for unskilled employees.

Once these programs are started, a discourse must also be introduced and circulated. It patronizes, as if conscious of some of the contradictions involved, and promises utopian measures: the elimination of fees for “excellent” students, benefits that will be given to poor students who are supposed to become rich after leaving the University, alongside many more cynical naiveties.

### Strategies of Power

These are understood as executive practices for the fulfillment of the Programs. In this sense, we take into account the given inequalities in society. In addition, strategies are opportunistic in the sense of maximizing efficiency for the fulfillment of the programs.<sup>8</sup> This opportunism is what gives relevance to media accounts of events, as well as the opinions of “think tanks” and lobbies. That is to say that the strategies of power take into account the synergy between several vehicles of propaganda and media conjunctures. In the European context, these strategies increasingly focus on legal and normative stuff. For the last fifteen years most of the European states have developed regulations and laws adapted to the “law and economics” ideology. The main purpose seems to have been ideological as well as practical. For the moment, the ideological enterprise appears to be more powerful than the practical one, since higher education is still a difficult field to be wholly incorporated into private management styles. Notwithstanding, the ideological offensive looks very important and the mimesis with private management is introduced in spite of the non-capitalist nature of the relations of knowledge which develop within the University<sup>9</sup>. To

8 Cf “*le système des différenciations*” and “*les degrés de rationalisation*” in Foucault 1980:239-240 and Gledhill 1994:126, 147-150.

9 The University as a lively community of scholarship is built on the basis of a universal socialization of its members in fields of knowledge, a responsible transmission of knowledge with a straightforward communication of doubts and findings, a publication of relevant results, and due respect given to the spirit of the human experience of research, study and teaching. As we will see later, the real subsumption to capitalism destroys these human qualities.

this end, staff reduction, costs reduction in general, audit recurrence and similar implements are introduced in the University, vexing the institution as a vital and independent source of knowledge.

The right to an education melts away and is replaced by a set of measures that fall under the belief that the imitation of business methods will produce the best results for the University. Also, it is claimed that this betterment of the University is being undertaken for the “good of society” and such a claim is made within a social and politically correct discourse that dismisses any critical initiative. This trend gives rise to concepts such as investment, debt, employability, opportunity, redundancy, labour market, and entrepreneurship. At the same time, the media develops discourses about the University as an obsolete, impractical and parasitic organism that can only acquire a healthy status if conducted according to the style and values of private profit. In spite of the current economic crisis that started in September of 2008, this discourse has been re-enforced without any regard to the human costs.

### **Alienation**

From the multifaceted and wide-ranging debates about Marx’s theory of Alienation we retain the phenomenon of the relationship amongst persons being mediated through the abstract properties of things. In this case, the value of personal communication at Universities is formalized and abstracted in administrative tools and formulae that are organized to be the only ones to give meaning to social relations at the University. That is to say that the new power relations are establishing abstract concepts to acknowledge and give value to all relationships among individuals at the University, as abstracted from the real value that pertains to interpersonal relationships. The main field of experience to be alienated is the complex phenomena of studying, learning and teaching. These obtain an “exchange value”—or the only formal social value—in technically and impersonally issued protocols. In short, anything that is contrary to the living act of studying, teaching and learning with all of its imponderability is taken as a mark of quality and excellence to improve the University.

Alienation is a result of totalitarian capitalist actions as well as a useful tool for making capitalism increasingly totalitarian, since alienation destroys effective human solidarity. Through the creation of a series of unrealistic protocols for the evaluation of teaching and learning, the personal communication of scholarly matters becomes alienated. Rather, people communicate via impersonal bureaucratic topics and systems of measurement. This is an old defect of the bureaucratic side of the University which today is magnified by the stress being placed on communication occurring through increasingly alienated means. Computer language is favoured for its usefulness as a tool of alienation.<sup>10</sup> The student no longer becomes engaged in conversation, dialogue and the improved construction of arguments but in questions and answers and the recall of clichés favoured by the “cut and paste” function of the computer. Also, learning is transformed through the administration of watered-down tests for which arguments and nuances are irrelevant. The increase in the frequency of exams and other evaluations (sold as a right for the students to know the state of their knowledge almost hourly) estranges them from cultivating an attitude of thinking about and studying topics and questions with amenity. Thus, students get increasingly alienated from their work and what motivates them to do it. A bureaucratic routine substitutes for the incorporation of will, thought and emotion in learning. The student (and the professor in her or his research) no longer feels the work that she or he produces as a part of herself or himself, with all the limits and possibilities of its expression. Instead, the entire meaning of studying is abstracted into receiving a mark and a title, worse than in previous periods, because there are more titles to be obtained and

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, *Informe Universidad 2000* (Bricall, 1998). According to this report and similar ones, the improvement of the quality of the University professorship is based only on the mastering of computer programs and associated languages. It is not based on educational results obtained by virtue of an improvement in the exposition of the contents of fields of knowledge. Also, it is considered a betterment of the University’s “quality” to accept as professors people who have only worked in business and to validate their “business or applied research” as equivalent to “scientific research.”

more marks to attain. The development of the personal being becomes obstructed by the new control mechanisms. Although the official discourse stresses creativity, the new pedagogy absorbs and destroys its chances. This is alienation. Exceptions confirm the rule, for there is resistance to this totalitarian neo-liberal offensive.<sup>11</sup>

The alienation process attempts to transform the student into an automaton ready to accept the precariousness of the labour market as a matter of fact. The “best” curricula are rather proofs of personal vulnerability and the ability to perform acrobatics to adapt to the capricious market rather than sound pursuits of personal development performed with intellectual work. The University thus contributes to the loss of social rights under an increasingly totalitarian capitalism.

### Fetishism

The bureaucratic products issued through the alienation process become fetishized in the sense of acknowledging in them all the personal qualities previously seen as belonging to individual persons. Thus people connected to the University receive an acknowledgement of their personal qualities only through the qualities of things. This situation engages people in a de-personalized and de-intellectualized race to obtain these fetish-trophies in terms of money, projects, titles, or mentions of “quality” and “excellence.” Thus only through the appearances of these objects can teaching, study and research be valued for each person. Of course, this is a long established fetishism in any university but today it becomes unduly exaggerated by a new step having been taken

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11 If we take into consideration the numbers of professors who have adhered to a couple of manifestos against the neoliberal offensive we can estimate resistance on the part of between roughly a quarter and a fifth of the teaching staff of the University of Barcelona. The official ratio between teachers and students is misleading because it includes both professors and people who do not teach or teach half time or even less. The University is divided between professors with a *reduced* assignment as faculty members (with their time dedicated to work in the bureaucracy) and people who are *fully* professors. The current competitive race amongst many professors is to obtain as many reductions of their teaching as possible.

in the bureaucratic production of protocols and a mimesis with capitalist trademarks.

Knowledge is appreciated only in terms of the money received for research projects, utilitarian networking and title productivity (receiving degrees, diplomas, masters, doctorates and so on). These things are the fetishes that are supposed to grant knowledge to individuals. The neoliberal trend deepens the conventional fetishism and makes the quantitative accounting of all of it easier. The “final product”—the title—is valued as a commodity. The period of studying and teaching becomes valued in a productivity ratio whereby the time period expended is related to the securing of this commodity.<sup>12</sup> The University has to sell titles following a high standard of productivity: aiming for less time being expended, good quality commodities and lower costs for their production. This means that there is less time to teach and study. Instead, time is only used to get instructions about where to “find things” without knowing why and how. In the same way, good quality just means good advertising.<sup>13</sup> Lesser costs mean lowering the salaries of

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12 There are students influenced by the neocapitalist ideology who identify their fees as investments. This is more apparent in private universities where fees are very expensive. Then they press for a prompt profit and complain about “too much studying” as if money was the main means to produce the title. Thus neocapitalist excellence rejoins the atavistic practice of buying university titles.

13 The web pages of the Spanish universities advertise their instructional programs as if they were for people prepared to acquire academic ignorance: without reference to actual content they claim fame, prestige, excellence, quality and innovation. Leading ideologists for a neoliberal university are eager to write about quality, excellence and innovation at the university without being able to define the terms because otherwise they can only define the qualities of simple commodities. Thus the language of innovation, excellence and the rest is simply evocative of who rules in the market place; it is “their language.” Actually, the main function of these terms is to suppress the ethics of the university, made from responsibility, generosity, honesty and enthusiasm in study and research. Instead, “quality” or “excellence” can only be defined with numerical standards imposed through measuring such things as the “impact of publications” and the completion of application forms for self-evaluation and the obtaining of funds for managing “research.”

future professors.<sup>14</sup>

Besides, there is a neoliberal representation in which all the unquantifiable personal qualities related to studying are considered unacceptable. The quality of teaching depends on the labels of quality, excellence and so on, officially obtained by the institution, not on the contents actually given and actually received. Thus the relations between abstract concepts give value to personal undertakings.

Fetishism means that knowledge is only acknowledged in titles. The university becomes a factory of titles in which the students' disposition as clients of a ready-made product is understood better than the uncontrolled effects of teaching and learning throughout their whole life. There are students who defy this “offer” and contradict academic authorities. They think that to study means to face new questions, to learn new arguments and become prudently committed to fields of knowledge. The effort and prudence involved in responsible study is a life-time task. It has nothing to do with the accumulation of titles and certificates.

### Formal and Real Subsumption

Until recently, the university was subsumed only formally to the market and capitalism. The university has had its own rationale and organization which could serve capital and the market, but it did not involve an incorporation of market and capitalist relations within its own structures. This incorporation is what is meant by real subsumption. Nowadays, the power relations already described introduce straightforwardly market and capitalist relations inside the university. The move is above all ideological, since it is absurd to transform the university into a strict capitalist business or a market relationship. Thus the main phenomenon to be observed in this trend is a mimesis of business procedures applied to the university, no matter how nonsensical and pantomimic

they become in reality. What is to be acknowledged by the idea of “society” (=market) is the ideological servitude to the initiative.

The transformation of free relations of knowledge into a mimesis of capitalist rationality inside the university is done by internal and external agencies. The interests that have created such agencies have agglutinated into various lobbies. These lobbies correspond to corporate professional groups (i.e. pedagogues), local political parties and groups formed as a result of ties of “friendship” and the patronage linked to those who hold high offices. These agencies<sup>15</sup> are instituted with absolute power and they coerce, often through salaries, professors and students to adapt themselves to the ideological and bureaucratic mimesis of the private enterprise inside the university. The absurdity of the task and the privileges of these agencies have turned them into strict parasites of research and teaching.

The main political move for the real subsumption of the university to capitalist ways and manners comes from its obedience to capitalist auditing<sup>16</sup> “suggestions.” The conference of chancellors of Spanish universities succumbed to this absurdity in 1998 when they decided to obey a report that evaluated the university in terms of the economics of business management. Thus, the “new” professors are supposed to replace decrepit figures and lead as top executives administering other professors and students.

Real subsumption also means the replacement of the logical concepts of intellectual exchange with the jargon of business. The university cuts its expenditures in salaries and grants given to the people who spend their time exclusively in teaching and research. It also “invests” half-heartedly in technologies (hardware, software and management). In addition, the university “invests” in agencies whose main aim is to ensure that the university connects to, and serves, the ideology of private profit. The recruitment of teach-

14 Usually the death or retirement (including the “invitation” for early retirement) of a professor means the creation of a “new” professorship (lecturership) that is badly paid and submitted to the new standards of “quality” (bureaucratic assessments of the potential and actual newly-hired professors' training and publications).

15 There is the characteristic linguistic abuse of acronyms in the agencies (EUA, AQU, ANECA, ENQA, EURASHE) and in their programs and strategies to signify a policy of compulsory “intelligence” (to be a know-all, a bighead).

16 Marilyn Strathern and John Gledhill, among others, have pointed out some time ago the offensive of “audit culture” in British Universities. See Strathern 2000.

ing and research faculty becomes frozen whereas the recruitment of bureaucrats, public relations people and other commissioned staff soars.

Also, there has been the creation of supposedly independent agencies to achieve these goals. (See ENQA 2005.) But such agencies happen to be public agencies which perform self-evaluations every five years, or private firms that have contracts with the public sector. Some of them are only independent from the university when the professors that work for them do not represent the university. The rest serve the programs and strategies of corporate business power as can be seen in their formation and contents. The whole reform of the “European” University is not coming from the requests of professors and students in accordance with the problems encountered in their fields, but from the demands of the ideology of totalitarian capitalism which seeks to recuperate what profiteers have paid in taxes in more facilities for the exploitation of labour.

### Democratic Despotism

Today, the powers that have been referred to above are engaged in the overall process that Alexis de Tocqueville labelled Democratic Despotism. The present offensive against the University takes advantage of the conditions in which most democracies of present day capitalism indulge. The power elites have developed a democratic society envisaged by Tocqueville (1961) in which political despotism becomes “wider and sweeter (softer) and degrades people without tormenting them”<sup>17</sup> as compared to the despotism of the Ancien Régime. Tocqueville sees the power of Democratic Despotism as based on a strict individualist alienation and developing “immense and tutelary...absolute, detailed, regular, providential and soft” (1961:434). Tocqueville adds that it resembles paternal power but that instead of preparing children for adulthood it keeps citizens in an eternal childhood, by making them think as

17 “*il serait plus étendu et plus doux, et il dégraderait les hommes sans les tourmenter.*” Translation from French to English by authors. Tocqueville 1961:433.

children. It is precisely this paternalistic aspect of despotism that is illustrated clearly in the methods that are being implemented for the “reform”: they try to create an immature student, especially devoid of autonomous reflection. It turns out that this change favours the corrupted character most adapted to the market empire. The strategies and techniques to fulfill this end have built a synergy between a naive pedagogy working with the categories of elementary schooling,<sup>18</sup> the neoliberal destruction of social rights and the baroque growth of a “Eurobureaucracy.”

Tocqueville keenly described how bureaucracy becomes an important aide for building Democratic Despotism. He tells us how in such situations the reigning power, after having modelled each citizen to its will, becomes a massive offensive for society at large, covering it with a network of “little rules, complicated, meticulous and standardized.”<sup>19</sup> This description fits exactly the constant avalanche of bureaucratic information issued by the competing agencies in introducing “quality” inside the University today. They even issue glossaries to guide readers of this information so that they can understand the new language of formal despotism: passwords without a meaningful content for learning or teaching.

The bureaucratic offensive couples with the political one and, to express this in terms of Tocqueville, it addresses people “not in destroying their wills but in softening them, making them yield and be conducted by others... It does not destroy but hinders new births, it does not tyrannize but bothers, represses, weakens,

18 As shown in the syllabi and actual courses of the Institute of Education Sciences (ICE) at the University of Barcelona (the trend seems to be common for all Spanish universities): they deal with “emotions in the class,” “attention curves,” “creative interaction” and so on as in an elementary school context. There is no psychology related to maturity, not even for “self-learning”! Recent courses (2008) given to university professors indulge the characteristic paternalistic behaviour which tries to create an atmosphere of naivety, “discovery” and conformism (including the encouragement of the use of childish and paternalist joking relationships and advice). An increase in one’s salary depends on attendance at these courses and acquiescence to that sort of stuff.

19 “*un réseau de petites règles compliquées, minutieuses et uniformes*” (Tocqueville 1961:435).



extinguishes, brutalizes” (Tocqueville 1961:435).<sup>20</sup> Tocqueville concluded that some democracies introduced freedom in politics together with despotism in their bureaucracies attaining “very strange singularities.”<sup>21</sup> He refers mainly to the contradictions that arise when dealing with common sense and everyday matters by means of authoritarian “solutions” and to the uncontrolled granting of concessions for demagogic purposes.

For the majority of professors and students, it is apathy that reigns in the University. The mere bureaucratic effect of the “reform” of the University with its application forms, reports, committees and meetings produce a minority of eager climbers and a majority of apathetic individuals.

Moreover, the people in power who have to face students and professors operate by continuously offering to engage in dialogue, by giving lip service to democratic correctness and legalistic procedures, holding meetings with official representatives as well as improvised leaders of students. They offer hours and hours of dialogue and take serious notes about any comments and criticisms that are presented. But never do they give in.<sup>22</sup> In the Spanish context the present day authorities try to impose a totalitarian

program<sup>23</sup> consciously avoiding all the methods that could evoke the Francoist regime. Thus only when “democracy is in peril” (“not for the sake of our interests”) will they appeal to the use of force.<sup>24</sup>

### Addendum

On March 18 2009, the rector of the University of Barcelona called in the police (without any previous notice) to expel the students that were occupying the chancellorship building where the rectorate is located. From that moment and during the successive demonstrations that followed, the police charged brutally against students, journalists and passers-by. There were more than a hundred people injured including about twenty journalists. Several Human Rights organizations and the Lawyers’ Professional Association have demanded responsibilities to the government.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the dialoguing style of the political and academic authorities had changed abruptly to a repressive action. Also the academic authorities imposed a lockout on several faculties for the rest of that week. For the moment the tactics of the authorities seems to rely on the representation of a “subversive minority” which can only be dealt with by the police (about three thousand students demonstrated in Barcelona on the night of the 18th in a spontaneous march). The protest against the neoliberal destruction of the University is thus minimized and criminalized. We do not accept this “official matter-of-factism” and there are hopes to regain a critical perspective on behalf of students and professors in order to stop democratically the neoliberal destruction of our University.

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20 To this Tocqueville adds significantly that this peaceful, soft and ordered servitude makes a fair couple with “some of the external forms of freedom.” (Tocqueville 1961:435).

21 “Les peuples démocratiques qui ont introduit la liberté dans la sphère politique, en même temps qu’ils accroissaient le despotisme dans la sphère administrative, ont été conduits à des singularités bien étranges” (Tocqueville 1961:437). In a final note (p.466 for page 438) Tocqueville talks of the “general apathy” as the cause of both anarchy and despotism. He concludes that it is this apathy which has to be fought against otherwise it will create anarchy as well as despotism “almost indifferently.”

22 The absolute intolerance to reform the neoliberal strategies and technologies is complemented by a new censorship: the agencies of “quality” are intruding in the design of course syllabi by cutting and altering anything “too critical” no matter whether it has been already approved by departmental meetings and Studies Councils (the organisms that approve syllabi according to the University Statute and composed by professors and students of specific fields of study)

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23 This is a broad political issue that goes beyond the topic of the University.

24 The presence of the police has returned to the University after years of absence due to the clash between the intransigence of academic authorities who only indulge in long “dialogues” and the impatience of students facing matters that they are told are “fait-accompli.”

25 On September 18th, 2009, 115 people (including students) that were aggressed by the police during the day of the eviction from the chancellorship have filed a criminal complaint against the police and its authorities as responsible of the harsh charges against the population (Personal communication from the lawyer). As well, there is a civil complaint in progress.

Several examples from among numerous news stories about these events can be found at the following links:

- [http://www.elpais.com/articulo/sociedad/Batalla/campal/Barcelona/desalojo/encerrados/UB/elpepusoc/20090318elpepusoc\\_4/Tes](http://www.elpais.com/articulo/sociedad/Batalla/campal/Barcelona/desalojo/encerrados/UB/elpepusoc/20090318elpepusoc_4/Tes)
- <http://www.lavanguardia.es/ciudadanos/noticias/20090318/53662613336/caos-y-cargas-policiales-indiscriminadas-durante-una-nueva-marcha-antibolonia-mossos-barcelona-via-l.html>
- <http://www.europapress.es/nacional/noticia-heridos-24-estudiantes-32-mossos-carga-policia-barcelona-20090319063457.htm>
- <http://www.telecincio.es/informativos/sociedad/noticia/862782/862782>
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## Resistance One-On-One: An Undergraduate Peer Tutor's Perspective

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Leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order. At least spare us their morality when we write. *Michel Foucault*

I am a conflicted person by nature. I don't often feel like I fit in, even in places where I really want to. I feel like a charlatan, an impostor, because I am always critiquing the very institutions I become a part of. This facet of my personality leads me to seek out other people and places that don't quite belong, spaces that represent the "borderland," people with whom I can share my sense of "in-betweeness." Maybe these impulses were what first led me to my campus Writing Center, where I have worked as a peer tutor for three years.<sup>1</sup>

The Writing Center—not quite classroom, not quite student union—represents that borderland I am always on the lookout for. And that job title, "peer tutor," gives me one more conflict to embrace. Even my school itself is conflicted; the largest of Kent State University's eight regional campuses, Kent State Stark is a commuter campus located in Canton, Ohio, and serves about 4000 students. Our student body is heterogeneous; though not substantially diverse racially, we do have a significant population of "non-traditional" students (students over the age of twenty-five). As a twenty-four year old undergraduate, my position

as both "peer" and "tutor" is a confusing one. And yet, this conflicted identity is valuable to me. As a tutor, I try to help each student as best I can, and as a student, I empathize with their jammed schedules, incoherent professors, and vague assignments. By moving between the academic and student worlds, I find I can more easily recognize the borders and limitations of each. Being on-hand with students as they succeed, or sometimes fail, in their writing, I now have a more clear vision of when students are served by their institution and when they are not.

For instance, there is the widely contested concept of standardized testing. Incoming freshmen in the fall of 2008 were only eleven when the "No Child Left Behind Act" was passed<sup>2</sup>. While the move to assessment-based education was already well in place before the Act, it codified such programs and outlined punishments for schools which do not perform. The students we now see entering college are products of this education, and younger students grew up in an educational environment geared towards standardization. Writing center director Joe Essid describes "this new demographic, coming to us at the same time as creeping corporatism" as being made up of students

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1 Although the title denotes a single tutor, this paper could not have been completed—let alone started—without the help and support of my fellow tutors. Our work, and our rapport, is based on collaboration, and it is to that outlook which I accredit my perspective.

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2 Passed in 2002, this Act institutionalized the use of standardized testing throughout the United States. It ties school funding to achievement, punishing schools that do not meet federally mandated scores by cutting funding. This focus on scores leads teachers to shift class time away from "extraneous" material, and focus narrowly on tested subject matter. The Act also allows military recruiters access to student records.

“both more conservative in their epistemology and with less allegiance than any in recent memory to the written word” (2005:3). The consequences of an education reduced to “teaching to the test” will reverberate throughout their intellectual lives. Although it has only been a few years since my own high school graduation, I feel have seen a general decline in the preparedness of incoming freshmen who visit our Writing Center, especially when it comes to critical thinking.

Unfortunately, the university setting is not necessarily the intellectual respite that it could be. Although corporate models do find their way into classrooms, it is often the administration that initiates such programs. I think of my own dean, who sometimes refers to herself as “Dean and CEO” (Kramer 2005), and the effects she has had on our campus by deepening our ties to local businesses and tightening our campus focus onto specific job-training degrees (Roche 2007), making the M.B.A. the first (and currently only) Master’s program available on my campus. Henry Giroux defines the university operating on a corporate model as one in which the “educational leadership is stripped of its ethical and political obligations and is redefined primarily as a matter of management, efficiency, and cost effectiveness” (Giroux 2001:3). Rather than holistic liberal arts approaches that facilitate a meaningful entrance into a democratic society, higher education is increasingly seen as a form of job training—where skill set assessments are the order of the day, rather than literacy or critical thinking.

It should be no surprise then when students come into the Writing Center and ask us to “fix” their papers for them. They’ve been told how important “time management” is and they are simply looking for an efficient way to correct their papers. It is likely their professors, increasingly over-worked part-timers or adjuncts, don’t have the time to address their concerns one-on-one (that’s cost effective administration at its best). But most distressing, these students, with their conservative epistemology, view writing as a product, an end result, a commodity. They come looking to have their papers “cleaned up,” as if the paper was a broken down car or pile of dirty laundry that the student can drop off and come back for

in an hour or two. For anyone familiar with writing center literature, these metaphors are not new. They have plagued us since the beginning.

I wish to stop here and backtrack for a moment. Knowing where we have been often helps us in knowing where we are going, and writing center literature has developed its own sort of creation myth. It goes something like this: between the 1950s and 1970s, “writing labs”—poorly funded, often housed in dusty basements or unused closets, and with a focus on grammar—were established to accommodate the increase in post-war enrolment and open enrolment policies. By the late 1970s, they were transformed into writing “centers,” and the focus was no longer solely on the mechanics of writing. As Daniel Mahala explains, “the shift from writing ‘lab’ to writing ‘center’ meant that our work was not fundamentally about ‘fixing’ this or that text, but about helping students develop a sense of agency as writers, helping them take charge of their own lives and educations” (Mahala 2007:4).

The writing “lab,” with its viewpoint that writing was simply a skill set that could be taught or given to students, represented a conservative view of writing (and education). By the mid-80s, this stance was replaced with a more liberal concept of writing. More than any other single document, Stephen North’s 1984 essay “The Idea of the Writing Center” came to dominate the way such centers have been viewed and defined. His essay outlines the importance of the writing center in a student’s writing “process” in contrast to the impact of a “lab” on the student’s writing “product.” He sharpened this focus to the axiom “Making better writers, not better writing.”

However, this liberal view, with its focus on the potential of the individual writer/student, is slowly being replaced by a more radical notion of education. As literacy educators have entered the ranks of writing center directors, the scope of their aim has broadened. Looking past the paper, past the individual student, writing center theory and practice is beginning to look at the social context in which this writing takes place. No longer viewed as neutral, writing centers are increasingly being positioned in ways that more clearly show the nature and form of institutional power. Here, writing centers can serve as points

of agitation, as places where students begin to understand the logic of the systems they are a part of.

This is where I fit in, or more precisely, where my conflicted self overlaps with the conflicting goals of my Writing Center. My director likes to remind me of Peter Dunne's admonition to journalists to both "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable," and I see this as essentially my Writing Center's mission as well. When working with students who are comfortable in, and privileged by, standardized education, I seek to complicate their thinking, to help them expose and explore the underlying assumptions in their writing, thereby adding the element of risk into their education. Likewise, when working with students for whom leaner, more "efficient" classrooms are not an advantage but a threat, I will engage them in conversation about the structural hazards they face, such as racism or sexism. In either case, the "efficient" classroom teaches these students not to question, whether or not such silence is to their benefit. For students both comfortable and afflicted, the process of learning to question such authority is often enlightening and liberating.

For example, one evening I was sitting down in the Writing Center to work with a non-traditional African-American woman, when another woman, also older and African-American, came in. As it happened, they were from the same class and were having similar difficulties getting started on their assignment. Although they did not know each other well, they agreed to have a joint session, as I was the only tutor working that night. We began a conversation about the assignment, and about the class itself. They did all the talking. It was a difficult class, they explained, and the professor was hard to understand. Slowly, each found solace in the other's struggles, and with each confession from one came a knowing look of recognition from the other. Then, as their camaraderie seemed to be peaking, they turned to me, as if just remembering they were sitting with a skinny white boy. Not only that, but a writing tutor, someone who has probably done well in all his classes and has been given status and authority by the university. For a moment there was silence and their eyes seemed to ask if I was taking them seriously, or if I would just dismiss them the way other white people

probably had, as lazy blacks playing the race card. So I told them about the classes I've failed, the mistakes I made, and the frustrations that led me to give up at times. I told them that even though I couldn't know everything they'd gone through, I was sure racism and sexism had made life harder for them, and that unfortunately their experience in the university might not be all that different. Even though I felt like I was dropping bad news, that the university still holds some racism tightly, they both seemed to breathe a sigh of relief. I was listening to them. We were on the same page and with the air cleared, if only temporarily, we could move forward on the assignment.

This example demonstrates how writing centers can serve as safe spaces for students afflicted in the classroom. However, they can also serve as points of agitation to the system and, by their very nature, resist the corporate model. For instance, my own Writing Center seeks to disrupt student (and administrative) expectations. This year, we began offering "Food for Thought": free healthy snacks for students who drop in. A bowl of fresh fruit is kept near our door, visible to anyone passing by, and in clear contrast to both the highly commercial vending machines and the overpriced and deep-fried cafeteria food.

In addition to fresh fruit, we also distribute free condoms via our Writing Center. We received several hundred free, left over (and flavoured!) condoms from World AIDS Day events and agreed to keep them available to students year-round. They spark conversation from within the Writing Center and without. We are asked, what do condoms have to do with writing. Unfortunately very little, we sometimes quip. But the point is that safe sex is exceptionally important and, therefore, interdisciplinary. The tutors in my Writing Center also recognize that we see a lot of younger students and that such students are prone to make bad choices, both in their writing and in their sex lives, and so we want to extend whatever help we can. We do not feel that safe sex, or the Writing Center, should be boxed in by narrow definitions.

After all, writing centers are creative places. Our directors make the best of small budgets, and tutors are taught to think on their feet. So we know how to adapt. When I did my literature search to begin

this article, I was a little surprised by what I found. Writing centers house creative and often radical academics, so I expected to see complete and utter resistance to corporatization. Instead, some suggested adapting corporate models to suit our own needs, and most of the articles I found suggested flexibility, offering ways to work within or around such models. For instance, Daniel Mahala urges writing centers to make the best of a bad situation by “selectively identifying institutional pressures that strengthen its [the writing center’s] democratic vision of literacy, thereby enriching the practice of writing on campus as well as the training of tutors in the writing center” (2007:13). This kind of reaction highlights the creativity and the pragmatism of writing center directors. If corporatization is going to be a fact of academic life, then it is going to be viewed as just one more obstacle to overcome.

While I cannot say that I see writing centers as the solution to the rise of corporate universities, I don’t see them entirely acquiescing, either. For me, the Writing Center is a model of resistance. From their inception, writing centers have striven to be non-hierarchical. Peers, rather than specially hired professionals, serve as tutors, and re-defining the meaning of authority by means of tutor “peerness” has been a hallmark of writing center theory. We work one-on-one with students, tailoring each session to the needs of that particular student. Furthermore, our work is not evaluative; tutors do not give out grades. This reduces the element of fear in students by removing the looming threat of punitive harm. And our flexibility allows us to truly “comfort the afflicted, and afflict the comfortable.” With our small budgets and low institutional status, writing center folk may not be able to fundamentally alter the structure of the university, but by modelling for students an alternative approach to writing and educational theory, our job itself highlights the increasingly hegemonic control of standardized education.

I would like to conclude this commentary with an anecdote. To help make our Writing Center a more inviting space, we decided something had to be done about our drab, institutionally taupe walls. One of our tutors, an art student, offered to paint designs incorporating several dead languages across

the walls. This was great, we thought, since translating misunderstood writing is what we are all about. He figured out how to spell “Writing Center” (or an approximation) in Phoenician, Runes, Tibetan, and Egyptian hieroglyphics. We chipped in for the materials and he began to work.

After a few weeks of progress, with the painting nearly completed, an administrator noticed what we were doing and alerted the dean. She emailed us irate that we had not consulted her before starting to paint the walls. The dean worried that we would set a negative precedent for the campus. Emphasizing a need to retain control, she reminded our director of similar policies limiting professors from decorating or personalizing their cubicles. However, our director was able to smooth things over, and the painting was finished. We had broken campus rules of standardization, choosing to be different rather than normalized. We decided to continue the dead language theme onto our brochures, and even featured the artwork on the cover of our annual publication of student academic writing, *The Writing Center Review*. If our Center was going to be “branded,” we wanted that identification to be of our own design.

One day, we saw our dean (and CEO) walking down the hall, giving a corporate donor a personal, guided tour. She stopped near our door. “And this is our Writing Center.” Unable to fully account for us, she paused, then added tersely, “As you can see, they do their own thing in there.” No other description could have made us happier.

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## To Discipline and Enforce: Surveillance and Spectacle in State Reform of Higher Education

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**ABSTRACT** Drawing from concepts developed by the social theorists Michel Foucault and Guy Debord on the exertion of political power in contemporary society, this paper analyzes the restructuring of public higher education systems initiated by governors, legislatures and state higher education boards. The paper argues that the primary features of restructuring are (1) increased surveillance of the behaviours and attitudes of the constituents within colleges and universities by the state and (2) the spectacularization of reform by state governments. Surveillance and spectacle aim at the disciplining of individuals and enforcement of state policy and are forms of direct and ideological social control. They imply a transformation of relations between institutions and the state, particularly the subordination of higher learning to state policy objectives.

**Keywords:** Postsecondary education, reform, spectacle, surveillance

### Postsecondary Reform and Social Control

The late 1990s and early 2000s were a period of intense effort by state governors and legislatures in the United States to restructure and reform the coordination and governance of higher education as a means of achieving state goals that include (1) forcing greater accountability and fiscal responsibility, (2) promoting economic development, and (3) aligning institutional behaviours with state policy priorities (Brace et al. 1999). While significant reform and accountability measures were initiated in most states during the 1990s and continue in the early 21st century, fundamental structural change in state-level coordination and governance occurred in many states, including Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, Kansas, New Jersey, and Kentucky. An

important component of each of these restructuring efforts was the realignment of the culture and behaviour of postsecondary institutions with critical state policy goals, particularly in the areas of accountability, finance, and the public purposes of higher education (McGuinness 1999; Dill 2001). However, these reform efforts also generated new images of the relationship between higher education and other social institutions, most notably state governments and business.

The restructuring of postsecondary education in states such as Kentucky, Kansas, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Montana are particularly important cases of state-level reform of higher education because they followed and were conceived as a component of the

totality of the state's reform of education. Among other changes, postsecondary reform across the nation (1) strengthened the power and authority of state coordinating boards, (2) established an array of accountability measures of institutional and system performance, (3) elevated economic development as a primary policy goal higher education is intended to support, and (4) created state-financed trust funds or categorical programs that were intended to realign programmatic priorities. Another significant change promoted by postsecondary reform is the communication about the role of the state in higher education and the concept that higher education is a vehicle for the achievement of public policy goals articulated by the state.

The research literature and policy analyses of state-level higher education reform since the 1990s have done little to situate this important societal dynamic in a broader societal context. However, it is an important substantive question to ask about the social sources and consequences of state-driven reform in higher education. Further, existing literature on the topic of the relationship between reform and higher education has not analyzed the changing relationship between the state and higher education from the standpoint of critical social theory. Instead, this important phenomenon has been almost entirely analyzed through the lens of a pluralist or functionalist approach to the role of the state in society. Pluralism and functionalism maximize the use of concepts and assumptions that emphasize reciprocity and equity in the political process. Conversely, they also minimize the use of concepts and assumptions that enable observers to identify conflict, hierarchy, and processes of force and fraud in the construction of political reality. Following this observation, it is important to understand how reform functions as direct and ideological social control through initiatives designed to discipline individuals and enforce state policy.

In an effort to respond to the one-sided, consensus-oriented understanding of state-level postsecondary reform, this paper discusses postsecondary reform as a form of direct and ideological social control dependent upon processes of surveillance and spectacle. An important outcome of the

restructuring of higher education has been a transformation of relations between institutions and the state, particularly the subordination of higher learning to state interests. The paper examines the mutual relationships between higher education and the operation of state-level reform of higher education, particularly the extent to which the new image of higher education works to enforce, control, and discipline behaviour and the knowledge process in society through surveillance and spectacle (Vinson and Ross 2003). The paper explores the extent to which the restructuring of higher education operates to normalize and universalize the interests of economically and politically powerful groups in the state policy process. We take on the questions of how and to what extent higher education reforms entail *surveillance* (Foucault 1995) and *spectacle* (Debord 1994) as methods of discipline and enforcement.

The specific questions the paper attempts to address include:

1. To what extent can the contemporary state-driven reform of higher education be understood as a form of direct and ideological social control involving the fusion of surveillance and spectacle?
2. Within what contexts and through what mechanisms does the fusion of surveillance and spectacle occur within state postsecondary reform? What are the practical consequences of the fusion of surveillance and spectacle in state postsecondary reform?
3. What are the implications of the analysis of surveillance and spectacle in state-level reform of postsecondary education for critical scholarship on higher education?

Following the initial analysis by Vinson and Ross (2003) and drawing from critical studies of the notion of *image* by Barthes (1977) and Bakhtin (1981), *surveillance* by Foucault (1995), and *spectacle* by Debord (1994), the paper proceeds by discussing (1) the role of image in the contemporary societal merging of surveillance and spectacle as a form of direct and ideological social control, (2) higher education reform as hegemonic image that functions to discipline individuals and organizations and enforce the interests of economically and politically powerful

groups, (3) the dimensions of reform on the image of higher education presented in media and the programming of institutions, and (4) the implications of Debord's concepts of *dérive* and *détournement* as modes of resistance in critical scholarship (1981a; 1981b). We argue that higher education reform operates as hegemonic image that is constructed within the existing fusion of surveillance and spectacle. As such, it has potentially oppressive dimensions that deserve critique and opposition. The paper concludes that *dérive* and *détournement* provide an initial, but incomplete, scholarly counter-maneuver aimed at challenging and resisting increased state control over the knowledge process in society.

### Surveillance and Spectacle as Forms of Social Control

Critical social theory and the sociological study of political order have both discovered that images are a basic component of the social construction of reality and operate fundamentally to control human behaviour and shape human thought within institutional contexts. Images are generated and located both physically and ideologically within the complex social and cultural totality of advanced state capitalism. They also tend to reinforce existing power and exchange relations on the level of human cognition and the structure of political power within advanced capitalism. Images are generally created by those who own and control the means of communications, particularly mass communications, or who are otherwise able to seize control of the processes of reality construction in society. Image has a dialectical relationship with power: power creates and elevates images to hegemonic status and is bolstered by them, while images simultaneously create and are created by power. While the relationship between image and power is mutually reinforcing, this is not to say that image never contradicts power or that competing images never vie for predominance in the social and cultural totality. Hegemonic images are images that achieve a significant measure of control over human behaviour and cognition, and are also controlled and manipulated by powerful social groups.

Understanding the social reality of image under advanced state capitalism requires the study of the

milieu in which images are produced, how they shape behaviour, and the social, political, and economic interests they serve. This means that the study of images associated with higher education must focus attention on the relationship between higher learning and the social and cultural patterns of the global totality of capitalism. Central to the global totality of advanced capitalism is the role of the state as the primary agent of social control through its activities in planning, reality definition, and the maintenance of social control through direct coercion. In the era of state capitalism, the essential role of the state is to mitigate the conflicts and contradictions that threaten the stability of this socio-historical formation. The core functions of the state under advanced capitalism include the *enforcement* of those norms and patterns that mitigate conflict, crisis, and contradiction, which occurs partially through the *disciplining* of individuals, groups, and organizations that pose a potential challenge to existing power and exchange relations.

Discipline and enforcement occur under advanced state capitalism largely through the vehicles of *surveillance* and *spectacle*. In the contemporary milieu of advanced capitalism, the fusion of *surveillance* and *spectacle* produces, maintains, and propagates controlling images that enforce prevailing societal norms by disciplining the thoughts and behaviours of individuals and groups. As an image or an ensemble of images, higher education reform can never reflect the complexities of the social organization of higher learning, but it does function as a mechanism of social control.

### Surveillance and Social Control

In his study of the birth of the prison, Michel Foucault (1995) identified the process of surveillance as a basic means by which power is exercised and social control is maintained in contemporary society. Foucault clearly viewed power not as an entity but as a network that operates within institutional contexts. While *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* is primarily concerned with the incipient social organization of the prison as a modern form of punishment, Foucault was extremely interested in discipline and enforcement as social processes situated in a broader

socio-historical environment. The social organization of the prison becomes a means for understanding the structure of discipline and enforcement in society and the exercise of power through surveillance.

An important point of departure in Foucault's discussion of surveillance is Jeremy Bentham's design of the modern prison, the Panopticon, which is physically structured in a manner that enables the warders to observe continuously the behaviour of the prisoners. The Panopticon is a social and cultural totality that physically permits the "hierarchical observation" of the many by the few, and socially and culturally supports the right of the few to make "normalizing judgments" about the behaviour of the many. For Foucault, surveillance represents an enforcing and disciplinary power emergent from a technological base that provides infinite, automatic, and unobtrusive opportunities for the few to observe the many. Advanced telecommunications technologies offer cultural and political elites very sophisticated tools to monitor and track human behaviour. Technologies such as "Carnivore," the FBI's email tapping framework, and "Echelon," the National Security Agency's program for monitoring virtually all worldwide telecommunications, are powerful surveillance technologies at the service of the government. These macro-level surveillance technologies supplement some of the more mundane forms of surveillance found in surveillance cameras, "nanny cams," radio telemetry, geographic information systems, global positioning systems, and "cookies" deposited by corporate and governmental websites into the personal computers of customers and citizens.

The uses and outcomes of these technologies must be understood contextually in terms of social, cultural, economic, and political trends. For instance, the War on Terrorism (or whatever it is called today) and the USA Patriot Act provide an important political and legal context for understanding the uses and outcomes of Carnivore and Echelon since September 11, 2001. Each of these contexts, however, reflects and reinforces an important feature of cultural life in the 21st century in the United States: the desire and opportunity to observe and to be observed. The social imperative to see and be seen includes both *how* we are seeing and being seen, and the *fact that* we are

seeing and being seen. This cultural imperative is referenced by cultural images such as Warhol's "fifteen minutes of fame," Orwell's "Big Brother," political polling, strategic marketing, "reality-based" television series such as *Real TV* and *Survivor*, and talk shows that feature celebrity wannabes as their guests, such as *Jerry Springer*, *Dr. Phil*, and *Judge Judy*. The proliferation of webcams and cell phones with digital video cameras make it possible to see and be seen simultaneously and continuously, suggesting a technological and cultural merging of voyeurism and exhibitionism. (Consider as well, of course, Facebook, Twitter, texting, YouTube, and so on.)

For Foucault, surveillance resolves the problem of political order in the modern world because technology and cultural norms encourage the procurement of "the instantaneous view of a great multitude" for a small number of observers, or even a single individual. Foucault argues that community and public life in civil society are no longer significant mediators of human behaviour in advanced societies. We are left, on the one hand, with individuals, whose selves, goals, and purposes are highly privatized and isolated, and, on the other hand, the state, which has become increasingly dominant among social institutions. As a consequence, social relations can be regulated only in the form of surveillance by the state and its collusion with large-scale organizations, such as multinational corporations, that provide technological support for a social system that is based on the observation of the many by the few.

Foucault's libertarian and antistatist theory of surveillance presents a compelling picture of the maintenance of political order in modern society. He argued that the role of surveillance in regulating social life increased in importance with the birth of the modern prison. He acknowledged that other forms of social control predominated in previous historical periods. Specifically, the spectacle was the primary vehicle for promulgating controlling images in antiquity. The spectacle is the obverse of surveillance, according to Foucault. While surveillance refers to the observation of the many by the few, spectacle is the observation of the few by the many. In Foucault's terms, spectacle renders a small number of objects or images accessible to a multitude of people.

Thus, spectacular architecture and communications strategies operated to ensure this form of observation and were possible because of the predominance of public life over private life. Temples, theatres, circuses, festivals, and coliseums were constructed to form society into “a single great body” and to reinvigorate public life and public purposes. Foucault concluded that the spectacle as a form of social control became obsolete in the modern period because of the need to maintain order in a hierarchical society that lacks the mediating organizational structures of public life.

### Spectacle and Social Control

Situationist philosopher Guy Debord argued that spectacle describes contemporary society as well as antiquity. In *The Society of the Spectacle*, Debord (1994) maintained that “the whole of life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation” (12). For Debord, the society of the spectacle defines a societal totality in which reality is replaced by image; life becomes advertised life. The images generated by information systems, marketing, advertising, and public relations obtain and pursue a reality *sui generis*. They are distinct from, not merged with, the lived experience of humans. The society of the spectacle is a form of alienation in which “being” is collapsed into “appearing,” in which the image becomes a distorted and disconnected form of communication that mediates all social relationships (Best 1994; Debord 1994, 1998).

For Debord, the spectacle is not merely a collection of images. Instead, “it is a social relationship between people mediated by images” (Debord 1994:12). Debord argues that the concept of spectacle helps us understand a wide array of disparate social phenomena. “Understood on its own terms, the spectacle proclaims the predominance of appearances and asserts that all human life, which is to say all social life, is mere appearance” (14). In concert with Foucault, Debord understood that the mediating structures of civil society, community, and public life have disappeared. In Debord’s critique, there remains the isolated, privatized individual whose social rela-

tionships are mediated by and subjected to the state and the production process (as opposed to participatory community).

Economically, Debord asserts that the spectacle subjects living human beings to “its will to the extent that the economy has brought them under its sway. For the spectacle is simply the economic realm developing for itself—at once a faithful mirror held up to the production of things and a distorting objectification of the producers” (Debord 1994:16). He notes that earlier stages of the economy’s domination of society included a downgrading of *being* into *having*. The present stage of social development, however, entails a shift in emphasis from *having* to *appearing*. He indicates that all *effective having* “must now derive both its immediate prestige and its ultimate *raison d’être* from appearances” (16).

At the base of the society of the spectacle is the division of labour produced by the specialization of political power. “The specialized role played by the spectacle is that of spokesperson for all other activities ... and the source of the only discourse which society allows itself to hear” (Debord 1994:28). Politically, the spectacle is an endless discourse “upon itself in an uninterrupted monologue of self-praise. The spectacle is the self-portrait of power in the age of power’s totalitarian rule over the conditions of existence” (29). The spectacle’s division of society into those who wield power and those who passively observe or contemplate the spectacle “is inseparable from the modern State, which, as the product of the social division of labor and the organ of class rule, is the general form of all social division” (30).

For Debord, the spectacle maintains its own regime of control and discipline, differentiated from surveillance and the Panopticon. The spectacle exists for its own reproduction and, through the economic and political realms, subordinates all human life to its needs. It controls by isolating and fragmenting, distorting communication, alienating human action, and restructuring communication to ensure one-way, instantaneous messaging. It operates to mitigate community and dialogue and, thus, to control image, conflict, and change. Those who control images have the ability to mystify being and hierarchical power relations within the spectacle.

Both Foucault and Debord articulated libertarian and antistatist visions of power, authority, and control in contemporary society. Both are centrally concerned with the role of the state and the mechanisms it uses to ensure direct and ideological social control in a society characterized by a loss of community and the structures of civil society that mediate relationships among people. Foucault's studies envisioned a Panopticon of surveillance. Debord's studies envisioned society as a collection of spectacles where appearance is more important than being. What is unique today is the merging of surveillance and spectacle where it is technologically possible and culturally desirable to see and be seen simultaneously and continuously. The potential of a totally administered society becomes more real as culture and technology become media through which everyone can watch everyone across all time and space. At the extreme, society becomes nothing more than a totality of isolated individuals incessantly under surveillance whose relationships are mediated by images.

Postsecondary reform provides one case in which the merger of surveillance and spectacle can be understood, and which can itself be understood as surveillance and spectacle. One example of the operation of surveillance is the hierarchical observation of the attitudes, behaviours, and performances of institutions, programs, faculty/staff, and students within higher education. An example of spectacle occurs in the presentation and reporting of institutional and system performance to higher education's many constituencies. Both surveillance and spectacle elevate image above authenticity and operate as vehicles of social control, political domination, and cultural conformity.

### **Postsecondary Reform, Surveillance, and Spectacle**

The 1980s and 1990s brought broader responsibility to state coordinating and governing boards as issues pertaining to access, quality, and cost became the primary concern for state policymakers. Epper (1996), McGuinness (1999), and Richardson et al. (1999) found that the roles and functions of state boards experienced a fundamental shift as governors and legislators became more interested in the quality of higher edu-

cation. Policy initiatives were introduced in the 1980s and used by state boards to satisfy their external constituencies that included incentive-based and competitive funding, mandates for student assessment, and performance-oriented accountability reports. The 1990s brought even more aggressive actions and policies from state boards as concerns regarding commitment to undergraduate teaching, faculty workload, and overall institutional efficiency grew. Additionally, performance indicators and performance funding programs were implemented to monitor institutional effectiveness and institutionalize reform efforts (Burke and Associates 2002; Epper 1996).

While every state has some form of state-level coordination, the nature and magnitude of regulation differs somewhat from state to state. Factors that shape differences among states include the varying nature of state history, structure, culture, law, educational standards, and political tradition, all of which influence the practices of state postsecondary coordinating or governing boards (Volkwein and Malik 1997). In heavily regulated environments, for example, public universities are treated like "state agencies" that have less flexibility in personnel, financial, and academic matters (Volkwein and Malik 1997). Regardless of the type of coordinating or governing environment, pressure has mounted for public higher education systems to become more responsive to public needs as mediated by state governments. As Epper (1999:2) suggests, the "customers of higher education (namely students, communities, and businesses) want educational services delivered to them conveniently and cost-effectively."

The initiatives of state coordinating and governance boards can have dramatic implications for both the state and colleges and universities. Hines (1988) suggested that higher education has a vested interest in the development of the economy of state capitalism. The state itself benefits from the knowledge, technology, and graduates generated by colleges and universities. The alignment of institutional behaviour and state policy is frequently viewed by policymakers and institutional administrators as a partnership which both parties must actively promote and support (Hines 1988). Governors and state legislators are no longer receptive to traditional appeals for

institutional autonomy that characterized much of higher education in the past. As Alexander (2000) suggests, with greater expectations being placed on it, higher education is obliged to examine itself or be examined by others. This observation reflects the increasing societal requirement that colleges and universities must become more responsive to national economic trends and new governmental demands for increased performance and improved alignment with public policies. To this end “higher education must understand the impetus and the nature of support for strategies aimed at institutional improvement and accountability” (Welsh and Metcalf 2003:446).

With higher expectations for accountability and effectiveness at the state level elevated, institutional administrators and strategic planners are crafting institutional plans to embrace and contribute to state initiatives. As suggested by Welsh and Metcalf (2003), “the higher education community has an increased interest in responding to rising demands for accountability by generating information that can inform internal planning... as well as inform external audiences” (446). At the state level, performance-based planning, accountability, and funding have become convenient means for states to align institutional behaviour with state priorities. Comparison tables, scorecards, national rankings, and institutional profiles are some of the popular devices developed by governing officials to compare institutional performance measurements (Alexander 2000). If institutions fail to meet state objectives or to fulfill state imposed thresholds, then they are threatened with a variety of fiscal and programmatic sanctions. These consequences provide a major impetus for institutional administrators and planners to align institutional priorities with state interests. Additionally, states have placed an increased emphasis on the role of postsecondary education in workforce development, business partnerships, and the creation of new markets through research and development. By designating and delegating responsibilities to individual campuses, states are now requiring colleges and universities to integrate state initiatives into institutional plans.

While states have become much more directive in the life of postsecondary education in the United

States, there is still considerable conflict and criticism of the role of state higher education boards. To mitigate conflict and criticisms of the state board, Mingle (1988) suggested strategies to promote or dramatize effective state coordination. First, he suggested that there must be a clear and unambiguous designation of authority to the state boards to regulate institutions and set policy. This designation communicates a clear policy and observational hierarchy for the institutions and promotes a type of communication that favours the ascendant role of the state. Second, state boards should promote master planning and strategic planning efforts that include programs, budgets, enrollments, faculty workload, and facilities in order to fully align institutional behaviours and resources with state policy goals. Third, states should establish formulas or policies for the distribution of public funds that reinforces major state policy goals. Accordingly, these formulas and policies create the image of a “rational” basis for the distribution of funds according to institutional obligations and performance. Fourth, he argued that states should establish program approval policies that ensure that institutional decision-making is consistent with or constrained by state directives. Finally, he suggested that state boards should conduct statewide policy analysis targeted at current issues facing the state. As Mingle (1988) suggests,

policy analysis is one of the most constructive and valuable functions of the state board, for these reports and discussions serve to break down the barriers between sectors and focus attention on long-term issues that campuses may be avoiding. [8]

States face a multitude of economic, social, and demographic issues and are constantly making choices regarding the limited availability of resources. Higher education institutions now witness postsecondary education policy changes that require their reforms to develop solutions to address critical state issues. The subordination of individual, organizational, and institutional initiative and behaviour to state policy goals is now viewed as a major philosophic principle of higher education reform (Conklin 2001). The overarching policy goal of reform is to improve state postsecondary education systems as a means of advancing capitalist economic development.

An array of policy initiatives help operationalize this goal. Two reform initiatives are particularly helpful in illustrating the processes of surveillance and spectacle in postsecondary educational reform. During the past decade, governors, legislators, and state boards have focused their interests in reform on the measurement of institutional performance and the financing of higher education.

### Accountability and Performance Indicators

State-level higher education reform typically requires public universities and community colleges to become more “accountable” for obtaining state goals. Almost every state that has pursued significant reform has established state and institutional performance indicators to define and track this. In Kentucky, for instance, the state adopted 40 separate performance indicators that are intended to address “five key questions” that are themselves intended to define the state’s vision for the role of higher education (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education 2002). The “key questions” from the state’s perspective are:

1. Are more Kentuckians ready for Postsecondary Education?
2. Are more students enrolling?
3. Are more students advancing through the system?
4. Are we preparing Kentuckians for life and work?
5. Are Kentucky’s communities and economy benefiting?

The five key questions and the 40 separate indicators that measure them required the state’s public institutions of higher education to commit resources and planning efforts toward the attainment of goals identified by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education on each of these measures. The new reform legislation provided a mandate for the state’s public postsecondary institutions and required institutional support for the state initiatives which were largely defined and measured through the performance indicators designed to address the five key questions. Kentucky’s approach is not unique, as many states have adopted performance indicators as the primary

means to assess institutional performance (Burke and Associates 2002).

The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education uses the key questions and their associate performance indicators in all of its planning activities and includes institutional and state performance in its various brochures and publications. They also appear on its web site (<http://cpe.ky.gov/planning>). Kentucky’s postsecondary reform effort was modelled on the Kentucky Educational Reform Act (KERA), which was initiated in 1990 and includes many similar accountability and performance measures. The Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) is regarded by policymakers in the state as a successful approach to state-driven educational reform because of its use of quantitative measures of student, institutional, and state performance.<sup>1</sup> (It should be noted that bureaucratic outcomes-based accountability systems for K-12 schools—such as KERA and the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001—receive wide spread support from politicians and policymakers at the state and federal levels, as well as many educators and researchers, but have also been severely criticized by a growing number of educational researchers. (See, for example, Gabbard and Ross 2008; Mathison and Ross 2008; Ross and Gibson 2007; Whitford and Jones 2000.)

The performance indicator or measure is a quantitative (and hegemonic) image that is intended to reflect and summarize the performance of an individual or organization on a specific variable. Epistemologically and organizationally, a performance indicator is the measurement strategy of an extreme form of managerial empiricism that has either eschewed the importance of understanding process in life, or that restricts free inquiry by prohibiting questions about the generation of the number and the social phenomenon it is intended to reflect.

The performance indicator is an effective blending of *surveillance* and *spectacle* that helps maintain

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1 The performance measures associated with CATS are available on the web site of the Kentucky Department of Education). <http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/HomePageRepository/Proof+of+Progress/Commonwealth+Accountability+Testing+System+%28CATS%29+Results.htm>



hierarchy by promoting images that minimize conflict and celebrate hierarchical observation. As *surveillance*, the performance indicator enables the observer, or those at the apex of the observational hierarchy, to categorize, monitor, and direct the behaviour and behavioural outcomes of the many, or those at the bottom of the observational hierarchy. As *spectacle*, the performance indicator is a pliable tool that permits the few to dramatize to the many the legitimacy of state power by creating, defining, and promoting images of necessity, accountability, and responsiveness. It is an image that mediates the relationship between the state, higher education, and the public. It is a form of reification in that it collapses the noumenal and phenomenal worlds into a number, quantity, statistic, or chart that is ripped from its moorings in a human process of conceptualization, measurement, compromise, refinement, and representation.

Because it always entails the refinement of measurement through the elimination of context, the performance indicator can never be an adequate representation of the human life-world. The performance indicator is always a distortion of concrete social reality because it is anathema to both context and totality. But the purpose of the performance indicator is not to achieve a neutral or objective representation of social and educational process, but to reinforce the observational hierarchy and to align the behaviour of organizations with state priorities.

### **Categorical and Performance Funding**

A second major feature of postsecondary reform in the United States is the creation of trust funds or categorical funding programs that set aside and designate state funds for programs and initiatives specifically designed to address state policy priorities. Appropriations to these trust funds are typically made to the state higher education board, which is then responsible for establishing criteria and distributing the funds to the institutions for designated programs. Examples of these programs abound in higher education today and include performance and fiscal incentive funding programs. Categorical funds attempt to address specific policy goals such as improving the state's accumulation of research funds, improving teacher education, and aligning workforce

development with emerging labour force needs. In each case, however, the intent is to use state resources to realign institutional behaviours, resources, and priorities with state policy goals.

State financial strategies that target funds for specific uses enforce state policy by removing or reducing institutional discretion in the internal allocation of funds. Thus, policy struggles at the institution or indeterminacy in the use of state funds is mitigated or minimized; the state has already solved the issue of how the funds will be spent and ensures that its priorities are addressed through the levers of resource allocation and financial management. The use of targeted funding strategies also promotes organizational and individual discipline by ritualizing the power and authority of the state higher education board over the institution and its constituents. Constituents who participate in institutional governance processes are socialized to recognize the power and authority of the state to decide how resources will be used. The ability of individuals who work and study within colleges and universities to participate fully in the construction of material reality is diminished in favor of a division of labour that elevates the interests of the state and the business, political, and educational elites who influence it. The division of labour in resource allocation becomes viewed as a legitimate and attractive, if bothersome, regime of finance, particularly if institutional administrators are able to promote the notion that the institution's total funding has increased.

Trust funds and categorical funding programs established by states to restructure the financing of higher education are an effective blending of surveillance and spectacle. Since the trust funds by design are not deposited into the institution's general fund, but are controlled separately, the accounting and accountability requirements enable the state to observe dollar by dollar the extent to which institutional expenditures meet state policy expectations. Thus, institutional control functions, business practices, information technology, audits, and financial reporting evolve into mechanisms of surveillance to observe the behaviour and behavioural outcomes of the faculty, chairs, administrators, trustees, and staff who participate in the operational implementation

of targeted state funds. The observational hierarchy between the state and the institution, and within the institution, is operationalized by finance officers in the state board office, state auditors, the comptroller's office at the institution, accounting practices, and software that generates financial reports that flow upward from the academic department or center to the dean to the vice-president for administration to the president to the state higher education board to the state auditor. The financial reporting system becomes not only a mechanism for tracking money, it is a means of disciplining individuals by monitoring their behavioural conformity with state policy on programmatic priorities.

As *spectacle*, targeted financial strategies enable those who manage spectacular domination to convey, advertise, or dramatize their vision and resolve to subordinate institutional behaviour to state policy. In many states, the governor, legislature, and higher education board ceaselessly promote these programs as the financial panacea for higher education. The trust funds and categorical programs, it is claimed, have helped the institutions overcome fiscal deficits in their operating funds, while also providing the state and external constituents with the power to direct institutional practice and individual behaviour.

The spectacle of higher education reform dramatizes the power of the state over organizations and individuals through hegemonic images that include performance indicators and categorical funding programs. Reform is a ritual drama employing the technology of hierarchical communications to control images and structure thought to preempt criticism, challenge, and conflict. The trust funds and categorical financing programs mediate the relationships between and among the institutions, the state, and the elites who influence or shape state policy. They are reifications that help reinforce stratification systems and authoritarian ideologies that promote externally imposed discipline and the uncritical enforcement of state fiscal and programmatic policy through resource allocation and financial reporting. These programs are celebrations of the domination of social life and the educational process by capital and the state since they eliminate discretion at the institution and, thus, minimize autonomy and self-direction in governance and organization.

### Implications for Critical Scholarship

The research literature on the role and impact of the state in higher education in the United States is almost entirely uncritical of prevailing social relations and forms of knowledge. Research on the role and impact of the state on higher education has typically evolved into one of two prevailing forms. The first category includes literature that is oriented toward the solution of management problems at colleges and universities posed by the evolving relationship between the state and the campus (Hauptman 2001; Hines 1988; Paulsen and Smart 2001; Richardson et al. 1999). The second is literature that focuses on the nature and sources of state policy toward higher education (Alexander 2000; McGuinness 1999; Trow 1998). In recent years, this literature has focused on the dissatisfaction of business and governmental elites with the performance and priorities of colleges and universities and has promoted an agenda that aims at a transformation of higher education into a form more congenial to the interests of capital and the state. A much smaller body of literature presents a critique of the role of the state in higher education and expresses frustration with the financing of higher education and the intrusion of corporate interests into public policy for higher education (Berman 1998; Polster and Newson 1998).

With dynamics such as surveillance and spectacle, it is difficult to understand how traditional methodologies or research strategies can provide an adequate understanding of the role and impact of states in higher educational reform. It is also difficult to understand how traditional forms of knowing can provide a cultural and political critique of the extension of state power into the policy processes and daily operations of colleges and universities. The merging of surveillance and spectacle presents clear and unique obstacles for any sort of pedagogical or inquiry-based resistance, particularly since the two permeate everyday interactions and discourses. The implications of the fusion of surveillance and spectacle include both a resistance to them in higher education and a broader discourse and action regarding the role of the state in society. While the various studies of ideology and image presented by Bahktin (1981) and Barthes (1977) offer insights into the

important questions surrounding the relationships between image and society, the theoretical work of Foucault and Debord provide crucial starting points for challenging the legitimacy and power of hierarchical observation and artificially constructed social spectacles.

### Foucault on Power and Resistance

Foucault's work on resistance rests most importantly on his understanding "that power, with its mechanisms, is infinite" (2000:452), though not necessarily omniscient or omnipotent. He cautions against forms of resistance in which some individuals have the authority to distinguish between appropriate or proper revolutionary behaviours and strategies at the expense of others. He also recognizes that opponents, resisters, and revolutionaries must take into account not only those actions that are the most directly political, but also those that are forms of evasion or defense against power and surveillance. Reminiscent of Bakunin's (1971) critique of Marx, Foucault (1980) specifically warns against revolutionary strategies or political ideologies by which one regime charged with imposing discipline is replaced by another with the same coercive capacities.

For Foucault, however, power in all of its forms demands the strongest modes of resistance. "The rules that limit [power] can never be stringent enough; the universal principles for dispossessing it of all the occasions it seizes are never sufficiently rigorous. Against power one must always set inviolable laws and unrestricted rights" (Foucault 2000:453). While Foucault dismissed labels such as "anarchist" and "libertarian" (see Macey 1993), he subtly argues for the potential of an anarchic or profound "logic of revolt" in which the "whole species of rationality and the status of a whole regime of truth can be made open itself to interrogation" (Gordon 1980:258). This is a striking and fundamental argument for resistance aimed toward the entirety of disciplinary power. The implications for critical scholarship in higher education may include a number of tangible forms of political resistance, such as boycotting, refusal, and organizing for political action. The methodological challenge of a critical scholarship is to identify, express, and support the visions and ideas of individuals and groups

who oppose the hierarchical observation of surveillance in higher education, even though these may be forms of opposition that are localized, situational, and contingent (Foucault 1980, 2000).

### Debord on Spectacle and Resistance

Debord suggests a variety of techniques to challenge the society of the spectacle. Debord's approach to opposition and critical scholarship have not been extensively explored for their significance to critical scholarship, but they offer considerable potential to challenge the regime of spectacle in higher education reform (Vinson and Ross 2003). The first is the *dérive*, which literally means "drifting" or "the drift," but implies for Debord a "mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society; a technique of transient passage through varied ambiances" (Situationalist International 1981:45). Further,

In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their usual motives for movement and action, their relations, their work and leisure activities, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. The element of chance is less determinant than one might think; from the *dérive* point of view cities have a psychogeographical relief, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes which strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones. [Debord 1981b: 50]

For Debord, the *dérive* was developed in the context of urban geography and psychogeography referred to the study of the effects of the geographical environment on the emotions and behaviours of individuals. For those who work and study within the spectacle of state-driven higher education reform, the *dérive* offers a counter-strategy to planning, management, and accountability strategies that reinforce state power. The *dérive* is a form of knowing and behaviour that is not dependent upon, but seeks liberation from, staged and spectacularized discourse on the priorities, problems, successes, and failures of the social organization of higher learning. It offers a method for observing, judging, and normalizing the structures and experiences of higher education that challenges policy and management strategies

designed to discipline students, faculty, and other constituents by enforcing priorities, values, and performance standards developed by political, economic, and educational elites. Assessment, planning, and accountability processes in higher education would fundamentally change if informed by the *dérive*. The hierarchical observation inherent in state-driven forms of assessment, planning, and accountability would be subverted in favour of more discursive, participatory, and liberatory processes of evaluation and decision making. The *dérive* situates processes of knowing, assessing, and valuing more directly in everyday human experiences. It challenges and is fundamentally at odds with reality construction that is staged and spectacularized for the purposes of control and manipulation.

The second concept developed by Debord is *détournement*, which literally means “diversion.” For Debord, *détournement* refers to the integration of present or past artistic production into a “superior construction of a milieu.”

In a more primitive sense, *détournement* within the old cultural spheres is a method of propaganda, a method that testifies to the wearing out and loss of importance of those spheres. [Situationalist International 1981:46.]

Jappe (1999) argues that the *détournement* is “a quotation, or more generally a re-use, that ‘adapts’ the original element to a new context” (59). He continues:

It is also a way a transcending the bourgeois cult of originality and the private ownership of thought. In some cases the products of bourgeois civilization, even the most insignificant ones, such as advertisements, may be employed in such a way as to modify their meaning; in other cases, the effect may be to reinforce the real meaning of an original element ... by changing its form. [59]

Debord suggested that *détournement* is the organization of a new, meaningful ensemble of artistic elements based on the reuse of existing elements. Taken together, *dérive* and *détournement* constitute a technology for creating a “reinvented world” of experiment and play that enables the discovery of a “world of permanent novelty” (Marcus 1989:168-170).

As techniques of resistance aimed toward the

enforcement of a regime of images presented as performance indicators and categorical funding programs, *dérive* and *détournement* would have significant meaning and importance. How can they be applied and what impact might they have?

### *Dérive* and Critical Scholarship

When applied to reform in higher education, the *dérive* demands first a re-understanding and reconstruction of the policy environment engendered by changes in observation-based technologies and the intrusion of state capitalist governance and exchange relations into the policy and management of higher education. *Dérive* requires “drifting” through the physical, intellectual, and policy environment that includes the internet. It requires a confrontation with an entirely new set of “psychogeographies.”

*Dérive* is a social act that might involve faculty and students collectively and critically “drifting” through the space of higher education as they are attracted and repelled, or as their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours are stimulated. They would be free to enter or exit policy and managerial domains, both physical and virtual, to experience, disrupt, play, learn, and govern. They could enter, surf, and modify state databases, vision statements, and web sites that collect, control, and (re)present images pertinent to the future of colleges and universities. Conceivably, they could enter and exit classrooms, boardrooms and media offices where policy and hegemonic images are enacted. Scholarship on higher education reform would itself be transformed by focusing more on the *dérive* as a response to policy initiatives by the state and less on the uncritical promotion of the goals of reform through scholarship that merely describes and explains institutional adaptation.

### *Détournement* as Critical Scholarship

With respect to *détournement*, the implications for resistance and critical scholarship involve a re-use or re-adaptation of symbols or elements of communication to a new context so that the effect is to “reinforce the real meaning of an element ... by changing its form” (Jappe 1999:59). *Détournement* is a method that challenges dominant meanings of an image gleaned through a process of surveillance or a constellation

of images that constitute a social spectacle by juxtaposing a new combination of symbols that help to situate the image in a newer, broader social and historical context. For instance, imagine a newspaper headline that states: “State Council’s Assessments Show Colleges Failing to Achieve Goals.”

Imagine also that this headline is accompanied by a table that lists the names of institutions in one column and average scores on a survey of recent graduates about their experiences at the institution in another column. The hegemonic image presented in this familiar news headline with accompanying information may seem like an innocuous news story about institutional performance on this national survey of undergraduates that aims at assessing how institutions measure up to expectations for their performance as articulated by a state higher education board. But further imagine an expanded chart and story that includes information on response rates, validity and reliability measures, institutional funding deficits, income levels of students and their families, ethnicity, academic qualifications of entering freshmen, administrative costs, dollars reallocated from academics to athletics, costs driven by governmental reporting requirements, and costs of international junkets taken by institutional chief executive officers and trustees.

The initial news story presents an image of a responsible state board attempting to measure institutional performance so that, ostensibly, students, and the community are better served. However, in the context of surveillance and spectacle, the initial news story reflects the power of the state to gather information on individual and organizational behaviour and to spectacularize its efforts to subordinate behaviour within colleges and universities to state policy objectives. The revised news story that includes an expanded table and description of the broader context changes the meaning and significance of

the assessment of institutional performance by the state. Specifically, the expanded headline and story helps subvert the hegemonic image of the responsible and omniscient use of state power to assess and restructure institutional performance. Information pertaining to the methods of surveillance, the social characteristics of students, and other challenges faced by the organization, including those generated by the state, provide a modification of the image that is a better reflection of the complexity of the socio-historical context of higher education.

The core of *détournement* rests on the idea that the hegemonic image can be altered to fit the context or the context can be altered to fit the image. *Détournement* enables students, faculty, and researchers to confront and challenge the enforcement properties of state-level reform of higher education as image. Confrontation and challenge require access to the technologies that make enforcement possible and a critical understanding of hegemonic images generated through the merging of surveillance and spectacle. *Détournement* provides a relatively untapped mode of critical resistance that can be joined with *dérive* and Foucault’s oppositional stance on power to comprise an incomplete, but initial, critical scholarship and praxis to challenge the hegemonic images, the spectacle, of state reform of higher education.

The practices of *dérive* and *détournement* are not methodological absolutes but tentative steps toward subverting hegemonic images of reform and creating an oppositional scholarship on higher education reform. They provide a vision for the creation of time and space in order to challenge alienation, passivity, and conformity. The hegemonic images of postsecondary reform are only a part of a broader reality of social control, challenge, and change that is ultimately created by human beings in an ongoing and imperfect process of reality construction.

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## Reflections on Work and Activism in the ‘University of Excellence.’

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*The University, through its students, faculty, staff, and alumni, strives for excellence and educates students to the highest standards.*

Place and Promise: The UBC Plan

*Excellence has the singular advantage of being entirely meaningless.*

Bill Readings, *The University in Ruin.*

Excellence is the goal contemporary society strives for: excellence in sport, in business, in art, in scholarship, and in life in general. Yet as Bill Readings so pointedly observes, contemporary society has emptied the idea of ‘excellence’ of meaning. The search for excellence structures workplace competition, student recruitment, and the evaluation of practically all aspects of the contemporary university environment. In its operational mode excellence is little more than a set of quantified indicators—dollar value of grants, number of publications, ranking of publication venue, completion rates of students, and so on. These indicators are tabulated by individual, unit, or university and then ranked accordingly. Deriving from the tautological market principle that those who win are by definition excellent, being top ranked makes one excellent. There is, however, a problem if too many people get the reward. The crux of excellence is its reliance upon failure as the foil against which it is itself determined. Excellence is no absolute; it’s a normative measure that relies on failure and the threat of failure to propel peo-

ple to engage in acts of self-exploitation simply to keep their employment or their place in the university of excellence.

It is critical to note that this is not an argument for incompetence, an excuse for inadequacy, nor a call for the mediocre. My focus is on the way that excellence as a concept (not as a quality) is tied into the ideology of neo-liberal capitalism. Capitalism in general is a system by which mechanisms of a free market are used to regulate and control human transactions and engagements. There are obviously historically contingent and regional variants of capitalism. What I ask the reader to focus on is the way in which excellence has become a core term for a series of labour management practices that have insinuated themselves into the belief system of academic labourers. The power of the neo-liberal concept of excellence is that it presents as a quality academics all aspire to while simultaneously undermining the possibility of actually obtaining it. Our work becomes measured by quantity and placement of output: “so long as one



publishes with the prestigious academic presses and journals, one's publications are 'excellent'" (Wang 2005:535). The paradox is that we become embedded within the hegemonic discourse as we attempt to labour within the context of our workplace: we are, in a manner of speaking, damned if we do, damned if we don't.

This paper is an autoethnography of the university of excellence. That is, I draw from my personal experience as a student and then professor within a series of North American universities. In this paper I reflect on three linked, but autonomous, social moments within my scholarly career: 'On Strike!' a story of student radicalism; 'In Struggle!' a story about academic labour, and; 'New Proposals (Again!),' a manifesto for action.<sup>1</sup> Each of these moments revolves around a particular aspect of the university of excellence, its structure and location within the wider society, and the ways in which engaged progressive political action might intersect with the realities of our everyday work and lives.

### *On Strike!*

The social space of 'student' provides—at least in theory—the opportunity and capacity to act that one appears to lose when enmeshed within mainstream employment and respectable middle age. It is a social space that gives license to radical, anti-social, or experimental behaviours and perspectives (see, for example: Pfaff 2009). This notion is well captured in that famous old saw: "If you aren't a socialist in your youth you have no heart. But, if you're still a socialist in middle age you have no brains."

The student social space is facilitated by our society's extended notion of late childhood; that is, the social categories of teenager and youth. This makes an engagement with alternative futures possible while simultaneously diminishing their importance through a folk model in which such experiments are discounted as the 'antics' of youth. It is not, however, a space of total freedom. Possibilities are constrained by historical facts, cultural forces, and the general structures within which people finds themselves. Yet it is

this very possibility of change and innovation that gives power to student protest movements. As a faculty member within the university of excellence I see contemporary students struggle with the possibility of political activism within a context that has changed significantly since my own days as a student activist.

The memories of the earlier generation of the 1960s and 1970s student radicals overshadowed my own student radicalism in the 1980s. Their stories of struggle made it sound as though it had all been done before. Yet, as is often the case with youth, our optimism and excitement in the face of what was new to us propelled us forward. In my circle we found Rosa Luxemburg's idea of spontaneous struggle and the mass strike beguiling even as we overlooked the importance she placed on organization and the historical moment. Nonetheless, we saw this as a means to organize and advance in the face of a deepening attack against public education and an emerging agenda that later became familiar to us as neo-liberalism.

The universities of the 1980s were in the early phases of the new corporate university of excellence (Readings 1996).<sup>2</sup> They were still partly in recovery from the protests of the 1970s, but they were also striding forward with new forms of privatization and techniques of labour control. Universities followed industry with the establishment of two-tiered contracts for academic labourers: one set of rules for tenure-stream/tenured faculty; a much less rewarding set for a growing body of part-timers (Patterson 2001). At the same time tuition fees and class sizes exploded across North America. The radical call to make university scholarship meaningful was degraded into a less progressive utilitarianism linked to notions of economic efficiency and job training. This is the moment within which I entered into student politics.

I came to university having grown up in Prince Rupert, a northern British Columbia resource dependent community, where strikes and labour conflict

1 These sections were original presented as a part of a trilogy of papers at the annual meetings of the Canadian Anthropology Society (CASCA).

2 This is not to say that universities have ever been anything more than a central part of the ideological apparatus of capitalist societies. However, there have been a series of forms, the corporate university of excellence being only the most recent.

had been the normative backdrop against which one learned about the world. Born in the early 1960s, I am perched at the end of the baby boom and the beginning of what fellow BCer and author Douglas Coupland (1991) called “Generation X.” My political coming of age was formed in the shadows of *les enfants soixante-huit*.<sup>3</sup> Though I vaguely recall the 1967 centennial ‘Canada song’<sup>4</sup> from TV commercials it is the shocked tones of family conversations and the accompanying harsh black and white news reels of the declaration of martial law by Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau in October 1970<sup>5</sup> and the Kent State killings<sup>6</sup> that brought the wider world to my attention. And, while I do recall joining my cousins in their TV room to watch the first moon landing in 1969, it was the fall of Saigon<sup>7</sup> in 1975

3 The ‘children of 1968,’ as the generation of protest came to be called in France.

4 Canada song <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IE0nhnwNcgU>

5 The 1970 October Crisis was Canada’s late 20<sup>th</sup> century experience with radical left politics and radical Québécois nationalism. Early in October 1970 James Cross, British Trade Commission in Montreal, was kidnapped by the *Front de libération du Québec* (FLQ). A few days later Quebec Labour Minister Pierre Laporte was kidnapped by the FLQ. In response the federal government invoked the War Measures Act (WMA), the first time in Canadian history during peacetime, which led to a military occupation of Montreal. The WMA suspended civil liberties and allowed for the arrest without charge of several hundred political activists in Montreal and across Canada. James Cross survived his kidnapping, but Laporte was summarily executed by strangulation.

6 The Kent State University shootings occurred in the context of a student protest against the US invasion of Cambodia. Members of the Ohio National Guard who were policing the demonstration killed four students and wounded nine others in a 13 second barrage of bullets. Over the course of the previous three days escalating student protests had lead to the conservative university administration, acting with the State government, to call in the National Guard. However, the very fact that the students were unarmed and that several of the dead had not even been involved in the protest fueled American and world-wide opposition outrage. The Kent State shootings became a pivotal event in the anti-war movement of the 1970s.

7 Saigon was the capital of South Vietnam and the base of US military operations during the Vietnam war. In April 1975 the US were finally pushed out of Vietnam. US citizens and supporters were evacuated by heli-

that resonates most strongly in my memory.

These global events played in the background in my hometown but also set the stage for the material conditions of the everyday. We too had our own crises and conflicts. The 1970s was the turning point of the long post war economic boom. High interest rates and low rates of growth combined with a growing resistance on the part of capital to working class demands; these were the conditions out of which the neo-liberal assault began.<sup>8</sup> By the 1980s the ‘new right’ was in full swing and privatization, retrenchment, and debt reduction became the language of the day.

Back in my hometown the rising cost of resource extractive industries—in terms of capital investment requirements and environmental impacts—was progressively undermining the local economy. Working class struggles were increasingly on the defensive. From a working class point of view the demands of green activists was seen as yet another form of middle class dilettantism and meddling. The strengthening movement and legal support for indigenous title and rights claims was increasingly supported by capital while simultaneously being experienced as prejudicial by the non-indigenous members of the working and petty bourgeois classes (Menzies 1994). This experience of working class and indigenous struggle provided the context for my engagement in the university as a student.

The universities I attended in the 1980s and early 1990s were in the throes of the neo-liberal transition. The idea of education as a right was being replaced by a concept of education as a commodity to purchase. Measures of economic efficiency were being applied with increasing rigour in the face of budgetary cutbacks from government funding agencies. The

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copter. Striking images of people rushes the gates of the US embassy as overloaded helicopters, some with people barely able to hold on, flooded world news programs. It was a humiliating defeat for the world’s then leading super-power. But it was also a powerful and jubilant event for many who opposed the war and who saw in the US occupation of Vietnam a blatant act of imperialist aggression.

8 In Prince Rupert labour strife was a strong component of the 1970s. I have written about one aspect of this struggle within the local fishing industry (Menzies 1990, 1992, 2001b).

following two stories of student activism occurred in the context of the emergence of the university of excellence and the imposition of a neo-liberal agenda.

### Solidarity Coalition

Following their election in May of 1983, Premier Bill Bennett and his Social Credit Party proclaimed a 'new reality' had arrived for British Columbia.<sup>9</sup> The provincial government immediately began a radical transformation of provincial services and programs in a series of actions that was to foreshadow the next three decades of provincial politics in BC. Under the 'new reality' six thousand provincial employees were to be laid off, the labour code was to be revised in favour of business, and social service, healthcare and education programs and budgets were to be cut (Carroll and Ratner 1989; Palmer 1987; Quine 1985; Ratner 1998:110-112). Despite a growing opposition in the streets and loud opposition in the legislative assembly, the passage of an omnibus package of legislation seemed to be progressing without serious challenge. It is from this political moment that the Solidarity Coalition (a broad-based alliance of community groups and labour organizations) and Operation Solidarity (the trade union wing of the protest movement) was formed. As the summer progressed to autumn, the protest movement ramped up to a full-blown province-wide public sector strike that threatened to spread into the private sector industrial unions.

As an undergraduate student and student politician at Simon Fraser University (SFU) in the early

1980s, I was actively involved in a grassroots network of students whose political links were closely tied to extra-parliamentary leftist groups such as Socialist Challenge, International Socialists, The Revolutionary Workers League, elements of the New Democratic Party and the now defunct Workers Communist Party—an intriguing and complex alliance of divergent left groups, most of whom had their genesis in 1960s New Left politics. There were of course other elements involved and the emergence of postmodern lifestyle politics were already evident in our organizing meetings.

As student activists we saw the growing Operation Solidarity/Solidarity Coalition as an opportunity to shift the balance of power from the top-down unionism of the day to a grassroots organized mass movement that might actually topple the government. Thus we joined with the 'prepare the general strike' committee, a left faction of the trade union movement that was gaining grassroots support from wood and mill workers in the metropolitan Vancouver region and in the interior of the province. For the first time in more than a decade, the Simon Fraser Student Society called a special general meeting of the student body that achieved quorum (over 500 people). We voted to join the strike.

From our point of view as student activists we drew upon the strength and public legitimacy of the Solidarity Coalition in advocating within our classrooms prior to the walk out, and then in organizing our picket line work where we actively stopped cars, busses, and pedestrians from entering campus. We entered into the area of conflict partly out of the excitement of the moment and partly out of a belief that through this action things could be made better. Perhaps we could have made a real difference had the more conservative union movement leadership not lost their nerve. Clearly, leadership does make a difference and in the absence of a coordinated political organization outside of the social democratic power structure of the NDP and the BC Federation of Labour it was not possible to shift the narrow economism of the union establishment. From within the centre of student activism and protest we understood the possibility of progressive change even if we lacked the real political reach to make it happen. The

9 The Social Credit Party in BC had its roots in a depression era political theory. The theory behind 'social credit' was the notion that the depression was caused by a lack of disposable income. This gave rise to the famous  $A + B = C$  theorem. That is, money in people's hands (A) leads them to spend (B) which combine to drive the economy (C). The practical application of this was for the government to give people money to spend. By the time Bill Bennett was elected Premier in 1983 the party was on the vanguard of the neo-liberal agenda. The party was also a dynasty that Bill Bennett inherited from his father who had formed the first Social Credit Party in BC in 1952 and, with a three year exception in the 1970s, it was the governing party of British Columbia until its scandal-ridden collapse in 1991.

university of excellence, as one of the cornerstones of the neo-liberal agenda, was triumphant. There was a general understanding of the criticalness of the political juncture but the established progressive and union leadership didn't seem to realize the long term implications of the loss.

### CUNY Strike

The City University of New York is a venerable public institution consisting of 23 separate campuses including the Graduate School and University Center, senior colleges such as City College, Hunter, Lehman, Queens, and junior colleges which—at least in principle—are designed to meet the higher educational needs of the residents of New York City. For decades CUNY has been a key focal point of assimilation and integration of aspiring entrants to the growing 20th century middle class.

Widespread community-based struggles in the 1960s and 1970s created new openings for students of working class, minority, and immigrant roots. Two key issues helped establish this entrée: an open admissions policy that undermined the restrictions created by class privilege and a tuition policy that kept the cost of access relatively low compared to other public universities and colleges (in fact tuition had been free for over 100 years). Most of these gains have now been undermined by New York State's own brand of neo-liberalism. Open admissions has effectively been removed by the cutting of all upgrading courses, persistent funding cuts, and the arrival of standards of 'excellence.' The same global issues that were instrumental in sparking the Solidarity Coalition of 1983 in BC also set the stage for the CUNY strike of 1991.

The attacks against public institutions in New York throughout the 1980s and 1990s were part of a more general attack against the public provision of social services, education, and health. University administrators were trying to meet funding shortfalls through increased tuition, restrictive admissions policies, and the undermining of educational services in general. Governments were interested in privatizing and divesting themselves of costly social services such as public education. Market mechanisms were becoming the flavour of the day.

My involvement in the CUNY Strike began

in 1990 as a new doctoral student and occurred in the context of the first Bush war against the mid-east. One of my friends recently reminded me that during that fall we ran a poster featuring pictures of Mario Cuomo, then Governor of New York, W. Ann Reynolds, Chancellor of CUNY, and the late Saddam Hussein, the former president of Iraq. Under their pictures our caption read: "Who is the real enemy?" We were facing a massive increase in tuition fees and a nearly debilitating budget cut. From this perspective, the representatives of political elites in the US seemed far more of a threat than any distant political leader.<sup>10</sup>

The CUNY strike was system wide. Spurred into action by student activists at the City College of the City University of New York (CCNY), groups of students began taking over their campuses throughout the CUNY system. By the end of the occupation more than two-thirds of CUNY was under student occupation. At the Graduate Center we organized an action in support of the CUNY colleges. Our core group of a dozen or so people was comprised primarily of anthropology students. We shared a common socialist political orientation that informed our approach to organization. Whereas the CCNY students used a cadre-type system in which only those directly involved could participate in decision-making, we opted for a participatory model of democracy. Thus, as our occupation proceeded we held a vote each day on whether to continue or end our occupation. With a process and plan in hand, we took action several days after CCNY students took over their campus with the idea of holding our campus in sup-

10 And, as history has shown us, the threat of Iraq was more myth than reality. In the first Bush war the Iraqi Army essentially dissolved under the assault of American aerial bombardment and ground assault. Many of the horror stories of Iraqi atrocities (such as the infamous baby incubator hoax) turned out to be false. The real atrocity was the thousands of ill-equipped Iraqis burned and bombed as they fled Kuwait City. The second Bush war, initiated in response to the claims that Iraq held weapons of mass destruction, has also proven to be based on a falsehood—there were no weapons of mass destruction. In the wake of a decade of warfare Iraq seems ungovernable; a country in turmoil that is now, more than ever before, likely to spawn America's much feared Islamic Terrorists.

port of the other striking CUNY students.

In the early 1990s the CUNY Graduate School and University Center occupied an 18-story office tower in mid-town Manhattan, just across the street from the research centre of the New York Public Library and Bryant Park. The ground level of the building had an open mall that connected 41st and 42nd Streets with a public walkway. Overnight a set of security gates were lowered to close off the mall, but normally these gates would have been up by the time of the planned takeover. In previous years' occupations, students had simply taken over the public mall and that had been our intention. However, when we arrived the security gates were down. Our symbolic takeover of the public mall became a real occupation of the entire building.

We had to show our student identification to enter the building past the security gates and into a lobby by the main bank of elevators. Once our first small group was in we asked the security guards standing there to leave the building. "This is a student occupation. We are in control of the building now," we told them. All but one of the guards agreed to leave. Later that morning one of the student occupiers forcefully expelled the remaining guard. Once we had the building firmly under control, we called in other students who had been waiting nearby.

Our guiding principles were those of radical participatory democracy. In practice this meant that we held a public open air meeting each day of the occupation. Anyone who wanted could vote on whether or not to continue the occupation. Inside the occupation we also had meetings to discuss how things were going, draft and approve public statements, and to consider the position to put forward in the following day's open air meeting. Our notion of radical democratic practice emerged out of our particular idea of radical socialism and our critique of anti-democratic variations of socialism and mainstream politics in which dissent and diversity are suppressed in favour of a so-called common good. We were motivated by the ideal of participatory democracy encoded in the twin concepts of trust and risk. That is, for democracy to work one must place trust in people to be fully engaged; but also, we must be willing to take the risk that things will not work out as one hopes.

We started our occupation as a consciously symbolic act. That is, we realized that simply taking over a piece of real estate had no independent value or meaning outside of the wider context of struggle. The Graduate Center occupied a position of prestige within the CUNY system, but it was not a center of power. The power of our action was as an act of solidarity with students at colleges like Bronx, CCNY, Hostos, Hunter, Lehman, or Queens where the majority of New York students attended. Yet, as the occupation progressed the perspective of the participants shifted toward what I came to call a militant liberal perspective in which the physical control of the building became the central issue. As the occupation deepened, the students who joined us came more and more to feel that controlling the graduate centre building meant that we had control of real power and lost sight of the wider context within which our actions existed.

The militant liberals—students who were part of the then popular post-modernist academic movement—argued that holding control over the building was in and of itself sufficient to cause the university to negotiate with us and to meet our demands for a tuition freeze. Those of us who had organized the occupation argued that our only power lay in our ability to extend our struggle beyond the building and to forge real political linkages with local trade union and community movements such as we saw represented in the college-based struggles. With the lesson of the soviet failure to build 'socialism in one country'<sup>11</sup> we rejected the idea that a group

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11 Socialism in one country' refers to the Stalinist idea that it was possible to create the conditions of a classless society by turning inward and in ignoring the world around. However, this is not in fact possible and, in the Soviet case, led to horrendous atrocities and loss of life and ultimately created a state capitalist regime that shared with the west a form of corporatist control over labour through a managerial class. At the core of the socialist argument is that revolution may well start in one country but that the path toward a true communist society requires the constant expansion of the revolution outward until all vestiges of capitalism are eradicated. Stalin's approach was initially made out of necessity in the face of revolutionary defeat but it ultimately became a rationalization for the autarkic authoritarianism of Stalin's USSR.

of elite outsiders (most of us at the graduate centre were out-of-state students) could build a progressive movement in one office tower. Eventually a compromise was reached that allowed us to hand over the building to the administration while holding on to some modest political gains.

The militant liberalism that emerged in the course of the CUNY strike at the graduate center has its echo in the radical posturing of small 'l' liberal academics who publish biting critiques of the powers that be but do nothing in their own workplaces or home communities. This is a politics that denies the reality of political struggle and instead fetishizes radical text and clever theory. It is also a form of academic politics that reveals the extent to which working classes have been forced into retreat (Callinicos 1990). While the power of BC's working class in 1983 was still sufficient to mount a major defensive struggle, by the 1990s the capacity of New York's working class movement was fractured by race, ethnicity, and the debilitating effects of the American neo-liberal agenda.

### In Context

The Solidarity Coalition and the CUNY student strike were both situated within particular local contexts. However, they were also local responses to wider global processes in which those in charge of the global capitalist system were attempting to shift the balance of power back toward capital. During the long post-war boom that created the conditions for the so-called affluent society (Galbraith 1998) working class people had managed—at least in the western economies—to push their standard of living to levels not previously seen. Facing the threat of workers winning more than better wages, western ruling classes entered into an historic compromise with labour (Przeworski 1985). As conditions changed over the course of the post-war decades this compromise became less tenable to the ruling classes and the compromise broke apart—hence the rise of the neo-liberal agenda.

Operation Solidarity/Solidarity Coalition was part of a broad-based social moment that linked trade unions, political parties and community groups. Other examples of the solidarity coalition

can be found in the mid 1990s struggles against the neo-liberal government of Ontario,<sup>12</sup> and in the weaker protests against the neo-liberal government of Gordon Campbell in BC since 2001.<sup>13</sup> What sets

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12 Though many commentators locate the origins of the neo-liberal agenda in Ontario with the 'common sense revolution' of Mike Harris and his conservative government (1995-2002) it was in fact under the social democratic (New Democratic Party or NDP) government of Bob Rae (1990-1995) that neo-liberalism was applied in its classic sense in Ontario. The NDP has been the traditional party of the Keynesian compromise in Canada. The party has attempted to govern, when it has been in power, through a combination of ad hoc social policy spending (i.e. housing, healthcare, education) combined with middle of the road economic policy that maintains the rule of capital. This form of happy-face capitalism seems to work in periods of economic growth. However, when capitalism is in crisis social democratic governments have lacked the stomach to take over the commanding heights of the economy and have instead retreated into fiscal policies that are indistinguishable from mainstream pro-enterprise parties. Rae retreated from his social democratic roots made in 1993 after he watched a CTV news documentary on the fiscal crisis in New Zealand (Crow 1999:184). Fearing that only a radical neo-liberal approach could 'save' Ontario from economic disaster Rae compelled his caucus colleagues to introduce a new 'social contract' that froze public sector wages, opened and rewrote collective agreements (something that would happen again in BC following the election of the Gordon Campbell BC Liberal government), and enforced mandatory days off without pay (which came to be called "Rae-Days" by disgruntled workers). Wage rollbacks were coupled by an austerity budget that slashed public sector spending. Rae's economic policy turnaround ushered in a decade of social cuts and deterioration in public services, the ramifications of which are still being felt in Ontario today.

13 Gordon Campbell's provincial BC Liberal Party was elected in May 2001. The Liberals defeated a discredited ten-year old New Democratic party government. Under the BC NDP the provincial government had tried to walk the line between fiscal restraint and targeted social project spending. Despite this, the general direction of the NDP's fiscal policy was aligned with that of Bob Rae's Ontario NDP government. The Campbell innovation was to come in hard with a massive series of fiscal cutbacks, government restructuring, privatization of core government business and services, and to legislate new collective agreements across the public sector. Where the NDP had vacillated between cozying up to business and demanding support from their traditional supporters in labour, the Liberals had no such problems and sys-

the Solidarity Coalition apart is that it marks the end of a long wave of working class resurgence in British Columbia. The Sacred attacks were part of the opening salvo of neo-liberalism in North America.

The CUNY strike of 1991 represented the end point of a similar movement or period of social advance and prefigured the political transformations of neo-liberalism within public post-secondary education in New York State. But in New York issues of race and ethnicity heavily overwrote the dynamics of the struggle. Whereas the State University of New York (SUNY) was predominantly white, the CUNY system was predominantly Latino and African-American. The roll back of state funding had a disproportionately negative effect on CUNY where funding was already only 80% on a per student basis of the SUNY system.

These local particularities shaped the possibilities and dynamics of student activism. In BC the politics were class politics. In New York class politics were mediated through the lens of race. As a student engaged in militant political struggles there was a freedom of movement that is not possible as an employee of the university of excellence. However, as the next sequence of this paper discusses, new avenues of action emerge even as others are taken away

### *In Struggle!*

Radical posturing is easy to find within the pages of our academic community's journals, magazines, and

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tematically removed from appointed office all those not directly supportive of their political agenda. In the university sector this can be seen in the face of government appointees to Boards of Governors. In the early years of the Campbell government the trade union movement tried to rally support. Aside from a few showcase rallies on the grounds of the provincial legislature and sporadic protests from parents, teachers, and assorted community organizations, the trade union movement seems to have restrained itself to quiet lobbying and acquiescence to the neo-liberal agenda. In the midst of the current global economic crisis, BCers seem quiet as they await the promised 2010 Winter Olympic boom that is said to be coming. With massive drop in BC's resource sector revenue (upon which the province of BC relies) combining with the opening of most public sector labour contracts in the spring of 2010 (post-Olympics) quiescence is likely to turn into protest.

newsletters. Anthropologists and their kindred colleagues seem able to muster righteous indignation over child labour in Latin America, inhumane and misogynist cultural practices in Africa, or even the barbarity of neo-colonialism practiced on indigenous peoples in 'our' backyards. But where is the everyday practice, the real social solidarity, that one might be excused for believing should accompany virtuous and radical sounding pronouncements in print?<sup>14</sup> This section of the paper explores the ways the structure of the academic workplace shapes and constrains the possibilities for progressive action.

### **Social Solidarity and the Academic Workplace<sup>15</sup>**

So, why does the academic workplace engender a mode of social interaction that eschews social solidarity even when many of its practitioners publicly advocate what might loosely be termed a progressive

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14 I should hasten to add that not all academics engage in radical posturing—some are downright regressive in their outlook. Many academics find the competitive zero-sum game of the academic pursuit of excellence perfectly acceptable. At the very least the honesty of those who find the system palatable in its current guise is admirable, if self-serving. What does stick in the craw, so-to-speak, is the ideological bafflegab produced by some academics and academic administrators who speak of collegiality on the one hand while they are busily engaged in undermining collaboration and solidarity on the other through their active support of market mechanisms. While of a different sort, the professional book radical is equally tiresome as they pronounce on conflicts and situations in far off places, produce volumes of radical sounding prose, but do nothing to make a real difference where they work and live.

15 To my colleagues who may misread the underlying sentiment as suggesting that there is in any way a personalized sense of grievance I want to set that aside right from the start. What I am talking about in this section is the structural aspect of our workplace and the ways in which the university of excellence militates against a full-fledged form of social solidarity. This is not to say that my immediate workplace environment lacks collegiality—it is a very collegial place to work. However, the social structure of the workplaces necessitates that gains by one end up being losses by another in terms of the economic and social status rewards within the workplace. So, to my dear friends and colleagues I ask that you read on understanding that this is a structural—not personal—critique.

politics? The academic workplace can be described as one that is premised upon confrontational discourse and individual competitiveness in which career advancement is determined by individual gain in a zero sum game.

The material conditions of the academic work site do indeed have implications for how people interact with each other. My partner, who works in a public high school, often comments on the degree of collegiality and collaboration in her work place. Teaching resources are shared freely between colleagues. Ideas on how to manage classrooms and challenge students to learn are freely shared. Through these everyday communications and collaborations, a community of care and support is created. This degree of workplace solidarity extends beyond a focus on work and lies at the core of the militancy of teachers in the public schools system. Teachers in BC have a long history of job action that must in some important way draw on these everyday forms of collaboration and cooperation in their workplace.

Prior to my appointment at UBC in 1996 I worked in BC's fishing industry as a commercial fisherman. The world of fisheries is one that requires social collaboration. Even at times when one may not like one's crewmates one must find ways to work together as the very physical requirements of work necessitates collaboration and cooperation in the work process. Working in close proximity with a small group of men under conditions where what I do affects the abilities of everyone else and vice versa leads to a social solidarity the likes of which I have never seen in the university of excellence. This is not to say that the world of fishermen or the world of public school teachers is an idyllic one of solidarity and bliss. What it is to say is that the structures under which individuals work shape and constrain their capacity to effectively collaborate, and that the world of a research university faculty member is one that is specifically orientated in a manner to undermine social solidarity in the workplace even as the ideology of collegiality is proclaimed.

Academic work is, in one sense, a form of glorified piecework. That is, we are rewarded by how much we produce. This is a deliberate and provocative claim. Clearly, most tenure stream faculty receive

a base salary. University performance or merit pay systems are based on, among other things, publications. A friend recounts an anecdote in which their biology instructor explained to the class that each paper he published was valued at about \$20,000 over his lifetime. He linked each published paper's value to merit pay and advancement through professorial ranks. He also suggested that it increased his capacity to negotiate individual salary increases. Many teaching-intensive post-secondary institutions have regulated pay scales. This is not, however, the case in research-intensive universities. For those of us working in research-intensive universities in countries such as Canada and the United States salary increases over and above standard career increases or general raises are individually negotiated. It is in this sense that I provocatively refer to academic labour as glorified piecework. I would add that while the situation in a North American research-intensive university may not be the normative case, it does set the criteria against which other forms of academic labour are measured.

Back to glorified piecework: as in any other workplace governed by piecework there is no fixed limit on what is expected. Of course, we implicitly understand that this is part of the university of excellence—we drive each other forward competing for scarce rewards of merit pay and advancement through the academic ranks knowing that if we slack off someone else might work harder. Those working outside of the research-intensive university rail against the teaching load that limits their ability to meet the publication goal required to gain access to the few privileged positions in the so-called 'top-tier' universities. It's an old trick that capitalists have used to inspire productivity, but it is always intriguing (and somewhat saddening) to watch how otherwise intelligent people internalize and argue for this dehumanizing work practice under the guise of excellence in scholarship.

Academics, like other professionals, have a fair degree of freedom in setting certain aspects of their conditions of employment. However, the hierarchical nature of tenure and promotion committees is such that effective control is placed within the hands of a relatively small group of academics at each institution, many of whom have participated in the manage-



ment structure of their institutions as departmental chairs, program directors, deans, etc. While the system may vary from institution to institution the basic structure is similar. Tenure cases are reviewed first by a department (or equivalent) level committee of already tenured faculty. Their recommendation is passed up the administrative hierarchy to a Dean's (or equivalent) review committee that then sends its recommendation up to the final committee at the top administrative level of the institution. At each level in the process there is a committee of faculty and administrators of increasing seniority. The final decision normally rests with the institution's top academic administrator and approval by such board of governors or regents that may exist.

It is the peculiarity of our current workforce structure that, as jobs tightened in the 1980s and 1990s (and then again in the current period following a brief opening from the late 1990s to the 2007/8), following the 1960s/70s post-secondary expansion, hiring became more focused on actual rather than potential output. Thus, those hired during and up to the early 1980s were likely to be hired without PhD or publications. However, by the mid 1990s the going rate at UBC and similar universities of excellence was a minimum of three peer-reviewed publications at the point of hire. Since the late 1990s the focus has been on so-called 'top-tier' universities (which translates as American private or Ivy League universities) and, in the process, Canadian degrees become by definition sub-par (see, for example Silverman 1991)<sup>16</sup>.

### Progressive Action in the Workplace

The paradox of the university of excellence is that, in focusing on measurable output over the content of academic production, a space for progressive action is created. However, the focus on output over content can have some rather embarrassing, and in fact, fraudulent effects. Jan Hendrik Schön, "an up-and-coming physics and nanotechnology wunderkind"

employed by Bell Laboratories managed to commit one of the largest hoaxes in recent times (Reich 2009:1). His falsified data were published in the 'top-tier' science journals *Nature* and *Science* giving him the number two ranking globally according the ISI Web of Science ratings for 2001; a clearly 'excellent' researcher by all measures of the day. His work was totally fabricated even if it was based on an idea that was eventually found to be correct. As science writer Eugenie Reich comments, the environment of competition for employment and advancement creates a climate in which fraud becomes possible "as almost all scientists, including those at universities, are working with the next grant application or major publication in mind, and it is not unheard of for researchers working on a project that is under threat to promote preliminary data more than they otherwise might" (2009:9).

The paradox of 'excellence' as an organizing principle is that it drives output rather than content. Here we can see a critical difference between the university of excellence and what Readings calls the university of 'culture' in which culture, tied to the project of the nation state, is the animating principle of the university (1996:62-118<sup>17</sup>). Within the university of culture what an academic said or published was more important than how much they said and published. In the university of culture the question of power was "structured in terms of the inclusion or exclusions of subjects from cultural participation" (Readings 1996:117). Thus, anthropologists who dissented during the US cold war lost their jobs for supporting anti-racist positions, not necessarily nor specifically for pro-communist positions (Price 2004). Intriguingly, the primary threat to US capitalism and the cultural idea of Americanism in the 1950s and 1960s was (and, I would suggest, remains) racial equality. This likely arises from the ways in which race and class in the U.S. are intimately linked (Brodin 2000, 1998, 1989). Thus, as long as academics in the university of excellence maintain their productivity at the rate being set by their colleagues a limited social space is opened up for progressive activity.

16 The preference for hiring non-Canadian Ph.D.s can be seen in a review of faculty in the 29 Canadian anthropology departments listed in the American Anthropological Association's 2009 guide to departments where 59% of faculty in Canadian departments offering a Ph.D. programme have non-Canadian degrees.

17 See also Price 2004 for a discussion of how the university of culture disciplined dissident anthropologists.

### Putting Words into Action

Since my first appointment at UBC I have been involved in a number of local solidarity actions. Some have gone unnoticed by the university's administration; others have brought some minor criticism upon me.<sup>18</sup> I have also been involved in my community residents' association and, while my children were in school, in school-based parent advisory councils. All of these actions are fairly mainstream and 'normal' activities for many people in our society who also participate in civil society organizations. What has been different is my effort to locate my participation in efforts to democratize these various organizations and to build effective linkages between divergent groups on the basis of workplace organizations.

Early on in my employment at UBC the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) summit was held at UBC. The main events were housed at the university president's residence and the Museum of Anthropology—venues directly adjacent to my own office. A large community and student opposition to the event developed in the months leading up to the summit. The opposition was in part a reaction to the planned attendance of Indonesian dictator Suharto; but the more important point of opposition was the role that the APEC summit was playing in the global neo-liberal agenda. APEC was part of the international movement toward liberalized global trade and the consequent undermining of local economic security for working people.

Students and their allies ramped up their organizing and political protests as the university prepared

for the coming world leaders. The fall 1997 protests at UBC became infamous in Canada for the actions of an RCMP officer dubbed 'sergeant pepper' who sprayed protesters with pepper spray with little warning during one of several clashes between police and activists.<sup>19</sup> For those of us who had experience with political protests in the early 1980s, in which conflict with police had been common, the carnival-like performance of the No APEC protests seemed quite different. Student activists dressed up as clowns, beat on drums, and pirouetted their way toward police fences. The police responded with pepper spray and arrests. The protesters seemed surprised with the police response but continued to advance on the police. Many of the young protesters who had experience in the environmental movement were those who 'wanted' to be arrested marched toward some predefined line and were then peacefully arrested by the waiting police. The rough and tumble of police violence was a new experience for these student protesters who complained vociferously following their arrests. Nonetheless, the protests continued under the eyes of snipers perched on nearby buildings, police in riot gear, and undercover agents embedded in student protest organizations.

As a junior faculty member I didn't seem to realize that I should remain silent and stay out of trouble.<sup>20</sup> Drawing upon my then recent experience as a student activist and my understanding of the importance of having faculty support, I attempted to have our department take a formal position of opposition to the APEC leaders summit at UBC. However, my senior colleagues politely set the issue aside citing academic freedom as one justification not to take a position. Two senior colleagues later approached me. Each in their own way implied, rather than stated, that I should keep my head down during my pre-tenure period. Neither of them brought up the issue directly, but both visits were too close to the event at

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18 During the illegal 2005 public teachers strike I worked with two colleagues at UBC to organize a series of public demonstrations (one of which caused the university administration to send warning letters to faculty and support staff advising us that participation in the rally outside of lunch or coffee breaks would constitute an illegal withdrawal of labour) and a university forum (which caused a university administrator to send me series of late night emails advising me that I could not call the forum a UBC event unless my "career path" included related publications). See at: <http://blogs.ubc.ca/new-proposals/2005/11/teachers-strike-forum-videos/>). In addition, with parent activists, I co-organized strike support activities at various schools throughout Vancouver including authoring a blog in support of public education.

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19 For a timely and thorough account see Andrew Larcombe's master's thesis "It was like the gauntlet was thrown down": the No! to APEC story (2000).

20 I am glad that I was not paralyzed by a false fear that some academics invoke by way of rationalizing their absence from political engagement. It is my sense that my life has been better for living my convictions than by trying to hide them.

hand to really be understood as anything other than advice on how to survive in the academic workplace.<sup>21</sup> While I did not directly enter into the active protests I did, nonetheless, take up a role as witness to on campus protests during the summit as part of an ad hoc group of similarly minded faculty. The APEC lesson for me was that I needed to ensure that my activism was combined with academic output so that when my turn for review and promotion came up there would be enough 'output' to overshadow the 'deficiencies' of political activism.<sup>22</sup>

Over the course of the next decade or so I had many opportunities to put this lesson into practice. From support work for students who took over the university president's office in the mid-1990s through a series of protracted and at times bitter labour conflicts between the university and its various trade unions, I had many real-time opportunities to put words into action. During this period of time I also became involved in our university faculty association and had a first-hand experience of conservative unionism at work.<sup>23</sup> What became apparent to me is

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21 It is likely that since my two senior colleagues had come of age within the university of culture, they were very much concerned that what a person said and published could have serious implications for career progress.

22 Constraints upon publishing and the mainstreaming of peer review publications toward the lowest common denominator of academic fashion is the subject of an entirely different paper. It is important to note here that the pressures to only publish in, or to only count, so-called 'top-tier' (i.e. U.S.) journals as fitting measures of excellence is a growing problem. The net effect of these programs is a narrowing of publications in social science and humanities fields where faculty may self-censor and only publish what they think will be acceptable in the dominant U.S. journals. For colleagues who see their primary attachment as the imperial heartland this does not pose a significant problem. However, for those of us who see relevance in maintaining an autonomous Canadian tradition of scholarship this is a real problem that needs to be confronted.

23 Academic labourers, especially those of us in the university of excellence, often are quite supportive of systems of privilege and differential reward. Nonetheless, most of the people who were involved on the UBC Faculty Association during my three terms on the executive were dedicated scholars who found injustice and inequity in employment at UBC to be distasteful and

that being actively involved, even from a position of political dissent, is not in and of itself an obstacle to continued employment in Canada.

From my vantage point as a faculty member within the university of excellence, I can see the relative privilege that has been granted to us. We have a degree of freedom and flexibility that few other workers have. With this comes responsibility and obligations. If we wish to do more than simply participate in the reproduction of the dominant society and its attendant social inequities, then we have an obligation to go beyond radical words and directly involve ourselves in the democratic struggle in our work and communities. We need to be cautious to not act naively or without some form of wider support. We should, however, act. In what follows I outline some of the small ways that one can engage in progressive politics within and against the university of excellence.

### *New Proposals (Again!)*

Kathleen Gough challenged anthropologists in 1968 to place their talents and personal political commitments behind the national liberation and anti-imperialist struggles of the day. Gough's call for new proposals are as relevant today as they were more than 40 years ago. As U.S., British, Canadian and other Western troops wage war in far-flung lands, workers in the heartland are confronting a resurgent ruling class intent on dialing back any advance or advantage that working people have gained. As anthropologists our arena of struggle straddles the sites in which we conduct research and those in which we engage in teaching and writing. This duality should give us a unique purchase from which to engage in transformative politics. It is instructive to review the key points of Gough's argument before proceeding further.

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they tried to address these imbalances. Despite the rather small 'c' conservative nature of the UBC faculty association, a slate with close ties to UBC's administration took control of the executive in 2007 on a platform of, among other things, rewarding excellence. Their major grievance was that the faculty association seemed to be anti-research and far too interested in supporting mediocre faculty then in building excellence. For the new executive, awarding excellence was the order of the day.

## New Proposals for Anthropologists: 1968

Anthropology is a child of Western imperialism. It has roots in the humanist visions of the Enlightenment, but as a university discipline and a modern science, it came into its own in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This was the period in which the Western nations were making their final push to bring practically the whole pre-industrial world under their political and economic control. [Gough 1968:403]

Gough goes on to describe how most anthropological research until World War II had been conducted in societies colonized by the West. In the years after World War II, this situation had begun to change as the majority of the colonized world achieved independence or was in the throes of anti-colonial wars. Yet, this degree of political autonomy was threatened by an attempt by the U.S. government to re-impose Western power.

Western dominance is continuing under new guises, even expanding and hardening. At the same time, revolution now begins to appear as the route by which underdeveloped societies must hope to gain freedom from Western controls. [Gough 1968:405]

The question, says Gough, is “what does an anthropologist do who is dependent on a counter revolutionary government in an increasingly revolutionary world?” (1968:405). In answer to her own question Gough suggests two answers: anthropologists either become historians of small scale society or “admit that our subject matter is increasingly the same as that of political scientists, economists, and sociologists” (1968:405).

Anthropology, according to Gough, had failed to recognize that the world was a global system defined by imperialism (cf. Wolf 1982). Anthropologists had “virtually failed to study Western imperialism as a social system, or even adequately to explore the effects of imperialism on the societies ... studied” (1968:405). While noting several important exceptions (Eric Wolf and Peter Worsley among them) Gough comments “it is remarkable how few anthropologists have studied imperialism, especially the economic system” (1968:405). Those studies that have emerged often “assumed an international capi-

talist economy [without question] in its framework” (Gough 1968:406).

Gough concludes her essay with a short list of new research questions that would bring anthropology forward to face the realities of the world system and save the discipline from retreating from meaningful research. Each of her questions challenged anthropologists to put their skills to work to honestly evaluate the implications of imperialism for the world’s majority populations.

We should do these studies in *our* way, as we would study a cargo cult or Kula ring, without the built-in biases of tainted financing, without the assumption that counter-revolution, and not revolution, is the best answer, and with the ultimate economic and spiritual welfare of our informants and of the international community, rather than the short run military or industrial profits of the Western nations, before us. [1968:407]

Gough’s call for a more relevant and engaged anthropology in 1968 was part of a movement in anthropology that was beginning to respond to the changing realities of fieldwork in former colonies. What have become commonplace concerns in today’s anthropology were novel and even threatening to the discipline in 1968. Most anthropologists today highlight doing research that has meaning and value for the people being studied; most anthropologists try to be in some way collaborative and engage communities as partners in research; most anthropologists see themselves as in some way progressive, if only in a small ‘I’ liberal sort of way. Yet, when Gough called on the discipline to literally get their hands dirty working to make the world a better place, anthropology instead made a turn to literature and textual representations. Gough’s concern with understanding and then transforming economic and political coercion in the then newly post-colonial transnational workplaces was set-aside in the competition for academic output in the university of excellence.

## New Proposals for Anthropologists: 2010

Our workplace, the contemporary university of excellence, is at the forefront of neo-liberal experiments and campaigns to target the most vulnerable and disadvantaged of the working classes. The university of

excellence is governed by principles of accountability (emphasis on count) to the detriment of content, quality, or social equity. For example, class size limits are more likely to be set by national magazine report cards and related measures of excellence than by recourse to effective pedagogy.<sup>24</sup> This is the context within which we produce papers, books, and conduct our research. It is also the terrain within which today's struggles for dignity and wellbeing is occurring. Our academic world is no longer (if it ever was) an isolated ivory tower. Our universities of excellence are at the core of the new world order. Our responsibilities and obligations thus call upon us to directly confront these forces in our workplace and through our actions.

First the practical concern: is there time to do all the things one needs to do to keep one's job (or to get one!) AND be actively engaged in progressive politics. As a parent of two who entered kindergarten in the same year I started working at UBC I say "yes there is time in the day!" However, the arena of struggle may shift.

For much of the last decade I was involved in my children's schools on parent advisory councils. Perhaps this is not so exciting as organizing demonstrations against dictators (as per the No APEC organizers) but, I would argue it is crucially important work just the same. One of the critical lessons taught by the old-line communist party union organizers in BC is that respect is built through everyday action. Networks developed through the everyday create the relationships that one is able to build from. These networks create the organizational base from which one can organize. These are the moments that have potential to make real change. As a parent I entered the world of my children's school and engaged in a politics aimed at democratizing and improving all children's learning experience. This involved activities from advocacy on behalf of other parents through to

direct action in support of striking teachers. These are small 'r' reforms, but from these can come the capital 'R' revolutions in behaviours and society that will indeed usher in a better world for all.

As academics in the university of excellence, we are expected to win grants and publish papers. In this we have a lot of autonomy. I often say to my students: "Yes we must publish, but we get to choose what we publish."

For me this has led to a series of articles and films on research methods (2005, 2004, 2003, 2001a) in place of what I may have originally wished to publish. This shift reflects my concern for conducting ethical research and to resist the undue influence of the competitive drive to publish as much as one can. To me, a respectful research engagement means that one takes the time to consult and to work with the people about whom we write. Some researchers, lost in the competitive rush to publish, prioritize their own advancement and desires over the people about whom they write. They do so without regard for consequence, seeking only the recognition that might come to them for rushing toward publication. It is possible to do honest, accurate, good work that is considerate of the people about whom we write; work that can contribute to making our world a better place. To do so should be an ethical and moral value to which we subscribe.

In our teaching we have an obligation and a responsibility to engage our students, to challenge them to examine and interrogate their values and their misconceptions of the world. This is not simply an activist pedagogy, it is a pedagogy based upon the principles of social justice and equality. It seems to me that learning in a context of social inequality, without understanding it or trying to do something about it, is an immoral act. Part of learning should mean learning about one's place in the world and the implications of privilege and disadvantage on our collective capacity to become fully human. Especially as anthropologists who actively engage people through our research and in our teaching, we have both a responsibility and an opportunity to put our words into actions that will create a better world for all.

Anthropology embodies a real possibility of transformative learning; but we need to take Gough's

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<sup>24</sup> I was the chair of my department's undergraduate studies committee during a period when the Dean, having read a national news magazine report card on UBC class sizes, sent a directive to readjust course enrolment limits so that they meshed with the magazine's reporting structure. This allowed us to 'game the system' supposedly to boost our score on the national report card.

criticisms and proposals seriously in order to make good on the promise. What are the effects of global capitalism on people's health and wellbeing? How can we make democratic practice real and what does our knowledge of small-scale societies tell us about the possibility of true participatory democracy? Rather than studying those without power, can we renew the call to study up and focus on the ways in which local/trans-national elites have gained control over public institutions such as the university of excellence? Wasting anthropological insight on interesting, but ultimately naïve and irrelevant topics, contributes to maintaining the status quo and thus is akin to complicity in the injustices of the global capitalist system.

### *From Action to Words to Action*

I have spent three decades now involved in post secondary education: about half as a student and a bit more as a faculty member. Throughout this time I have had the occasion to observe first-hand the possibilities of progressive political engagement. Over this same period of time the nature of the global capitalist system has transformed, matured into a condition in which it is now clearly a global system that has subordinated the central components of all economies to the logic of capitalist accumulation. An anthropology that tries to cling to the partial study of small places or through the use of multiple local spaces while insisting upon the idea of the confluence of community and culture will indeed be relegated to the dustbins of history. Now, more than ever, our anthropological work—our social science work—AND our political work needs to be located fully “within a framework of understanding of what is happening to the larger system” (Gough 1968:405). Anthropology, as a politically engaged practice, has the capacity to turn ideas into actions that can create a better world for all of us.

### **Acknowledgements**

No political struggle is ever truly an individual act. Over the course of three decades I have had the pleasure of befriending, learning from, and working with a host of activists, friends, colleagues and comrades in arms from my early days as a student politician to the present. As clichéd as it is they are too many to mention here. I will invariably overlook some, others may not wish to be mentioned, a few have already passed away. From those early years I recall Ann C., Gord C, Doug F, Peter G, John G, Lise H, George H, Terry J, Mike M, Herb P, Thom Q, Jeff S, Keven T, Ian W, and Calvin W, in particular as playing a role in shaping the development of my view of progressive politics. I acknowledge you as being there when it counted. More recently I acknowledge my friends from CUNY (fellow classmates Anthony and Kate and my former advisor Gerry in particular) with whom I learned about progressive politics (and anthropology) in New York City. This paper has been read and critiqued by a tolerant circle of colleagues and friends. My thanks to Stephen Baines, Wayne Fife, Anthony Marcus, Keith Preston, Bob Ratner, and Sharon Roseman who read, commented and suggested changes. Some changes have been made, others ignored, and then some managed to elude me. I trust that in some small way I have honoured your engagement with my reflections. At the end of the day what will matter is how we change the world; not how we write about it.

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*Book Review*

AN ACADEMIC SKATING ON THIN ICE. By Peter Worsley. Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books. 2008. 296 pp. ISBN 978-1-84545-370-1 (cloth)

Peter Worsley's recently published book *An Academic Skating on Thin Ice* is a cogent first-person account of the intellectual life of one of the 20th century's most important scholars. Among his many major contributions, Worsley became known internationally for having brought the concept of "le tiers monde" into the English lexicon as part of his influential explication in the book *The Third World: A Vital New Force in International Affairs* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1964). He is equally recognized for having honed the concept of "cargo cults" with the similarly best-selling *The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Study of 'Cargo' Cults in Melanesia* (MacGibbon and Kee 1957). Both of these books were later republished in new English editions as well as being translated into other languages. Among his other books are *Inside China* (A. Lane 1975), *The Three Worlds: Culture and World Development* (University of Chicago Press 1984) and his important overview *Marx and Marxism* recently out in a new revised edition (Routledge 2002). In the late 1980s, he edited *On the Brink: Nuclear Proliferation & the Third World* (Third World Communications 1987). He was interested in the topic of indigenous knowledge very early on, when he did doctoral research in Groote Eylandt, Australia. He later wrote the two wide-ranging books on the topic of knowledge: *Knowledges: What Different Peoples Make of the World* (Profile Books 1997) and *Knowledges: Culture, Counterculture, Subculture* (New Press 1997).

Having been taught anthropology at Cambridge University by Reo Fortune, G.I. Jones and E. E. Evans-Pritchard (visiting from Oxford), Peter Worsley received a bachelor's degree in 1947, sooner than normal as part of "Wartime Regulations" (p. 55). Despite his lively description of his connections with other students and faculty in various institutions throughout his life, Worsley also explains how when he was an undergraduate at Cambridge students were socially divided by year, College, and academic rank to the extent that "It's significant that of the eleven people who were Communists in Cambridge in the late 1930s/early 1940s who recently wrote about their Cambridge days, I knew only one of them" (p. 24). Later on in the book, however, we hear about his path crossing with scores of individuals who were similarly involved in endeavours such as the founding of *New Left Review* which, he recounts, for a time became "more than a mere journal, but a movement, with a score of discussion groups across the country and an office in Soho, complete with coffee bar" (p. 131).

Worsley was recognized early on by his professors to be a leading thinker. For example, he was one of two winners of the Curl Prize from the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1955 for an article that was an abridged version of his MA thesis (p. 113). However, his participation in Communist politics and his own commitment to social justice in the face of a world—including an academic one—largely controlled by capitalism, colonial relations, racism, and



sexism prevented him from taking part in opportunities that were easier to access for other research stars of his generation. About his first interview to work with the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, for example, he recounts:

The research post was for research into race relations in Southern Rhodesia. ‘What is your attitude toward the colour bar?’ asked the Colonial Office man. I said that I was opposed to it on scientific grounds, on ethical grounds and just about any other grounds that I could think of. Needless to say, as Max told me on the phone next day, I didn’t get the job. But, he said, he had just been appointed to a new Chair of Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester, and would I be interested in applying for a Research Studentship? [pp. 69-70]

A few years hence, as with academics in the US and other countries he found that

the Cold War was still with us. I applied again for a post with the RLI, and this time, Max told me by phone, I had got the appointment, but MI5 had put a block on it. The viciousness and omnipresence of the Cold War is hard to recall from this distance in time. [p. 77]

Many years later, he tried again with a similar result:

I now made another application to the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute. This time, Max informed me, I was indeed appointed. But MI5 stepped in to veto this. My anthropological achievements counted for nothing. After ten years studying the subject, and Africa, it was obvious that I would never be allowed to do fieldwork again in territories controlled by the Colonial Office. [pp. 125-126]

He, like others, was also restricted in where he could gain permits to do research as a doctoral candidate. Ready with supplies for long-term fieldwork and a Research Studentship from the Australian National University:

I went down to Territories to collect my entry permit for New Guinea—a formality, I thought. ‘Not for you’ was the response of the official I saw. MI5 had struck again. I had been banned once more, from another continent. [p. 83]

Worsley’s politics also propelled him into jobs in sociology rather than anthropology, first at the University of Hull and then at the University of Manchester. By his own account, Worsley worked very hard to educate himself in sociology and contribute to building strong departments. He recounts his memory of the appointment drama at Hull:

Had I been on the appointment committee for the sociology job, I would not have appointed Worsley, because there were five other good candidates, all with training in sociology [. . .] I remember looking out into the Front Quadrangle and thinking, ‘If they appoint me, I’ll dedicate myself to developing a really strong department’. They did appoint me, and I did what I had promised myself. [p. 128]

Indeed, with a group of colleagues he produced two very successful and influential texts in 1970: *Introducing Sociology* (Penguin; later reissued in new editions as *The New Introducing Sociology*) and *Modern Sociology: Introductory Readings* (Penguin; with a later issue *New Modern Sociology Readings*).

Worsley also reminds us throughout the book of the violence of struggle and conflict. In South Africa, just before apartheid is written into law, Worsley approaches the Communist Party and is shown the reality of the shantytowns by the journalist Ruth First who “was eventually blown to bits by a letter bomb sent by South African Intelligence to Maputo” (p. 68). Worsley often interweaves his own memories of events with printed sources—those that he had read in the time period of which he is speaking and those that he consulted later on. In some instances, it is a case of him having accessed new information about events that occurred decades ago that had only recently come to light. His book is therefore both a memoir and a reanalysis of the social relationships, ideological battles, and economic and political forces that were at play in contexts he participated in and/or thought about at different points in his lifetime. One example is his discussion of the Mau Mau rebellion and the camps where the government detained thousands of Kikuyu. He had spent time in Kenya and other countries in that part of Africa during WWII as a member of the 2/6th King’s African Rifles (p. 36). He notes that

when I returned from Australia in 1954, it was very difficult indeed to unearth what was going on in the camps, though we knew it included tortures every bit as horrific as the atrocities which the British public were told was a monopoly of the Mau Mau. [p. 119]

Further, he writes “it was not until September 1955 when more and more leaks, many from people who had played major roles in the camps themselves, became a flood” (p. 120). However, as with so many events that occurred during his lifetime, he draws our attention to additional information that came to light later on: “half a century had to elapse before two American scholars, Caroline Elkins and David Anderson, were able to document the details of the atrocities” (p. 120).

His ever-present awareness of inequality is never hidden from view, even on the last pages of the book where he lets his readers know that among his current leisure activities is his weekly visit to

a West End [in London] pub, which would be too expensive for the one in five people over fifty who live below the poverty line or the seven million who may have bus-passes but have no access to public transport. [pp. 273-274]

I encourage readers of *New Proposals* to follow Worsley’s self-described journey. Those who have crossed paths with him, or the situations and institutions he discusses, will undoubtedly recognize much. Those who have not will learn a great deal about the real-world contexts in which fields such as anthropology and sociology emerged in the post-World War II period not only in the England where Worsley taught at the University of Hull and the University of Manchester, but also throughout the world where he conducted research. He also landed in a number of locations as a visiting professor, including what was then Sir George Williams University (now Concordia University) in Montreal; the Colegio de México in Mexico City; the CUNY Graduate Center and New School for Social Research in New York City.

Throughout this account, we are shown an individual who was a voracious reader, an indefatigable researcher and writer, a brilliant public intellectual and institution builder. In a period of intense corporatization of universities and marginalization of critical research, his story is a good reminder of both earlier struggles and of the legacy of steadfastness that we have in academics such as Peter Worsley.

Sharon R. Roseman

*Book Review*

THE EXCHANGE UNIVERSITY: CORPORATIZATION OF ACADEMIC CULTURE. By Adrienne S. Chan and Donald Fisher. Vancouver: UBC Press. 2008 ISBN: 9780774815703 (cloth) \$85.00. 2009 ISBN 9780774815703 (paper) \$34.95. 224 pp

This volume consists of nine edited versions of papers presented during a symposium organized by the Centre for Policy Studies in Higher Education and Training, University of British Columbia. This symposium took place in May 2003 at the annual meeting of the Congress of Humanities and Social Sciences/Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences. In the introduction, the editors Adrienne Chan and Donald Fisher argue that several external factors are influencing the reshaping of the university system and leading to the creation of the exchange university, "where exchange is linked to commodity production and capitalist production in the education system" (p. 2). In particular, they discuss four structural trends that are significant to post-secondary education in Canada, including globalization; the commodification of knowledge and the knowledge economy; science policy; and federal funding and public-private linkages. This book provides an important exploration of the impacts of these shifts on higher education in Canada, including the increasingly complex and porous boundaries between the public and private sectors. It is through research conducted with faculty and administrators that the tensions within universities and concerns regarding the form of this new academic culture are explored.

Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades introduce the concept of the "academic capitalist learning/knowledge regime," building on earlier work on aca-

democratic capitalism (Slaughter and Leslie 1997) in considering the extent to which market behaviours have become associated with the internal workings of universities and colleges. As part of this process, the boundaries between public and private institutions are being reconfigured. Important to this transformation are policy, copyrighting, and patents, each of which falls under the heading of "circuits of knowledge." Slaughter and Rhoades discuss how circuits of knowledge are influencing public/private relations and displacing the public knowledge regime. Yet, as they also note, there are several fault lines in this regime as contradictions, such as those that emerge as universities pursue both public and private funding, persist in the relationship between universities and the market.

In a case study of the University of Ottawa, a research-intensive university, Adrienne Chan and Donald Fisher explore academic culture through six dominant themes, including research, science, commercialization, changing roles among faculty and administration, collegiality, and generational differences. In part, they note shifts in hiring priorities and competition tied to research, an escalation in the level of commercialization of research, and visible generational differences with respect to research objectives. Related to these findings is a perceived imbalance between "hard science" and social science. A managerial culture has emerged along with increased pressures associated with time and space shortages.

The relationships among faculty and administrators have become increasingly complex and issues of collegiality have influenced faculty roles and solidarity. In examining these themes and their significance for academic culture, Chan and Fisher acknowledge important linkages between the state, academia, and the private sector.

Shifting the focus from administration and faculty, Brigitte Gemme and Yves Gingras explore the impacts of academic capitalism through the case of graduate students in Quebec. Their focus is on students, many of whom are in the natural sciences and engineering, who received funding through partnerships with private enterprise. Through this approach, Gemme and Gingras provide a valuable look at disciplines with industry linkages and perceived commercial value. In this context, they describe a new generation of researchers who are adept at responding to both academic and industry demands.

In an historical analysis, Paul Axelrod describes university and government relations from 1945 to the present. After the 1995 election of the Conservative Government of Ontario led by Mike Harris, universities experienced an increase in both government and market involvement. In general, Axelrod finds that universities in Ontario have enjoyed relatively stable levels of autonomy, despite the increasing integration of universities into national and provincial policy agendas, which have been impacted by economic interests. In this insightful assessment, it is argued that while some oversight by the Ontario government should be expected, the form of this involvement needs to be carefully considered.

Through a focus on university faculty, Linda Muzzin utilizes the concept of “accounting logic” (Broadbent, Dietrich, and Roberts 1997) to explore the increase in contingent faculty, or Contemporaries, in universities as part of this logic. She finds that once a temporary solution to labour shortages, contingent faculty may now come to serve as members of a reserve army of labour. This discussion is situated in terms of gender and ethnic equity. While recognizing that some equity gains have been made, Muzzin argues that this process has been faced with many challenges posed by limited tenure-stream positions. She notes that this is particularly true in sociology

and anthropology, which “have been limited in their ability to accommodate minoritized groups because of restructuring” (p. 119).

In their chapter on academic autonomy, Janice Newson and Claire Polster stress the importance of faculty autonomy to universities and to the public. Despite this, Newson and Polster argue that faculty members are not only experiencing decreased autonomy at the institutional, national, and international levels, but that they also contribute to this erosion. For example, faculty may support the use of performance measures despite the possible outcomes of decreased autonomy and influence on research initiatives as faculty members select topics that will enhance their performance reviews. Among Newson and Polster’s suggestions is a shift in focus from an individual to a collective strategy in resisting the erosion of academic autonomy.

Focusing on one specific university discipline, Jo-Anne Dillabough and Sandra Acker argue that teacher education, or the faculty of education, is a complex site where gendered individuals are defined. Through a focus on women teacher educators, they examine the role of female work in three studies in the UK and Canada. They consider the role of gender in influencing the effects of certain “regulatory controls cross-nationally and their impact on the construction of female work in a professional discipline with a history of institutionalizing female labour” (p. 147). In part, they seek to ascertain “the process through which women are repositioned and reconfigured as gendered workers in a globalizing/marketizing academy” (p. 148).

Theresa Shanahan provides an insightful case study of the University of British Columbia’s Faculty of Law using a political economy perspective. Acknowledging that the costs of post-secondary education are being shifted to both the private sector and to the student “consumer,” she explores the significance of market-driven pressures on academic culture and legal scholarship. Shanahan notes that, thus far, the law school has retained a high level of professional autonomy, academic freedom, and immunity to scientism and commercialism. This is despite challenges that have emerged surrounding increased workloads and revised expectations for

research. In general, she finds that the Faculty of Law is underfunded, relies on financial support from the private sector, does not follow the same research structure as other disciplines within the university, and engages in research of limited commercial value.

In an apt final chapter, Jennifer Sumner discusses the enclosure of the university commons. She argues that through the commodification of knowledge and an increased relationship with private partners, access to higher education is limited. In this chapter, Sumner explores the process by which this is occurring and possible forms of resistance. She suggests that faculty should play an important role in developing a new knowledge commons.

Chan and Fisher conclude by revisiting key issues raised throughout the book, emphasizing the process of commercialization and marketization of universities. In this conclusion they agree with Sumner's call for establishing universities as common public spaces with unobstructed access.

Throughout this book, structural changes and the impacts of these changes on Canadian universities and colleges are addressed. Faculty, administration, and students navigate within and also play a part in establishing this new academic culture. A sense of the uneven development occurring within the university system is provided, perhaps most strikingly through the examples of the struggles that are ensuing between (and often within) academic disciplines as they are subjected to various levels of funding, research demands, commercialization, and autonomy.

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