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2004 Recipient

Wendy Wolters, "Without Sanctuary: Bearing Witness, Bearing Whiteness," *JAC* 24.2.

2003 Recipient

Wendy S. Hesford and Theresa A. Kulbaga, "Labored Realisms: Geopolitical Rhetoric and Asian American and Asian (Im)migrant Women's (Auto)biography," *JAC* 23.1.

2002 Recipient

Jacqueline Rhodes, "'Substantive and Feminist Girlie Action': Women Online," *College Composition and Communication* 54.1.

Review Essays



The Humanities and their Boundaries

Ronald Strickland

In 1977, under the direction of former Nixon cabinet member William E. Simon, the John M. Olin Foundation launched a campaign to create a conservative "counterintelligensia" to oppose the liberal bias of humanities faculty in American universities. Over a period of nearly three decades, Olin funneled tens of millions of dollars to conservative scholars and institutions until, at the end of 2005, the foundation discontinued its programs (Miller). The liberal humanities, it would seem, are no longer a threat. It is not the case, of course, that conservatives have won a battle of ideas within the academy. Instead, Olin and other conservative foundations have won a fight to reduce public funding for higher education. The prevailing ideology of academic humanism is more expansively democratic and egalitarian than ever; however, the humanities are being contained and neutralized; their effectiveness is undermined by the "neoliberal" privatization of American higher education.

Neoliberalism should be seen, notwithstanding the confusing terminology, as an outgrowth of "neoconservatism," the political movement that emerged partly as a reaction to the moral relativism and disregard for traditional values of late twentieth-century American society, and partly as a rejection of the "politics of identity" adopted by the anti-racist, feminist, and gay rights movements. While neoconservatism sought to restore traditional hierarchical

structures of authority, neoliberalism deploys the anti-authoritarian logic of "new left" ideology in order to undermine the power of institutions that have been influenced by the arguments of multiculturalism. Neoliberalism revives Adam Smith's concept of the "invisible hand of the market," seeking to remove state control and regulation from commercial and industrial activity and, at the same time, to impose the rationality of the "free market" in areas such as health care, social security, and education. The neoliberal vision of higher education rejects the traditional "Humboldtian" ideal, in which the role of higher education is to serve society by producing enlightened citizens, in favor of a "market" model, in which the university's role is to serve the "student-as-consumer" by responding to student demand for vocational training and promoting an ideology of consumerism rather than altruistic models of citizenship.

In this environment, students take out huge loans to pay ever-higher tuition as the federal and state governments disinvest in higher education. Anxious about the burden of debt, undergraduates enroll in vocationally oriented programs rather than liberal arts majors. Of course, the neoliberal university projects itself as responding, democratically, to student-consumer demand; however, the students are not choosing to reject the humanities in an economic vacuum. Their choice is affected by the state and federal disinvestment in higher education; the demand is "manufactured."

Against this backdrop of ongoing crisis, the two books I will review here explore the boundaries of the humanities and the role of the humanities in society. Some of the essays in David A. Hollinger's collection, *The Humanities and the Dynamics of Inclusion since World War II*, are remarkable for the attention they give to contrarian perspectives on social inclusion. An essay entitled "The Black Scholar, the Humanities, and the Politics of Racial Knowledge since 1945" by Jonathan Scott Holloway, for example, focuses substantially on the plight of pioneering Black scholars who labored under the burden of expectations—from both Black and white communities—that they would write and teach about Black topics. Another essay, by John T. McGreevy, describes the

exclusion of Catholic faculty from the humanities departments of most public and non-Catholic private colleges and universities before the 1950s. In general, Hollinger's contributors examine the humanities from a decidedly retrospective point of view. There is scarcely any mention of current issues such as globalization, technological dehumanization, and the concept of the "posthuman." There is no attention to the spectacular growth of religious fundamentalism and little notice of the erosion of civic agency in a public sphere dominated by postmodern consumerism. These omissions, among other things that I will discuss below, situate the book on the conservative side of the partisan culture wars, notwithstanding the presence of some moderate voices among the contributors.

The lead essay, by one of those moderate voices, John Guillory, does address an urgent problem of concern in the humanities—the challenge to democracy posed by consumerism. Guillory makes two counter-intuitive arguments about the emergence and evolution of general education programs during the twentieth century. First, he asserts, the general education movement began not as an effort to accommodate new students from non-elite backgrounds, but as a response to the replacement of the classical *trivium* and *quadrivium*-based curriculum with the elective system at Harvard, and as a response to the concern that elite students were not getting sufficient exposure to the traditional values found in the western classics. The elective system facilitated a more directly professional-training orientation in undergraduate studies, and some critics worried that American society would suffer from a lack of the kind of social cohesion that had been fostered among its leaders by the traditional humanist curriculum. As things turned out, a degree of social cohesion did result from the common experience of college-educated Americans during the twentieth century; however, it was a social cohesion based less on a shared appreciation of traditional elite culture than on a shared experience of professional training and on the consumer lifestyles available to members of the growing professional-managerial class. For this new "mass elite," Guillory concludes, "cultural anxiety about the level of taste," which was in fact a real anxiety for

the emerging professional-managerial class before World War II, "has been displaced largely to the domain of consumables, where niche marketing has established new and complex hierarchies" (39). The replacement of high culture as a distinguishing feature of class identity by the consumable artifacts of mass culture and by technical-professional credentials negates the effect that "we rather innocently call 'democratization'" in higher education; instead, Guillory argues, colleges and universities are participating in a general process of what Alain Touraine calls "massification" (39). The American university at the turn of the twenty-first century is "underdetermining" with respect to American national culture, which, such as it is, is largely formed "by the mass media—or more accurately, in the complex interaction between mass media and regional or ethnic cultures" (35).

In another essay from the first section, Roger L. Geiger provides a detailed demographic account of the expansion of student demand for courses in the humanities from the end of World War II through the 1960s, and the decline that set in during the 1970s and 1980s. A large part of the growth in humanities education, as he demonstrates, was simply a result of the general expansion of higher education after World War II (61–62). Then came "the bust" of the 1970s. Geiger remarks that students were alienated from literary studies, in particular, after 1969, "when self-proclaimed radicals gained ascendancy in the Modern Language Association and promoted an agenda of anticapitalism, confrontation, and fixation on the latent social biases in literature" (66). If students had identified with their young radical professors during the 1960s, he asserts, "students were now chronologically removed from the heroic struggles of the student rebellion . . .". He cites survey figures indicating that around 40 percent of students "consider[ed] it 'very important' to become 'very well off financially'" until 1973, while that percentage increased to 50 percent in 1975 and 71 percent in 1985 (66).

These surveys of student attitudes along with Geiger's summary of the radicalization of literature faculty provide interesting bits of the complex whole; however, they surely don't add up to a

convincing account of the causes for the decline of the humanities during the 1970s and 1980s. Something I find lacking in particular in this essay, and throughout the collection, is attention to the role of education policy-makers and politicians. During the 1960s, the former normal schools that were becoming comprehensive state universities appropriated some elements of the "mission" and "prestige" of elite liberal arts colleges and research universities. What this meant, for many first-generation students, was a chance to get a critical, liberal education that was not exclusively focused on "practical" vocational skills training. In addition to a wider distribution of cultural capital, the transformation of the normal schools made the intellectual processes of critique (however limited within the framework of rationalist and idealist ideology) more widely available in American society. Almost immediately, however, there were efforts to rein in that democratic access by limiting the scope of humanities education at all levels. One of the most influential of these was a 1963 book, *The Uses of the University*, by Berkeley chancellor Clark Kerr. Coining the term "multiversity," Kerr outlined a blueprint for a two-tier public university system in which the "flagship" state universities would produce the research that industry needs, while a lower tier of comprehensive public universities would produce the workers. Students in state universities at both levels would get a scaled-down version of the traditional liberal arts education, with a more limited access to the humanities.¹

During the 1970s, in an atmosphere of fiscal constraints accompanying a deep recession, Kerr's prescription for a hierarchically structured system of public higher education was widely adopted. Legislators began to cut back on public funding for higher education, and the second-tier institutions were hit the hardest. By the early 1980s, the two large tuition-free and open-access university systems—CUNY and the California state universities—were forced to begin charging tuition. The Reagan administration drastically reduced student grants and eliminated most government-backed low-interest and interest-free higher education loans. So, Geiger's account of how, mindful of the recession, students who

felt estranged from their radical professors abandoned the humanities for business and technical programs is only a partial explanation for what happened, and it is surprising to see the neoliberal political agenda of disinvestment in higher education neglected in his account.

Joan Shelley Rubin's contribution, "The Scholar and the World," concludes the first section of Hollinger's book by reflecting on three academic humanists who became "public intellectuals" in the post-World War II era: Gilbert Highet, Jacques Barzun, and Howard Mumford Jones. For this group of conservative academics, she writes, "the dynamics of inclusion entailed not so much the incorporation of diverse students into the university as the extension of instruction outward from the classroom lecture to the best seller and the broadcast" (76). Barzun's positions are more or less representative. First, in tacit response to the rise of the physical sciences at the expense of the humanities during the Cold War space race with the Soviet Union, he argued that the physical sciences should be subsumed under the humanities in the undergraduate curriculum, since "science is made by man, in the light of interests, errors, and hopes, just like poetry, philosophy, and human history itself" (qtd. in Rubin 87). This move would have meant an expanded role for compulsory courses in the history of science as opposed to laboratory courses. As Rubin wryly notes, Barzun's "proposal manifested the 'dynamics of inclusion' in the sense that Barzun imagined the humanities engulfing and recasting the competition threatening their curricular preeminence" (87). In general, Barzun's conception of the humanities was decidedly undemocratic and anti-egalitarian. He criticized the emphasis on "creativity" within American elementary schools, arguing that it was wrongheaded to encourage students' self-expression and to advance "individual goals" (88). He criticized modern art for celebrating a "love of confusion" that "undermined the 'articulate precision' of a cultivated mind." He defined philanthropy, disapprovingly, as "the liberal doctrine of free and equal opportunity as applied to things of the mind" (89). For Barzun, the "dynamics of inclusion" of Hollinger's subtitle had little if anything to do with inclusion of

previously excluded demographic groups. He saw "nothing undemocratic or iniquitous about selecting the best for the highest training" (qtd. in Rubin 87), and his "best" turned out to be implicitly white, middle-class or upper-class, and male.

From the distance of fifty years, Barzun's anti-democratic elitism seems quaint. However, he continued to write books promoting these ideas into the 1990s. In 1993, at the height of the culture wars, the University of Chicago Press republished Barzun's 1968 book *The American University: How it Runs, Where it is Going*. In a 1996 book entitled *The University in Ruins*, Bill Readings developed a far-reaching critique of Barzun's conception of the role of the humanities in the context of the student revolts of 1968. For Barzun and others like him, Readings points out, the university had a hero, and that hero was a white male professor. The student—whether white or black, male or female—was expected to identify with the professor-as-hero, and, eventually, perhaps, to succeed him in that role. Readings argues that as a result of the student uprisings of 1968 the student "body" was marked by gender and race; it was no longer a universal white male construct. Readings links this transformation of the student-subject to two distinctive changes in the American university in the latter part of the twentieth century. First, Readings argues, since capital no longer reproduces itself at the level of the nation-state, the academy's and in particular the humanities' role in producing citizen-subjects of the nation-state is becoming redundant. Second, since the ideal citizen-subject of the modern nation-state was the Enlightenment's "universal" subject—an abstract white male subject held as the measure of humanity at large—the identity-politics movements that dominated both progressive political discourse and the restructuring of the academic humanities after 1968 rendered it increasingly impossible for the academy to perform the work of social cohesion envisioned for it by Enlightenment thinkers.

In Readings' analysis, these two related phenomena are further linked to the effects of globalization and neoliberalism, in which some key resources of the nation-state are "privatized," or

subjected to “market” direction, and others are pressed more or less directly into the service of multinational capital. In the United States, government support for higher education steadily declines, and greater economic sacrifice is imposed upon students. Meanwhile, some of the resulting deficit in professional-managerial talent is made up by siphoning off trained professionals from other nations through the immigration “brain drain,” and domestic university students are shaped into consumers rather than citizens, seeking “marketable” skills training to enter the employment arena at the expense of being provided education for civic participation.

None of the essays in the first section of Hollinger’s book connects the crisis of the humanities after World War II to the current political and economic challenges to democratic education in much detail. However, the essays of the second section—“European Movements against the American Grain?”—devote considerable attention to antidemocratic thought in the humanities. Two of the three essays in this section devote considerable space to University of Chicago philosopher Leo Strauss. Strauss is often cited as having influenced Allan Bloom’s book, *The Closing of the American Mind*, the writing of which was funded by the Olin Foundation, and the publication of which is sometimes credited with having touched off the “culture wars” of the 1980s and 1990s. Strauss is also mentioned as a mentor to Paul Wolfowitz, a principal architect of George W. Bush’s policy for intervention in the Middle East, and a key influence on the conservative pundit William Kristol. In the first essay of the section, Martin Jay compares Strauss’ thinking on the question of “truth” in political discourse to that of other 1950s émigré intellectuals Theodor W. Adorno and Hannah Arendt. Each of these thinkers, although from different political positions, problematized the notion of “plain English” and the rejection of rhetorical nuance so valorized in American political discourse. Strauss’ disdain for simple “truth” in political discourse is derived from the Platonic idea of the “noble lie”—the idea that philosophers and rulers who see the truth should soften it for common people, for their own good. This, as Jay observes, can only be seen as an expression of Strauss’ elitist

contempt for the idea of an enlightened public (111). However, together with the writings of Adorno and Arendt, Strauss’ darker view of political discourse offers a corrective to the determined naïveté of mid-century American politics. “This is not to say,” Jay concludes, “that valuing truth telling and wariness about falsehoods should simply be banished from the political realm” (119). Nonetheless, the writings of these émigré intellectuals suggest that

rather than seeing the Big Lie of totalitarian polities as met by the perfect truth sought in liberal democratic ones, . . . we would be better advised to see politics as the endless struggle between lots of half-truths, cunning omissions, and competing narratives, which may offset each other but never entirely produce a single consensus. (119–20)

Of all the essays in the book, Martin Jay’s essay is the least immediately concerned with the “dynamics of inclusion.” However, the essay does provide a historical context for thinking about the complexity of political discourse needed in order to establish a consensus for governing a heterogeneous democratic society.

In the past several decades, attacks on logical positivism and scientific rationalism have come mainly from postmodern theorists critiquing various aspects of modernity’s universalism. By contrast, a thread that runs through several essays in this volume (including Jay’s) is the tension between what might be called “values” discourses in the humanities and the positivist orientation of the sciences. Here, the question of value in philosophical discourse is taken up by James T. Kloppenberg, who discusses the experiences of three émigré philosophers: the German Gestalt psychologist Wolfgang Köhler, the French neo-Thomist philosopher Étienne Gilson and, once more, the German Jewish political philosopher Leo Strauss. Kloppenberg devotes the larger portion of his essay to an explication of Strauss’ philosophy. Strauss’ influence derives, according to Kloppenberg, from his rejection of the Enlightenment tradition and his advocacy of a return to the certainties espoused by classical philosophers. Plato and Aristotle understood that

humanity had lost contact with nature, and they sought to restore humanity to its rightful state by probing the nature of the "eternal," unchanging problems that can only be understood through an awareness of "natural right" (Kloppenbergs 138). Modern tools of knowledge such as hermeneutics and social science methodologies only further obscure this absolute truth of nature, and bury humanity in a cave even deeper than the one in Plato's famous example.

Strauss was so contemptuous of rational dialogue that he disdained even to respond to critiques of the idea of natural right that he found in Plato, Aristotle, and other ancient philosophers: "He considered their superiority self-evident and their meaning accessible enough for those inclined and equipped to study them as he did" (138). Strauss favored government by an elite who could rightly determine the dangerous, "esoteric" meanings to be read between the lines of the writings of the classical philosophers.

Kloppenbergs concludes his very generous account of Strauss' thought with the observation that "Strauss's brand of Aristotelianism continues to attract ardent adherents uncowed by the persistent ridicule they face in scholarly circles. The appeal of the idea of eternal truth appears to have considerable staying power" (148). An ironic footnote to this last sentence reads: "Straussians' access to the generosity of wealthy foundations makes it difficult to portray them convincingly as marginalized outsiders, the image they cherish" (157). The fact is, Strauss' ideas are not widely embraced by humanists within the academy. On the other hand, several books have been written about his influence—outside the academy—on a few conservative pundits, lobbyists, and politicians who are supported or subsidized by foundations such as Olin and others. The activities of these foundations and their political successes have been examined in detail elsewhere, so it seems strange to have so much attention given to a figure like Strauss here without a more substantial acknowledgment of the political and financial strings that have been attached to his ideas.² While Strauss is a fascinating character, this book seems to me to exaggerate his influence within the academy even as it misses

opportunities to consider the importance of his thought among intellectuals outside the academy who are funded by the right-wing foundations.

Strauss' marginality within the academy is evident in the fact that he is not even mentioned in the contribution following Kloppenberg's, an essay entitled "Philosophy and Inclusion in the United States, 1929–2001," by Bruce Kuklick. Kuklick traces the decline of the influence of John Dewey's pragmatism at leading universities during the 1930s, then the rise of positivist analytic philosophy, "philosophy of science," and "philosophy of language." Kuklick's essay and an essay by Leila Zenderland, entitled "Constructing American Studies: Culture, Identity, and the Expansion of the Humanities," present contrasting examples of how two disciplines responded to the expansion of higher education after World War II. Philosophy, potentially the broadest of disciplines, narrowed its focus to the discourse of analytic logic, rejecting ethical and political inquiries as lacking intellectual rigor. "Values"-oriented philosophical discussions were pushed to the margins as the discipline took up questions of "how to think," rather than "what to think." One result of this move away from ethics toward a more "scientific" and science-oriented analytic philosophy was an increase in the numbers of Jews and Catholics among the faculty of leading departments. With ethical questions off the table, a more professional, less "clubby" atmosphere prevailed. At the same time, the rigidly apolitical orientation of analytic philosophy discouraged women and African Americans from pursuing careers in philosophy, and philosophy faculties remained overwhelmingly male and white as other humanities faculties became more diverse, demographically.

Leila Zenderland's essay presents the evolution of American studies programs in sharp contrast to the story of academic philosophy in the latter half of the twentieth century. A hallmark of American studies, and of all the humanities disciplines that have prospered since the 1950s, is interdisciplinarity. While philosophy narrowed its focus and saw interdisciplinary work as lacking analytical rigor, American studies welcomed interdisciplinary col-

laboration and exchange. While philosophy shrank from issues of social relevance, American studies embraced opportunities for engaging social and political issues. Although the first American studies programs were begun in the 1930s, the field expanded rapidly after World War II. The stark reality of American military and economic power provided the impetus for the establishment of American studies, both in the U.S. and in Europe. However, there was a progressive predisposition toward "inclusion" in early conceptions of American studies. Against the ideological menace of Nazism, which stressed the significance of racial, religious, and ethnic difference, the first American studies programs embraced an ideology of democratic revival and a "common American identity open to anyone who subscribed to the universal ideals of the Enlightenment" (277). As an example of this attitude, Zenderland cites the efforts of the poet Archibald MacLeish, whom President Roosevelt had appointed Librarian of Congress, to "rally intellectuals, academics, artists, and journalists to fight Nazism by explaining and defending democratic, pluralistic, and humanistic values to broad audiences" (277).

Rejecting traditional distinctions of value between "high" and "low" culture, American studies found expressions of "the American dream" and the democratic spirit in all sorts of cultural productions. Soon, however, the "consensus" on American popular culture began to fragment into a "multicultural" American studies as it was challenged by women and minority scholars. Rather than being diminished or destroyed by these challenges, American studies instead literally exploded, becoming even more all-embracing and expansive than it had been in its beginnings.

In his introduction, Hollinger identifies two central themes related to the humanities' changing role during the twentieth century: an adjustment to accommodate wider demographic inclusion and an expansion of "cognitive boundaries" to provide a critical foundation for the scientific and professional training that would increasingly dominate higher education (2). The various contributors do include the occasional mention of "the dynamics of inclusion," and they do chronicle the response of different humanities

disciplines to the expansion of the academy; however, in the end, the book doesn't provide a satisfactory discussion of these themes. The reasons why the humanities should have performed the functions of acculturation of newly included groups and training in critical thinking to prepare students for the demands of a changing society are obscured. The essays are interesting for their accounts of the academy during the Cold War; however, they don't speculate about what role the humanities might play in the twenty-first century. Finally, the collection relies too much on biographical accounts of notable figures—whether of Leo Strauss, Jacques Barzun, J. Saunders Redding, or Marjorie Hope Nicolson—which are interesting on their own terms, but which do not shed much light on our current situation.

In *Humanities, Culture, and Interdisciplinarity: The Changing American Academy*, Julie Thompson Klein supplies the forward-looking perspective on the humanities that is almost entirely missing from *The Humanities and the Dynamics of Inclusion since World War II*. Klein's method is to provide a thick historical description of the concepts "culture," "humanities" and "interdisciplinarity" rather than focusing on particular thinkers. She begins by recounting an institutional history familiar to readers of Laurence Veysey's *The Emergence of the American University* or Gerald Graff's *Professing Literature*. The early decades of the twentieth century saw the rise of specialization and a narrowing of disciplines, along with resistance to this trend from the "culture camp"—traditionalists who "upheld the values of the older American college," extolling "the social and moral purpose of education, spiritual idealism, and a conception of culture as process rather than research project," and preaching "a gospel of 'civilization' and 'cultivated generalism' that was also advanced by editors of literary monthlies, organizers of the fine arts in major cities, and an assortment of schoolmasters, authors, lawyers, clergy, artists, and performers" (12). The continuing influence of the culture camp can be seen in the general education movement and in the "Great Books" programs at the University of Chicago and other institutions.

During the first half of the century, under siege from vocationally oriented pressures and the ascendancy of the physical sciences, the humanities clung to a traditionalist, elitist conception of culture. However, the demographic expansion of the academy after World War II inevitably overwhelmed this conception of culture, and this demographic change was accompanied by new intellectual movements: the importation of European philosophy and literary theories from existentialism and phenomenology in the 1950s to Lacanian psychoanalysis, neo-Marxist theories, and poststructuralism in the 1960s and 1970s. Increasingly, proponents of these theoretical discourses positioned themselves under the rubric of multiculturalism. A heightened focus on gender, ethnicity, subcultures, and cultural difference was accompanied by a "de-Europeanization of academic culture" and an accelerated humanistic study of American culture in which "European ideas, models, and traditions are still predominant, but they are no longer transparent" (35).

All of these developments contributed to what Klein terms a "new generalism" that has set the humanities on a path diverging from both the traditionalist's vision of culture as a unified ideal and the modern system of disciplinary specialization. The long-term trajectory, she argues, suggests that the discrete disciplines of the traditional humanities are being replaced by a cultural studies paradigm that privileges interdisciplinarity. Klein sees this turn to cultural studies as, on balance, a progressive, democratic trend, and her account of this history during the later decades of the twentieth century is attentive to the points at which social conditions and political movements outside the academy evoke an intellectual response that cannot be channeled in conventional disciplinary discourses. Like Zenderland, Klein sees American studies as the model of a successfully expansive humanities discipline in the latter half of the twentieth century, and she focuses on American studies as the most likely site for a renewal of progressive general education in the twenty-first century. After the cultural revolutions of the 1960s, she recounts, scholars explored a wide-open field of artistic expressions and intellectual, social,

political, economic, and psychological forms of American life. American studies expanded from its initial focus on literature, history, and popular cultures to include specializations such as ecological studies and environmental history, critiques of capitalism and the global economy, new area studies and African-American studies, ethnic studies, women's studies, and urban studies (159).

Klein is scrupulously aware of the shortfalls of interdisciplinarity. She describes in detail the problems that have dogged interdisciplinary work—dilettantism, "intellectual poaching," problems of integration of fields, interdisciplinary claims for what are really only "multi-disciplinary" approaches, and problems of access to institutional resources and recognition. However, she convincingly presents the arguments about these issues as central to interdisciplinarity's strength and vitality, and, implicitly, the key to the interdisciplinary humanities' viability as a source of democratic renewal in the twenty-first century. This optimistic perspective comes across in her account of the neoconservative attacks on multiculturalism beginning in the 1980s with the National Endowment for the Humanities reports from William Bennett and Lynne Cheney and Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*. Klein sums up the charges in a litany taken from Graham Good's 2001 book, *Humanism Betrayed*:

English is collapsing under the weight of Theory. . . . Art is being turned into a new holism of "culture" defined by social practices that challenge the older holism of "civilization." The emancipatory capacity of creative imagination is being lost. Transcendent identity is being sealed into compartments of identity, period, culture, and class. And, the keyword "global" is replacing the keyword "universal," displacing perennial questions about God, fate, death, and the human condition. (204)

Like many others have done before her, Klein grants a ring of truth to some of these charges. In the intensely competitive field of higher education, academic careerism is a necessary evil. Younger faculty members are the most susceptible to this tempta-

tion, and they are also the ones most likely to be engaged with new theories and approaches. So, it's tempting to imagine that undergraduates are being deprived of access to the classics of humanism and western civilization while their teachers indulge narrow personal interests and radical political agendas. However, even if these charges have some validity, it's not clear that the trends of theory and interdisciplinarity are responsible for the decline of the traditional humanities. Vocationalism, the neoliberal disinvestment in higher education, and disciplinary overspecialization combine to diminish access to humanities courses and to render existing courses irrelevant to the needs and interests of contemporary students. Further, anecdotal narratives of decline oversimplify the crisis. A survey by Lyn Maxwell White of the actual evidence from syllabi, curriculum requirements, and enrollment data dissolves this picture of the radical humanities into a haze of "sweeping and sensationalist claims and a 'disheveled anecdotalism' about what is happening at probably no more than a dozen leading research universities and liberal arts colleges" (205). Across the range of 4,000 postsecondary institutions in the United States, Klein concludes, the actual practice of humanities education is carried out with professionalism and sensitivity to the values of the past as well as to the needs of current students.

Moreover, the trend toward interdisciplinarity in the humanities continues; the reaction against overspecialization shows no sign of abating. In the same study mentioned above, White found that federal grants from the Higher Education in the Humanities Program sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and grants from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education during the 1980s and 1990s reveal the following interdisciplinary trends: collaboration across departments, institutions and sectors; comparative approaches to culture; engaging pedagogies and the use of technology; inclusion of both new and traditional materials; selective focus rather than an emphasis on coverage; a concern to engage faculty and students in new learning; and attention to the strengths, missions and directions of local institutions (206-07).

So, Klein is cautiously optimistic about the progressive potential of interdisciplinary humanities with the model of American studies as its vanguard. In her concluding chapter, "Crafting Humanities for a New Century," she examines recent trends in humanities scholarship and especially in the humanities' role in general education with a view to the future. Citing a report entitled *Liberal Learning and the Arts of Connection for the New Academy* produced by Elizabeth Minnich for the Association of American Colleges and Universities, Klein lists several elements of a "New Academy"—with a transformed role for humanities studies—taking shape in U.S. colleges and universities. Whereas the traditional humanities sought to promote cultural unity, the humanities in the New Academy are adopting a goal of "coherence." The older metaphor of unity "assumed consistency in the sense of logical relations in a linear framework," while "the alternative metaphor of coherence allows for many kinds of connection in an evolving social construct" (215). Klein offers two examples related to diversity and multiculturalism to illustrate this difference. First, in a model derived from the older metaphor, many institutions continue to address domestic cultural diversity in isolation from international education. The reason for this lies partly, no doubt, in the separate institutional histories of area studies as opposed to Black studies, women's studies, and cultural studies. However, Klein sees it as a debilitating arrangement. The New Academy, by contrast, integrates domestic and international diversity to define multicultural learning as a form of "interculturalism"—a pedagogy that works at the intersections of both disciplines and cultures to foster "an understanding of global processes that dismantles the boundaries between domestic and international diversity" (214-15). Second, many institutions treat multiculturalism as an addition to a curriculum seen as a unified whole. When it is understood in this way, Klein argues, multiculturalism is a contradiction leading inevitably to a false unity. However, when it is understood as a task in integration and coherence, multiculturalism "requires constructing a logical sequencing of courses in a new matrix that recognizes both the multicultural nature of American society and the multidi-

dimensional nature of knowledge" (215).

In the current era of globalization, when no advanced society can exist in a condition of isolation and cultural homogeneity, it should be no surprise that multiculturalism has become a central concern of the humanities. As Klein points out, the liberal arts have been concerned with social upheaval from the classical era to the present. "Much of the nostalgia for a lost past," she writes, "exhibits a faulty sense of the history of the American university that masks prior controversies, minimizing the expansion and alteration of canons and curricula and stripping tradition of its own historical context and controversies" (217). There is, however, one important difference between the present situation of the humanities and the situation that prevailed during the expansion of the academy in the 1960s: the level of resources available. In the current era of declining resources, many indicators of democratic progress have a dark side. The increase of women faculty in the humanities, for example, has been accompanied by the emergence of a large academic underclass of adjunct and part-time teachers who are disproportionately female. Interdisciplinary cultural studies can provide administrative cover for retrenching departments and cutting faculty. In the zero-sum economic climate of the neoliberal academy, funding for human enrichment and civic empowerment loses out to funding for more vocationally oriented studies. Yet, there is a bright side to our current situation: we have something to offer the student-as-consumer that is relevant to their lives and can compete with the appeal of vocational training. Our task, as humanities educators, is to pursue that relevance, without sacrificing the intellectual rigor of traditional scholarship.

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Notes

1. See Aronowitz for an extended discussion of Kerr's influence.

2. For a detailed account of funding for conservative critics of higher education by Olin and other foundations through the early 1990s, see Messer-Davidow,

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Interrogating Our Vision: The Ethical Potential and Challenges of Cyberspace

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Online paper mills, colleges sued for students' music downloading and file sharing, viruses sent anonymously across networks, cyberpornography, online gambling, online discussions where no one listens, solipsistic blogs and websites, e-mail messages from an eBay that doesn't exist, ad pop-ups, commercialism run amok. It's hard to imagine a time when the Internet and World Wide Web (WWW) seemed to offer the next great hope for democratic social action, a way to "connect" the world across difference, and a radically new writing space that could realize the postmodern ideals of non-hierarchical communication and non-unitary selves. Although I no longer expect the revolution, I must admit that I still hold out hope that the Internet and new writing technologies might help us address social inequities and work toward social change. However, I also realize that my use of such technologies can just as easily implicate me in the further commodification of self, the support of large media corporations, the loss of jobs in the "new" economy, and the spread of capitalism across the globe. How does

one navigate the ethical quagmire teaching with and using technology has put us in? How do we ensure our "nobler" goals guide our actions rather than our unwitting alliances with fast capital? How do we keep our own presumptions about ethical action from distorting our ability to see other possibilities? Two recent books address such questions, both implicitly and explicitly, from very different perspectives: *The Impact of the Internet on Our Moral Lives*, edited by Robert J. Cavalier, and *Radical Feminism, Writing, and Critical Agency: From Manifesto to Modern*, by Jacqueline Rhodes. If one is looking for clear, ethical answers, however, neither of these books will provide them. Instead, what they offer are conflicting views on whether the Internet offers ethical challenges or new possibilities for ethical action. In the contrasts between them (and within the Cavalier collection), they usefully incite the reader to consider the implications of *how* we frame ethical issues, reminding us that the question frequently begets its answer.

In the first chapter in the Cavalier collection, for example, Terrell Ward Bynum returns us to the ethical discussions of Norbert Wiener, a mathematician who helped coin the term "cybernetics" and explored the ethical challenges posed by the "automatic age" in the years following WWII. From Wiener's lectures and books, Ward synthesizes three "strategies for dealing with topics in information ethics":

- (1) Exploring or envisioning the impacts of information technology upon fundamental human values with an eye toward advancing and defending those values.
- (2) Identifying ethical problems generated by information technology, and then suggesting ways to resolve those problems.
- (3) Proactively seeking ways to use information technology to create a better world. (16)

Wiener's strategies seem just as worthwhile today because they remind us that technology is never neutral and our ethical questions should be guided by values and a desire to "create a better world." Such a statement, however, also points to the problems