

Universities, Futures: A Roundtable with Darin Barney, Andrew Piper, and Joanna Zylińska

Caroline Bem and Rafico Ruiz (McGill University)

On January 18, 2011, SEACHANGE brought together Darin Barney (Department of Art History and Communication Studies, McGill University), Andrew Piper (Department of German Studies, McGill University) and Joanna Zylińska (Department of Media and Communications, Goldsmiths, University of London). Over a modest lunch, set up in the Arts Council Room at McGill University, with its large oval table and imposing portraits of former Deans of the Faculty of Arts, we spent close to two hours engrossed in discussion.

Drawing on the specific perspective of their respective institutional and disciplinary affiliations, each speaker contributed to what became a lively and animated discussion articulated around the question of the becoming of the global university. From a reflection on disciplinary divides through the formulation of the necessity for renewed modes of inquiry, to the exploration of the possibility for technological openness as well as a range of counter-institutional practices and interventions, the overarching centrality of “choice” traversed the conversation in the manner of a common thread.

A Question of Becoming: Inquiry and the Global University

Rafico Ruiz I'd like to begin with a question of becoming. It's a question of becoming in that, while it has been asked over and over again in recent years, it is very much still incomplete, that is, in process. The question is: what is to become of the university? This “to become” really implies an uncertain future and an unstable present. Indeed, it is perhaps both accurate and troubling to

say that this is a question posed by a host of academics from across the spectrum of the university's disciplines. Both accurate and troubling because, even though answers are being given, they could not be more diverging in their aims and attitudes. In brief, they very much measure the distance, to echo a binary Darin Barney establishes in a recent article on precisely this question, between "certain historical but persistent ideals concerning the role, orientation, ethos and practice of the university and the material reality of what it has become under the auspices of neoliberal, technological capitalism." Given this short preamble, rather than asking all of you "what is to become of the university?,"—a question, maybe, best left rhetorical—we might ask, instead, what *has* become of the university? Or, better, what has become of your universities, both ideal and material, as you have come to know them through your work, action and experiences?

Darin Barney First of all, I think that the question of "the university" is a difficult one because there is such a wide diversity of types, tiers, and experiences of the university in the contemporary climate. In fact, that may be one of the symptoms of what the university has become: that is, that there has been a kind of systemic rationalization and organization of post-secondary education, more broadly than the university, into a wide diversity of types of institutions, tiers of institutions, and settings that also vary geographically from one context to the next. And so, to begin to speak about what has become of *the* university already places you, in a way, into a reflection on an idea, rather than a reflection on what is a considerable diversity of material experiences across the terrain of post-secondary education across many countries.

Caroline Bem To orient the discussion would it be helpful if we focused on the university in North America and the UK because as geographical regions all of us here present happen to have ties with?

Joanna Zylinska Not necessarily, since the idea of the university as an entity located in a particular geographical space is coming under increased scrutiny due to all the different global forces at work in the world. So if there is something like the “global university” emerging, it is more as a concept than an actual space.

Obviously we could talk about experiences from our own individual institutions, or institutions we are in contact with: these experiences are valid and important, and I think stories have to be told. But there is something else that we are referring to when we are talking about the university. So “the question of the university,” if I can put it this way, refers to both the established idea, or concept, under which certain ways of generating and producing knowledge and of doing scholarship have been gathered, but also to the current transformation of higher education — in the way Darin talked about it — into a neo-liberal agent of the articulation of the market economy. The university, globally, is becoming that kind of placeholder for the fantasies and desires of the market, while also having to serve a particular role within this economy. It explains and justifies its existence precisely by being able to provide economic resources and generating income. Perhaps this is more the case in the UK than it is in other places, although, again, looking at academic debates internationally you can see that this logic underpins *the* university more globally.

Andrew Piper I would definitely second that. To me, the single biggest challenge facing the university in the future lies in addressing the way that corporate values have begun to infiltrate the university and are encroaching upon the nature of academic inquiry. The question is how one frames a response. That is to say, do we try to motivate our answers of what is to become of the university in terms of economic value by using the vocabulary, language, and logic of the market? Or, on the contrary, do we position “the university” as a space of difference, developed over time through specific histories and structures of inquiry? What is one to do about what strikes me as an increasingly wrongheaded reorientation of scholarly work? I think the answer is to tap into an articulation of differentiation. Within capitalist societies, there should be a kind of tolerance, a way of building an acceptance of different modes of action into the system. If we want to call these “modes of production”—if we still think about what we do as labour and work, but tied to a unique practice—then what I keep coming back to as fundamental to the university is the notion of “inquiry.”

“Assessment” has become for me one of the central issues. Nothing could be more heretical than to announce to or within a corporate setting that something is wrong with “assessment.” After all, that’s the number one mechanism that they work from. But, as I’ve come to realize, “assessment” is about an outcome and impact. Whereas “inquiry” is about questioning and the space of thought. And I was trying to think how it might be possible to begin to justify this ideal entity called “the university” within a global economic space as a place of inquiry and not as a place of assessment. In other terms: to try and have an assessment of the culture of assessment under which we increasingly live our lives.

D.B. Andrew is correct that a universal culture of assessment has descended upon the university, one that seems quite alien to how most of us in the arts and humanities would otherwise conceive of what we are doing here. The language of this culture is that of “benchmarks,” “performance indicators,” “impact,” “training” and “highly-qualified persons.” The substance of these categories, and the expectations they entail, vary between different types of institutions, but all of us now find ourselves in the position of having to account for what we do in these terms, whether individually or collectively. And it is not just a matter of translating our indigenous priorities and practices into a new vocabulary that leaves them more or less intact. This language has a performative effect: when what Andrew describes as “inquiry” becomes “problem-based learning” in order to register with the new categories of assessment, something fundamental changes.

J.Z. What concerns me in all of this is whether we should just respond to the positions that are already being imposed on us, or could we perhaps work out a different mode of producing a new philosophy of the university, which would also involve a re-invention of the university? Ideally, within this latter scenario, the university wouldn’t just take a secondary role to the dominant discourse through which the idea of the university is being shaped now, which is the discourse of knowledge transfer, knowledge economy, etc.

I’d like also to take issue with one particular strand of rhetoric that is shaping the university in the UK and beyond. I’m talking about the funereal rhetoric, whereby the university is being articulated in terms of its own death. So to return to Rafico’s original question, this is the idea of the being of the university as being-towards-death. This has happened in Britain, for example, in relation to the recent Browne Report—which proposes to remove a block

grant for teaching from all the humanities, social sciences and arts subjects. The force of that rhetoric, of course, is supposed to spring people into action and to alert wider society to the fact that something serious is going on. But there is perhaps also something more conservative or even dangerous in that articulation: the sense that the only possible response is through a fetishization of that kind of supposed death. So there's both a sense of horror and, at the same time, a certain immobility in saying "we're going down."

For example, Terry Eagleton in a recent piece in *The Guardian* titled "The Death of Universities" is writing under that very rubric when he says: "there is no university without humane inquiry, which means that universities and advanced capitalism are fundamentally incompatible."⁹² Now, obviously, this is a somewhat naïve position, in the sense that universities have long been tied to the capitalist system. This is not to say that the university shouldn't be a place of inquiry and critique where the market mechanisms of capitalism are engaged with, criticized, and exposed through their contradictions. But to suddenly construct a fantasy place that is separate from mechanisms of capital is a form of wishful thinking, especially coming from a theorist who has benefited from universities such as Manchester, Lancaster or Oxford, which have been immersed in the broader market mechanisms for a long time. This position also enables us to forget about the relative wealth of the academic institutions that allow for particular types of inquiry to happen. So how do we as academics continue with that kind of critique of capitalism, which I think is what Eagleton is really calling for, rather than fetishize the supposed death of the university? How do we continue with that critique while also living and accounting for the contradictions of capitalism within the university? I am

⁹²Terry Eagleton, "The Death of Universities", *The Guardian*, December 17, 2010, www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/dec/17/death-universities-malaise-tuition-fees (accessed July 8, 2011).

thinking, in particular, about some of the privileges that we as permanent or tenured faculty are drawing from it, such as the fact that the maintenance of these privileges depends upon large numbers of staff who are on short-term contracts, who are often not unionized, etc. How do we live through that?

A.P. We've always been subject to patrons.

[laughter]

A.P. No, what I mean by that is that these contradictions are part of the nature of what I'm calling inquiry. They've been at the heart of "the university" since its inception. We have always been subject to patrons and thus to compromise—or at least to speak from a compromised position. One of the ways to get around this paradox, the idea of critical thinking from within, could lie in trying to articulate structures of practice aimed at reshaping the value-systems which are being generated around us. More concretely stated, one of the ways this cult of assessment manifests itself is through an articulation of market theory that is actually a kind of sickness within itself. In reality, it's detrimental to its own market-oriented structure, because everything is created on a short-term feedback loop which loses sight of longer term value production. When I think about it, I'm more comfortable staying within some of those neo-liberal terms where, for instance, the question of "value" is taken in a broader human sense as something that operates according to different temporalities and different models of production. Instead of thinking about this world of micro-assessments, which take place in absurd timeframes that have nothing to do with the way we think about asking questions, writing and thinking, we need to make an argument

for their value on different time scales. This, in turn, requires a rethinking of place, not as outside versus inside, but as space which is temporalized and spatialized in new ways.

Post-Humanities: Lines of Connection and Strategic Interventions

C.B. If we're thinking about the way to react to this from within the academy is it useful to think of it in disciplinary terms? What are the disciplines which might take a leading role in doing this work of rethinking and of trying to reorient things? Could we almost think of a new sub-discipline that might emerge to look at academic cultures specifically? Would that be useful at all? Or would that just perpetuate the proliferation of micro disciplines and very specialized sub-fields?

R.R. What's interesting to me is that no one has mentioned the humanities yet. There's this idea—I don't want to call it a rhetoric—that the humanities are always what's under threat. And if we talk about the university as this unitary entity, which might and mightn't be that productive to talk about in such a way, then maybe the humanities are also potentially that same unitary, imaginary entity. Is it about a discipline in particular or is it about an aggregate?

C.B. Exactly. How many of those are we going to produce? Because we've been in this culture of producing new disciplines or subfields of disciplines for the last thirty years or so.

D.B. My initial response to this question is to say that I think that what has happened to the university, what's happening to the university and what will happen to the university is primarily a political question and not an academic or intellectual question. And so, the idea of contributing to a better outcome or some other re-imagining along the lines that Joanna and Andrew suggested, will certainly entail an open, re-configured academic practice, but an even greater part is going to be who wins and who loses in the political struggle for the university. That is, if the struggle happens. And this is why I hesitate in response to a question like yours because I really think that the conditions that are being diagnosed here will be altered, or are likely to be altered, only if there is a political resistance that exceeds innovative changes in our practices of teaching and doing research. I'm not gainsaying those. I think they are significant and important. But I think that the university as it is, in this degraded condition that we've diagnosed, can accommodate and handle these changes in a variety of ways. What it won't be able to accommodate or handle, however, is a significant political resistance on the part of the constituencies that matter to the university, or that are in a position to disrupt this trajectory that the university is now on. I have some ideas about who those constituencies are but, again I see it primarily as a political question wherein academic practice can only be one part of the response.

J.Z. I absolutely agree with what Darin is saying, but at the same time I think there's a double tension or double bind for humanities scholars. So let's just return to that question of the humanities that we've been hedging around and not addressing up front. I'd like to suggest that academics are perhaps best predisposed to defend the space of the university. Having said that, I'm all for forging, and also recognizing, horizontal alliances with other forces and

agents of transformation, and for gathering together that political momentum. It goes without saying that this can't be happening *only* within the university; we shouldn't allow ourselves to daydream that the university is the best place for this kind of complex political transformation. However, at the same time, I think there is something singular about the space of the humanities that scholars like ourselves can, and perhaps even should, do something about.

The difficulty of course is that we ourselves have subjected the humanities to a lot of critique over the last few decades. We've been suspending or working through all the signal points of the humanities such as the human, subjectivity, agency, etc., and now we suddenly want to defend the humanities in "humane" terms, as Eagleton puts it. But at the same time there is a different pressure we are facing, which posits that the humanities have to justify their existence in other than humanistic terms, which is to say, in economic terms. So how do we get ourselves out of this double bind?

This is where I want to gesture towards this idea of the "post-humanities," which has been developed by people like Gary Hall or Neil Badmington. Within this perspective, the humanities can, or perhaps even should, become post-humanities, taking on board its own critique of humanism while also not letting go of its political responsibility and ethical commitment. Without leaving behind the legacy of the humanities entirely, the post-humanities need to take on board the critique of all these signal points of humanism that simultaneously contributed to the shaping of the humanities. This can mobilize the sort of political energy that Darin talked about and it can foster the work of creative invention. As well as being a space of inquiry, the post-humanities can also be a space of alternative production. So we still remain within the rhetoric of the market—which in itself is perhaps not evil *per se*—but we also work to remobilize that rhetoric towards the production

of spaces, and of forms of being and inquiry that are different from the established ones. So this shift wouldn't just be a rhetorical exercise: it would gesture toward the possibility for enacting specific exercises, strategic interventions, action plans, open access movements in the university, such as the invention of alternative teaching forms, free/libre models of publishing, free/libre forms of academic labour coming from tenured faculty, etc. etc.

A.P. I was actually avoiding the use of “humanities” intentionally. I meant it as a kind of strategy. I want the conversation to be less at a disciplinary level, or even a faculty level. Rather, I want to investigate some of the common modes under which we all work at the university. These are quite different in relation to the larger social context within which we find ourselves. I want to argue for the status of that difference in order to suggest ways in which these common modes could then be reintegrated with one another in terms of “value,” again, as I see it, the value of inquiry broadly understood. My sense is that it is this slicing off of disciplines that is responsible for the accelerating sense of decline in which we currently live.

It is this common sense of an academic mission that might allow for the identification of both the positive and negative ways universities have tried in various fits and starts to create lines of connection with other social practices. By avoiding thinking of ourselves as outside of the natural sciences or any of the applied sciences and so forth, we might be able to rethink how we connect with other social institutions. Perhaps this is where some of the politics behind it could be addressed, to take up your idea Darin. Instead of being this bastion on the outside—the historical trope of the ivory tower—we should aim for productive lines of connection with a whole range of tiers, of other social institutions that preserve and justify our practices as they are.

There's a possible culture of integration that I think we haven't taken advantage of. It doesn't have to look like—to take one example from our home institution—the Bombardier lecture series in business ethics. That's not what I'm saying, definitely.

C.B. How does this tie in with what's happening in your own department? Because, as far as I understand, there's some restructuring going on within several of the language departments at McGill right now. Can you say something about that?

A.P. It's a conflicted process. It's basically addressing scarcity. It's addressing a dwindling student and faculty population and the need for critical mass to be a unit. It's the basic capitalist solution to everything: merger. I don't want to fetishize either solution. I don't think it's really a solution, I just think it's a practice. I don't care about it much either way, actually. I don't feel a sense of loss and I don't really feel a sense of gain. What I care about is whether there are still people around doing what I care about, which is language-based inquiry.

D.B. Can I ask you a question? What you said is really compelling, Andrew. That kind of rethinking that articulates a set of common commitments and practices across disciplines, and also simultaneously tries to articulate those with significant social realities outside the university, do you see that operating primarily at the level of form or content? It seems to me that what you're talking about is extremely compelling at the level of form. The way we produce and distribute knowledge, the way that we teach, the way that people learn, the way that we inquire in all its modes. However, the

sticking point really comes in terms of the pressures that not just the university, but particularly the humanities, are facing. I think this happens at the level of the content layer rather than the form layer (or the mode layer or the practice layer). In other terms: it's really not so much about the *way* in which knowledge is organized, disseminated, circulated, authorized, or transmitted, rather than the very things that the humanities think about and inquire about and the statements that humanists and post-humanists make. These do not register as having value beyond a very thin and sentimental layer within the university and the wider population at large.

A.P. I don't know...there's a part of me that says "yeah, you're absolutely right," and statistically this is borne out: look at the decline in the number of degrees in the humanities in North America! There are two ways of thinking about that. One is more abstract, to come back to your point-of-view and the political question, and asks who is the constituency? When you look at all the cuts taking place across universities right now, they do not give rise to a sense of public satisfaction. So within this culture of decline and becoming towards death, I actually think there's a larger sense of political dissatisfaction, disfavour and discomfort.

But rather than look at the actual numbers game of the content of degrees—who's taking what and what's growing and what's shrinking—I prefer to look at an overall political valence of the university. And here I see a lot of strength. I really do, in spite of the fact that it seems totally counter-intuitive. Now is precisely the time to capitalize on that and say: "Look, the cuts in resources are going to mean cuts in access, and cuts in access are going to have a major impact on you, the public. And you're now going to start to feel that." In California they're now, or soon, going to realize that fewer people

are going to go to the California system which means that more people are going to have to pay more to go to the private system or accept diminished futures in terms of their careers. When it comes down to that level, that's when that common political concern beyond content begins to emerge.

What doesn't work is what I would call a content-based discourse, as when Martha Nussbaum says: here's the point of the humanities, this is what we do, this is why it matters. It doesn't seem to go anywhere. The economic pressures, on students and on the institution as a whole, are just too strong. I think there are ways that the humanities can do a better job of shoring themselves up within the space of the university, again through building lines of connection. We can work harder to connect our practices with people across the social and natural sciences, and then also socially as well, to continue to build those political constituencies that you were speaking of Darin. Because there is a sizable portion of the public who is in favour of what universities do. One of the questions I have been asking myself is how can we build this sense of integration more closely into what we do.

J.Z. But this connection is being articulated very much in market terms. The public could think it will lose these access points, but they will also lose upon exit, because the benefits of the university are explained to them predominantly in economic terms (such as "future career prospects"), and this is why some kids will pay three or four times as much to go to MIT or Harvard. You could argue that it is because they really get four times better education there than they would at a small liberal arts college [laughter], where the professor spends a lot of time with you but doesn't really do high-flying research. But at the same time, obviously the justification for elite and prestigious universities is provided to a large extent by drawing on the logic

of the market. This is also how the discourse on higher education is being reshaped in the UK. It is a broader issue of shifting from—as Stefan Collini’s article in the *London Review of Books*⁹³ signals in its critique of the Browne Report—an understanding of higher education as a public good, something that the state and the general public have a responsibility to support and shape, and towards a lightly regulated market in which customer demand and student choice determine what’s on offer. This is the shift which is taking place in the UK and Europe now and which has already happened in North America. So, in a sense, I wonder whether it is not already a lost struggle, trying to appeal to the public in non-economic terms. It’s not that I’m contemptuous towards the public and its ability to grasp other arguments, it’s that the public discourse around universities is first and foremost a discourse of economic value. The Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition in Britain is now saying that students will pay all this money—triple time the fees we used to have—but they will have better jobs and they will also know what they want to study, and they will decide what’s best for them. Collini gives this example of kids who can go to a sweet shop and they might know which sweets they want, but do they really know which philosopher they should be studying, can they really tell me how much Kant they want, and are they really in the best position to make those decisions at the entry point? [laughter] That’s what lies behind the combined logic of higher university tuition and the promise that the market will always deliver. In fact, the latter is becoming something of an empty promise because of high graduate unemployment across the US and not just in the UK.

⁹³Stefan Collini, “Browne’s Gamble,” *London Review of Books*, vol. 32, no. 21, (November 4, 2010), www.lrb.co.uk/v32/n21/stefan-collini/brownes-gamble (accessed on July 8, 2011).

A Problem of Access: The UK Student Protests

C.B. I'd like to address this a little bit more because generationally, Rafico and I are closer to that generation that pays to go to school within a growingly corporatized setting. I'm thinking back to my years as an undergrad in the UK, in the early to mid-2000s, and I'm comparing that with what's going on there now which I've been following in the media. I see these kids protesting relatively violently in the streets because there's been this tripling of their fees but for me, when I think back to the time when I was studying there, I doubt that this is the result of a sudden drive towards politicization and radicalization. It seems to me more like a very visceral reaction resulting from the fact that what they always assumed as being granted to them suddenly has been taken away from them. And they're very much thinking within the completely capitalist-adapted model of "I go off to college and don't really care what I study." I studied in a large undergrad program where we did film studies and a common response was "Why are we watching black and white movies?" and a lot of my peers were saying "Well, I'm just doing this because I *need* my BA because I want to work at an HSBC branch and I need a BA to be able to do so." And they wanted to buy houses, and take out mortgages and get married and buy cars. And now they're being told that they can't do that unless they pay triple the money to do so. And so that, to me, is the only reason why now they're smashing windows and doing all that. It's quite enraging when you're someone who's born in '80, who's only really known that system and who's now preparing to go into it from the other side. You ask yourself: how am I going to do this? Is this really how it's going to unfold? Obviously, the entire culture of how we—teaching assistants, professors, etc.—relate to undergraduate students is changing more and more. This is why, to me at least, there's really a huge impetus to rethink what the

university even is. If it's really a machine that just hands out degrees to people who need them to work in jobs that don't require them, personally I think—and maybe it's because I'm young—but I think this has to be a breaking point.

J.Z. If I can just respond to this quickly, because I understand you're talking about the UK context where you did your undergraduate degree. I think there's perhaps a certain danger of universalizing the culture of the youth in this way by saying "They're all irresponsible, they have no politics, they're brainless, they don't read, just consume things," and obviously it's a very seductive narrative...

C.B. Sorry—I don't want to be too strongly placed in that camp...

J.Z. Sure... As someone who's worked in a number of British universities—from universities that are not selective and take students from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, to more selective and prestigious institutions—I recognize some of the things you're talking about. But at the same time, I'm wary of universalizing that kind of student experience. Especially on the level of rhetoric, a lot of students simply reach for the kind of language that the culture or the market more generally provides them with. So they inhabit the space and the set of expectations that are already there. At the same time, —and this is going to sound terribly humanistic—there's this transformative nature of the educational experience, when people just come to do a degree in film or media studies and have no idea why we are making them watch French stuff, or Indonesian movies [shared laughter], yet all those different and unexpected things can happen in the process. Humanities education is also one of those privileged spaces where you can ask questions,

not just of culture and its values and aspirations, but also of capital and the way it is negotiated. It also offers a training in language performance and language use. The protests in the UK were very interesting for a number of reasons. There was perhaps indeed something visceral about their origin and enactment—as you said, there’s a gut feeling that people are unhappy because something is being taken away from them. But in some sense politicization can perhaps happen in that sort of bottom-up way, as a corporeal irritation, rather than primarily as a result of reading political theorists and having a moment of reflection before deciding “I think I’ll go and start a revolution tomorrow.”

[shared laughter]

R.R. In preparing for our conversation I was reading Allan Bloom’s *The Closing of the American Mind*, which was published in 1987. It’s a problematic book in many ways, but I came across the following quote from Bloom: “What each generation is can be discovered in its angers, this is especially true in an age that prides itself on calm self-awareness.”⁹⁴ And so what we’ve been talking about is sort of situated between apathy and anger without being one or the other. But is there an outcome other than a visceral reaction or a weak politicization? Are people really angry and does that change by positions and generations?

A.P. I’d suggest that it’s just on a continuum. The British experience is part of a broader experience of the problem of access. I think that’s a topic we haven’t really addressed here but which needs to be at the forefront of the

⁹⁴ Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 19.

conversation because it has such potent political implications. Universities also have to bear a lot of the burden of that problem. We simply haven't addressed questions of access. We can point fingers at paymasters and say "See, it's their fault for cutting budgets," but I'd say internally, in the sense of self-regulation, we've never squarely addressed proportional resources, etc., to the extent that that's going to have an impact on who can come and who can't come. The U.S. model is simple: access is a function of payment. It's not a public good, although there are public universities that obviously fill that void. However, the fact that access is typically squeezed just by the rising costs, and the very increase of those costs is, I have to say, slightly inexcusable. It's a huge problem and as members of the system we have to participate in that conversation and try to address it rather than just say "It's expensive, what are you going to do, why don't you throw more money at the problem?"

And so the crisis points are beginning to happen, finally. This is the first generation that will have a lower participation rate in higher education since World War Two in North America and I'm assuming also in Britain. What do you do? Because that also is a death spiral. That is to say, one of the efficacies that higher education has enjoyed in terms of funding has been access, so that greater public access has driven public funding. The decreased access is going to drive decreased funding. If fewer people see it as a good that they can participate in, they're not going to be politically invested in supporting it. That's one of those moments where I feel like, again heretical to say, but we almost need to be a little more corporate in our self-governance of addressing costs. The studies that I've read indicate that only a tiny percentage of the price increases in higher education have gone towards students and teaching. Here, the humanities are probably much less at fault, if you want to make disciplinary distinctions. The resource absorption has been so much greater in

different content areas than in the humanities, and nobody's addressed that: this resource-intensive aspect of research versus its own efficacy. There's this kind of inherent good to applied research in the natural and social sciences, but a cost-benefit analysis has never really been taken. Give a consulting firm a good year with our data and I think everyone would be pretty shocked to find out where that money has gone and the fact that none of it has gone towards making sure more people can come to the university. For me, that's one of the critical issues at stake: how can we participate in that as individual researchers and members of a community? Darin and I have both sat on the university senate, and part of the corporatization that is happening is the disenfranchisement of agency at the faculty level. It's getting harder to do something about it as an individual, so that's another challenge that's thrown into the mix. You can identify issues, but your political valence as an actor is absolutely decreased in university governance structures.

Resisting from Within: Open-Access Journals and Other Forms of Counter-Institutional Engagement

R.R. I was hoping to ask about the poles that actors in a university can operate under. If one is, to take a favourite theme of Darin's, courage, and the other is something resembling pragmatism as a survival technique, which may be a cynical observation but I think a lot of people are telling themselves "One must do what one must," under certain circumstances the latter of these two poles is increasingly becoming valid, rational, necessary, etc. In Gary Hall's *Digitize This Book!*, he remarks that one tactic of resistance within corporatized universities are small, experimental projects that enable one to make an institutionally pragmatic "tactical use of the space of the

university,”⁹⁵ in order to begin to think differently of the institution. The example he cites is the open-access electronic journal, *Culture Machine*, which, of course, Joanna, you are involved with. Drawing on this example, what I’m trying to get at is, to put it in corporate terms, the idea of “output” but also ideas of “free” publication. What are viable tactics of, to reclaim a corporatized term in its more critical double sense, “managing” today? Since as academics we are, at base, mostly textual voices writing, how do we go about making that practice manageable?

J.Z. That idea of reclaiming tactical spaces of the university, or using the space of the university tactically, is very close to my heart. Together with Dave Boothroyd of Kent University and Gary Hall of Coventry University, I’ve been involved in running *Culture Machine* for over ten years now. *Culture Machine*, in its day, was one of the first open-access journals; journals that provide free access to knowledge on a worldwide basis. This model is becoming increasingly popular now, and yet it’s also very interesting how open-access hasn’t been taken up very willingly in the humanities. But in the sciences, which are, at the risk of generalization, more conservative politically, the adoption of open-access has been much more rapid: witness the proliferation of archives and databases such as arXiv.org, The Public Library of Science, or PubMed Central. It’s partly to do with the fact that knowledge in the sciences has to be propagated quickly. News becomes old news very quickly because someone has invented a cure for cancer, while the humanities have a longer tradition of pondering over things.

Ted Striphas, author of *The Late Age of Print*, in his academic blog analyzes the conditions of publication and what lies behind corporations such

⁹⁵ Gary Hall, *Digitize This Book! The Politics of New Media, or Why We Need Open Access Now* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 3.

as Taylor & Francis; for example, he looks at their links to different corporate bodies, to the military, etc.⁹⁶ The interesting thing is that academics in the humanities have been very keen to analyze structures of power elsewhere, but have been somewhat unwilling to turn the light back on themselves and on the structures of power that they themselves are implicated in. At the same time, many of us have been involved in seeking to constitute, on the cheap if you like, different conditions and different spaces of possibility for the university. This is precisely Hall's argument in his work that follows *Digitize this Book!*. So obviously *Culture Machine*, for us, has been one of these spaces; it's been an experimental space where the question of access to knowledge can be both opened up and reflected on critically. Another such project is the *Liquid Books* series, published by Hall and Birchall with the Open Humanities Press. Together with my students on the MA Digital Media at Goldsmiths, I've just

⁹⁶ Ted Striphas, "Acknowledged Goods." *Worksite, Differences and Repetitions: The Wiki Site for Rhizomatic Writing* (2008), www.stripas.wikidot.com/acknowledged-goods-worksite (accessed July 8, 2011). Striphas writes: "In fact, many academic journals are owned by corporations whose interests far exceed intellectual pursuits. Consider this: shares of Taylor & Francis/Informa plc, which trade on the London Stock Exchange, closed at £239.75 GBP on Friday, January 30, 2009, up from a twelve-month low of £140. Its revenue topped £1.1 billion GBP in 2007, an increase of 9% over the preceding year. One of Informa's subsidiaries, Adam Smith Conferences, which is indeed named for the patron saint of economic liberalism, specializes in organizing events designed to open the former Soviet republics to private investment. Other divisions of the company provide information, consulting, training, and strategic planning services to major international agricultural, banking, insurance, investment, pharmaceutical, and telecommunications corporations, in addition to government agencies. Take Robbins-Gioia, for instance. The United States Army recently tapped this Informa subsidiary during an overhaul of its command and control infrastructure. The firm was brought in to assess how well the Army had achieved its goal of 'battlefield digitization.' The United States Air Force, meanwhile, tapped Robbins-Gioia when it needed help improving its fleet management systems for U-2 spy planes. Other aspects of Informa, such as the Monaco Yacht Show, are perhaps more benign. Nonetheless, Informa is a significant global player whose business ventures extend into some of the most important geo-political and economic realignments of our time."

edited a book called *The Liquid Theory Reader* as part of this series. It is available on an open-access, open-content and open-editing basis. The project has tried to involve students in producing knowledge, and thinking about what it means to produce knowledge, differently and collaboratively: rather than make them spend fifty pounds on a big course reader, I wanted to get them to become active agents in producing texts and making them available to everyone on an open-access basis. As part of the project, we staged an experiment that involved writing an essay collectively – initially in the form of a blog, which we then edited to constitute a more conventional article, in response to the following question: “Can you Use a Wikipedia Model to Write and Edit Books?”⁹⁷ Obviously the question itself is a little crude, but it was just supposed to serve as a provocation. The project was supported by a very small grant from the Higher Education Academy in the UK, in the amount of five thousand pounds, and with some additional funding from my own university. With this project, we were able to basically do away with the traditional course books while also creating a space for thinking about the politics behind publishing and taking the debates about the author that we’re all familiar with theoretically (via Barthes, Foucault, etc.) into the actual space of practical engagement with the Internet. But it wasn’t just a case of “out with the old and in with the new.” Our aim wasn’t therefore to proclaim that we don’t need books any more; that in the age of Kindle and the iPad, books have to be electronic; or that we should all write by committee. It was just a very small experiment in creating and inhabiting the tactical space of the university for that particular M.A. program, undertaken with a group of engaged, interesting students in an attempt to do something different.

⁹⁷ “Future Books: A Wikipedia Model?”, *Technology and Cultural Form: A Liquid Reader* (2010), www.liquidbooks.pbworks.com/w/page/32057416/INTRODUCTION-TO-THE-LIQUID-READER (accessed July 8, 2011).

D.B. I'm going to play devil's advocate a little bit here, because I absolutely admire the work that Joanna's been doing with *Culture Machine* and the other projects that she's been talking about, but—again to play devil's advocate *a bit*, not really—I'd like to point to this word 'articulation' that you used. I think the sense of articulation that's really important in relation to the kind of tactical responses that you've been describing is the articulation *between* them such that they become something more than individual experiments in some kind of archipelago of creative and innovative practices that don't actually touch anything to do with the deep structural organization of the university and its connection to organized capital and what have you.

That's a crucial moment in the development of these tactical practices and it is happening, precisely, with some of the projects and people that you talked about. Both the university, and the structures of power that are invested in the idea of the university being a kind of conservative institution, have always relied on a situation in which individual actors within the university system, primarily professors, can in effect save the university a little bit through the freedom that they enjoy within their individual courses and publishing or research careers. It's the idea that I don't have to get involved in a political movement to save the university if I, instead, make knowledge more egalitarian within my individual classroom, and if I write very critical things about the organization of knowledge and publish them in cultural studies journals. Then I can go like this [gesture of wiping hands clean] and with good conscience say "I'm not part of the problem, I've done what I could do." But of course that's precisely the university's best security against any kind of meaningful structural change because then, not only are those efforts disconnected and disarticulated, but it also takes the pressure out of the

system a little bit. Those who are most likely to be critical feel that they can be satisfied within the context of what they're allowed to do because of well-established regimes of academic freedom. And so, beyond the political value of the tactical practices themselves, lies the political moment of their articulation into broader and more threatening struggles in relation to the university as an institution. In many cases, the kind of activity that the neo-liberal university would reward as forward-looking innovations is precisely the kind of activity that you describe.

J.Z. Yes and no. Let me just pick up on this kind of...threat [shared laughter]. Some of the ideas behind the projects I've been describing are very explicitly critical of the very fundamentals of the neo-liberal university. I don't think it's entirely true that the modern neo-liberal university welcomes any of those interventions. Although I absolutely agree with you that it's perhaps not enough to do just this. There is a danger that a bunch of professors will be doing little experimental things with their students and nothing will ever come out of it, apart from a few people having a lot of fun. However, there is obviously a strategic dimension to those tactical interventions—which is what you were getting at, I think. For example, it involves raising a number of significant questions: What actually constitutes a book?; What should count as appropriate material for a tenure committee: could blogs and tweets count towards someone's tenure? The latter might sound like a ridiculous question at the moment and I'm sure our own reaction is "Please, no!" At the same time, these are questions about academic knowledge, authority and value, and about the justification of our established ways of doing things. So the university values innovation, but I think what it often means by innovation or invention is rather conservative, and often

remains limited to preserving the status quo.

On the one hand, I suppose the main thing around the specific projects I mentioned lies in the non-profit, or even counter-profit aspect of them. On the other hand, the majority of innovations in the modern university are tied to profit (either through ideas behind knowledge transfer, third stream funding, or through obscenely large grants that are supposed to somehow prove the quality of a given research project). This means that knowledge has to be applied eventually, that we have to articulate our knowledge in terms of impact, and that even the more abstract or blue skies thinking has to lead to some kind of tangible “benefit to society.” At the same time, if you are producing open-access forms of knowledge—be it in the form of academic papers, online projects and conferences, interventions, or joining the wider open access movement—then you are producing knowledge which goes against the profit of some rather powerful institutions, such as publishing companies that are running academic journals, for example, taking away that power bit by bit. So there is something going on at the tactical level, and there is also a strategic articulation of that in political and economic terms. That coupling is absolutely important. For me being involved in these experimental projects has been a way of developing, to cite Derrida, a counter-institutional politics of the university.

A.P. It seems to me that that question of whether there should be a sub-discipline, as you call it [to CB], or certainly a field of inquiry, that is critical of the academy itself, is a growing question: there’s a flood of books about the future of the university, the state of the university. I think that’s all to the good. I actually think we suffer a deficit of self-reflection, that it hasn’t permeated widely enough yet—both at the tactical, local level, the day-to-day

of what can you do as a university actor, and at the higher, political level of organization. That is to say, one of the reasons I think the U.S. system has at times been successful in negotiating some of these things is through some real political associations which can be effective because of the scale of the system relative to the overall political system. Whether it's associations of university teachers, it's a pretty sophisticated operation that's able to lobby with the government for funding and all those things. So that kind of representation is fairly developed, and probably would do better to become more developed. That is to say, we have to think both locally and globally in terms of our acting. My hope, or my expectation, is that, as we go through this period or crisis or whatever you want to call it, we should be more cognizant of participating at that level. Universities are so huge, they're enormous multi-billion dollar a year organizations and they're so heterogeneous that that kind of systemic approach is always really hard to do at any level—Robert Darnton's recent work on the problem of library funding demonstrates that (in a recent series in *The New York Review of Books*).

Think about libraries: they're major cost centres of the university and yet are shot through with dysfunctional practices. Suddenly everyone woke up and realized—it happened over a certain amount of time but we didn't know until recently, we're just beginning to be aware—just how inane the costs of academic publishing are. Fifteen to thirty thousand dollars for a journal in chemistry! It's absolutely ridiculous for people to publish articles and have it cost that much when their research is being subsidized by the government, by the university; it's universities paying twice for everything, it just makes no sense. A corporate observer would say: yes, you've been corporatized, just badly; we're incompetent at corporate practices. Sometimes you need to be better at it, and sometimes you need to work just to keep it at bay and say:

“Anyone who runs a Society and has a journal attached to that Society, it should be open access. You should not pay a publisher to publish that journal. And so, whoever you are, wherever you have that position of power running that journal, that’s your job right now: your job is to address that inane cost. Reduce that and then you’re contributing to the question of access to knowledge, both at a discursive level and in terms of classroom attendance.”

Laptops and Other Gadgets: Negotiating Technology

C.B. Well, I’m still sort of sympathetic, sometimes, to these views. I mean, I can understand where you come from and I think it’s a much more optimistic, constructive position that you’re articulating. But there is that instinct, you know, like when they say: “Ok, we’re gonna tripple undergrad fees in the UK”, and you’re wondering “well, I’m doing the same for that money than I was before, so how come now they’re costing £9,000 a year, what is it? Obviously, I’m not paying for me, I’m paying for the science labs or something else.”

J.Z. No, the actual cost of education remains the same. You’re paying more because previously the government paid for it, while now it’s refusing to do it. So the government would explain to you very well why it costs what it does.

C.B. Yes, I know, and I followed that. But it still doesn’t feel like... even the figure, I mean, it sort of feels abstract, if you see what I mean. In the sense that, no matter who pays for it, in effect I don’t believe I cost either £ 3,000 or £ 9,000. Because all I use is a few books and, you know, that’s it.

J.Z. What do you do about Rolex watches? [laughter] They cost like \$10,000—do you believe it's their inherent value?

C.B. No, I don't. And that's where I see the connection. So you either buy into that system or you don't. So I do not want a Gucci watch and I do not want to pay either £ 3,000 or £ 9,000 for my education. I'd rather pay 0. But I mean that's obviously a very different debate. So there is that temptation to say: "Ok, we're just going to opt out, and maybe these different disciplines are just too different. Maybe the humanities and the sciences have nothing to do with each other, nothing to say to each other, and shouldn't even be housed within the same institutions." That's something I've thought sometimes. Like a very basic, separatist response. But probably it's not the most productive way of seeing it. No, really, I liked your point [to AP], I think it's much more productive.

A.P. I mean, I'm sure there are lots of people asking that question. Whether the devolution of the liberal arts out of the university makes sense. It just happened for example in the UK with the New College of the Humanities. Because the sense of place, respect, responsibility, is just so diminished. And when you think about it, all we need is a room with some chairs and some paperbacks. I mean really, is it that expensive? Versus a Supercollider!

C.B. And it feels like technology's being pushed on you as well. I mean, the debate of whether we even really need overhead projectors and powerpoints, to me that's still a very open debate. And when I'm TAing and I

sit in big classes where I see the kids surfing on the internet while the prof is lecturing, that's teaching me that when I'll come in and teach one day, I'm going to ban computers from my classroom.

A.P. I already did.

C.B. You did? That's fantastic!

A.P. It completely changes the culture in the classroom, it's amazing.

D.B. I wanted to do it but then I didn't do it because I thought there's no way Piper would ever do it!

[general laughter]

A.P. I spoke to them about it before I did and said: "I respect that you don't want to pay attention to me, I think that's actually an important form of learning, I just want you to do it in a certain way."

D.B. [to AP] You rock my world!

A.P. But just to finish the thought on devolution: I actually don't think it's a good idea. That's to say if I had to choose, I would not choose it, although I think there is a rationale to it. I prefer to choose, right now at least, a common sense of purpose. That, to me, is more compelling than the articulation of difference.

D.B. I think I agree with Andrew on that for sure. I'd like to go back to this question that you [to CB] raised about technology in the classroom—overheads, power-points, all of this stuff.

C.B. I think it's very important. I think there's a turning point happening right now, and that something has to be done.

D.B. I think that it's important too, but in a different way than what I imagine that you think given what you just said. And I say this as a person who's widely recognized as technologically allergic or whatever. I think that all the kind of dismay about technology in the classroom, distraction, all of that, is a bit of a red herring and mostly leads into conservative directions in terms of a fall-back on traditional modes of delivery, organizing, and pedagogy. In fact, I think that it's much more productive to approach the possibilities of those kinds of distributional technologies in the way that Joanna and Andrew have discussed, which is to say tactically. To say, "yes, of course it's possible that what's gonna happen in this case with these technologies is that they're not going to listen to me and instead they're going to do something on their iPod." But there's also a whole set of possibilities for coming up with different, more challenging, resistant or disruptive ways of delivering, organizing and producing knowledge in a classroom setting. These technologies don't deliver that automatically but they at least provide a kind of occasion in which to think about these kinds of possibilities and to try to enact them in classroom settings.

The big issue, technologically, is the almost total commitment of the university, at the level of its administration and at a systemic level, in most Western national contexts now, to the project of technological development

and innovation as the reason for the university's being. More than market ideology itself it is this technological ideology—the idea that the university is some kind of instrument for the advancing of technological flourishing, technological wealth, and technological conquest of the problems that we are facing—which contributes to the throwing of the university into that project. It is the complete identification of what the university is *for* with that crude technological agenda that accounts for the innovation agenda and all of these other issues that we've talked about already. That's the technological problem that the university is facing; not, I think, that students are distracting themselves with iPads in classrooms.

J.Z. Well, to ban technology or, alternatively, to try and put it to supposedly progressive ends in the classroom is to invest technology with an impossible task. It's also to reduce it to an instrument and give it a magic function of having to sort out all the socio-economic ills. I mean, it's like Tony Blair's idea that everyone had to be connected to the Internet: somehow that was supposed to make Britain a more just, more fair society. At the same time, I absolutely share Darin's worry with regard to the extent to which technology can be excluded from the classroom. From my philosophical standpoint it can't be excluded, because where would we draw the line in this process of exclusion? The only way we could draw such a line would be between good and bad technologies—but do we want to moralize technology in this way? Having said that, it's not like I haven't been tempted, you know, to ban laptop use in my own classroom. Especially in big lecture classes, if I see they're on Facebook... Again, such a ban could perhaps be seen as a tactical gesture. It's not about the moralizing of technology, but about placing it in a particular context.

With regard to that proposed disciplinary separatism mentioned earlier, I think that some of the most interesting things around technology and around the humanities are occurring at the interstices of the humanities and the sciences these days. I'm not talking about the uncritical turn on the part of the humanities towards the sciences in an attempt to get a little bit of the STEM-glory (STEM being "Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths," the kinds of "proper" or "true" subjects that the British government and other governments have invested with value). I'm more interested in other kinds of debates, such as the work being done around bioethics, critical readings of biology, genomics, etc., and in how humanities scholars can engage with those kinds of debates. But also, to follow those debates, you need to at least have your biology A-level in order to have a basic understanding of how the body functions, what some of these discourses articulate, etc. So, as this critical intersection between the humanities and the sciences—which obviously is not a new thing—is something that interests me a lot, I would be against the idea of the humanities seceding and just going off into a completely separate realm.

A.P. To play the devil's advocate—and I think we can use that term quite literally because I'm going to invoke Heidegger here against you, Darin—I would like to take issue with that *fear* of the university as an instrument, and of an ideological investment in technology as a kind of social good. And I say that only in Heidegger's sense that we are always only ever *after* technology. I have a very deep-seated feeling about the human as a technological species. Therefore, to engage in a suspicion about that being the mission of the university, I think, is running up against a kind of anthropological impossibility. To which, I would counter, simply, that the mission should, turned around, be a kind of acknowledgement, that we are always after

technology. Therefore, we need both the kind of applied mission-value statement—the way part of the university is oriented—and then also a kind of critical interaction with it. I know this is mostly what you were saying, I don't think you're in a kind of banishment-mode. So taking issue with the university's functionalism and technology as a social end in and of itself? I kind of just take that for granted: from bone-tools to iPads. It's been there as long as we have. So, that's why I support the idea that the discourse of anti-technology in the classroom is a red herring because what we need, in fact, is to always have it on our radar-screen. That's who we are and that's what we do, as human beings, and therefore we always want to build it into our conversations; both in a positive and in a negative way.

D.B. My point is not that somehow the university could be not or other than technological. I agree with you and subscribe to that Heideggerian view. My point is rather that the state—and this is a word that has not yet come up here today—uses a particular ideology about technology in order to enforce certain distributions of resources, certain kinds of relationships and modes of production upon the university. This then becomes the language by which many of the pathologies that we've identified come to be justified, even though it is itself a kind of bogus, ideological language.

A.P. I don't know. I just can't get past the fact that there's no "ex" or "post" or "pre-technological space." I'm ok with the university having that as its mission because it's a subset of this larger thing called the polity, which is a larger subset of this thing called society, itself a larger subset of a thing called species. And technology is just there.

J.Z. But in such an articulation the university seems to be choosing to remain blind to that environmental understanding of technology that Heidegger proposed and Stiegler and others have developed, reducing it to an Aristotelian understanding of it as a mere tool instead. So I understand what Darin is suggesting, and would very much support any efforts to challenge that instrumental discourse on technology—where technology is supposed to bring about certain social, cultural uses and goods—with its more environmental understanding (which proposes that we are set up by technology, whatever that actually means). Yes, even with that, we're still faced with the responsibility of having to understand technology in its different set-ups, incarnations and institutions. So that discourse of technological innovation that's being pushed by governments, universities and other institutions is a step back for me. Philosophically, it's faulty, but socio-politically, it's really pernicious.

C.B. What strikes me, and this is where I was coming from really, is that we've basically maneuvered ourselves into this situation where technology can't be attacked, where the moment you attack it that's it, you're a conservative, you hate technology, you want to go back to studying Latin and holding a pencil. And so, what to me is very striking is that there's this blindness of the university against imposing any sort of regulation. So we're living in this state of total deregulation of technology in the classroom, which is all I was getting at, really. A good analogy would be: when cars were first introduced, people drove without licenses. And then by the time everyone had a car, you realized that it was chaotic and that you needed to impose some sort of a regulatory structure. Well it's the same thing: by the time everyone in your classroom has a computer, there has to be something in place on how to

use that computer within that setting. And short of that, yes, I think there's an argument to be made for time away from the computer—you know, all these rather mundane arguments. But in any case, this to me is the interesting point: how the context of neoliberal uses of technology prevents us from actually looking at it for what it is. Now, we actually need to wrap up...

Conclusion

J.Z. Can I ask a wrap-up question and turn it back on to you two, as the editors of SEACHANGE? (It's because you asked me earlier about *Culture Machine* and we talked generally about technology and access to knowledge and all these different things). Picking up on some of the threads we've discussed so far, I wonder if you could talk a little bit about the institutional, political, cultural, technological implications of your work with that particular journal? Where is it going? What is it trying to do? Do you see it as a strategic place within the university for graduate students?

C.B. Yes, we really should have opened the discussion with that. We actually segued straight from having lunch into the discussion, so we haven't had much of a formal introduction.

R.R. Theoretically, the structuring element that SEACHANGE is trying to address is: how do we think of theory as a sort of lived event? And how, when you're theorizing this mode of encounter with your problem or your question, or this "moment of articulation," how is that an event and how do we respond to that? So our first theme of the "Face-to-Face" was trying to get towards that. Now, our second theme of "Choice" is building on that first

theme and how that moment of encounter can then lead to different possibilities. So there's definitely a larger arc that we're trying to construct and which takes the shape of a series of events. Generally, the structure of the journal goes from "event" to "encounters"—that's what we're doing right now—and it goes through "exchanges" as well. It's also important for us to think about the idea that a journal has a "lifespan." In other terms: it's "open-access," but it's not necessarily "open-ended" in terms of its timeframe.

More generally, we're trying to engage these questions of scale, and also to really deal with interdisciplinarity in both a responsible and an irresponsible way. In the sense that disciplinarity is something that you can maybe get at through curiosity and critical engagement rather than peer-review, necessarily. So we can all ask the questions that maybe need to be asked. But, at the same time of course, we have a shared responsibility of checking facts amongst the peer-group of people participating.

C.B. The idea to be published online was obvious; there's really no other way, in 2010, that you're going to start a journal. We're trying to open ourselves up, beyond our department, to other departments within the university, and beyond that, to other universities in Montreal and abroad. We're trying to establish connections with other young editors in our situation. In the mid- to long-term, we're interested in the idea of potentially editing joint issues in partnership with other journals. We've been looking at different cultures of journal editing, in Europe especially. We were looking at Istanbul in particular, which has developed, over recent years, a vibrant culture of ambitious paper and web-based academic journals put out by PhD students and young academics.

J.Z. Peer-review is obviously another white elephant that needs addressing and thinking through. Now *Culture Machine* is open access, but not open content or open editing. (The latter were part of the Liquid Reader project I talked about earlier, where students were involved in the open editing of the content.) Interestingly, with *Culture Machine*, after ten years of using the HTML format for our articles, we changed to PDFs in 2009. In some way, this could be seen as a conservative or even backwards step. However, we received so many positive comments on the new look: people loved the fonts, the layout (we used *New Literary History* as inspiration), and would often say that articles now looked “proper.” For us the decision to return to that arguably more conservative look was motivated by the simple fact that the PDF format was easier to edit, but the affective response from the scholarly community was interesting.

A.P. To me that’s part of that sense of what I meant when I talked about this opening up of the university and the humanities to technology. Every example I see, there’s more often than not an anxiety about technology in the humanities. When I banned laptops from the classroom, it’s not because I’m anxious about the computer as such, it’s that I wanted to think about it in a particular way; this meant keeping it in one sense at a distance, and in another bringing it closer into view to put it under scrutiny. I get worried the other way around when people turn out to like PDFs because they realize: “Oh, it’s like a print artifact that’s been digitized.” That’s not really a critical understanding of new media.

J.Z. Maybe you can only expect people, including the scholarly community, to be experimental one thing at a time. So, for instance, online

journals are being accepted more and more, although [to CB] I thought it was very radical when you said: “It’s impossible to start a journal in 2010 unless it’s online.” I mean, given that Taylor and Francis, Intellect, etc. are starting so many new printed journals every year as their last attempt to make money through securing as many institutional subscriptions as possible before the whole for-profit university publishing system collapses, I think they would be horrified to hear your statement! But I absolutely agree with what you’re saying.

D.B. But this anxiety, do you think it’s pathological? [shared laughter drowns out the rest of the question]

A.P. To me it’s a combination of the disciplinary and the ideological, it has to do with our self-identification as outsiders. We consistently define ourselves “in opposition to,” that critical stance that says: “I cannot be part of X, even though *all* of my practices are imbedded in it.” That’s my problem. So on the one hand I agree with this critical stance—it’s what we do in the humanities—but on the other hand, people then do very uncritical things like say I’d rather have a PDF, or I’d rather teach a paperback.

D.B. What I’m trying to articulate is where you see the distinction between your choice of enforcing the anti-laptop policy and that kind of generalized anxiety about technology. Because I think there is a distinction, but I’d like to know where it is situated.

A.P. Yes, fleshing that one out would probably help because that was a pretty visceral response. Maybe it’s sort of application-centered.

D.B. It goes to this kind of thoughtful engagement with the specificities of the medium in a specific context.

A.P. Yes, its placement and intellectual efficacy. I guess I'm also reacting to that. The love of the PDF is perhaps too strong of a sign of that centeredness. I'm just worried about our un-openness to the technological as an entity. Whether it's as a discipline, whether it's as a faculty or the university as a whole. I err more on the side of wanting to push us to be more open towards it rather than less. But "open" obviously means "reflective" and points to the necessity of thinking through the application of it, the place and the appropriateness of it. Very much, Joanna, what you're obviously doing with *Culture Machine*. So far, I think, this is something we haven't yet fully integrated into what we do.

And then there are resource issues: that is to say that it's very, very expensive from an infrastructure point of view. To me, that is also a choice, which I am not actually being forced to make right now: would I give up on this openness to technology in favor of education getting cheaper? If that's the way it's going to play out, that would be an interesting choice to make. Which I'm not being forced to make right now, but which could arise as the result of this kind of thinking. And then for me, the answer is yes, access supercedes technology.

C.B. Absolutely.

R.R. I think we can end right there—with that choice yet to be made. Good *choice* of words, Andrew.

[shared laughter]

Darin Barney is a native of Vancouver, Canada, and studied at Simon Fraser University and the University of Toronto, where he trained in political theory and received a Ph.D. in 1999. He is the author of *Communication Technology: The Canadian Democratic Audit* (UBC Press: 2005); *The Network Society* (Polity Press: 2004; second printing 2006); and *Prometheus Wired: The Hope for Democracy in the Age of Network Technology* (UBC/Chicago/UNSW 2000) which was awarded the 2001 Award for Social and Ethical Relevance in Communication Research by the McGannon Center for Communication Research at Fordham University, selected as an Outstanding Title in political theory for 2001 by the American Library Association's *Choice Reviews* and a Finalist for the 2002 Harold Adams Innis book prize. He is co-editor with Andrew Feenberg of *Community in the Digital Age: Philosophy and Practice* (Rowman and Littlefield: 2004). He has presented the prestigious Hart House Lecture at the University of Toronto, published in 2007 under the title *One Nation Under Google: Citizenship in the Technological Republic*. Darin Barney is Canada Research Chair in Technology & Citizenship, President of the Canadian Communication Association, and Associate Professor and Director of the Graduate Program in Communication Studies at McGill University.

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