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## Manifesto for the Humanities

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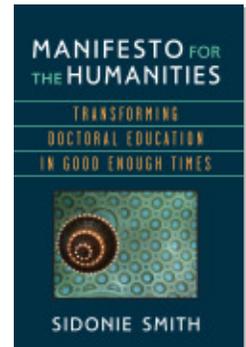
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## What Is to Be Done?

Academic humanists respond to this query—“What is to be done?”—in various ways. Some put their heads in the sand and bemoan crises that are just too big and intractable to tackle. Well, yes, some of them may be. But, really, there’s much to tackle. Some play the victim of an ignorant public and its various representatives who just can’t understand the centrality of humanities inquiry to higher education and the world. Okay, where exactly does that petulance lead? And what kind of politics is enacted when faculty expect others to assume that theirs is a privileged position? Others turn back in nostalgia and talk of a time when the humanities were the revered core of a liberal arts education. Not me. No way.

Let’s stay in the present moment and go forward from here. To suggest why I cleave to my mantra that the times are good enough, I offer my registry of actions for surviving, even thriving in these times: beware the route of nostalgia; avoid the blame game of theory and identity politics; hold the vision of inclusive excellence in sight; muster data for evidence-based counternarratives to commonplaces about the sorry state of the academic humanities; recognize the larger community of activists throughout the academy and the resources they mobilize for making change happen; remember all the humanists and allies out there; and act to make doctoral education forward-looking for future humanists.

### Beware the Route of Nostalgia

Let me talk of my problem with nostalgia. I’ll do so by invoking someone writing during what some academics may think of as better times, and writing with something less than enthusiasm for how wonderful they were. And I’ll tell a more personal story about why I don’t like to linger in nostalgia. After all, those times were a lived experience for many faculty now in the academy, myself included.

First, to Jacques Barzun, as president emeritus of Columbia University,

writing about the “higher bankruptcy” of the American university in 1968. In *The American University*, he observed:

Federal transfusions of cash will keep the great heart pumping; friends will rally round and bring jam (rarely meat); and commencement speakers will administer with a free hand the drug of self-praise.

Then the parts will begin to drop off, as the autonomous professor has begun to do; or go into spells of paralysis, as the student riots have shown to be possible. Apathy and secession will take care of the rest, until a stump of something once alive is left to vegetate on the endowment or the annual tax subsidy.<sup>1</sup>

For Barzun, the metaphor of choice was the university as gangrenous patient, losing limbs and vegetating in an ICU unit.

Two things strike me about Barzun’s portrait of the academy. The first is that, amid his doom and gloom, he exudes confidence that the funding of higher education will continue to be robust. It certainly had been the case in the 1960s, when public higher education was robustly funded by state legislatures. When I was a freshman at Michigan in 1962, tuition for an out-of-state student was around \$225 per semester, and state funding made up about 80% of the general operating budget. Around 1968 that percentage began its four-decade decline.

The second pertains to his dismissal of the new technological accouterments of the professor’s life:

In another domain the university should have led the way in ascertaining and publicizing the difference between the useful and the deceptive: I mean the clutter of machinery, the so-called aids to teaching. Some are excellent, like the equipment of a language laboratory, various projector devices, and certain films for scientific or medical demonstration; others are fraudulent or futile.<sup>2</sup>

Note the assurance with which Barzun dispatches early technological devices in the classroom and his stunning lack of prescience. Like Barzun, people in the academy are trying to grasp the current state of higher education in the United States and around the globe, to determine what is to be done. Unlike Barzun in the late 1960s, today’s faculty and administrators recognize only too clearly that funding is not assured and technology not tangential to the future of higher education.

And for many students, as well as distinguished administrators like Barzun, those good old times were not so good. Let me turn to my story. When

I stayed on for an MA after completing my BA at the University of Michigan in 1966, I found myself in a Department of English whose faculty made it clear that women graduate students were unwelcome and insignificant in the scheme of things. We were tolerated, but not mentored as graduate teaching assistants. We were imagined as future secondary teachers, not future academic intellectuals, and thus not doctoral student material. Legitimate graduate education was for the young men who would be guided by senior faculty and placed in their first job by means of an old-boys network. There was no interviewing at the MLA convention, which was at that time more a learned society than a professional organization. No tension on the elevators or at the phone banks. No frenzied parade around the book exhibit. Jobs were to be had without interviews of the kind routine now. A call here. A call there. The men called other men, asking for the protégé. And the women who inhabited the broader university community? They were wives who wove the web of academic sociality, organizing teas, hosting dinner parties, grading papers, while they provided secretarial support to spouses, typing manuscripts and carefully correcting page-proofs.

And the young woman who left Michigan with an MA in English? I returned to Cleveland to live at home and teach in secondary school. And I soon knew that I couldn't continue on that track, which involved supervising study halls to interrupt the flight of spitballs arcing from ungainly boys to embarrassed girls. To supplement my salary teaching high school, I joined the part-time faculty at Cuyahoga Community College to teach freshman composition. In 1968, I found a place in the Department of English at Case Western Reserve University, a graduate program that welcomed women who wanted to take doctorates, valued us, mentored us, and gave us the confidence to imagine ourselves as future professors. I know my dissertation advisor did. That was the year *The American University* hit the bookstores. The next year, I started teaching Black American Literature and came to understand the importance of literary history to minority communities, of deep reading of noncanonical authors to students' lived experiences.

In 1971, I entered a new kind of job market, and a constrained one. I didn't get a job straight out. I caught a ride to Chicago, combed the yellow pages for universities, made cold calls to see what positions were available, and landed a job as assistant dean of continuing education at Roosevelt University. After a year I recognized that the dean liked his associates and assistants to be female; less competition, less challenge to his authority. Then I got a one-year visiting appointment at the University of Arizona, which turned into a tenure-track appointment. Many of my friends and colleagues in the academy had employment itineraries similar to mine.

In the mid-1970s, when, as an untenured assistant professor at the University of Arizona, I decided with my partner to have a child, we planned for a convenient delivery date. My son arrived on December 31. I returned to teaching within a week and a half. My bid for tenure had failed while I was pregnant and as yet unmarried. In my discussion with the chair about the outcome of the tenure deliberations in the English department, I was told that the decision had nothing to do with my personal life. After a second tenure review the next year, a review on procedural grounds, I did receive tenure. I spent several years in study groups with friends across the humanities and social sciences reading everything that was coming out in feminist theory and retooling myself for a different kind of scholarship. Administrative positions were not an option for many women in the academy then. I sought administrative experience elsewhere, taking a leave to work at the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington.

When people talk about the “good old times” in the humanities, I’m less than enthusiastic about joining in. Sure, faculty governance trumped administrative fiat; sure, public funding of higher education was more robust and the costs of higher education well within the reach of the middle class. Sure, the humanities seemed in a secure place amid the broader liberal arts. Yet I remember that the academy was not a welcoming place for many, including white women and women and men of color, whether students or faculty; that faculty governance was also faculty gatekeeping; that chairs were often czars of disciplines. I remember a place where arguments for expanding the curriculum into areas of women’s studies, black studies, and ethnic studies invited contentious debates and fierce resistance. A time when preparing for courses required not only time and energy and persistence, but also fundamental retraining. A situation in which more than a few people found careers thwarted by tenure committees that labeled them controversial, uncollegial, or unproductive. The stories are there.

The changes came. At the University of Arizona, for instance, friends and I were buoyed by heady talk of continental theory that provided lenses through which we could make sense of the questions we were asking about the difference of women’s writing, about the politics of gender, about the workings of ideology in racial formations, and on and on. Those of us involved in building the university’s Women’s Studies Program were supported in our plans to change the curriculum and introduce new interdisciplinary fields by the Ford Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities under the leadership of Joseph Duffey. I and others were tutored by professional organizations such as the American Council on Education on the skills needed for administrative positions so rarely open to majority and minority women and

men of color. Elsewhere academic activists were advancing their own agendas; calling attention to processes in need of revision; advocating for new kinds of programs.

My turn away from nostalgia has to do with the fact that, however remarkable the system of higher education in the United States is, and has been, the academy and the humanities are always failing some students and faculty. The history of American higher education has been one of constant change and constant pressure to make the system more inclusive, and more responsive to the aspirations and needs of diverse communities—Jews, women, African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, American Indians, first-generation sons and daughters, sexual and gender minorities, people with physical and mental impairments, undocumented migrants. Through successive waves of activism in the academy, enrollment policies shifted.

With regard to the professoriate, substantial change has occurred as well, due to the labors of many people—administrators, faculty, and students alike. Now white women and men and women of color lead major colleges and universities. The numbers and percentages of white women and women and men of color earning doctorates in the humanities continues to rise. An increasing number of research universities and some colleges have been introducing family-friendly policies, enabling men and women in tenure and tenure-track positions to take parental leaves. Revisions of tenure and promotion processes and criteria have brought more transparency at evaluation time. More recently, recruitment initiatives, such as the national initiative called ADVANCE, with its project STRIDE (Strategies and Tactics for Recruiting to Improve Diversity and Excellence), train faculty to recognize forms of evaluative bias and pursue equitable hiring practices.

But this is no time to rest on any laurels. The struggle for inclusion is ongoing. Congratulations are not in order. In the university and in the humanities in particular, there is always more to be done.

As some of the graduate students with whom I work cautioned me to remember, humanities departments are not unqualifiedly progressive, ethically driven redoubts in the contemporary academy. They are not, in and of themselves, an unqualified social good, talking of truth and enlightenment, of meaning and values, of empowerment and consequence.<sup>3</sup> It wasn't that way when I was coming up. And it's not now. The fields of the humanities can talk to—address the needs and concerns of—students from underrepresented groups and first-generation students, students from working-class families, students with disabilities, and LGBTQ students; but they don't necessarily do so.

Now many students feel abandoned altogether as colleges and universities graduate two kinds of students—those without debt and those with debt who have struggled at two or three jobs to make ends meet and bring everything

to class required of them. For a good number of students, educational spaces remain alienating environments, unwelcoming if not downright hostile. In the classroom. In the curriculum. In the corridors. In scholarship. Others find themselves isolated, subject to stereotyping on majority white campuses, as evidenced in the fall 2013 Twitter hashtag campaign, #BBUM, “Being Black at Michigan.” The campaign and the demands of African American students provoked intense discussions of race and climate, curriculum and support services, classroom attitudes and social relations, and demanded faculty and administrative commitment to timely and creative response.

The relationship some students have with their institutions of higher education can be at once one of desire for what it can offer and antagonism about the costs of that desire in alienation, the devaluation of experiential history, the hostile climate of one’s unbelonging, and high debt. Furthermore, as Marc Bousquet argues, a structural disincentive for potential applicants to even pursue doctoral education exists. The result is an absence of promising applicants from certain groups: “The persons unfree to ‘choose’ the profession are disproportionately Hispanic and African American.”<sup>4</sup> This is the case because of what Bousquet terms the “wage discount,” that is, the effect of structurally reproducing entrance into a low-waged academic labor force as the endpoint of advanced study.

For many faculty as well, the conditions of academic life are not as enabling and inclusive at campuses across the country as they must become. A large percentage of contingent faculty on non-tenure-track appointments barely make a living wage. A worrisome number of faculty, both tenure-track and non-tenure-track, experience a negative climate. For women, having children “is a career killer,” and advancing to the full professor rank a hard slog, especially in humanities disciplines.<sup>5</sup> Faculty in the tenured ranks remain disproportionately white and male with respect to their percentages in the general population, and the fractions of white women and African American and Hispanic women and men remain disproportionately low with respect to percentages in the general population.<sup>6</sup>

So much had, and has, to change to make the academy more inclusive of people and of scholarly questions and of texts and of fields. So many faculty and graduate students had and have to join to make structural change happen. If the good times were so good, why all the struggle for change?

### Avoid the Blame Game

That struggle can be obscured in the narratives circulated that play the blame game, whether coming from those outside or those inside the academy. For a few ornery pundits, studying the academic humanities is detrimental to

the humanities writ large, an argument made by writer Lee Siegel in a *Wall Street Journal Review* piece in the summer of 2013. The byline for Siegel's piece reads: "Of course it's important to read the great poets and novelists. But not in a university classroom, where literature has been turned into a bland, soulless competition for grades and status."<sup>7</sup> What an argument: kill the humanities to save the humanities. But something like this argument infiltrates the critique of the humanities lodged by public intellectuals and conservative culture warriors.

Inside the academy, a number of humanists have been weighing in with analyses of how the state of teaching and scholarship in the humanities bears much of the blame. Let me take up the critique of one of them. In "What Dido Did, Satan Saw & O'Keeffe Painted" (2013), Mark Bauerlein lambastes "the killing of primary texts—more precisely, canceling the primacy of them" and the elevation of critical activity to the same level as creative activity. He presents these two moves as "a fatal choice . . . with damaging effects continuing today."<sup>8</sup> Bauerlein sees the damaging effects of the theory fetish in recent self-studies by humanists, "The Heart of the Matter" (2013) from the Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a sobering report on the decrease in the percentage of bachelor degrees taken in the humanities; and in Harvard's 2013 report from the faculty on the decrease in the percentage of students majoring in the humanities there. For Bauerlein the paradox is that, in extolling the virtues of humanistic inquiry, advocates for the humanities seem little interested in objects, texts, works, the thing itself. His antidote to the troubles with the humanities is thus the return to the object, the great work.

Bauerlein's is an impassioned argument that the turn to theory and to identity-based research and scholarship directed attention away from questions of value, aesthetics, ethics, and thus the very embodied and intellectual energies that compel students and the public to engage humanistic learning. It's the "No wonder the public doesn't understand or value what we do" argument: humanities scholars have been invested in inscrutable prose accessible to the few, absorbed with political correctness, and carried to a succession of trendy topics. If only so many academic humanists hadn't turned. If only they hadn't wittingly and unwittingly opened the humanities up for the assaults of social conservatives and their political representatives. If only . . . they would have "what," exactly? A return to the "great books" approach to humanistic learning in the academy is not likely to convince state politicians to fund the humanities disciplines and liberal arts education more robustly. Nor is it likely to ground a 21st-century graduate education.

Nor are academic humanists uninterested in texts as texts, or averse to deep readings of what used to be called the great books. Early modernists,

whatever their theoretical bent, sleep with the classics, eat breakfast with the great books, make dates with revered authors. So too medieval historians and scholars of the long 18th century. But that is not the only nourishment sustaining academic humanists as they dedicate lives to their questions, topics, methods, and archives. They propose new interpretations to tell new narratives about the meanings, aesthetics, contexts, politics, and afterlives of ideas and genres and metaphors, of discourse and influence and circulation and repurposing.<sup>9</sup>

There are those in humanities departments who counter what they see as a repurposed argument drifting forward from the culture wars of the early 1990s. In *The Humanities "Crisis" and the Future of Literary Studies*, Paul Jay refuses the scapegoating of theory and critique as the cause for the troubles of the humanities and vigorously defends the centrality of critique for both the curation of the objects of humanistic inquiry and for the sharpening of skills. Looking forward while historicizing backward, he issues a salutary call for "professionalism without embarrassment." In the end, he orients his reader not to "a return" but to a 21st-century vision of a humanities energized by multiple reading strategies, motivated by engagement beyond the academy, fascinated by globally distributed and heterogeneous cultural forms, and replete with usable expertise.<sup>10</sup>

I'm with him there. I don't want a return.

And I don't want to participate in bashing what some colleagues see as the latest trends in technologizing the humanities. I'm not with those who link the continued devaluation of the humanities with the rise of "digital humanities." Scholars in the humanities are all humanists in digital environments now, in their scholarship and in their teaching, in their projects of scholarly communication and in their curation of their work. Some are making a contribution by studying digital cultures. Some are pursuing computational approaches to the study of language and history, to inquiry into cultural forms and logics and the condition of the human and the posthuman. Many are creating new archives and databases and developing new platforms. I take up these transformations of the everyday life of humanists in Part II.

For me, the blame narratives are flawed in their targeting of causes. They focus in too neatly on a thread of what is a messy, complicated story. They characterize those people positioned as antagonists in the academic drama as one-dimensional ideologues. They tend to look back rather than imagine forward. They often avoid grappling with large structural issues. I find them "clingy" rather than energizing. But this doesn't mean I'm into avoiding critical attention to practices and projects and modes of communicating scholarly work in the humanities, its discourse, prose, and presumptions. I'm for critique with attitude.

## Seize the Opportunities

So what are the opportunities in play now to justify my mantra that the times are good enough to reconceptualize doctoral education in the humanities? They include the opportunity to get into the fray by mobilizing data that tell good-enough stories about humanities teaching and inquiry; the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the activism and advocacy accumulating force across the academy and professional organizations; and the opportunity to join humanists in the academy to humanists and allies beyond the academy.

### *Marshal Arguments with Data-Based Evidence*

Yes, numbers can tell a disturbing tale. Since 2008 they have told the tale of a falloff, sometimes dramatic, in the number of humanities majors. But those numbers tell only a part of the story of the humanities in the academy. Those who advocate for humanities faculty, programs, departments, and disciplinary issues can tell alternative narratives to the commonplace one circulated on campuses and in the broader public.

Michael Berubé and Russell Berman, for instance, both former presidents of the Modern Language Association, have been mobilizing data to this end. Recall the earlier observation that a downturn in humanities majors and enrollments accompanies economic downturns. And then reconsider. No matter what pundits, columnists, and colleagues say, enrollments in many humanities programs remain comparable even now to enrollments in past decades. While enrollments in the humanities trended downward during the recent economic collapse, they are now trending upward, not uniformly across all units but steadily in aggregate.

Berubé brilliantly lambasted, with his unfailing wit, the habitual gloom-and-doom of op-ed pundits and disgruntled academics alike in his July 1, 2013, column in the *Chronicle Review*. And he did so by doing what they failed to do with exactness: went to “data” and “numbers” and the statistical guru Nate Silver and the authoritative Digest of Education Statistics to ground his argument. His conclusion reads:

Despite skyrocketing tuition rates and the rise of the predatory student-loan industry, despite all the ritual handwringing by disgruntled professors and the occasional op-ed hit man, despite three decades’ worth of rhetoric about how either (a) fields like art history and literature are elite, niche-market affairs that will render students unemployable; or (b) students are abandoning the humanities because they are callow, market-driven careerists . . . despite all of that, undergraduate enrollments in the

humanities have held steady since 1980 (in relation to all degree holders, and in relation to the larger age cohort), and undergraduate enrollments in the arts and humanities combined are almost precisely where they were in 1970.<sup>11</sup>

Responding to a *New York Times* piece on the “small” percentage of humanities majors (15%) graduating from Stanford in 2013, Russell Berman penned a response correcting the slippery statistical presentation:

In the School of Humanities and Sciences, to which the article refers, 20% of the class of 2013 majored in the humanities and the arts. This surpasses the natural sciences at 15% and approaches the social sciences at 25%. The remaining 40% chose interdisciplinary programs that draw on courses across these clusters. In recent years, the number of humanities majors has held steady, while social science majors have been declining. Yet focusing on majors alone misses the significance of humanities courses in general education. Last year 27% of all course enrollments were in the humanities.<sup>12</sup>

Such retorts keep the focus on what is good enough about the current state of the humanities in higher education. And they insist on resisting uninformed and undocumented platitudes about the humanities. I take heart from the usable data of everyday life.

In the midst of angst about what’s wrong with students, theory, and culture-war-era fields, large numbers of students continue to double major in humanities fields. On the Humanities Indicators website, a project of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, graphs indicate that since 2010 the number of students completing second majors in humanities disciplines has risen significantly (though the percentage of first majors in humanities disciplines has fallen). They indicate that in the community colleges the percentage of associate’s degrees earned in humanities disciplines has steadily increased to a 2013 level of near 40%. HI also reports that “the share of college students taking introductory or intermediate Spanish increased more than for every other type of course except freshman composition.”<sup>13</sup> In its 2014 annual report, the Linguistics Society of America noted that “the field of linguistics is growing most rapidly for undergraduates, with an increase of approximately 120 more students awarded BA degrees annually for the past 13 years.”<sup>14</sup> And by the end of their studies, the IH graphs show, a larger proportion of humanities majors score in the highest brackets of the analytic part of the GRE “than in any nonhumanities discipline.”<sup>15</sup>

All across the humanities, capaciously defined, students continue to sign

up, sit in, and cross the stage to get diplomas in humanities disciplines. Still. And potential employers continue to insist upon the centrality of critical thinking, capacious reading, appreciation of ambiguity, ability to learn how to learn, and effective communication, to successful careers across the life span.

Perhaps such national media venues as the *New York Times* are so enmeshed in neoliberal analyses of the times, that they reproduce the market-driven narrative of the crises of inutility. They reproduce a stereotype of the current generation of students whom they misrecognize as in it for the buck. Further, they betray presumptions that suggest journalists and commentators might benefit from the project of deep and engaged reading in order to better interpret the alternative stories that data can be made to tell. Perhaps reporters might go looking for historical factors contributing to the shifts in majors: the opening of the academy and the professions to large numbers of white women and women and men of color that gained momentum during the 1970s.

With regard to humanities departments and their status? Data available through *The State of the Humanities: Higher Education 2015*, issued by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, reveals that there is “very little evidence of decline in the number of humanities departments,” though there is some decline in the number of degrees awarded by humanities departments.<sup>16</sup> HI graphs also indicate that “after adjusting for inflation, expenditures in 2012 [related to support for humanities research] . . . were 54.6% higher than in 2005.”<sup>17</sup> Moreover, in the current economy of accountability metrics, as Christopher Newfield has demonstrated, some humanities programs are profit centers because the costs of mounting English or philosophy or linguistics courses is far less than mounting courses in the STEM fields. Working with cost figures from Arizona State University from 2010, Newfield suggests that the lack of transparency in calculating and publicizing the comparative costs of different programs across the university creates a climate in which the liberal arts can easily be presented and interpreted as a sinkhole of public monies with little benefit to students in terms of jobs and the economy, when in fact they are cost-effective centers within the larger university.<sup>18</sup> Others have cited figures for UCLA and the University of Washington that indicate that humanities departments generate more tuition income than they cost to run.<sup>19</sup>

And with regard to those who would repeat the mantra that degrees in the humanities do not lead to the first job, or may only lead to a job as a barista at Starbucks? A late 2013 survey out of the human resources firm Careerbuilder reported that “nearly half (47%) of college-educated workers said their first job after college was not related to their college major,” and, the report continued, “thirty-two percent of college-educated workers reported that they never found a job related to their college major.”<sup>20</sup> Another report by urban economists Jaison R. Abel and Richard Deitz in 2013 used data from the U.S.

Census Bureau and the 2010 American Community Survey to run calculations that find that “close to two-thirds of college graduates in the labor force work in a job requiring a college degree, while a little more than a quarter work in a job that is directly related to their college major.”<sup>21</sup> These studies suggest that except in certain fields like engineering and other STEM fields, there is no surety that the major leads to a particular job in the field for which the major is said to prepare people. Other data suggest that earning graduate degrees leads to a better match between field of study and career.

These reports tell other stories as well, reminding me that there is a world of data out there—statistics, reports, analytics—through which to tell different stories about the state of the humanities—to ourselves, to colleagues and administrators, and to the public. It is not always easy to sift through the data, the reports on the data, and the further interpretation of the reports. Yes. That’s the case. But it is worth the sifting to get a more complex picture about what’s happening out there in the academic humanities. It is worth going to the considerable data and reports available through professional organizations and the Humanities Indicators. Turn a critical lens on the hype about data analytics; remember that statistics are an effect of systems of collection; but also take advantage of what data reveal about aspects of the state of the humanities and renarrativize the commonplaces of humanities bashing.

Of course, data itself can’t do all the heavy lifting of articulating the relevance of humanities teaching and scholarly inquiry to the grand challenges confronting the world, their value to lifelong learners and learning, their inherent pleasures, their role in sharpening the powers of critical analysis, their centrality to the liberal arts, and their good-enough robustness. But data can be joined to testimonies and experiential histories and stories of scholarly projects to enhance the case to be made about the role of the humanities in the academy and beyond.

In renarrativizing what is happening in the academic humanities, and doing so with intensity, liveliness, and intellectual intimacy, academic humanists engage multiple audiences with sophisticated, evidence-based rejoinders. In doing so, they drive the agenda rather than remain constrained by defensive postures. They also model for faculty colleagues and graduate students the roles of public advocate, educational policy analyst, and engaged scholar.

### *Recognize the Larger Community of Activists*

Every day, across the academy and beyond, there are people out there conceptualizing, preparing for, and enacting plans to intervene in aspects of the conditions sketched above.

There is action out of the national academies. The National Academy of

Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine have reported on the state of the university and its funding support, issuing 10 recommendations, the last three of which direct attention to attracting, funding, and graduating new generations of doctoral students, and, most critically, attracting a greater diversity of applicants.

There are the advocacy groups, foremost among them the DC-based National Humanities Alliance, constituted of leaders of all the professional organizations, training faculty to be lobbyists for the National Endowment of the Humanities on the Hill, making the case for public support of the academic humanities and state humanities councils. In the digital humanities community, Alan Liu and others have founded 4Humanities, an advocacy arm of the field energized to move beyond critique. Here is Liu issuing his call for action in PMLA:

The digital humanities register the crisis of the humanities. For that reason, I and others started the 4Humanities advocacy initiative, “powered by the digital humanities community,” so that the digital humanities can try to advocate for the humanities and not just register their crisis. I do not know how much difference that initiative and others like it will make in the meaningfulness of the humanities to the world. But I do know that such an effort—dedicating the digital humanities to the soul of the humanities—is what is meaningful for a humanist, digital or otherwise, now.<sup>22</sup>

Keys words here are “Do not just register,” and “act.”

There are blueprints for structural change related to the rise of a contingent labor force in the academy, the deprofessionalization of the academic workforce, and the exploitative wage rates for non-tenure-track faculty. The Modern Language Association and the American Historical Association have made advocacy on behalf of the non-tenure-track faculty on the nation’s campuses a major project. The MLA website makes accessible information on staffing patterns at campuses through its Academic Workforce Data Center and its Academic Workforce Advocacy Kit.<sup>23</sup> There are as well initiatives to tackle directly the restructuring of the academic workforce through “adjunctification.” Under the leadership of Maria Maisto, the New Faculty Majority network brought the conditions of adjunct faculty to the attention of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce in late 2013, with the result that the Democratic staff of the committee issued a report titled “The Just-in-Time Professor: A Staff Report Summarizing eForum Responses on the Working Conditions of Contingent Faculty in Higher Education” (January 2014).<sup>24</sup> Participants in the Adjunct Project compile data on adjunct salaries and working conditions for contingent faculty across the country through a crowdsourc-

ing wiki. The Delphi Project on The Changing Faculty and Student Success “conduct[s] original research on non-tenure-track faculty” and “produc[es] important resources for use by leaders on campuses,” including analyses of the relationship between student learning and the status and conditions of adjunct faculty.<sup>25</sup>

Campaigns for unionization target higher wages, better working conditions, secure benefits, and access to professional development opportunities for faculty off the tenure-track and for graduate student instructors.<sup>26</sup> Graduate students at NYU succeeded in organizing the first union at a private university in the United States, signing the first five-year contract in March 2015. Graduate students at the University of Toronto went on strike in early 2015 over wage and benefits issues, eventually agreeing to binding arbitration.

There are calls for renewed commitment to the values of the tenure system and shared governance. The American Association of University Professors tracks and responds to attacks on the tenure system and faculty governance, and incidents of violations of academic freedom across North America. Twenty-three professional organizations signed a joint statement in response to the move of the Joint Finance Committee of the Wisconsin State Legislature to introduce policies in the 2016 budget that would directly undermine protections of academic freedom and faculty governance in the University of Wisconsin system. This statement was followed by one issued by the Board of Governors of the American Association of Colleges and Universities.

And there is the considerable noise of everyday activity. Publishing. Blogging. Speaking to various publics. Making the case all the time and everywhere. Organizing. Testifying. Protesting. Digging into details of budgets and their impact. Digging into data compiled by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, available on the indispensable Humanities Indicators website.<sup>27</sup> Historicizing structural changes to the funding and administering of higher education. In videos and wikis. At conferences and strikes and teach-ins and performance venues.

There is activism all around. That activism, however fitful, however frustrating, however modest before the large structural trends, is itself a source of energy and a site of agency. It also produces a public goods archive of resources for those seeking to make change: toolkits, task force reports, program initiatives, research, jeremiads, and manifestos. In the midst of debilitating trends and discursive noise, this archive functions as an ideational commons, a cacophonous reservoir of strategic argumentation, unsettling critique, thought-puzzles, extended analyses, improvisational tactics, tutorial education, and innovative programming. It is also a commons of praxis, available for tapping in the project of transforming doctoral education in the humanities.

*Remember All the Humanists Out There*

Finally, these are good-enough times because there are so many allies out there, people whose work, whose everyday pleasures and lasting legacies, translate the value of the humanities in the world. I like to think they number in the millions.

Of course, some of them are doctorally trained academic humanists in libraries and think tanks, in IT and PR, in administrative positions and presidencies, in contingent positions and tenure-track positions. More numerous are the professional humanists outside the academy. They are the archaeologists and anthropologists who unearth buried pasts and bring cultures of meaning into purview, as do the professional humanists unearthing artifacts from the Roman city Londinium beneath London and the possible plague pit amid the shaft sinkings for the new London rail link. They are the gender studies majors who apply their prodigious skills in analyzing the effects of gender stereotypes, racial discourses, and homophobia, for instance, in the workplace, public health arenas, nongovernmental organizations, law and medicine, among other careers. They are the art historians who build archives, curate collections, educate the public and speak to the creativity of diverse peoples and communities and arts cultures across the globe. They are the philosophers and linguists, cultural theorists and literary historians, public historians and musical theorists who carry their fascination with the humanities into the worlds of work they enter. They translate their love of reading, their visual literacy, and their powers of critical analysis into careers in the profit and nonprofit sectors, into public policy and courts of law.

There are also generations of students of the humanities who continue to follow the interests of their youth, the respite of their wearied, working days, and the unpredictable avocations of their later years. They read voraciously in many genres—novels, memoirs, poetry, biographies, and histories. They pause before a Vermeer, staggered by the quality of light on his translucent canvas. They listen intently to the sounds of a raga, of a reggae beat, of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto no. 3, of a wailing sitar or a thundering drum. They sing in choruses or preserve traditions of sacred music. They visit historical sites and wander local historical museums for serendipitous encounters. They ponder the forms of belonging of people in the past or struggle to understand the shifting terms of citizenship in a global world. They too go on archaeological digs, even with arthritic knees. They make gifts to colleges and universities to support humanities programs and students.

There are many who are self-tutored, informally and collectively educated. They turn to cultural authorities for narratives of community and survival, to shamanic storytellers or to stand-up comedians. Others are alumnae of col-

leges and universities who can remember a particular classroom moment when light broke, or the darkness of doubt descended, or the frisson of a deeper understanding shot through their bodies. Everywhere people thrive on the artists and thinkers who mark worlds of meaning and on the work of scholars in the humanistic disciplines who painstakingly interpret worlds, cultures, events, social relations, and lives in the making. As the American Alliance of Museums observes, far more people in the United States buy tickets to wander museums across the country (around 850 million) than to enter stadia for sporting events and theme parks (around 483 million [2011]).<sup>28</sup>

There are allies all around who understand the value of humanistic thinking and making. They understand that the life of consequence and imagination and curiosity and flexibility and passionate commitment to doing the work of the humanities in the world is another kind of successful life. They recognize that humanistic inquiry is also a kind of training and a way of approaching challenges that are indispensable to the vibrancy and adaptability and capacity of the economy and the ongoing struggle over the meaning, the future, and the ethics of democratic polity. Wherever they find their professional lives, these allies share the passion for doing, learning, reflecting on the many pleasures of the arts and ideas of life, of human sociality, of human aspiration, of transspecies companionship, of knowledge from below.

The diversity of this humanities workforce and its allies helps make the times good enough. Thinking capaciously about community enables academic humanists to resist situating the public as antagonistic to their academic enterprise. Moreover, such a disposition calls mentors and advisers to resist projecting a career outside the academy as a sign of failure. Professionals outside the academy can be identified as potential mentors for doctoral students thinking about multiple possible futures before them. The Modern Language Association has recently acted on this vision of a broader community of humanists through its Connected Academics project, enlisting doctorally trained humanists in supporting students in doctoral programs interested in multiple career horizons.<sup>29</sup> The academic humanities is a vibrant node in a far larger collaboratory of everyday humanists enacting the work of the humanities, and expanding the impact of the habits of scholarly inquiry.

### The Times Are Good Enough

There is so much that is good enough in the current climate and economy of higher education in the humanities. I am not glibly arguing that this moment is like every other. As noted earlier, there's been a decades-long retreat from public funding of higher education as a public good, a trend with demonstrable impact on increasing inequality and the erosion of educational access and

justice. There's been a seismic shift in the makeup of the professoriate—now disproportionately non-tenure-track, contingent faculty, a seismic shift that Bousquet terms deprofessionalization.<sup>30</sup> There's been the raucous cacophony of the pundits and politicians of utility. There's been an intensification of the chronic condition of the job market for those with doctorates seeking careers in the academy, as economists D. C. Colander and D. Zhou recently observed.<sup>31</sup>

Nonetheless, the opportunities are rich. There are counternarratives to be circulated. There are people and resources to draw on. There is a larger humanities network out there. The academic humanities is a project in process. The changes won by hard work in the past and all the advocacy, innovation, and change now in process sustain a sense of historical perspective and daily purpose.

And thus, my mantra, which to be a mantra has to be said again and again: the times are good enough to work with, although the intersecting complexities of the forces often elude adequate analysis and appear insurmountable. Tales of doom and gloom cannot become an excuse for acting as if change is impossible, or wholly out of any one person's hands. My activist project is the transformation of doctoral education in the humanities. It's in the air. It's on the agenda. It's up for debate.

This is no time for despair, or complacency, about what it takes to ensure a vibrant, disputatious, creative academy. This is no time for complacency about how to conceptualize a doctoral education committed to access, diversity, and excellence. The future of higher education is the future of diversity, human, institutional, and disciplinary. The future of diversity lies in the doctoral training of future teachers and scholars. The future of doctoral training lies in the animation of a 21st-century vision purposeful in its approach to meeting the educational challenges of the times.

The times are good enough. This mantra is a pulse of promise.