

“The Idea of the Corporate University”

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The very idea of the corporate university stirs people up. It enrages some, but inspires others. For some, the corporate university is the devil’s handiwork. For others, the corporate university is an angel’s vision. These polarized attitudes are sincere, but only on one level are they a response to the modern university. More profoundly, they can also be a symptom of polarized attitudes towards contemporary corporations and capitalism. Like all polarities, these are symptoms of extreme, contrasting clusters of thought and feeling.

Negotiating between the extremes entails a serious discussion about the nature, causes, and consequences of the corporate university. This discussion is inseparable from the question of the survival of the university itself. For it will not survive unless it is financially sound. I take it as axiomatic that financial soundness depends --- in part--- on complex partnerships with government and private enterprise, the adaption of practices of modern management, and revenue-generating enterprises. What, after all, is so necessarily awful about patenting a disease-fighting drug----unless one is unalterably, reflexively opposed to the drug industry? I am, however, temperamentally, intellectually,

¹ My great thanks to Dominick LaCapra for inviting me to be a part of this conference.

and morally more attracted to the principles that must frame these activities. My comments will outline the polarity of ideas about the corporate university, especially in the United States, suggest what the term “corporate university” might actually mean, and end with an old-fashioned appeal to values that might shape our response to this mutating institution. .

From a historical perspective, there is an irony on the attack on the “corporate” university. For the medieval roots of the university are two-fold: first, the Catholic Church and its clerical orders, and next, the opportunity to form a legal, corporate body to pursue a common purpose --- such as craft guilds or municipal councils. It is well-known that the Latin word “universitas” in the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries was one term that referred to such corporate bodies. When “universitas” was originally applied to academic groupings, it could refer to associations of students, or associations of masters, or associations of masters and students together. Not until the late 14th century did “universitas” began to be associated with universities in particular and in distinction to other corporate bodies.

Fascinating and important though it is, the development of the medieval and early modern university is beyond the scope of this paper. However, no comment on the corporate university can ignore Adam Smith’s chapter on education, “Of the Expence (sic) of the Institutions for the Education of Youth,” in An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, published ---- symbolically enough--- in 1776. Smith was writing shortly before the simultaneous rise of the modern research university and of the modern corporation with its limited liability, transferability of shares, juridical personality, indefinite duration, and civil registration. As a result, his idea of the

corporate university is historically bounded, but for those who oppose faculty tenure as a bad deployment of human capital, he is a prophet.

Although Smith was a university man, whose books began as classroom lectures, he sees the university as a dangerous melding of two elements. The first is medieval corporations and their legacy. Smith writes, "...jealousy of strangers, the aversion to take apprentices, or to communicate the secrets of their trades, generally prevail...and often teach ...(corporations), by voluntary associations and agreements, to prevent that free competition which they cannot prohibit by bye-laws." (p. 126) The second element is the endowments that have accrued to universities. Unfortunately, teachers no longer earn fees and honoraries but take the salaries that endowment make possible. I would assume that a latter-day Smith would place grants and contracts won through a competitive review process in the same category as fees and honoraries. For Smith, the double whammy of a corporate nature and endowments terminally damages the three fundamental elements of a university: teachers, students, and ideas. It makes the faculty selfish, slack, careless, self-indulgent, and yet obsequious to a largely ineffectual but "arbitrary and discretionary" external oversight. (p. 718) Students are the victims of bad teaching and of the monopolistic control universities have over credentials for certain professions. Finally, ideas reek of Neanderthalism. Universities, Smith charges, have become "sanctuaries in which exploded systems and obsolete prejudices found shelter and protection, after they had been hunted out of every other corner of the world." (p. 727)

Would Smith approve of the modern corporate university? I believe that he might approve of the current competition among universities, but his approval might also hinge

upon the definition of the corporate university. For me, it is a non-profit institution that embodies at least one of the following three features: 1) An overweening commitment to a modern management styles and rhetoric; 2) An overweening respect for corporate values and corporate associations, e.g. limitless naming opportunities; and 3) An overweening solicitude for profit-making opportunities. The mere presence of corporate elements does not transmogrify a university into a corporate university. So defined, the corporate university differs from two other important variations on the theme. One is the university within a corporation --- such as Motorola. How powerful these institutions are depends upon their intrinsic educational integrity, the willingness of the home corporation to fund and shelter them, and their ability to offer credentials (degrees and certificates).

The second form is that of the university as for-profit corporation or a subsidy of a for-profit corporation. The words University of Phoenix leaps unbidden to one's lips. These are, bluntly, up-to-date versions of older proprietary educational institutions. They succeed insofar as they serve the needs of a particular constituency. My fear is not that they are going to become the dominant model of the university in the United States. The tradition of the non-profit university is too strong. Moreover, the bursting of the dot.com bubble also burst the edu.com bubble that was the most glimmering globe in the universe of edubiz. My fear is of the role that for-profit universities might play internationally. One of the most vital developments in higher education outside of the United States is the growth of the private university. I think, for example, of the Central European University in Budapest. The private university can offer an alternative to a public system stifled by the state, or corrupt, or financially starved, or all of the above. Many private universities,

like the Central European University, are non-profit institutions, but others are for-profit proprietary institutions. They can have the educationally bankrupt quality of the proprietary medical schools that Abraham Flexner so rightly eviscerated in Medical Education in the United States and Canada: A Report to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (1910). I would very much like to see the equivalent of the Flexner Report, funded by a foundation, about private universities outside of the United States.

Of the texts that treat the idea of the modern corporate university, and the polarities this idea incites, by far the most vivid is the hilarious academic satire Moo, by Jane Smiley (1995). Its setting is a Midwest land grant university, a child of the Morrill Act. The dean of the agriculture school is canny enough to realize that he must be polite to local farmers, no matter how loony they might seem. A central figure is a huge pig, Earl Butz, being force fed as part of a secret research project in a building known as "Old Meats," Having passed through the 1960s, the university has experimented with a multi-cultural dorm and has hired a Chicana for the English Department (as an assistant professor). It is now watching the fall of Communism. Of greater local interest is the futility of the basketball team, despite the fervent play-making of Coach Rawlings.

Huge, diffuse, this multiversity has made too many promises to too many constituencies, although each promise has its nobility and each constituency its value. As a result, it is a "vast network of interlocking wishes, some of them modest, some of them impossible, many of them conflicting, many of them complementary." (p. 386) The university will be, it vows, the source of jobs, of social and medical transformations, of true and beautiful and profound thoughts, and for students, of independence and pleasure. "Its limits expanding at the speed of light," Smiley writes, "the university could teach a

kid, male or female, to do anything from reading a poet to turning protein molecules into digital memory, from brewing beer to reinterpreting his or her entire past.” (p. 386)

Inevitably, these multiple and divided constituencies, each with its own desires and ambitions, regard each other with confusion and suspicion. Static crowds the channels of communication. Citizens believe that the university is rich and has wealthy professors who once taught Marxism and now teach “something called deconstructionism which was only Marxism gone underground in preparation for emergence at a time of national weakness.” Legislators believe that the faculty “was determined to undermine the moral and commercial well-being of the state, and that supporting a large and nationally famous university with state monies was exactly analogous to raising a nest of vipers in your own bed.” In turn, the faculty thinks that the governor and state legislators don’t care about education and that it was only “a matter of time before all classes would be taught as lectures, all exams given as computer-graded multiple choice, all subscriptions to professional journals at the library stopped, and all research time given up to committee work and administrative red tape.” Secretaries believe that faculty and administrators are too lazy to run the Xerox machines. Janitorial staff believes you must never really look into any wastebasket “if you wanted to maintain your belief in human nature...” Students believe that dormitories are always overbooked and that there were three ax murders on the campus the year before. And finally, “It was well known to all members of the campus population that other, unnamed groups reaped unimagined monetary advantages in comparison to the monetary disadvantages of one’s own group, and that if funds were distributed fairly, according to real merit, for once, some people would have another think coming.” (pp. 20-21)

Inexorably, given the political economy of its times, Moo's university is becoming more corporate. Its privileged genres are less the scholarly monograph than the memo, the budget, the grant proposal, and the contract. The administration is expanding, with federal relations officers and smarmy but overbearing management experts, one of whom asserts, "An organization is a delicate thing. I like to think of it as a field of balanced dynamics." (p. 379) State budgets are cut, then restored, then cut again --- a yoyo of allocating and rescinding. To supplement the state, the university is to woo and seduce the private sector. As the narrator comments sardonically, "Associations of mutual interest between the university and the corporations were natural, inevitable, and widely accepted. According to the state legislature, they were to be actively pursued." The legislature's strategy is to allocate university resources elsewhere after corporations "began picking up more of the tab for higher education." The more corporations pay, the less the state has to pay. Then legislators can give state dollars to widows and children and not to "sleek professors." (p. 22) The blustery governor is the guardian of education as enlightened business. "Education is an investment," he declares. "The trouble is, they don't run it like an investment over there, with the students as customers, because that's what they are, you know. Now they run it like welfare, but I'm telling you, if they won't turn it around themselves, we've got to turn it around for them. This administration believes strongly in education." (p. 112)

In the midst of intrigues and hijinks by students, faculty, administrators, alumni, taxpayers, politicians, and businessmen, two faculty members are locked in a particular struggle. One is Dr. Lionel Gift of the Economics Department, the highest paid professor on campus, who also rakes in lucrative contracts and consulting fees. The blinkered,

narcissistic, and anal descendent of Adam Smith, he is a true believer in the “the divine market” and unfettered competition. (p. 174). His classes are filled with young men who “tended to be self-confident and to look forward to lives of wealth and power...It all agreed reassuringly with every myth and fairy tale.” (p. 141) On tenure committees, he is suspicious of the arts and humanities.

The other figure locked in struggle is Chairman X, the chair of Horticulture, a tenured radical who loves the ecologically correct garden he plants with his students around Old Meats and who thumbs through The Nation and The Progressive. Although Chairman X has gradually become a member of the consuming middle classes, he still sits in his office “mulling over the triumph of consumerism, selfishness, technology, leisure, meat eating, localism, competitiveness, and appetite.” (p. 154) To him, Gift is “that slinking, fat-faced, low-life, bloodsucking lickpenny from the economics department striking here, striding there, ever smiling, ever calculating, ever buying low, ever selling high, everlastingly trampling rare glass frogs underfoot...” (p. 278) Discovering that Gift is helping a mysterious multi-national corporation stripmine a previously unspoiled part of Costa Rica, Chairman X distributes a flyer about Gift’s work with the inflammatory headline, “Do You Know That Our University Is Working to Destroy (The Last Virgin Rain Forest in the Western Hemisphere)?” He organizes demonstrations, and incites a riot. For the moment, Gift is balked, and one can hear the previously-balanced narrative voice emit a cheer.

Gift, of course, is a parody of the idea that the corporate university is an angel’s vision. I have met my share of Lionel Gifts: the head of the Horticulture Department in an agricultural college (known colloquially as Hort), who warned me, as a new dean, not

to “mess with” Hort because it had rooted, fertile relations with the state’s cut flower industry, the third largest in the state. Then there was the dean who compulsively and perkily asked if we were following the “best practices of our industry,” and then there was still another dean, this time of a business school, who informed the graduate school of arts and science that if it ever gained the capacity to do a spreadsheet, it would discover that it was a sinkhole of debt and that it should then close up shop and stop taking subsidies from the business school. The advocates of the corporate university can coolly, even chillingly, deploy the discourse of modern management. In his review of Bill Readings’ University in Ruins, Dominick LaCapra quotes a letter from a Distinguished Executive in Residence at the Center for the Study of American Business at Washington University to the Chronicle of Higher Education. “What are the core functions and departments of the university? Can you dispose---I don’t use that word lightly---of unproductive programs? What is the primary goal of the institution? If you were absolutely forced to choose research or teaching, which would it be?”²

However, the tone in which the positive idea of the corporate university is presented is less apt to be cold than commonsensical, an appeal to both elites and ordinary citizens to see where the future and our future well-being lie. Deliberately or inadvertently, this rhetoric is congruent with one of the university’s historical roles---to be socially useful. A current predicate of the future is that the world economy is speeding away from the dirty, polluted lands of the industrial age to the clean, pure, microchipped shores of the information age. Listen, for example, to a 1987 report of the Science Council of Canada, an advisory group to the government:

² Dominick LaCapra, “The University in Ruins?”, Critical Inquiry 25 (Autumn 1998): 34.

“Teaching and basic research are major roles of the university and must remain so. But as knowledge replaces raw materials as the primer of the world economy, the universities’ part in creating wealth---too often understated---becomes crucially important. The intellectual resources of the university are needed to help revitalize mature industries and generate the product ideas needed to create new ones. Canada’s future prosperity increasingly depends on designing effective ways to integrate the university and the market place.”³ Given the glowing promise of plenty of such a partnership, the government must help to broker it. Indeed, this promise of plenty is so glowing that a tone of common sense can give way to one of irrational hope and exuberance. And thus, the lineaments of the dream of the corporate university become drawn in acrylic colors, a vision for the boys in Professor Gift’s over-subscribed courses and another chapter in the annals of marketing.

The purveying of this dream is ubiquitous. Let me cite but one case study---from that sober if brightly illustrated monthly magazine Scientific American. In the September, 2002, issue is a special advertising section, glossy enough to have been sponsored by fashion or tourism industries. Fifteen pages long, its title is “Italy: Technology and Innovation.” Its purpose is to sell technology centers and research campuses in Northern Italy. Their purpose is to provide “breakthrough innovation in...high-tech” that has both global and local applications. Universities, state and regional governments, and industry strive towards this goal seamlessly. Although the portraits of the older academics are reassuringly frumpy, the settings are either sleek or glamorous, and the younger workers

³ Sheila Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie, Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, paperback edition 1999, p. 53.

movie-star handsome. The ad refers knowingly to the latest in academic trends. A hospital/scientific research complex in Pisa deploys “A Multidisciplinary Strategy for Medical Research and Patient Care.” The Emilia-Romagna region promises “emerging clusters like the multimedia sector in Bologna,” the site of one of the two oldest universities in the world. Bowing to English as the global language of research and commerce, The Politecnico di Milano Technical University (PdMTU) combines Italian and English in its very name. The compelling fantasy of the supplement is that the innovations of Northern Italy will contribute --- not just to Pisa or Bologna or Milan --- but to all of human progress. This is the globalization of both hype and hope. These innovations will stabilize the Leaning Tower of Pisa, lessen human labor through robotics, cure AIDS and cancer. Only a churl could question them.

Chairman X, of course, parodies such a churl. For him, the dream of the corporate university is a nightmare. Few critics of the corporate university reject money per se. They know that money can be spent for good as well as ill. They can think of the founding of the University of Frankfurt and its radical division, the Institute of Social Research. The nightmare is about being a financial have-not, about being under corporate control, and about rationalized, hierarchical, bottom-line management practices. Such a fraught attitude extends a long-standing suspicion of ties of American universities to commerce and business. In 1925, a member of the Massachusetts States legislature charged that Harvard University “was in the meshes of financiers, that professors dared not speak up on behalf of real scholarship, that ‘big business’ is in the saddle, that business was exercising an alarming tyranny over the entire university, that freedom of speech was dead, and that big business was forcing scholars to say only things

approved by J.P. Morgan.”⁴ Although I will take my examples of an unrelenting critique of the corporate university from the political left, it is crucial to realize that dislike of the idea of the corporate university is not limited to the political left. It emerges from a large body of academics, many in the humanities. They fear the loss of our academic soul and the trashing of an often ahistoricized, idealized, but foundational medieval tradition--- that is, an idea of the university as an association, a company of masters and students, of teachers and learners. Exacerbating their dread is the lingering demoralization caused by the attacks on the universities during the so-called Culture Wars of the 1980s and 1990s. Like floodwaters, these wars have receded, but they have left damage and debris.

Let me offer two examples of the critique from the left. Surprisingly, neither mentions the great medical centers and teaching hospitals of the American research universities, which the drastic changes in health care financing in the 1990s severely threatened. The first example is the shorthand version of the corporate university as nightmare, Cary Nelson and Stephen Watt’s Academic Keywords: A Devil’s Dictionary for Higher Education, the title a self-conscious theft of A Devil’s Dictionary by Ambrose Bierce, the American satirist and journalist of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Pugnacious, often funny, unapologetically oversimplified, the narrative of Academic Keywords tells of an overpowering trend towards an unholy alliance of government, industry, and the university. Nelson and Watt identify twelve different ways of being a corporate university. Whole labs and departments are now up for sale. Indeed, run by administrators and not faculty, universities are addicted to the “corporate profit pipeline.” (p. 86) Intellectual and academic functions are atrophying. Labor is a cost, not a valuable

⁴ Carter A. Daniel. MBA: The First Century. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, and London: Associated University Presses, 1998, p. 109.

resource. Among the exploited are graduate students. All that remains is heroic resistance, faculty dissent, and calls for more financial transparency so that the full dimensions of corporate malfeasance can be mapped by the resistance.⁵

The second example is a far more subtle evocation of the idea of the corporate university as nightmare: Bill Readings' The University in Ruins. I have asked myself why it has such currency among academics and concluded that its appeal lies in its subtlety; in the foreboding and apocalyptic rhetoric that gives voice to the free-floating campus anxiety; in its romantic anti-authoritarianism; and in the accuracy with which it nails the more fatuous and manipulative features of the modern university.⁶ Readings does perceive national differences among universities, but his imagination is archetypal. That is his strength. His University in Ruins is a post-historical state of decay. The historical university, embodied in the University of Berlin, was to realize a national culture identity. Its hero was the "liberal, Reasoning subject." However, globalization, which he too easily conflates with Americanization, destroyed the nation-state, imposed "a rule of the cash-nexus in place of the notion of national identity as determinant of all aspects of investment in social life," (p. 3) and established The University of Excellence. Readings skewers the claims that "We Are Excellent" that does pervade university agitprop. For him, being excellent is self-justification by an institution that is an "autonomous bureaucratic corporation" (p. 35) where the administrator has replaced the faculty member as hero. The administrator dominates a faculty is a work force, students consumers, and knowledge a product. All that resisters can do is to form a remnant

⁵ Nelson strongly supports graduate student unions, arguing that they are a defense against the exploitation of graduate students that helps the university's bottom line. In contrast, I believe that graduate student unions, substituting collective bargaining for shared governance, solidifies within the university the labor/management practices of many corporations as well as public institutions.

community, a “dissensual community,” which serves thought itself, calls the disciplines into question, and values teaching as an “interdiscursive” activity. However, Readings’ archetypal imagination is also his fatal weakness. For globalization has not destroyed the nation-state. Nor do universities --- in their complexity and hybridity --- match his nightmare. He is less map than warning, an appeal to conscience.

The dream of the corporate university offers the integration of the university and the corporation --- with government compliance --- as a supreme value. The nightmare of the corporate university strips the corporation of value and prophesizes the death of any university that would seek its fatal embrace. Where, between the polarities of dream and nightmare, are the realities of our waking lives? Surely, a more grounded analysis of universities in modern industrial democracies links together several realities. To reduce them under the unflattering rubric of “the corporate university” is an ineffectual defensive mechanism for dealing with the trauma they may have caused, and a dangerous deflection of our attention away from sobering truths. Perhaps the most important truth is the simplest. Universities must survive financially if they are to survive. There is no free lunch for universities. There never has been. Moreover, they have always had an economic dimension, no matter how veiled, in the operations and the hopes of their masters, students, and benefactors. Universities do not live on manna from heaven. They never have. They do not do so now. As Edward Shils writes, “No modern university has ever lived entirely from the sale of its services.”⁷ Universities have received subsidies from the church, the state, and private philanthropists as individuals and foundations. The

⁶ This foreboding and apocalyptic rhetoric is a feature of right-wing attacks on the university as well.

⁷ This was written before the University of Phoenix and other for-profit institutions, but the point remains for non-profit institutions.

fees paid by their students for tuition have only in a very few cases come close to covering the costs of conducting a university.”

Many people in universities wake up every morning wondering how to cover these costs. Some are trustees; some are administrators; some are scientists looking for next grants for their laboratories. The hostile cries about the corporate university that perhaps most rankle me are from tenured faculty who don't have to worry about paying the bills, e.g. the ever-rising infrastructure costs of their computers and Internet hook-up. Only a tiny handful of universities are wealthy enough --- through endowments and investments --- to be comparatively remote from financial anxieties. The rest of us are versions of Mastercard advertisements, totting up the cost of this and that, figuring out revenue streams to wash away these costs --- and all the while deeply believing that universities are intrinsically priceless.

The next reality is that the United States university, if it is to remain intellectually vibrant and financially hale, must avoid being ground to pieces between two great social forces. The first force, which I celebrate, is the immense growth of the modern university since the 19th century. In the 19th century, old disciplines were reformed, new disciplines created, and new professional schools invented, a process that has continued with awesome and exhilarating consequences. Although the subject is beyond my scope at the moment, the history of business schools is a fascinating chapter in the relations among modern capitalism, modern corporations, and the university. After World War II, universities began to grow demographically --- and dramatically. This growth, this expansiveness and inclusiveness, has been a historically important melding of the university and democratic values. In and of itself, growth has resulted in organizational

complexity, and this has imposed managerial demands. \$1 billion dollar budgets need more than an abacus to handle. Demographic growth was not a capitalist plot, but the pervasive, valid recognition that higher education is a benefit for members of all economic classes, races, nations, and genders.

The second great force, both reinforcing and colliding with the first, has been a set of socioeconomic relations that have developed since World War II. The counterpart to Moo. Their narrative is now being told by highly competent historians and social scientists who respect its complexity. As I read them, I feel ambivalent. On the one hand, I admire the modern university's ambition, resilience, realism, and innovative responses to the post-World War II moment. I have willingly devoted much of my life to this institution. On the other hand, I too fear --- from time to time --- that universities spent hundreds of years killing the Christian God that dominated them in order to install Mammon.

The narrative that is emerging about the United States---and which I will repeat very briefly and clumsily -- tells of a university system that became the best in the world after 1945. The number of international students it has attracted is but one sign of its success. Some causes were financial, including the federal government's decision to invest heavily in medicine and university-based science. Other causes were structural. As Hugh David Graham and Nancy Diamond argue, United States universities were decentralized and pluralistic.⁸ This allowed a prominent role for private institutions. However, the academic market was also united by common organizational forms and professional standards. This permitted a healthy competition between campuses with

⁸ Hugh Graham Davis and Nancy Diamond, The Rise of American Research Universities: Elites and Challengers in the Postwar Era. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

family resemblances for students, faculty, and sources of funding. (pp. 11-12) Arguably, the 1960s were a Golden Age for American research universities, before the times then turned much grayer. Symbolized by the word "1968," campus revolts --- cultural and political --- created "popular distrust." (p. 85) Even harder to manage were slowing enrollments and the inflation of the 1970s. The subsequent financial difficulties led to what Roger L. Geiger has named "an age of privatization," "a process of change toward greater dependence on private actors and resources and less dependence on government." (p. 36).⁹ The defining features of the age of privatization are "a shifting of the costs of higher education onto the shoulders of students and their parents; second, the privatization of academic research, both in its funding and its utilization; and third, a growing entrepreneurialism on the part of universities, both in external engagements and in internal management." (Geiger, p. 38)

Yet government has hardly disappeared. The results of its actions have been, at best, mixed. Federal funding is still strong for biomedical research. Moreover, the Bayh-Dole revision of patent law in 1980 gave universities the right to patent discoveries made with federal grants. However, as Graham and Diamond point out, crucial federal agencies are spending less money on research. Overhead rates are declining. Academic earmarking --- a bi-partisan excitement --- is subverting the peer review process that ought to control the awarding of grants. (pp. 215-220) On the state level, with their budgets in trouble, governments have hoped both to damp down expenses and grow revenues.

⁹ Geiger has published several books about the modern university. The text I am using in this paper is Roger L. Geiger, "The American University at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century: Signposts on the Path to Privatization," Trends in American and German Higher Education. Cambridge, MA: American Academy of Arts and Sciences with the support of the German-American Academic Council in collaboration with the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2002, pp. 33-84.

Graham and Diamond write, "Political and business leaders developed state-level versions of industrial policy for higher education, designed to implement both cost-cutting consolidations and strategic plans to involve universities in regional economic development." (Graham and Diamond, p. 202) Both federal and state governments have imposed regulations that are expensive to implement, in part because institutions must expand their bureaucracies in order to do so.

As my advertisement supplement about Italy shows, aspects of "the age of privatization" appear in countries outside of the United States. More specifically, partnerships among government, industry, and universities are an international phenomenon. In their study of universities in the United States, Canadian, Australia, and the United Kingdom, Sheila Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie analyze such partnerships as one important element of what they have influentially named "academic capitalism." Although Slaughter and Leslie are far more empirical, far more reliable, and far more hopeful than Bill Readings, "academic capitalism" resembles --- to a degree --- the idea of the University in Ruins. Between 1970 and 1995, Slaughter and Leslie write, academic labor changed radically because of the globalization of the post-World War II political economy. The consequences were numerous. As state finances changed, universities had to seek more sources of funding. Universities became less insulated from the market. Faculty members were asked to become more entrepreneurial. Simultaneously, corporations needed new products. Slaughter and Leslie write, "The shift occurred because the corporate quest for new products converged with faculty and institutional searches for increased funding." (p. 7) The market became a test of academic success.

Biotechnology, as many have noted, is a primary example of the intersection of

university research and the market, but so are materials science, optical science, computer science, and cognitive science. Seeking to stimulate national economies, government helped to fund industry-university cooperative research centers. The 1980s saw interdisciplinary research centers in the United Kingdom with academic-industry-government funding. In the 1990s, the Clinton presidency established an Advanced Technology Program in the Department of Commerce. In the same decade, Australia began Cooperative Research Centers, using British and United States models.

The affects of the “age of privatization” and “academic capitalism” are real. However, I would suggest, their presence is not overweening enough to change universities into the corporate university that is the dream of some and the nightmare of others. One reason, in the United States, is the combination of stability and flexibility that pluralism and decentralization offer. Similarly, even though sports are powerful and problematic on American campuses, most American campuses are more than sports arenas. Moreover, the dangers of privatization are no secret. Not only radical critics, but more centrist participant/observers in higher education have been keenly aware of them. Higher education is full of self-scrutiny.

For example, Jonathan Cole, the sociologist who has spent many years as provost of Columbia, incisively analyzes the problems with the partnerships between government, industry, and the research university. Industrial support is uncertain. It is difficult to balance “investments in high economic payoff research against sustained effort in more basic and intellectually challenging research.” Some faculty members are tempted by large economic gains, but others have no hope of them, unless a monograph suddenly becomes a HBO drama series. The training of graduate students can be

corrupted by putting them to work on potentially profitable rather than intellectually vital projects. Finally, and so crucially, relations with both domestic and foreign businesses can undermine “a commitment to open science” because of business demands for proprietary rights to scientific discoveries. In brief, the commons of intellectual property may become a very private, gated community.¹⁰ If and when this happens, I would add, the university has bought the rope with which to hang itself.

Armed with such knowledge, what are we to do? My intuition is that the financing of health care must be changed and that our great medical centers with their teaching hospitals must be more fully supported, but this is a subject that others, more expert than I, must address in detail. Another possibility: as Donald Kennedy, once the president of Stanford University and now the editor of Science, recommends in his deontologically charged Academic Duty, we might reclaim a service ethic in every fundamental aspect of our work. My own suggestions are less systematic. The first is about rhetoric, a cry for a constant, optimistic statement and restatement of our core values: the commitment to learning, discovery, and creativity; to teaching; to freedom of thought and speech; and to faculty powers. Part of the success of Reaganesque American conservatism has been its constant, optimistic statement and restatement of its core values. Despite their difficulties, follies, and errors, American universities should do no less. We need not abandon the language of universities either to the barbarisms and blandness of officialese or graffiti scrawled on ruined walls. If pressured, we must press back, offering hope but not hype in our work

¹⁰ I first cited Cole’s warnings in Catharine R. Stimpson, “Myths of Transformation, Realities of Change,” PMLA 115, 5 (October 2000): 1146.

My second suggestion is about money. Students are now leaving college, graduate school, and professional schools with often intolerable levels of debt. We see this among our recent alumni and alumnae (if students do graduate), in our own families, and among our friends. As a matter of public policy, we must return financial aid to more grants and fewer loans. Otherwise, we will place students in our 21st century version of Adam Smith's description of their plight under the decadent corporatism of the late 18th century: they simply will not be free. However, their chains will not be forged by lazy professors in educational monopolies, but by interest-accumulating loans students have taken out because educators convinced them they need higher education in order to succeed. Or, an alternative scenario that I have presented elsewhere. We will gradually build a four-tiered structure of higher education: handsome, residential higher education for the elite, with programs of financial aid for less affluent students who are to be brought into the elite; mass-produced, on-site higher education for many, often in proprietary institutions; e-education for students who are taught electronically, whose student center will be a chatroom; and finally, an inexpensive hybrid of mass-produced on-site and electronic classrooms.¹¹

My final suggestion is about the curriculum. In many medieval universities, the faculty of the arts was ---with some rancorous disputes --- the gateway to the higher faculties of law, medicine, and theology. The arts were interdisciplinary, a combination of what we now name the humanities and the sciences. The social sciences would be added much later in the 19th century. Today, some professional schools value the arts, now variously called the arts and sciences or the liberal arts. For example, literature is

¹¹ Catharine R. Stimpson, "The Culture Wars Continue," *Daedalus*, 131, 3 (Summer 2002): 39-40. My thanks to Terry Sullivan for her 1992 presidential address at the Association of Graduate Schools for

now taught in about 40% of American law schools. However, the power of professional schools, the belief that many of the liberal arts lead to a stony and unprofitable career path, and elements of privatization have wrecked havoc on the humanities and on the humanistic social sciences. Unless universities attend to them, their attenuation will only increase. If they go, there go our memories, our languages, our imagined worlds, our sense of social and cultural complexities, our gods and goddesses, our making of meanings --- in brief, ourselves. To abandon all this would be suicidal, an act of profound indifference to life, and, no matter how masked, an act of self-contempt and self-hatred.

Let me conclude by returning to my satiric academic novel Moo, or, to be more accurate, my comic academic novel. For Moo has a series of happy endings. Two young women undergraduates --- one an African-American from Chicago, one a white farm girl from the Midwest --- decide they will be roommates after all. Two other undergraduates -- one male, one female -- are on the verge of falling in love. Other couples are savoring the possibilities of romance as well. Loren Stroop, a truly loopy farmer, dies and leaves blueprints for a piece of farm machinery that might bring a small fortune to the university. Happy, the governor relents on the budget.

As for Dr. Gift, the voice of the corporate university as dream, he finds that his accounts are being audited. Too smug to be worried, he goes to a lavish lunch with Elaine Dobbs-Jellinek, a striving development officer, at the Hays-Adams Hotel in Washington, D.C. She is carrying a Fendi bag and wearing a Donna Karan suit. For one moment, each fantasizes about a romance with the other, and then draw away from the exploration of love, of intimacy, of the other. She remembers the tedium of housework. He remembers that she might already have a son, and that it is better "to live by principle

showing the dangers of accumulating debt for baccalaureate students.

than by desire...the wisest course for homo economicus was the cultivation of indifference.” (p. 403) They part, and only she is wise enough to have any inkling of loss.

But as for Chairman X, the wild and woolly voice of the corporate university as nightmare, Chairman X is finally wise enough to marry Lady X (although everyone has assumed that they have been married for years). Their three children look on with patent happiness. Fragrance from their apple trees fills the air. And in this university town, the couple, after their vows, “seemed to be lost in an astonishing, and even legendary, kiss.” (p. 414) Here, we are to believe, is not the kiss of death, but of love and thus of life; not the kiss of angels and demons, but of us, the raw materials of art, the humanities, and universities.