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Review of Christopher Newfield's *Ivy and Industry: Business and the Making of the American University, 1880-1980*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003

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Christopher Newfield is nostalgic for the heady days of high theory in the 1980s and pre-Sokal-affair 90s, when the humanities felt like the most cutting-edge part of the university. Research emanating from the humanities reached an increasingly large audience, theorists enjoyed rock-star status, and the liberal arts had the clout to challenge science departments on their own turf with biting epistemological critiques. At least this is how Newfield remembers the era in his introduction to *Ivy and Industry*, but since that period it's been a slow downhill slide for the humanities—from theoretical summits to far more modest digs in the least influential buildings on the quad.

Newfield's book is an ambitious attempt to examine the tangled history of academia and business in the United States, and his scope is as wide as his subject matter. His digressive history ranges across the map: the development of the American university; the rise of the professional/managerial class; the New Criticism; Foucault; and management guru Tom Peters. The scale of the undertaking is impressive, but the narrative thread is frequently lost in long summaries of intellectual movements, legal decisions, and case studies. While it doesn't range much into the most recent decades of labor conflict in the university, *Ivy and Industry* provides a long-term theory about how the social and economic pressures specific to the university produced a uniquely contradictory organization and mental state among its faculty and administration.

There's little direct discussion of adjunct and part-time labor issues in the book. This is partly because Newfield begins at a more fundamental starting point than most analyses of university labor—with the reflexive conservatism and financial austerity he sees as hard-wired into its economic structure:

The American university tradition of low faculty salaries goes back 370 years. An equally old tradition has allowed colleges and universities to save money by letting faculty go and herding leftover students into remaining courses. Colleges often cut faculty benefits, and this could mean anything from reducing pensions to eliminating a professor's right to graze one milk cow on university grounds. When salaries rose after World War II and again in the 1960s, largely because of federal infusions of funds into technological fields, payroll costs were contained

by expanding the use of non-faculty instructors, especially teaching assistants enrolled in doctoral programs. Since 1980 universities have controlled payroll costs by increasing the use of nontenured and part-time instructors at not quite double the rate of full-time faculty. (33)

This paragraph more or less comprises the extent of Newfield's specific attention to part-time labor issues in the university, but his deep-structure analysis of why these patterns persist goes some distance beyond a predictable fallen Eden theory of skinflint administrators and voracious corporatism. Instead, he sees the humanities at the core of the struggle to maintain the integrity of the university and resist the managerialism that is structurally inevitable yet damaging to humanist development.

Newfield begins with the decline in power and influence of what he sees as the soul of the university: the humanities. He argues the decline results from three factors: losing the public argument in the culture wars; losing the financial battles with state governments and the scientific-industrial money nexus; and losing control of the university to the new business-modeled administration. He begins with some relatively innocuous observations—such as that universities and corporations were founded with rather different missions, but have converged over time as the influence of business has waxed while the social capital of the humanities has waned. This trend corresponds to the shift in earning and political power from the humanities toward the sciences, as the earning power of the technical fields grew.

Universities found themselves in this perpetual state of dependence because they were disallowed from participating in the full-on capitalism that industry could employ. Even though both were dedicated to growth—or, in difficult times, survival—universities operated as non-profits. “[U]niversities did not,” Newfield reminds us, “directly participate in the commodity system that is the major long-term source of the growth of capital. They took on a vast new set of activities and expenses without access to the financial machinery that supported these activities in corporations” (32). Torn between a desire for corporate-like growth and the social mission of the university, many administrators were unable to speculate or leverage their capital with the same freedom as their corporate counterparts, and thus couldn't create a purely profit-based business model (of the kind now embodied in, say, the University of Phoenix).

Newfield also identifies a dual role for the legacy of humanism in the university. First, it underwrites the legitimacy of the university's non-profit mission by emphasizing the intangible aspects of self-making and personal agency. But humanism also played a role in how the professoriate understood its own role in shaping the university. Newfield argues that even as most of American society became Taylorized and highly specialized, academic workers were afforded a more autonomous working life:

We might therefore think of university faculty as a special kind of “labor aristocracy.” Faculty had real control over their individual work and local supervisory authority. But this did not allow faculty *as a group* to wield decision-making power. Faculty occupied a contradictory class location, owning and not owning their academic capital, managing and being managed by turns. (80)

The labor autonomy of the professoriate is a metonym of the social autonomy of the university, and the administration's role is to balance this independence with the constant need for funding.

To convince the professoriate that they had real autonomy, administrations began to introduce a new divided governance system in the early twentieth century. In these systems, the administration ceded control of “academic” matters to professional bodies like faculty senates, thus isolating what happened in the classroom from the business of running the university. Of course the differential in power and importance of the decisions made by the administration versus those delegated to faculty bodies made the latter often seem trivial and ineffectual, but the faculty could at least maintain an illusion of control over their working conditions.

Free of the constraints of top-down management and rigid, task-oriented labor, physicists and humanities professors alike had been able to pursue research based on instinct, intuition, and affinity, and were more creative and energized in their respective activities. The products of this research were not always profitable, but the freedom to play within the research process was essential to the most dramatic advances—the kinds of radical breakthroughs that weren’t possible under more structured forms of labor. According to this model, “[g]enius . . . depended on unforeseen, unpredictable, partially unhinged eruptions of personal agency. This agency wasn’t optional, something you could replace with efficient teamwork” (131).

But the one-sided division of power between administration and faculty, agreed to nearly a century ago, has since come back to haunt the professoriate, as a “soft Taylorism” slowly eroded the independence they had been promised. According to Newfield, “Faculty long ago grew accustomed to the absence of a rewarding democratic experience in their professional life, and to see this absence as protective. Faculty autonomy, in short, became equivalent to a classical, negative form of freedom—freedom from overt coercion—in the very period during which system management, ruling with muted coercion, was making this kind of freedom less effective” (88).

By the 1960s, the university-industrial complex had advanced tremendously. The World War II-era collaboration of government and university in technical fields subsequently led to a closer relationship that took the form of increased grants and government-directed research, and industry was not far behind. What faculty and some conscientious government officials began to realize was that as this for-profit, outside-directed research became more prominent, “the market regularly fail[ed] to support basic research *and* the human development on which research depends” (122).

In the overlong and somewhat redundant central chapters, Newfield recounts the development of the new humanism and the New Criticism through the work of Irving Babbitt, John Dewey, and other public intellectuals. The self-governing freedom of thought necessary for productive academic departments was what the humanities tried to instill into its students as well. The problem was that the personal development mission of the university—the one thing that set it apart from any profit-oriented business—was viewed as increasingly unimportant by the companies hiring their graduates. Newfield sees figures from Dewey to Lionel Trilling engaged in a struggle to reconcile this rupture between the university’s self-image as independent truth-seeker and its increasingly businesslike and profit-oriented reality.

Changes in the 1970s and 80s marked another major challenge in the relationship between the university’s public mission and its search for private funding. A turning point came in 1980 when Congress passed the Bayh-Dole Act, which transferred patent rights to universities and gave them the rights to license technologies to private business.

Suddenly inventions that had been developed with public funds could be turned into highly profitable business arrangements, and, more importantly, they could now be sold to high-bidding private partners through exclusive licensing arrangements. This raised the stakes dramatically for public-private partnerships between university science departments and industry, thereby shifting the balance of power even further toward highly directed, “practical” research. Meanwhile, university administrators “downplayed the possibility that they were damaging the public good by acting, after Bayh-Dole, as brokers for the private ownership of publicly funded patents. They downplayed as well the possibility that the incentive system, which encouraged proprietary knowledge, conflicted with social efficiency, which required open knowledge” (185). Newfield recounts in detail the changes that occurred in the University of California’s patent law and policies for these partnerships, using this as a case study for the gradual surrender of faculty patent rights and the commercialization of science departments that accelerated dramatically in these decades.

Is there a way out of this surrender of educational independence? Newfield looks for answers in new, “radical humanist” management styles, most notably from business guru Tom Peters. Peters’ *In Search of Excellence* (1982) was one of the opening salvos in the horizontal management revolution, in which middle management would disappear to make way for an empowered, engaged, and largely self-managing workforce. This philosophy was embraced by the tech industry, where by the late 90s at the height of the market bubble it had become something close to gospel. Peters’ feel-good affirmation of the inner genius waiting to be unleashed in beaten-down workers is familiar to anyone who picked up *The Wall Street Journal* or *Business 2.0* in the late 90s. In the post-bubble world, Newfield retains hope that this management philosophy could still be more trend than fad. Peters’ core idea that the social and personal aspects of work can be as important to productivity as managerial oversight and hierarchical structures is still a radical premise when compared to the structures of most corporations in America.

It would be easy to see this book as a product of its time, in the shadow of what appeared to be a radically new era for systems of labor in America. When the Internet stock market bubble burst, Tom Peters probably seemed like a more questionable prophet of the future than when the Dow was expected to soar to 25,000 as the creativity of the American workforce was unleashed through newly flexible, humanist management methods. As dubious as the idealism of the final chapters may appear, and as superfluous as some of the central chapters are, *Ivy and Industry* remains a useful guide to the historical patterns of university financial strategies, and provides a much-needed context for contemporary labor battles. The first two chapters in particular are an outstanding, insightful high-level summary of the history of the university’s relationship with business. If one could make those first 40 pages required reading and leave the rest as an extra-credit assignment, the book’s primary work would still be done.