

# The New Humanities in the ‘Post-University’: Introduction

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If we wish to set a date for the creation of the first university, 1088 is, according to its own history, the birth of the University of Bologna, ‘when masters of grammar, rhetoric and logic began to devote themselves to law’<sup>1</sup> and made an association that was called *universitas<sup>2</sup> magistrorum et scholarium* (or *discipulorum*). However, according to the general editor of the comprehensive *History of the University in Europe*, this year was a ‘conventional date’ symbolically chosen in 1888 by a committee chaired by modern Italy’s official national poet, Giosuè Carducci, when ‘a grand jubilee’ was attended by the royal family and rectors of universities from all over the world in order to emphasize the legitimacy of the ‘recent and still not completely consolidated political unification of Italy’ via an ‘eight-centuries-long tradition of free research and teaching at the University of Bologna’.<sup>3</sup> The University of Oxford was founded not by an act of the Pope but ‘by the wills of its teachers and students’<sup>4</sup> after the city acquired in the 1180’s ‘a certain strategic political significance as the seat of the royal administration and of the ecclesiastical courts’.<sup>5</sup> In 1209 King John’s quarrel with Pope Innocent III ended up with the pope’s interdict on the English Church,<sup>6</sup> with riots following and the closing of schools from 1209 to 1214, when teachers were finally granted ‘liberties and privileges like those which were provided in Paris’.<sup>7</sup> The University of Paris was recognized publicly between 1208 and 1231,<sup>8</sup> and later on became the Sorbonne. After 1209, ‘following the arrest and execution of a few students, upon the orders of the mayor and

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<sup>1</sup> See the presentation of Bologna University; available at <https://www.unibo.it/en/university/who-we-are/our-history/university-from-12th-to-20th-century> [accessed 5 October 2020].

<sup>2</sup> In the Middle Ages the name *universitas* referred to diverse corporate bodies.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Rüegg, ‘Themes’, in *A History of the University in Europe*, gen. ed. Walter Rüegg, vol. 1: *Universities in the Middle Ages*, ed. Hilde de Ridder-Symoens (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 4.

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Brooke and Roger Highfield, *Oxford and Cambridge*, Photographs by Wim Swaan (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 49.

<sup>5</sup> The first attestation appears in a fragment from Giraldus Cambrensis’s *Autobiography*, where he mentioned that in 1187 there were several faculties (or branches of learning) at Oxford. (See Brooke and Highfield, 50).

<sup>6</sup> Brooke and Highfield, 55.

<sup>7</sup> Rüegg, ‘Themes’, in *A History of the University in Europe*, vol. 1, 13. See also T. H. Ashton (gen. ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford*, 8 vols. (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1984-1992).

<sup>8</sup> See Rüegg, ‘Themes’, in *A History of the University in Europe*, vol. 1, 12.

the king’,<sup>9</sup> many masters and students from Oxford fled to Cambridge, which had been established long before as the ‘favourite academy’, ‘an offshoot from Athens’ of the ancient British prince Cantaber.<sup>10</sup> When Oxford reopened, the scholarly community in Cambridge had been established, though it must have been very small and relatively obscure for many years to come’, or a ‘centre of learning’ that ‘could not seriously compete with Oxford before the fifteenth century.’<sup>11</sup> The process of secularization of universities began with the University of Naples (1224), Frederick II’s ‘prototype of a state university’,<sup>12</sup> before many other universities were established in the 14<sup>th</sup> century: in Rome (1303), Prague (1346), Cracow (1364), Vienna (1365), Heidelberg (1386), Cologne (1388) and Mainz (1476).

It is thus clear that the university was a European institution at its inception. It included four ‘faculties of *artes* variously called philosophy, letters, arts, arts and sciences, and humanities – law, medicine, and theology’ that shaped ‘an academic elite, the ethos of which rests on common European values and which transcends all national boundaries.’<sup>13</sup>

Fast forward to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when ‘the political upheavals of the French Revolution and Napoleon’s conquests devastated the university landscape in Europe’, reducing the number of universities from 143 (in 1789) to 83 (in 1815).<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of the war’s political consequences, the ‘Age of Enlightenment’ presided over the development of the modern university through the influence of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant.

In ‘What is Enlightenment’ (1784), Kant famously emphasized the importance of the concept of *Bildung* (forming/shaping)<sup>15</sup> and encouraged ‘thinking for oneself’. This was ‘not meant to rule out a legitimate role for relying on the testimony of others’ but rather ‘directed above all against a kind of blind religious faith, in which one either refuses to question one’s clerical authorities or relies on a mystical intuition that cannot be assessed by reason.’<sup>16</sup> He defined Enlightenment as ‘man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity’ – declaring as the motto of enlightenment ‘*Sapere aude*’ [Dare to

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<sup>9</sup> Jacques Verger, ‘Patterns’, in *A History of the University in Europe*, vol. 1, 53. For the history of the University of Cambridge, see Edmund Carter, *The History of the University of Cambridge from its Original, to the Year 1753* (London: For the Author, 1753); Thomas Fuller, *The History of the University of Cambridge, from the Conquest to the Year 1634*, eds. Marmaduke Prickett and Thomas Wright (Cambridge: J & J.J. Deighton, 1840); Christopher Brooke (gen. ed.), *A History of the University of Cambridge: Volume 2, 1546-1750*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988-2004).

<sup>10</sup> See Brooke and Highfield, 55.

<sup>11</sup> Brooke and Highfield, 56 and 55.

<sup>12</sup> Rüegg, ‘Themes’, in *A History of the University in Europe*, vol. 1, 18.

<sup>13</sup> Rüegg, ‘Foreword’, in *A History of the University in Europe*, vol. 1, xix and xx.

<sup>14</sup> Walter Rüegg, ‘Themes and Patterns’, in *A History of the University in Europe*, gen. ed. Walter Rüegg, vol. 3: *Universities in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries (1800-1945)*, ed. Walter Rüegg, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

<sup>15</sup> Translations of *Bildung* ‘as *éducation, formation or self-cultivation* do not quite capture the German meaning.’ Johan Östling, *Humboldt and the Modern German University: An Intellectual History*, trans. Lena Olsson (Lund: Lund University Press, 2018), 37.

<sup>16</sup> Samuel Fleischacker, *What Is Enlightenment?* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 31. Cf Jacques Derrida, ‘Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of “Religion” at the Limits of Reason Alone’, trans. Samuel Weber, in *Acts of Religion*, ed. and Intro Gil Anidjar (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 42-101.

know], which he equated to the courage to use one's own understanding.<sup>17</sup> *The Contest of the Faculties* (1798) was his attempt to develop further the role of the university in society. The German philosopher gave priority to the faculty of philosophy, at the time considered 'lower' than the faculties of theology, law and medicine. According to Kant, the faculty of philosophy was authorized only by the free play of reason, and thus the only guarantor that the human race could register constant progress rather than 'continually *regressing* and deteriorating' or remaining 'at a permanent *standstill*, in relation to other created beings.'<sup>18</sup>

In 1810, philosopher, linguist and diplomat Wilhelm von Humboldt borrowed Kant's 'idea of *Bildung*, socially nested self-formation'<sup>19</sup> as the basis for setting up a new kind of university in Berlin, still known historically as the Humboldt University of Berlin (at times also called the Kantian University), whose guiding principles were autonomy of knowledge, Kantian critique, Reason and Cartesian thinking. The Kantian University gave rise successively to what Simon Marginson calls 'the modern European University, the reforming American University' (Johns Hopkins University, which was founded in 1876 after the Kantian-Humboldtian model), and 'the world University of science and critical scholarship,' imported also in East Asia, mainly in China, Singapore and South Korea<sup>20</sup> where some of its principles are kept to a certain extent to the present day. Moreover, according to Edward Shils and John Roberts, 'concurrently, too, an amalgam of features of the old and the modern English and Scottish universities did much to shape new North American colleges and universities as well as those of Canada, India, Australia and South Africa. Finally, though the university patterns of France were more limited in their diffusion, North Africa, French West Africa, Syria and Indo-China all showed the impact of French higher education in the last half century of our period.'<sup>21</sup>

The 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* stated that education was a fundamental right whose purpose was to contribute to the well-being of society and achieve 'understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups,' with the Humanities playing an essential role in this enterprise based on liberal education.

The end of the 1950s was marked by the famous 'Two Cultures Debate' initiated by British scientist and novelist C. P. Snow in his 1959 Rede Lecture at the University of Cambridge, entitled 'The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution'. Snow deplored the fact that the gap between the world of Sciences and that of the Humanities had become too wide to solve global issues. For Snow the literary culture of his times was traditional and ignorant of science. He therefore condemned the Victorian educational model that gave priority to the Humanities to the detriment of science in an age that had become predominantly scientific, adding that 'in Germany, in the 1830's and 1840's, long before serious industrialisation had started there, it was possible to get a good university education in applied science, better than anything England or the U.S.

<sup>17</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, trans. H.B. Nisbet, ed. Hans Siegbert Reiss, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 54.

<sup>18</sup> Kant, 178.

<sup>19</sup> Simon Marginson, 'The Kantian University: Worldwide Triumph and Growing Insecurity', *Australian Universities' Review* 61.1 (2019); available at <http://www.aur.org.au/article/The-Kantian-University%3A-Worldwide-triumph-and-growing-insecurity--21223> [accessed 26 September 2020].

<sup>20</sup> Marginson.

<sup>21</sup> Edward Shils and John Roberts, 'The Diffusion of European Models Outside Europe', in *A History of the University in Europe*, vol. 3, 163.

could offer for a couple of generations.’<sup>22</sup> According to Stefan Collini, what Snow voiced was actually ‘an anxiety that some such fissure in types of knowledge might be opening up in a way which damaged both individual cultivation and social well-being’ that dated since the Romantic period, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>23</sup>

‘Predictably, the literary intellectuals reacted furiously,’<sup>24</sup> with the most excessive reply coming from the literary critic and university colleague F. R. Leavis, who responded to Snow in an *ad hominem* attack, deplored by Aldous Huxley as ‘violent and ill-mannered’, disfigured by its ‘one-track moralistic literarism’, and dismissed by Lionel Trilling as ‘pure hysteria’.<sup>25</sup> In his response, published in 1962, Leavis found Snow ‘frightening in his capacity of representative phenomenon’, ‘repetitious’, displaying a complete ‘*naïveté*’, ‘indistinguishable from the portentous ignorance.’<sup>26</sup>

Within a few years, Snow rethought his position and published a text on a ‘Third Culture that would foster the dialogue between scientists and literary intellectuals.’<sup>27</sup> In his 1963 revised text, ‘The Two Cultures: A Second Look’, Snow showed awareness that no miracle solution could solve such difficult issues, although he more optimistically considered that a dialogue could be restored ‘to some extent’:

With good fortune, however, we can educate a large proportion of our better minds so that they are not ignorant of imaginative experience, both in the arts and in science, nor ignorant either of the endowments of applied science, of the remediable suffering of most of their fellow humans, and of the responsibilities which, once they are seen, cannot be denied.<sup>28</sup>

By the late 1970s, some two decades after the ‘Two Cultures Debate’, the world of Sciences had the upper hand on the Humanities, and ever since the latter have entrenched themselves in a defensive discourse by which they voice their felt necessity to continuously explain their role and legitimize their existence.

In the 1960s, German academics started inquiring what had happened to Humboldt’s university. In 1986, when Heidelberg University celebrated its 600-year anniversary, among the guests who delivered an address on the topic of ‘Die Idee der Universität’, Hans-Georg Gadamer expressed his concerns about the crisis of the university resulting from abandoning *Bildung* and basic research in order to pursue vocational education required by the highly industrialized society. The most worrying

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<sup>22</sup> C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures*, Introduction by Stefan Collini (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 24.

<sup>23</sup> Collini, ‘Introduction’, in Snow, x.

<sup>24</sup> Ernesto Carafoli, Gian Antonio Danieli and Giuseppe O. Longo, ‘Preface’ to *The Two Cultures: Shared Problems* (Milano: Springer Verlag Italia, 2009), v.

<sup>25</sup> Collini, ‘Introduction’ in F. R. Leavis, ‘Two Cultures? The Significance of C. P. Snow’ (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.

<sup>26</sup> F. R. Leavis, 61, 65 and 69.

<sup>27</sup> Carafoli, Danieli and Longo, v. For more on the Two Cultures Debate see Gerald James Holton, *Thematic Origins of Scientific Thought: Kepler to Einstein* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Frank Furedi et al., *From Two Cultures to No Culture: C. P. Snow’s ‘Two Cultures’ Lecture Fifty Years On* (London: Civitas, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> Snow, 100.

factor was that 'young people no longer saw their studies as a mission in life, but as an assignment to be got through.'<sup>29</sup>

By 1978, the restructuring of American universities began with the establishment of the US Business-Higher Education Forum in order 'to create partnership between corporations and universities to support science, math, and technology.'<sup>30</sup> This commitment of the university to the 'business route' implied a break away from the Kantian-Humboldtian model.<sup>31</sup> Corporate executives increased their presence on universities' boards of regents and trustees as neoliberalism 'generated a new market to train teachers and administrators for charter schools, and leaders with expertise in management techniques.'<sup>32</sup> At the same time, as Martha Nussbaum stated, while the Humanities and the Arts started to disappear from public school curricula, the job shortage in the Humanities and Social Sciences resulted in hardships, since those who stayed were no longer based in a few leading schools, but spread all over the United States.<sup>33</sup>

In 1988, at its 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the University of Bologna issued the *Magna Charta Universitatum* that the university rectors from several European universities signed, followed by the Sorbonne declaration that Ministers from France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom signed in Paris in 1998 for 'harmonising the architecture of the European Higher Education system'.<sup>34</sup> The European Union's target was to become the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world. In 1999, ministers of education from 29 European countries ratified the Bologna Accord, following the Lisbon Recognition Convention.<sup>35</sup> By that time, the world had already moved from *Logos* towards *technologos*, and societies were increasingly profit-driven. For Jeremy Rifkin, this was the 'third industrial Revolution', when cyberspace, micro computing and robotics appeared,<sup>36</sup> with a significant impact on the reorganization of the university as a commodified corporate workplace representative of the 'capitlocene'. The system that was being put in place was, in Bernard Stiegler's deconstructive formulation, 'founded on the production and activation of traces, of "grammes" and "graphemes" that discretize, affect, reproduce and transform every flux

<sup>29</sup> Östling, 208.

<sup>30</sup> Carlos A. Torres, and Daniel Schugurensky, 'The Political Economy of Higher Education in the Era of Neoliberal Globalization: Latin America in Comparative Perspective', *Higher Education* 43.4 (2002): 436.

<sup>31</sup> For an excellent analysis of the contradictions between the marketized vs civic university, see Michael Schapira, 'Kant versus the Managers: Historical Reconstruction and the Modern University', *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 53.1 (2019): 111-26.

<sup>32</sup> Marta Baltodano, 'Neoliberalism and the Demise of Public Education: The Corporatization of Schools of Education', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 25.4 (2012): 500.

<sup>33</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 3.

<sup>34</sup> 'Joint Declaration on Harmonisation of the Architecture of the European Higher Education System', retrieved from *Wayback Machine*; available at [http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Sorbonne\\_declaration.pdf](http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Sorbonne_declaration.pdf); [https://web.archive.org/web/20090824025723/http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Sorbonne\\_declaration.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20090824025723/http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Sorbonne_declaration.pdf) [accessed 6 October 2020].

<sup>35</sup> Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, The Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The United Kingdom. Other countries signed later on: in 2001, Croatia, Cyprus, Liechtenstein, Turkey; in 2003, Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Russia, Serbia, Vatican City; in 2005, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldavia and Ukraine; in 2007, Montenegro; in 2015, Belarus.

<sup>36</sup> Jeremy Rifkin, *The Third Industrial Revolution: How Lateral Power Is Transforming Energy, the Economy, and the World* (New York: Palgrave, 2013), 9-73.

and flow (well beyond just language)'. Stiegler called these our times' *pharmaka* and *hypomnēmata* (codes, ASCII, XML) which imposed themselves on our lives brutally and transformed 'the very conditions of education and research, as well as the relations between educational institutions and universities on the one hand, and what lies outside them on the other hand.'<sup>37</sup>

In 1999, Jacques Derrida wrote a text on the state of the university and the 'New Humanities', delivered originally as a lecture at Stanford University, in Silicon Valley at that time 'the site of techno-disruption', in which he adopted 'Kant's Enlightenment concept of the European university with some updating.'<sup>38</sup> Although he was not blind to the various mutations resulting from 'techno-science', 'worldwide-izing virtualization and delocalization of tele-work',<sup>39</sup> Derrida maintained his trust in 'The Future of the Profession or the University without Conditions', an idea that receded even further in the technocratic era. He returned to his text in his 2002 lectures published in *Rogues*<sup>40</sup> and in his last interview.<sup>41</sup> Stiegler addressed 'the Unconditional University' directly in *States of Shock: Stupidity and Knowledge in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, where he asserted that the 'technological shock strategy' affected both the autonomy and heteronomy of academic institution in a broad sense,<sup>42</sup> imposing many extra-academic conditions on it and reducing its freedom which also sadly became 'conditional',<sup>43</sup> although the aim of the university should have remained the same: to train 'rational thinking as specific attentional form.'<sup>44</sup> Moreover, via analogue and digital technologies, the 'global war' had also intensified the mnemotechnical system leading 'to an unprecedented functional integration of knowledge into the apparatus of production and consumption', which Stiegler named 'anti-knowledge' or 'a kind of *dis-integration* of knowledge itself', generating external conditions that exude 'an academic hyper-sophism, approved and evaluated in these terms, and mostly blind to the human, social, ecological and psychic ruins that this war brings.'<sup>45</sup>

But unlike the capitalist industry, the university was influenced by the negative rather than positive effects of the *pharmakon*, which affected both its missions. Research started to be produced under the pressure of shareholders or industrial criteria and 'subjected to the shortest-term efficiency possible' (which is, in fact, inefficiency in the end), while education was oriented more towards 'the criteria of so-called

<sup>37</sup> Bernard Stiegler, *States of Shock: Stupidity and Knowledge in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Daniel Ross (Malden, MA: Polity, 2015), 7.

<sup>38</sup> Constance L. Mui, and Julien S. Murphy, 'The University of the Future: Stiegler after Derrida', *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 52.4 (2020): 457.

<sup>39</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'The Future of the Profession or the University without Condition (thanks to the 'Humanities', what *could take place* tomorrow)', trans. Peggy Kamuf, in *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tom Cohen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 47.

<sup>40</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

<sup>41</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Learning to Live Finally, the Last Interview*, trans. Michael Nass (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Stiegler, 7.

<sup>43</sup> Stiegler, 170.

<sup>44</sup> Stiegler, 158. The term 'attentional' is not innocent; it refers to the growth of an 'attention economy' in this century, which is an approach to information management. This treats human attention as a mere commodity.

<sup>45</sup> Stiegler, 168.

employability', which actually 'has nothing whatsoever to do with professionalization.'<sup>46</sup>

Many scholars think nowadays that the mission of the university should still be, in Mark Taylor's words, 'a responsibility to serve the greater social good': to cultivate 'informed citizens who are aware of and open to different cultural perspectives and are willing to engage in reasonable debate about critical issues.'<sup>47</sup> Starting with the 1980s, academics from the Humanities, especially respected scholars from the United States and Britain (the first European country to import, then spread the American neoliberal model during Margaret Thatcher's and Tony Blair's mandates), voiced their discontent with the upheavals brought about in the university's mission. A mere glance at some of the numerous book titles dealing with the new condition of the university reveals their anxious sense of urgency.<sup>48</sup>

In 2012, in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* Jeffrey J. Williams coined the term 'critical university studies' to designate a new field of research in the Humanities. According to Williams, critical university studies are conducted in two different directions: one which represents the continuation of 'a tradition inaugurated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or before, in America', following Upton Sinclair's *The Goose-Step: A Study of American Higher Education* (1923), 'the magisterial muckraking report on universities of its time', and one which 'emphasizes the field's specificity to our time,' which arose from and responded 'to the vast octopus of contemporary higher education and the current trend toward privatization.'<sup>49</sup>

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, according to Pierre Bourdieu's *Homo Academicus*, social agents struggle for status and power and any alternative research methods and perspectives opposed to 'the reproduction of culture and of the group of reproducers' become almost impossible, since the power university dynamics establishes who can get

<sup>46</sup> Stiegler, 169.

<sup>47</sup> Mark C. Taylor, *Crisis on Campus: A Bold Plan for Reforming Our Colleges and Universities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 9.

<sup>48</sup> Lawrence C. Soley's *Leasing the Ivory Tower: The Corporate Takeover of Academia* (1995), Bill Readings's *The University in Ruins* (1996), Sheila Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie's *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University* (1997), David F. Noble's *Digital Diploma Mills: The Automation of Higher Education* (2001), Marjorie Garber's *Academic Instincts* (2001), Jennifer Washburn's *University, Inc.: The Corporate Corruption of Higher Education* (2005), Joe Berry's *Reclaiming the Ivory Tower: Organizing Adjuncts to Change Higher Education* (2005), Marc Bousquet's *How the University Works: Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation* (2008), Cristopher Newfield's *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class* (2008), Frank Donoghue's *The Last Professors: The Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities* (2008), followed by *The Last Professors: The Twilight of the Humanities in the Corporate University* (2009), Michele A. Massé and Katie J. Hogan's *Over Ten Million Served: Gendered Service in Language and Literature Workplaces* (2010), Thomas Docherty's *For the University: Democracy and the Future of the Institution* (2011), Michael Bailey and Des Freedman's edited collection *The Assault on Universities: A Manifesto for Resistance* (2011), Stefan Collini's *What Are Universities For?* (2012) and *Speaking of Universities* (2017), Gary Rolfe's *The University in Dissent: Scholarship in Corporate University* (2013), Gary Hall's *The Uberfication of the University* (2016), André Spicer's *Business Bullshit* (2018) and Patricia J. Gumpert's *Academic Fault Lines: The Rise of Industry Logic in Public Higher Education* (2019). To these we may add Jeffrey J. Williams' s articles 'Debt Education: Bad for the Young, Bad for America' (2006) and 'Student Debt and the Spirit of Indenture' (2008) as well as Terry Eagleton's 'The Death of Universities' (2010).

<sup>49</sup> Jeffrey J. Williams, 'Deconstructing Academe', *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 58.25 (2012): NP; available at <https://www.chronicle.com/article/deconstructing-academe/> [accessed 12 Oct 2020].

recognition as a legitimate scholar and what can be considered valid research.<sup>50</sup> The first to reflect on such university dynamics was Readings, followed by Docherty, Collini, Bailey and Freedman who bemoan the marketization of academia with its watchword ‘excellence’, whose main figure, the professor has become an administrator who takes care of his students who turned into ‘clients’<sup>51</sup> benefitting from ‘modularized’ education, ‘compartmentalized nuggets of commercially graded knowledge’<sup>52</sup> and obtain ‘student experience’, a fact also noticed by Gary Rolfe who is dismayed by the mission statement of his own university that omits ‘not only all references to education, but also to learning, which is replaced by the term “student experience”.’<sup>53</sup> All these, Des Freedman thinks, have spread ‘like a toxic virus’ from US to Britain in the 1990s, and, in combination with the ‘New Public Management’,<sup>54</sup> made universities ‘behave as if they were public limited companies, operating under the rubric of “shareholder value”.’<sup>55</sup> Research universities are also affected as they need to generate funding, since ‘success in research funding is inherently uncertain due to the volatility of resources from federal agencies and heightened competition.’<sup>56</sup>

These scholars castigate surveillance and fierce competition accomplished via assessments and an increased obsession with rankings that arose in what Docherty calls ‘a new era of suspicion’.<sup>57</sup> Stefan Collini, who authored the two Introductions to Snow’s and Leavis’s ‘Two Cultures Debate’, is not only the author of books on the state of the university but also very active in the media where he often discusses the disadvantages of the ever-increasing number of students in ‘world-leading’ institutions, and considers that in the recent years the mantra of the higher education policy in Britain to take in an increasing number of students has brought about disastrous effects: over-crowded and under-staffed universities, with most teaching done in the first two years by academics casualised on part-time or temporary jobs, and ‘underprepared students’ who ‘suffer debilitating stress.’<sup>58</sup> Collini’s diagnostic of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century university is as follows: ‘Never before in human history have they been so numerous or so important, yet never before have they suffered from such a disabling lack of confidence and loss of identity.’<sup>59</sup> Moreover, speaking about the future of the Humanities, he rightly notices that ‘any event or discussion with “the humanities” in its

<sup>50</sup> Pierre Bordieu, *Homo Academicus*, trans. Peter Collier (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), 105.

<sup>51</sup> Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 21.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Docherty, *For the University: Democracy and the Future of the Institution* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 55-6.

<sup>53</sup> Gary Rolfe, *The University in Dissent: Scholarship in Corporate University* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 56.

<sup>54</sup> This was a business-model approach to running government public service institutions and/ or agencies, developed in the 1980’s which was meant to make the public sector more efficient.

<sup>55</sup> Des Freedman, ‘An Introduction to Education Reform and Resistance’, in *The Assault on Universities: A Manifesto for Resistance*, eds Michael Bailey and Des Freedman (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 22.

<sup>56</sup> Patricia J. Gumpert, *Academic Fault Lines: The Rise of Industry Logic in Public Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019), 349.

<sup>57</sup> Docherty, 74.

<sup>58</sup> Stefan Collini, ‘English Universities Are in Peril because of 10 years of Calamitous Reform’, *The Guardian*, 31 August 2020;

available at [https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/aug/31/english-universities-peril-10-years-calamitous-reform-higher-education?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other&fbclid=IwAR3mqmlIcx4Q2D31TSJk-d4O\\_34jDPQ5\\_dcwrp6xv93aa3Idsg0j9nesyBA](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/aug/31/english-universities-peril-10-years-calamitous-reform-higher-education?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other&fbclid=IwAR3mqmlIcx4Q2D31TSJk-d4O_34jDPQ5_dcwrp6xv93aa3Idsg0j9nesyBA) [accessed 6 October 2020].

<sup>59</sup> Stefan Collini, *What Are Universities for?* (London: Penguin, 2012), 3.



title risks seeming both predictable and depressing', the latter because 'despite the inevitable arrival of the "deepest values" cavalry to save the day at the end, the story along the way is always one of being beleaguered and besieged, involving a tone that varies somewhere between the self-justifying and the complaining.'<sup>60</sup> Analysing universities' mission statements, he concludes that they are a cross between 'an extended dictionary definition of the term "university" and an advertising brochure from an upmarket health club.'<sup>61</sup> This is close to Gary Hall's definition of the uberficated university, which in a shared economy forces even humanist academics, researchers and students to become 'artpreneurs'. Hall presents a dire glimpse into the future of a university operating in a similar way to Uber disrupting state-regulated taxi companies and Airbnb state-regulated hotel industry, with academics finding themselves 'in a situation not dissimilar to that facing many cab drivers today. Instead of operating in a sector regulated by the state, they will have to whoever is prepared to pay for them in the "alternative" sharing economy education market created by platform capitalism', a platform that he bitterly titles 'Uber.edu.'<sup>62</sup> André Spicer goes as far as to condemn policy makers for creating 'business bullshit' under the form 'strategies':

The University's Vice Chancellor, a respected post-structural theorist who had written extensive critiques of post-modern managerialism, turned his talents towards concocting corporate strategy when he arrived at the institution. One of his first acts was to produce a strategy statement running over 30 pages. Strategising, like any hard work, is a job which is never done with. If you look at currently refreshed version of the University strategy, you will find a treasure trove of empty management speak: 'world-class', 'dynamic', 'enterprising', 'enable', 'excellence', 'agility', 'sustainability' [...]<sup>63</sup>

It goes without saying that many humanists all over the world felt under attack in the new Bologna-modelled university. Bourdieu explains that the marketization of academia provoked violent reactions from 'the most traditionalist teachers in the most traditional disciplines' who have been questioning 'the academic institution' and 'the market whose monopoly it guaranteed,' especially those who saw 'the fate of philology, a long-established academic discipline, brutally relegated by linguistics to the museum cellars,' and their 'literary disciplines, even the best protected, like the history of literature, classical languages or philosophy' threatened with extinction.<sup>64</sup> Under the pressure of new-born disciplines and methods established by linguistic sciences, philologists 'suddenly found themselves devalued [...] or forced into hazardous reconversions doomed from the start, faced with the intrusion of linguistics, imported and supported by marginals, often not *normaliens* [...].'<sup>65</sup> At the same time, as Marjorie Garber showed in her book *Academic Instincts*, literary theorists were often accused of using 'academic jargon' and some of them did not know which way to go: remaining specialists in their fields or becoming public intellectuals.<sup>66</sup>

While in the last two decades consistent work done by humanists and social scientists has attempted to propose various ways in which humanities should be

<sup>60</sup> Stefan Collini, *Speaking of Universities* (London and New York: Verso, 2018), 222-3.

<sup>61</sup> Collini, *What Are Universities for?*, 122.

<sup>62</sup> Gary Hall, *The Uberfication of the University* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 21.

<sup>63</sup> André Spicer, *Business Bullshit* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 96.

<sup>64</sup> Bourdieu, 126.

<sup>65</sup> Bourdieu, 126 and 29.

<sup>66</sup> Marjorie Garber, *Academic Instincts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), ix.

evaluated on their own grounds,<sup>67</sup> several humanists have mounted unfair attacks against their own fields and approximative findings that do not go beyond the purely ‘anecdotal’.<sup>68</sup> Several scholars in the Humanities and the Social Sciences made the first-ever European COST 15137 (2015-2020) which for the first time attempted to align research evaluation from 38 European countries with policy goals. However, with so many steps forward, there were also big steps backwards:<sup>69</sup> for instance, Lisa Ruddick, critical theory creates ‘demoralization’, depleting of meaning words such as ‘authenticity’ and ‘humanity’, and making the good thing look bad by calling it by the name of its near enemy.’<sup>70</sup> Geoffrey Galt Harpham, big promoter of making postgraduates ‘experience’ literature instead of teaching them how to do research, draws a caricatural image of the Humanities as ‘born in crisis’ and not doing well ‘out of it’.<sup>71</sup> One could find no critical arguments in such diatribes against humanists coming from a humanist. Similarly, one could find no logic in Nigel A. Raab’s disagreement with using theory in historical studies, as this is ‘the schoolyard bully, pushing those wimpy empirical historians into a corner’, similar to ‘an Ikea instructional booklet that demonstrates step-by-step how to build a bunk bed (or to interpret a given set of historical data).’<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> See, for instance, Blaise Cronin, Debora Shaw, and Kathryn La Barre, ‘A Cast of Thousands: Coauthorship and Subauthorship in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as Manifested in the Scholarly Journal Literature of Psychology and Philosophy’, *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 54 (2003): 855-71; Caroline S. Wagner, and Loet Leydesdorff, ‘Mapping the Network of Global Science: Comparing International Co-Authorships from 1990 to 2000’, *International Journal of Technology and Globalisation* 1 (2005): 185-208; Christine L. Borgman, ‘The Digital Future Is Now: A Call to Action for the Humanities’, *DHQ: Digital Humanities Quarterly* 3 (2009): 1-21; Maria Benavent-Pérez, Juan Gorraiz, Christian Gumpenberger, and Félix de Moya-Anegón, ‘The Different Flavors of Research Collaboration: A Case Study of Their Influence on University Excellence in Four World Regions’, *Scientometrics* 93 (2012): 41-58; Tim C. E. Engels, Truyen L. B. Ossenblok, and Eric H. J. Spruyt, ‘Changing Publication Patterns in the Social Sciences and Humanities, 2000-2009’, *Scientometrics* 93 (2012): 373-90; Geoffrey Williams, and Ioana Galleron, ‘Bottom Up from the Bottom: A New Outlook on Research Evaluation for the SSH in France’, in *Research Assessment in the Humanities*, eds Michael Ochsner et al. (Cham: Springer, 2016), 181-98; Linda Sîle, Raf Guns, Gunnar Sivertsen, and Tim Engels, *European Databases and Repositories for Social Sciences and Humanities Research Output, Report 2017* (Antwerp: ECOOM & ENRESSH, 2017); available at [https://enressh.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Report\\_Quality\\_Projects.pdf](https://enressh.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Report_Quality_Projects.pdf) [accessed 10 October 2020].

<sup>68</sup> See Jay, 36.

<sup>69</sup> See, for instance, the work of one of the groups of the COST Action 15137, Workgroup 1, *Aligning Research Evaluation with Policy Goals: Risks and Opportunities*; available at [https://enressh.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Stakeholders\\_PolicyGoals\\_v04.pdf](https://enressh.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Stakeholders_PolicyGoals_v04.pdf) [accessed 20 October 2020]. See also Michael Ochsner, Ioana Galleron, and Arleen Ionescu, ‘Projects on SSH Scholars’ Notions of Research Quality in Participating Countries’, *ENRESSH Report*; available at [https://enressh.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Report\\_Quality\\_Projects.pdf](https://enressh.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Report_Quality_Projects.pdf) [accessed 21 October 2020] and Michael Ochsner, Emanuel Kulczycki, and Aldis Gedutis, ‘The Diversity of European Research Evaluation Systems’, in *Proceedings of the 23rd International Conference on Science and Technology Indicators*, 2018; available at [https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/65217/STI2018\\_paper\\_204.pdf?sequence=1](https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/65217/STI2018_paper_204.pdf?sequence=1) [accessed 21 October 2020].

<sup>70</sup> Lisa Ruddick, ‘The Near Enemy of the Humanities Is Professionalization’, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 23 March 2001; available at <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Near-Enemy-of-the/15135/> [accessed 2 October 2020].

<sup>71</sup> Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *The Humanities and the Dream of America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 101.

<sup>72</sup> Nigel A. Raab, *The Crisis from Within: Historians, Theory, and the Humanities* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), 22 and 11.

With such disgraceful reactions coming from humanists themselves what Michael Bérubé and Jennifer Ruth report is no longer a surprise:

It has become an iron law of American journalism that no one is permitted to write the word 'humanities' in a sentence that does not also include the word 'decline.' Case in point: in the summer of 2013 the American Academy of Arts and Sciences released a report, *The Heart of the Matter*, that sought to promote the humanities and social sciences as important objects of study alongside the STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), and more generally as part of a kind of American civic nationalism. What followed the release of that rather mild report was an almost surreal series of newspaper articles about the decline of the humanities, as if *that* had been the subject of the report.<sup>73</sup>

With the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic taking the world by surprise, universities were prompt to adapt to the potential for further drastic slashes through the Humboldtian model. Thus, the attack against the Humanities struck with renewed vigour in academic systems such as Britain, the United States and Australia.<sup>74</sup> For instance, Durham University proposes to 'invert' its traditional residential educational model, and replace it with 'online resources at the core enabling us to provide education at a distance',<sup>75</sup> a measure that sadly will affect the Humanities more than the STEM disciplines. The sad truth is that the proposal of postgraduate and first-year undergraduate programmes, weighted by 'international market potential', does not seem to be merely temporary but extendable beyond next academic year and the resolution of the COVID-19 crisis, with the aim of reaching at least fully online 500 modules by the end of the 2020/21 academic year, and an agreed further roll-out in 2021/22. Such proposals resulted in over 300 academic staff signing a letter addressed to Vice-Chancellor Stuart Corbridge in which they asserted that no 'meaningful consultation, market analysis, or risk assessment' existed, and expressed the fear that this system might endanger whole departments, especially in the Humanities. The University of London has announced the planned closure of two of its prestigious institutes: the Institute of Commonwealth Studies (founded in 1949), and the Institute of Latin American Studies (founded in 1965); petition were launched in an effort to save these institutions.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Michael Bérubé, and Jennifer Ruth, 'Introduction: This is Not the Crisis You're Looking for', in Michael Bérubé, and Jennifer Ruth, *The Humanities, Higher Education, and Academic Freedom: Three Necessary Arguments* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015), 1.

<sup>74</sup> I would like to express my gratitude to Roland Clark from University of Liverpool whose many posts of links on Facebook in the last months helped me assess the present situation in UK, US and Australia better.

<sup>75</sup> See Jack Taylor and Tom Mitchell, 'EXCLUSIVE: University Proposes Online-Only Degrees as Part of Radical Restructuring', 15 April 2020; available at <https://www.palatinat.org.uk/exclusive-university-proposes-online-only-degrees-as-part-of-radical-restructuring/?fbclid=IwAR1DIVgpUGrNs3ICwWleXbRY45J414BST0tRbVAYF26P4PXfVKTDg2VR e6E> [accessed 6 October 2020]. See also Jonathan Kramnick, 'The Humanities after COVID-19: What Happens When Hiring Dies?', *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 23 July 2020; available at <https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-humanities-after-covid-19> [accessed 10 October 2020].

<sup>76</sup> See petitions available at [https://www.change.org/p/professor-jo-fox-and-professor-wendy-thomson-stop-the-closure-of-the-institute-of-latin-american-studies-sas-university-of-london?recruiter=914166673&recruited\\_by\\_id=9097a190-e80f-11e8-ab29-893cfaea6b1b&utm\\_source=share\\_petition&utm\\_medium=copylink&utm\\_campaign=psf\\_combo\\_share\\_initial](https://www.change.org/p/professor-jo-fox-and-professor-wendy-thomson-stop-the-closure-of-the-institute-of-latin-american-studies-sas-university-of-london?recruiter=914166673&recruited_by_id=9097a190-e80f-11e8-ab29-893cfaea6b1b&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink&utm_campaign=psf_combo_share_initial); [https://www.change.org/p/stop-the-closure-of-the-institute-of-commonwealth-studies-university-of-london?recruiter=914166673&recruited\\_by\\_id=9097a190-e80f-11e8-ab29-](https://www.change.org/p/stop-the-closure-of-the-institute-of-commonwealth-studies-university-of-london?recruiter=914166673&recruited_by_id=9097a190-e80f-11e8-ab29-)

American universities had already been hit after the Republicans came to power. According to Bryan Alexander, the election of President Donald Trump shocked many academics and students alike: ‘[a]cademic supporters of the Democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton, were dismayed, as were faculty, staff, and students opposed to the Republicans’ avowed policies and rhetoric, notably those concerning sexual harassment and immigration.’<sup>77</sup> Protests, online petitions and developing policies to protect students have been other academic usual activities apart from teaching and research in the US in the last four years, since members of campus communities, including students who were covered by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), were threatened. Other general demonstrations comprised the Women’s Marches (2017, 2018) and the March for Science (2017). Using the pandemic as a state of exception, firing academic and dismantling whole departments of Humanities became a national sport in the United States, with not only members of staff on a temporary contract but also tenured and tenure track professors retrenched from many Humanities departments.<sup>78</sup>

Australian universities are also very affected by the COVID-19 crisis, although, as history lecturer Hannah Forsyth rightly explained they ‘have long teetered or, worse, arrogantly swaggered on a precarious foundation.’<sup>79</sup> The recent decision to double the fees for the Humanities and the Arts left humanities academics aghast, with petitions following ‘to immediately withdraw the proposed massive fee increases.’<sup>80</sup>

From the few details offered here, one can see the Humanities have little to say in defending their fields in 2020 and their only solution remains writing and circulating petitions. To my knowledge, so far no petition has been successful in convincing policy makers to withdraw their unfair proposals.

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The first section of our volume, ‘States of Play’, explains how the Humanities are set squarely in the age of technology and technomania but also in the age of the COVID-19 pandemics that produced fear, panic and the state of exception, including contributions by Marc Vanholsbeeck and Karolina Lendák-Kabók, Ioana Galleron and Fatiha Idmhand, and Anne-Marie Callus.

Marc Vanholsbeeck and Karolina Lendák-Kabók’s article, ‘Research Impact as a “Boundary Object” in the Social Sciences and the Humanities’, interprets the results

893cfaea6b1b&utm\_source=share\_petition&utm\_medium=copylink&utm\_campaign=psf\_combo\_share\_initial [accessed 20 October 2020].

<sup>77</sup> Bryan Alexander, *Academia Next: The Futures of Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020), 49.

<sup>78</sup> See Karen Kelsky, *List of Campuses That Have Fired / Will Fire Faculty*; available at [https://docs.google.com/document/d/10CjYcU02TW-PtNRsfw5bbmo2HSE6BZvuH9bu2Ea88Xk/edit?fbclid=IwAR2Yq\\_B5L4amTgHrUbWCnc0XW5k8uyBH6CQ6717jflXtgWHTVdQAmz01dMc](https://docs.google.com/document/d/10CjYcU02TW-PtNRsfw5bbmo2HSE6BZvuH9bu2Ea88Xk/edit?fbclid=IwAR2Yq_B5L4amTgHrUbWCnc0XW5k8uyBH6CQ6717jflXtgWHTVdQAmz01dMc) [accessed 6 October 2020].

<sup>79</sup> Hannah Forsyth quoted in Misha Ketchell, “‘Universities Are Not Corporations’: 600 Australian Academics Call for Change to Uni Governance Structures”, *The Conversation*, 29 July 2020; available at [https://theconversation.com/universities-are-not-corporations-600-australian-academics-call-for-change-to-uni-governance-structures-143254?fbclid=IwAR0hT0HHYAQ6f6aPMJhdTcY1qC\\_kJcaHXT-XPL-Xljp-YvmlTc6-BIpV598](https://theconversation.com/universities-are-not-corporations-600-australian-academics-call-for-change-to-uni-governance-structures-143254?fbclid=IwAR0hT0HHYAQ6f6aPMJhdTcY1qC_kJcaHXT-XPL-Xljp-YvmlTc6-BIpV598) [accessed 20 October 2020].

<sup>80</sup> Ben Eltham, ‘Doubling University Fees for the Arts Will Leave Australia Less Equipped for Our Complex World’, *The Guardian*, 19 June 2020; available at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/19/doubling-university-fees-for-the-arts-will-leave-australia-less-equipped-for-our-complex-world> [accessed 20 October 2020].

of a research study conducted with early career investigators from 32 countries on the notion of 'research impact' in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (SSH). They develop a model that takes impact as a 'boundary object', distinguishing five commonalities, two differentiated and four divergent argumentative frames. In their view, the diversity of opinions in defining impact can have very positive meanings, such as fostering its translation 'beyond the frontiers of epistemic communities', and, finally coordinating better academics, policy makers and social stakeholders (48).

Focusing on the more recent discipline of the Digital Humanities, Ioana Galleron and Fatiha Idmhand's 'Why Go from Texts to Data, or The Digital Humanities as A Critique of the Humanities' is conceived as a defence against the common allegation that they contribute 'to the decay of Academia in general' and that they betray 'the humanities principles' (53). The first part of the essay presents the main characteristics of the Digital Humanities research practices and organisation: collaborative and FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable), blogging, disseminating findings via social networks, discussing actively questions on diffusion lists, a deeper engagement with topics such 'Gender and Cultural Analytics', 'Critical Black Digital Humanities' or the 'Digital Working Class' (58). The second part of the article is a case study that explores the archives of the Hispanic 20<sup>th</sup> century vanguard.

Anne-Marie Callus's essay, entitled 'The Contribution of Disability Studies to the New Humanities', raises the importance of disability studies within the Humanities, with the emphasis on how these two areas inform each other. Starting from a short history of the field, from its emergence as firmly embedded in the disabled people's movement to the 1990's, when it drew from the social sciences and the humanities, the article proposes possible ways in which a disability studies angle can enrich literary criticism, art appreciation and other discourses and practices with insights that can make the 'new humanities' 'more aware than ever of the vulnerability and frailty, and the concomitant strength and resilience, that are inherent in the human condition and of the multifarious and multivalent ways in which these aspects of humanity have been and are being lived and expressed' (87).

Section 2, 'Remediations' gathers thought-provoking articles on what can be called remediation/healing, looking into the pragmatic search for socio-political, cultural and educational remedies that must be put forward from within an institution under threat, enquiring further into what role 'New Humanities' or 'Posthumanities' can acquire within the academic institution still called 'University' in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Alexandre Gefen's 'Politics of Remediation: The Renewed Commitment of Contemporary French Literature. Critical Issues and Societal Debates' is a detailed survey of contemporary French literature in relation to its renewed social and political commitment. The author analyses how contemporary writers pose the question of immigration, rediscover collective and individual memory, propose returns 'to larger tableaux, to panoramas, to "long histories" and to grand narratives' (96), thinking of social inequalities, giving 'a voice to the invisible and the rejected' (97). Gefen insists on how political and social power is granted to some of these writers' texts. He thus considers that the new aim of literature is 'to build up an "us" and a common world, to pave the way towards "a global citizenship" and to fight the immense scepticism stemming from the two World Wars and the discredit of the political which marked the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.' (105)

Lanlan Du's 'The Two Cultures Debate Revisited in the Posthumanist Age: Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* as a Case Study' is an essay that examines a

fictional text that can be considered neither a utopia, nor a dystopia, but rather what the Canadian writer called a ‘ustopia’ to illustrate her speculative world-making. Du starts her analysis from the ‘two cultures’ debate revisited in the contemporary world and sees how Atwood warns about the dire consequences of the division between sciences and the humanities. Since *Oryx and Crake* deals with campus life, the aim of the author is to show that we should transcend the tendency of regarding the two cultures in binary opposition, and that the university should cultivate individuals who are not only technologically-savvy but also commiserative, capable of caring for the other in an ethical way.

Laurent Milesi’s ‘The Remediation of (Post-)Humanities’ is an investigation of the condition of the humanities in the digital age as always already that of the ‘posthumanities’, drawing from the Derridean deconstruction of the sign as technological ‘trace’ and Bernard Stiegler’s conception of humanity as indissociable from an exteriorizing technicity. Recalling Stiegler’s notion of ‘pharmacology’ to designate both the contemporary enslavement through tele-technologies and the concrete search for socio-political, cultural and educational solutions, Milesi reviews some of these remedies in Stiegler’s own pedagogico-philosophical practice as well as in experimental critics-theorists like Mark Taylor and Gregory Ulmer, before making a plea for videogames as a way of ceaselessly remedying and recreating our ‘techno-cultural bond’ (139), understood in the wake of Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin’s notion of ‘remediation’.

Without claiming to create an original blueprint, in ‘Prescription for a New Model University for the Humanities’, Jamey Hecht offers a sad picture of what is happening in American academia, which has been ruled since the late 1970s with the growth of US economy in sight. Through a pertinent analysis of Marc Bousquet’s 2008 *How the University Works*, Hecht gives a picture of organization management, bringing new perspectives on bureaucracy and scientific management and comparing the apprenticeship model with the Fordist perspective, whose management discourse has as ‘primary allegiance’ capital (149).<sup>81</sup> As a model for the Humanities he proposes a countermeasure, what he claims to be ‘a slightly formalized description of what can “happen anyway” when people gather in earnest to fulfil a need for education in the absence of resources and existing workable institutions.’ (151) This model might be considered a resilient ‘subscription-based model for humanities education, freed from the burdens of degree-granting’. (159)

The section of review articles deals with some of the issues that have recently influenced the position of the Humanities in the post-university: rankings, Digital Humanities, lack of academic freedom and hacking.

Geoffrey Williams’s minute analysis of Hugo Harari-Kermadec’s *Le Classement de Shanghai: l’Université marchandisée* (The Shanghai Rankings: The Merchandised University) concludes that ‘we are clearly in a don’t-shoot-the piano-player conundrum’ (171) and that, although it is true that there is collateral damage from rankings in higher education and research everywhere, this is rather because of the way in which they are used and abused by politicians. Cheng Li and Menuta Fekede’s review article of Patrik Svensson’s *Big Digital Humanities: Imagining a Meeting Place for the Humanities and the Digital* confirms that the field of Digital Humanities can bring benefits to the

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<sup>81</sup> For a very comprehensive study of organization theory, see Chris Grey, *A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book about Studying Organizations* (Los Angeles and London: Sage Publications), 2010.

Humanities in our age and is not actually working against them as some humanists still think. Anca Dobrinescu's review article of Michael Ignatieff and Stefan Roch's edited collection *Academic Freedom: The Global Challenge* echoes the authors' anxiety that current lack of academic freedom ultimately means citizens' lack of freedom. The review of this particular book could not come at a more timely juncture, when the despotic decision of Viktor Orbán's government to force the Central European University to move from Budapest to Vienna was officially condemned by the highest court of justice of the European Union, which ruled that 'the conditions introduced by Hungary to enable foreign higher education institutions to carry out their activities in its territory are incompatible with EU law.'<sup>82</sup> Stefan Herbrechter's 'post-academic' review of Daniel J. Cohen and Tom Scheinfeldt's edited collection *Hacking the Academy: New Approaches to Scholarship and Teaching from Digital Humanities*, which examines 'what happened to the idea of "hacking the academy"', which about ten years ago seemed 'a call to arms' coming from those who were trying to 'get rid of the stuffiness of the "traditional" humanities and motivate scholars averse to technocultural progress to change their outdated habits.' (191) Taking examples of hacking 'as an academic practice' in scholarship, teaching and institutions, Herbrechter offers us a consistent engagement with the many obstacles academics in the Humanities are confronted with nowadays.

The volume ends with a 'Coda' containing Ivan Callus's essay 'The Humanities Connection: Fiction and the Virus', which could be framed as a piece of 'critifiction', a concept that Laurent Milesi coined in relation to Hélène Cixous's texts, by which he understood 'the miscegenation of the critical and the fictional-creative'.<sup>83</sup> As Callus's title suggests, the essay connects Derrida's text 'The University without Condition' with Ali Smith's *Summer* (2020) in thirty sections that are narrated via what the author terms 'a journalling modality' which seemed 'the appropriate, *rigorous* choice' (208). This style gives the author the possibility to reflect on the 'X Humanities' in the midst of COVID-19 with the pressures it exercised on the academy, in order to show a possible way in which the humanities can best respond to (not to say survive in) evolving contexts.

Many of our articles engage with the work of Bernard Stiegler, whose demise in August 2020 shocked the world of humanists. As our readers will discover in these pages, his thinking had a great impact on Humanities Studies in the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We wish to dedicate this volume to him.

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<sup>82</sup> See Press Release no. 66/ 2020 of Court of Justice of the European Union, Judgment in Case C-66/18 Commission v Hungary, Luxembourg, 6 October 2020; available at <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2020-10/cp200125en.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2020].

<sup>83</sup> The term was used by Laurent Milesi in 'Portraits of H. C. as J. D. and Back', *New Literary History* 37.1 (2006): 54; 'Cixanalyses – Towards a Reading of *Anankè*', *Paragraph* 36.2 (2013): 287, and 'Demonstrating Monsters: Unmastering (in) Derrida and Cixous', *Parallax* 25.3 (2019): 281, n. 4.

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