

The Humanities and the Public Soul

by Julie Ellison

What is public scholarship in the humanities and the arts? There are many meanings to these four keywords--public, scholarship, humanities, arts. Public scholarship itself is a recent term for practices that, while venerable in some fields, are still new to the arts and humanities. What are these unfolding practices and knowledges? In the humanities and in many areas of the arts, collaborative work of any kind is rare, and there is a weak tradition of partnerships by faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates with community and public partners, either individuals or organizations. Consequently, there is plenty of room for ambiguity and debate about definitions. In order to establish a clear starting point for understanding public scholarship in the cultural domain, therefore, I will begin with a strict construction of the word "public," referring to work conducted in a deliberately democratic fashion by peers impelled by diverse interests and a common public purpose. I will focus on the importance of multiplicity and complexity in work in the arts and humanities that is jointly created as a public good by academic and community collaborators. As synthesized by Julia Reinhold Lupton, director of Humanities Out There at the University of California-Irvine, "The process of defining common goals in response to local exigencies involves mutual transformation and the creation of a new or renewed civil relation." This is a necessarily intricate enterprise.

I. They Eat Smoke For Love

When I was growing up, my father published an article in the *Saturday Evening Post*, one of many he would write for the *Post* throughout the fifties, titled, "They Eat Smoke For Love." It was about the passion of volunteer fire fighters. Still, that phrase, "they eat smoke for love," captures something about my father's own passion for writing, pursued over a long career as a journalist, novelist, editor, professor, and self-published social prophet. The bitter irony of "eating smoke" hints at the long odds of making a living as a writer. But the phrase also applies to the question before us now, to the community-minded love for a different kind of smoke--the fluid paths of imagination and inquiry.

The word "soul," in the title that Harry Boyte suggested for this essay--"The Humanities and the Public Soul"--floats before us, unresolved and undefined, probably undefinable. The evocative power of that phrase, "the public soul," goes straight to the heart of the quandaries of public scholarship in the arts and humanities. The phrase captures the profound desire for meaning and feeling--for soulfulness--that attracts many people to the arts and humanities in the first place. Such emotion runs smack up against the spirit of professional rigor and the norms of professional success. These clashes can be fruitful as long as one attitude does not drive out another. In order to craft the relationship between meaning and feeling in a public fashion, we must grapple with the mixed aspirations perpetually circulating within and between academic and community cultures.

Public scholarship is carried out by people who are "called" to civic leadership. Public work in the arts and humanities needs to boldly claim and more fully realize this role, at a time of transition and flux in the nation's politics and identity. Voicing and answering this call does not come easily to artists and humanists, especially in academic settings.

Humanists and artists are always called upon to explain, What are the humanities? What is art? Less interesting than the myriad definitions we summon up in response to these queries are the broader associations that cluster around such terms. To many, these disciplines broadly signify expression and inspiration--in sum, they are about *being moved*. They are also identified with analysis, theory, and critique. Artists and humanists in and out of the academy fret about how to negotiate the tension between hope and opposition, desire and critique, feeling and the labor of analyzing feeling. In public scholarship, these stresses become more pronounced. But at the same time, public scholarship can bring these tendencies into new and more fruitful balance. The defining feature of engaged cultural work is a determination to do it all, to undertake complicated projects that join diverse partners, combine the arts and humanities, link teaching with research, bring several generations together, yield new products and relationships, take seriously the past and the future. The driving philosophy is one of both/and, both mind and soul, both local and universal.

In this "both-and" spirit, William Paulson, in his new book, *Literary Culture in a World Transformed: A Future for the Humanities*, calls for "an enlarged humanism" committed to "the project of enacting human freedom and working in the world in all its dimensions and directions." The agenda, Paulson argues, is capacious and transformative:

an enlarged humanism...locates our creative and constructive tasks as human beings not just in an aesthetic, intellectual, or even cultural sphere but in the entire project of making and remaking the social, cultural, and material collectives to which we belong. (191).

History is helpful in establishing this vision of our future, including the history of hope-laden words. Nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century intellectuals defined "genius," for example, in ways that we might want to take seriously again as part of our usable past. For them, genius--now so unfashionable--was an energy source that could fuel social hope, social labor, and social change.

In Anne Gere's study of turn-of-the-century women's literary clubs, she found that identity politics shaped the clubs' focus. Jewish women read Emma Lazarus, African-American women read Phyllis Wheatley, working women read Jane Addams. The clubs had a strong self-help orientation, striving to make women "more active agents" on behalf of themselves and their specific communities. At the same time, Gere writes, club members defined poetry "as the language of the soul and the inspiration of humankind," in other words, as universal. "Effective benevolence" linked to identity politics was central to the clubs, but these were understood to be fueled by the engine of efficacious greatness. Regardless of race, religion, or class, almost all women's literary clubs promoted the practical power of contagious eloquence by reading Shakespeare, Milton, Longfellow, and the Bible. The social place of eloquence--especially in poetry--is being reclaimed as the both-and logic of earlier eras returns in new forms. That logic held that poetry reflected the union of genius and history, that it served both progressive social reform and personal expressive needs, and that it was simultaneously universal, personal, and supportive of group identities.

Similarly, W. E. B. Dubois framed black Americans' commitment to "developing the traits and talents of the Negro" as a program of "intellectual commerce" conducted by "co-worker[s] in the kingdom of culture." For Dubois, empowering the "Negro soul" in twentieth-century America while also pursuing "time-glorified methods of delving for Truth," including those contained in the writings of canonical white writers, were both inevitable and desirable.

Academic humanists, now resistant to universals, suffer from the worst side effect of our powerful and necessary skepticism: we have made analysis and hope strangers to one another. The world of the humanities, as Paulson observes, suffers from "the overemphasis on critique, the mentality of a guild that fancies itself a counterculture... and the excessive focus on reproducing the professoriate." The affect of these positions tends to be that of resentment and melancholia. Recently, largely through feminist work, we have learned to own up to emotion. Nonetheless, we still locate the study of culture below the arc of transformational desire as a live option in the present tense. Yet, as I have tried to show, there is a strong and interesting tradition that joins the concepts of beauty, truth, freedom, and genius to the labors of social reform and the advancement of the interests of particular communities. What if we recognized the ongoing life of this tradition and took it seriously? What if we respond to Paulson's revival of Kenneth Burke's "Literature as Equipment for Living" and begin to treat the arts and humanities "as a resource, as an extension of our collective sense organs, brains, and voiceboxes, near and far, then and now, which we can use as we participate in, and try to sustain, the life of the world." We do not need to reactivate nineteenth-century notions of genius, though we should honor them. But, like Paulson, we should commit ourselves to terms like "living" and "the world" that can carry a similar charge in our own day.

Speaking in hopeful terms, for those habituated to critique, puts us in a changed relationship to our cultural past and present. It confronts us with the history of words like "beauty," "genius," "inspiration," and, yes, "soul"--a vocabulary consistent with a desire for public speech and public practices.

Public scholarship in the arts and humanities most differs from standard academic practice through its explicit hopefulness. Such work is based on the conviction that it is possible for artists and humanists to make original, smart, and beautiful work that matters to particular communities and to higher education. Public scholarship provides a field for experiment, in which introspection and invention can be carried out sociably and publicly, yielding new relationships, new knowledge, and tangible public goods. The challenge for public scholars is to connect the difficulties of plausible hope with the emerging economies of cultural work. This connection can be made in leaderly ways. Models are available.

Liz Lerman, the MacArthur-winning founder of the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, is collaborating with several American communities, all part of her national Hallelujah Project. The model for the Hallelujah Project was the company's two-year residency in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The Shipyard Project, focusing on the role of the shipbuilding industry, by now almost defunct, worked with city residents to translate their experience into movement. In 1996 a weeklong festival included "public events, exhibits, on-stage and site-specific performance, storytelling, new music commissioned for local bands and choirs, and dance-mediated community forums." Without flinching from the widespread pain of the city's lost vocation, these

events probed "the role of the...200-year-old Shipyard in its history, politics, environment and culture." In each Hallelujah partnership, the starting question asked by Liz was, "What is it that your community is *in praise of*?"

Public scholarship counters the narrative of decline uttered by academic humanists and artists, particularly since the collapse of the academic job market in the humanities around 1980. Over the last two decades, scholars have addressed profoundly civic issues: the history and meaning of "the public sphere" and "civil society," the importance of place, cultures of everyday life and ordinary people, the artistic and cultural achievements of women and racial and ethnic minorities; national and family memory, the life of the body, the power of stories to structure experience; the resurgence of poetry spoken aloud; and the layered histories of how artists and intellectuals are connected to their times and settings. Yet the public importance of the work of academic scholars in the cultural disciplines was declared to be vanishing even as their scholarly subject matter was becoming more inclusive and democratic.

"What's happened to the humanities?" is the title of a 1993 collection of essays about the academic humanities. The story it tells is a characteristic one of decline: "the humanities have become a more marginal part of [higher] education," afflicted by "declining academic status" and by "reductions in financial support" from the National Endowment for the Humanities, foundations, individual donors, and universities themselves. The contributors to this volume argue that the fading stature of the academic humanities leads to these disciplines being under-resourced. They protest that money is flowing to public programs and away from original scholarship. They lament the fact that, despite the fundamental human and public importance of cultural knowledge, the humanities increasingly are viewed as irrelevant. Scholars often deplore the fact that funding increasingly is tied to collaborative projects, with less support available for individual work in the studio or the archive. This pressure is felt as coercive, as sabotage of the conditions needed for imagination and reflection.

There are similar narratives of decline in the arts, pervaded by anxiety about cuts in funding for individual artists; selection mechanisms that keep radical or disturbing work out of contention; and the perceived competition between quality and accessibility. As a powerful series of articles in the British *Guardian* shows, these pervasive worries about public pressures on the arts and humanities are not confined to higher education and are not unique to the U.S.

David Scobey, Director of the Arts of Citizenship Program at the University of Michigan, sums up this state of affairs: "The culture wars of the past decade have shown how deeply Americans are divided about their civic values-and how much they endow the arts and humanities with public significance. Academics...have pursued exciting new research into popular culture, the media, and civic values, yet our work has often been framed in ways that are inaccessible to the publics that we study. Partly because of this distance, the arts and humanities have been lightning rods for conflicts over such topics as the teaching of American history, ethnoracial diversity, and public funding for the arts."

Academics have plenty of legitimate concerns about the new public scholarship. For example, we have not begun to solve the problem of how to give public scholars time to think and write substantively about their work. How are we to combine action and reflection? And the academic

reward system is just starting to shift from a zero-sum approach ("how can I add community engagement to my existing teaching, research, and service workload?") to an integrative approach ("how can I develop new kinds of project-based scholarship and teaching that integrate disciplinary work into public partnerships?"). The biggest obstacle to progress, however, is the easiest to remove: the habit of melancholia and lament. How different, in tone and argument, is Paulson's *Literary Culture in a World Transformed* (2001) from *What's Happened to the Humanities?*, published less than a decade earlier (1993):

Reading and writing as a matter of serious, world-sustaining, responsibility-oriented education should be of a piece with reading and writing as a matter of individually oriented, liberatory, enlightening, or pleasurable education. People should be encouraged and assisted in thinking about the relations between the local and global networks of which they are a part; on the one hand, their lives, thoughts, modes of interaction, and imaginings; on the other hand, the social, historical, economic, and ecological contexts in which they live, and about which, as citizens, they're called upon to make decisions.

The specific importance of public scholarship in the arts and humanities is to provide purposeful social learning, spaces where individuals and groups with "trustworthy knowledge" convene to pursue joint inquiry and invention that produces a concrete result. Central to this work is the crafting of "a politics of educated hope." There are real differences in the work styles, cultural agendas, professional status, and politics of artists and humanists working in diverse locations. But there is also startling agreement on what content is interesting, what aesthetic and thematic strands are most promising, what complexity is worth capturing. This, it seems to me, is the basis for "educated hope" about public scholarship.

Artists and humanists operate in many settings: in college classrooms and studios, in public museums and local historical societies, in archives and K-12 schools, in the cultural and educational programs of Native American tribal councils, in non-profit performing arts organizations, in public libraries and in public radio, in church choirs and reading groups, in state arts agencies and humanities councils, on festival boards and participant-driven web sites. The Michigan Humanities Council--like all state humanities councils--requires participation by "humanities scholars" on every grant. This category, which applies to anyone doing public scholarship in the cultural arena, includes storytellers, artisans, curators, printers, Chautauqua presenters, church historians, and experts on historic preservation and restoration, as well as faculty in many different college and university programs.

In these diverse locations, there is real consensus about what matters, a consensus among working artists, humanists, and designers that spans the divide between academic and public cultures. The big ideas are shared. People doing cultural work of any kind are interested right now in the same six or eight issues: citizenship, migration, justice, group and individual identities, civil society, place, memory, health. This consensus establishes the premise for joint inquiry and creation. It doesn't mean that people have the same positions on these issues--simply that they recognize them as *the* issues. Consequently, they serve as the potential matrix of collaboration. Recognizing this broad terrain as the cultural commons should liberate campus-based scholars from their inhibitions about stating affirmative ideals. Academic critique, in fact, is motivated by strong commitments to positive values, such as social justice, expanded

literacies, a more inclusive canon, a more democratic vision of community. One of the most important outcomes of public scholarship in the arts and humanities, therefore, can be the reconciliation of hope and critique. Hope is a practice, just as critique is a practice. We can become skilled in hope, without abandoning the necessary energy of skepticism.

When I am collaborating with Chris Maxey-Reeves, a third grade teacher and my partner in the Poetry of Everyday Life Project, linking University of Michigan undergrads and Ann Arbor third graders, critique is fundamental. It is one component of an act of guided creation that we bring to the Ann Arbor Public Schools and the Ann Arbor District Library, to parents and kids, saying "We believe in this and so should you." We find ways to challenge university students and third graders to recognize and resist poetic cliché, for example, or to see through conventional idioms of beauty and emotion. On our field trip to a gritty urban park marked by the traces of the homeless people who live and sleep there, we work with the kids as they struggle to find words for their complex social knowledge of the half-seen homeless individuals who write fierce messages to park visitors in multi-colored chalk on the bridge. At the same time, we are not shy about proclaiming the power of inspiration, agency, discovery, and feeling. We walk a fine line. You can celebrate something to the point of suppressing dissent, subtlety, and complication. But it is a fallacy to think that claiming the public good requires you to leave your intellectual tough-mindedness and creative ambition at the door.

What if campus-based artists and humanists--connoisseurs of metaphor--took ourselves more literally? What if we took the question of democratizing the canon literally enough to enter in the joint discovery of literary knowledge with non-academics? What if we took the passion for public spaces literally enough to collaborate with municipal partners on site design? What if we took our interest in gender and genre literally enough to work with high school girls active in the poetry slam movement?

What if we learned what hope sounds like in public utterance? Here is an example of eloquence in the service of public scholarship, notable for its powerful complexity of vision. At the national conference of *Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life* in Fall 2000, Dr. Pearl Simpson spoke about the vibrant Black Bottom community that the University of Pennsylvania displaced and replaced in Philadelphia. She set forth how, in the enduring anguish of this site of so-called urban renewal, the Black Bottom Project created a full-length play based on the history of the neighborhood. The play was created and performed by former residents of the Black Bottom, University City High School students, and Penn students and faculty. For Dr. Simpson, the value of the project was manifold.

"If you were, you were, and if you are, you are, and you deserve to be heard," said Dr. Pearl, as she asked to be called. She continued: "We need ongoingness, we need refreshment, we need more people to take the place of those who go on to the great beyond because it's very important for everybody to know their history, regardless of how small or how minute the place. Some people want reparations, some people want recognition, and everybody wants respect."

The intricacy of Dr. Pearl Simpson's statement mirrors the diverse project team; the neighborhood, school, and university cultures it traversed; and the pride and sorrow bound up in the fate of the Black Bottom neighborhood. Dr. Pearl finds words for needs and desires ranging

from economic justice ("reparations"), a place in the city's self-knowledge ("recognition"), a continuous link to past experience ("ongoingness"), hope for the future and solace for past losses ("refreshment"). She negotiates consensus and disagreement in the repetition of "We need.... We need" and in the sequence, "Some people... some people... everybody." The powerful moral and political claim to histories of a community's place, however "minute," establishes the premise for a multidimensional public scholarship project. There is no more compact or powerful witness to the ethical relationship between past and present communities than this: "If you were, you were, and if you are, you are."

If we need help with hope, academic artists and humanists are even more stymied by patriotism. How do we define a positive vision of America? Public scholarship is grounded in local partnerships; dedicated to diversity; and based on a concrete grasp of the "new cosmopolitanism" that reveals the connections between the local and the global.¹ Given these values, can public scholars learn to "do patriotism" in the midst of an overpowering surge of national feeling? The traumas of 9/11 confront us with the complexity of our position. For all of us, these events have made the relationships among the locality, the state, and the world palpable and urgent. The attacks on Washington and New York, horrifying in every possible literal and symbolic way; the national investigation that followed; the slow-growing domestic panic triggered by the anthrax letters; the personal, civic, and institutional costs of an accelerated recession; the militarization of everyday life and of foreign policy: this tangle of interlocking crises is profoundly cultural, historical, ethical, symbolic, and expressive in nature, as well as material, bodily, and economic. I have been calling for a more hopeful and eloquent stance by artists and humanists. Does this mean that we are limited to the motifs of national celebration that have dominated the discourse of the mass media and of Washington thus far?

Frank Rich's *New York Times* column of January 5, 2002, "Patriotism on the Cheap," protests both the "complacency and civic fatuity of Sept. 10" and "the talk about patriotism and sacrifice since Sept. 11." 9/11, he notes, "is now free to be a brand, ready to do its American duty and move product," whether the product is commerce or public policy. There has been lots of talk, he notes, but not much action: "The new patriotism that was said to be a product of America's New War often seems to be little more than vicarious patriotism reminiscent of the pre-Sept. 11 fetishism of the Greatest Generation."

Rich points out that "jingoistic bluster" and flag-draped corporate marketing have been accompanied by "the new form of political correctness," according to which "anyone who says anything critical about the president or his administration is branded an anti-American akin to the Marin County Taliban."

Rich's column points up the urgent need for artists and scholars to articulate forms of patriotism that embrace dissent, ambivalence, and an ongoing national teach-in on the issues. At the same time, we need to find words for our loyalty to democratic principles rooted in the concrete particulars of our common and separate histories. If we in the arts and humanities are not able to voice patriotic positions that both identify with democratic idealism and expose our failure to realize it in action, we will find ourselves trapped in instant replays of the culture wars of the 1980s. Indeed, that tape is already running.

The resentment of critical voices on campus has fueled a hostile campaign against universities by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni. ACTA thus joins a long list of conservative pundits whose aggressive jeremiads of decline offer only one route to civic renewal: return to a strictly-enforced, air-brushed dream of how the liberal arts used to be. The ACTU report revived the culture wars by lambasting a so-called “blame America first” campaign on U.S. campuses. The failure of patriotism, according to the report, arises from the “pervasive moral relativism” of an educational system that fails to declare its loyalty to Western democratic ideals:

It was not only America that was attacked on September 11, but civilization. We were attacked not for our vices, but for our virtues—for what we stand for. In response, ACTA has established the Defense of Civilization Fund to support the study of American history and civics and of Western civilization. The first project of the Fund is *Defending Civilization: How Our Universities Are Failing America and What Can Be Done About It*. The report calls on college and university trustees to make sure their institutions offer strong core curricula that pass on to the next generation the legacy of freedom and democracy.

The ACTA report is fundamentally anti-democratic. The best way to strengthen the teaching of democratic legacies is not to rail at educators whose analysis may point to causes of traumatic events other than virtues and vices. Editorials urging “peaceful responses”—such as diplomatic efforts—to the attacks of September 11, references at a teach-in to the World War II internment of Japanese Americans, statements at a campus rally about poverty and suffering in other countries: all of these fall within the range of behavior that ACTA deplors. In so doing, ACTA seeks to divorce goodness from debate, ethics from historical and political knowledge. Artists and humanists committed to public scholarship have to make the case that pursuing knowledge of our own civilization *and all others* is a democratic virtue, and that the capacity for dissent is, too.

In an uncanny way, as Frank Rich’s reference to the “Greatest Generation” suggests, the country was more ready for 9/11 than we know. The rhetoric about how “everything is different now” is wrong. Some things were already different, and not just in cheap ways. The shift to positively valuing public institutions, including governmental ones, and an emerging sense of the honor of citizenly identity were already underway. Although these shifts had not found the occasion that would make this widespread intuition explicit, the nation’s readiness to enter into a changed civic landscape was well developed, though not inevitable or preordained. With a generation of college and high school students experienced in at least nominally civic community service, with a national discussion over some years about the quality of citizenship and community life, with support for engagement initiatives from major foundations, the passion to be *for* something was latent. In some sense, the shocked nation, on 9/11, was prepared.

Yet the kinds of public work being urged in the aftermath of September 11 may not necessarily enhance democratic citizenship. As William Galston notes, the UCLA survey of the attitudes of college freshmen suggests that “significantly increased levels of volunteering” do not translate into wider civic engagement in the form of voting, understanding the consequences of public policy, the ability to find information about public affairs, or other kinds of political participation.

In President Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address, he tried to connect patriotism, volunteerism, the revived dignity of government jobs, and the possibility of integrating community service with careers in the service sector, including education. He invited us to imagine what "a new culture of responsibility could look like." We can, he said, "change our culture"—a statement with which I passionately agree. This is precisely what public scholarship is about—the shared public work of changing our culture.

How does President Bush propose that we do this?

To sustain and extend the best that has emerged in America, I invite you to join the new USA Freedom Corps. The Freedom Corps will focus on three areas of need: responding in case of crisis at home, rebuilding our communities, and extending American compassion throughout the world.

This compassionate utopia offers a diffuse vision of familial emotion ("love a child") as a weapon against an equally amorphous external "axis of evil." This isn't good enough. The President should at least ask us to be smarter as well as nicer—to seek a more complex, adult ethic of local and global neighborliness, based on specific identities, interests, and problems.

Rather than simply dismissing the opportunistic quality of the President's proposal, however, or deploring the way it was used to provide some feel-good moments in the middle of a scarily militaristic speech, we should take the challenge to "change our culture" seriously. If this isn't the way to go about it, what is? What is the right way for us, as public scholars in the cultural disciplines? Are artists and humanists ready to work through the emotions of patriotism in connection with the inventions and inquiries of our work? Are we ready to deal with the both/and logic of patriotism and criticism?

The November/December 2001 issue of *The New Crisis*, the NAACP magazine, is dedicated to debates on Black patriotism. The African American community, though not unified, was ready with both/and thinking that provides a model for engaged artists and humanists. To start with, the editorial calls for "patriotism and support for the United States from all Americans," in the following terms:

Thoughtful dissent...is one of the highest orders of patriotism. Moreover, dissent is central to our tradition of building a better America. Principled dissent helped end slavery, and segregation, and is still propelling our struggle. The impulse to pull back and hurl criticism from outside rather than to participate fully as citizens within the national community cedes far too much. The massive contributions of the enslaved ancestors of so many of us have surely given us our share of ownership of this nation. It is our shared future we should be shaping, not just their bad history we are decrying.

Whether one agrees with these positions or not, one sees that this is a dialogic patriotism, negotiating the pressures that can move us alternately inside and outside of a sense of "national community."

The lead article in this issue of *The New Crisis* surveys a broad range of reaction: support for U.S. military action by the Black Patriots Foundation; sympathy for New York firefighters from Black firemen in St. Louis, despite their criticism of the fact that, of New York's 11,200 firefighters on September 11, only 300 were African American; opposition to sending U.S. troops to Afghanistan by delegates to the U.N. Conference on Racism last summer; the ambivalence felt by black members of Congress who supported the resolution giving President Bush war-making authority against the September 11 terrorists—and the vitriol directed at Representative Barbara Lee, who cast the lone dissenting vote.

Finally, there is an article on the many dimensions of Black-Arab relations in the metropolitan Detroit area before and after September 11. This is an unflinching account of “serious unresolved issues” between, and within, African American and Middle Eastern communities. Issues relating to racial profiling and the Justice Department interviews of Arab men suddenly put a premium on expressions of solidarity that proved difficult to achieve. As one scholar commented, conflicts arose from the effort to negotiate “principles of reciprocity and respect” in the context of ongoing economic, cultural, and political tensions. Can an ethic of quid pro quo work here? What defines patriotism now for a black or Middle Eastern, Muslim or non-Muslim, resident of Detroit or Dearborn? There is no evident consensus.

There is a lesson in this issue of *The New Crisis* for artists and humanists, particularly in colleges and universities. The arts and humanities have been spoken of as offering “solace” in a time of personal and collective trauma. But solace is complicated, not simple. The public soul needs the expression of grief, witness, and testimony, yes. But it also needs action, including educational action. Julia Reinhold Lupton outlines a strategy for patriotism embodied in action: “When our work involves addressing the practical exigencies and imaginative worlds of non-citizens...[t]he answer...is not to throw out the concept of citizenship,” she argues. Rather, we should “turn to...a ‘critical liberalism’...recoverable...through the creation of civic partnerships that render manifest, perform publicly, bring into actualization, the emancipatory promise of participatory democracy.”

Part II: A National Laboratory for Public Cultural Work

A fruitful ecology of public cultural enterprise is made up of local, national, and global networks of people and projects. At the local level, a modest economy of co-created work, grounded in broadly shared intuitions, carried out by campus and community partners, is subtly changing the zeitgeist in the arts and humanities. These networks comprise a national laboratory for practical patriotism. To bring this ecosystem vividly to life, I will survey the defining characteristics of a handful of exemplary programs. In so doing, I draw on the experience of *Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life*.

What is *Imagining America's* agenda? *Imagining America* (IA) is a national consortium of individuals, institutions, and associations that puts cultural work in the public interest at the heart of higher education. IA is a network of artists and humanists who pursue integrative, multi-disciplinary project-based work across the town-gown boundary. To my knowledge, it is the only national association committed to the craft of public scholarship in specific disciplines. Founded

in 1999, IA's founding partners were the University of Michigan, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, and the White House Millennium Council.

IA calls attention to a turning point in the dynamics of making and understanding culture. It has the makings of a power base for artists and humanists. It also offers an example for other disciplines to emulate as they reclaim their public soul and public muscle. It enlists project teams, program directors, and leaders in arts and humanities organizations, as well as university and college presidents. IA addresses the specific civic resources and challenges of the cultural disciplines, highly communicative and interactive fields with diverse practitioners and publics. IA offers information, convenings, models and best practices, access to leadership, and, most importantly, an evolving set of concepts and arguments aimed at constituting public scholarship in the arts and humanities as a movement. Even at this early stage of development, therefore, IA is both a learning community and a political intervention, a strategic advocate and citizens' lobby for public-minded artists and scholars and their many different partners.

A close look at the ethos and structure of several different programs reveals a key fact about public scholarship in the arts and humanities: it exhibits a high tolerance for complexity and fluidity, the vital uncertainty principle of public cultural work.

David Scobey directs the Arts of Citizenship Program at the University of Michigan, a platform for campus-community partnerships, research, and teaching in the art, humanities, and design. Scobey's observations about one community partnership capture the essence of successful university programs supporting collaborative public cultural work. He articulates the rich complexity of commitments to plural but strongly integrated missions: diversity, democracy, interdisciplinarity, the fusion of research and teaching, the co-dependence of the arts and humanities, and the energy liberated by the process of making new 'public goods.' The representative project that Scobey describes is

relentlessly multiple in the cultural products it aims to create, the media and disciplines upon which it calls, and the community partners it engages; and all these elements and projects are mutually permeable and reinforcing. There is an eclectic, improvised quality to the project's development, and it is constantly threatening to overrun our financial and imaginative resources, but that very disorganization points to the pent-up energy, the latent demand for new linkages and projects....²

Such purposeful complexity--which we must seek out and embrace—appears in the expanding repertoire of the Arts of Citizenship Program's projects. Viewed individually and together, they display the capacious, mixed logic of this mission:

The Homelands Project merges the efforts of the Matrix Theater, a community-based troupe in Southwest Detroit, Arts of Citizenship, and the University of Michigan Residential College. The project brought together students and faculty with youth, seniors, and community activists to research the history of this dynamic multi-ethnic neighborhood. Out of oral histories and documentary materials emerged a play called *Homelands*, set for performance next year.

Arts of Citizenship has collaborated with the Washtenaw County African American Cultural and Historical Museum to research nineteenth-century antislavery activism and African American community life in the area. Staff, students, and community volunteers have assembled a traveling exhibit, “Midnight Journey,” about local Underground Railroad stations and have joined networks doing similar work across Michigan and in other states.

Radio documentaries in partnership with Michigan Radio (a public radio station in Southeast Michigan, Flint, and Grand Rapids), started in 2001 with “Coming of Age in the Riot Years,” presenting personal accounts of the 1967 Detroit riots.

The Students On Site teaching partnership makes it possible for university faculty and students and Ann Arbor teachers to use the city’s riverfront neighborhood as a site for community-based interdisciplinary curricula about history, poetry, and the environment. A website offers an online archive of documents, maps, photographs, and audio recordings about the history of the area. A team of faculty and graduate students is working with city officials to develop opportunities for public art, historical exhibits, and park design in the same district.

The community partnerships of Arts of Citizenship exhibit two important structural features, which are typical of campus-community collaborations nationwide and which deserve to be aggressively promoted: the *stack* and the *loop*. Academics are used to thinking of their professional achievements in the terms traditionally used to define the university’s mission: teaching, research, and service, the holy trinity of faculty work. This model locates publicly engaged projects in the “service” silo, or maybe, where community service learning is taken seriously, in the “teaching” silo. Douglas Kelbaugh, Dean of Michigan’s Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, proposes a different model: the *stack*. The best campus-community collaborations, he says, “vertically integrate all three missions.” A single project incorporates scholarly and creative work, teaching and learning in public, and the production of public goods. This model offers an entirely different standard of excellence based on the integration of missions, not their separation.

The *loop* is the *stack* extended over time. In the *loop*, work can start at any point—teaching, research, service—and undergo a series of expansions toward the state of complex integration. Sustainable projects become chain reactions, moving into new phases with new partners. A local oral history project, for example, can lead to a new play, which can be accompanied by a research-intensive exhibit in the theater lobby, which can migrate to exhibit space in the public library. The content of the exhibit, in turn, can develop into K-12 and college curricula, enrich a local history web archive, and shape academic publications by a graduate student or new forms of faculty co-authorship with community-based peers.

Humanities Out There (H.O.T.) at the University of California-Irvine is another pioneer of this “relentlessly multiple” spirit. H.O.T. develops year-long humanities workshop for the Santa Ana Unified School District, aimed at enabling students from underserved groups to attend college. The workshop teams bring together different institutions and several generations: K-12 teachers and K-12 students; advanced graduate students in the humanities; faculty mentors; and

undergraduates. The workshops are founded on the principle of the “literacy triangle,” a model for integrating diverse educational goals: “H.O.T. counterpoints *cultural literacy* (knowledge of Western civilization), and *multicultural literacy* (informed awareness of other traditions) in the service of *basic literacy*.” H.O.T.’s vision of literacy is assertively democratic, aimed at making it possible for citizens to participate “responsibly and successfully in public life.” The program’s statement of goals is a model of both/and thinking:

By encouraging plurality and diversity, we...hope to define common values, principles, and narratives—both those from the past and those yet to be encountered and created.... A new ‘common good’ must be able to account for all that is ‘uncommon’ between us. A multi-faceted, content-rich literacy can provide one basis for such a revitalized civic space.

My final example focuses on a partnership between the Washington Humanities Council, the University of Washington’s Simpson Center for the Humanities, and other Seattle partners. They joined forces to offer the Clemente Course in the Humanities. This is one of many Seattle partnerships supported by the Simpson Center, which combines programs serving university faculty and students with a bold civic agenda. In Seattle, the Clemente Course is hosted by El Centro de la Raza, a Chicago/Latino civil rights organization that offers continuing and adult education to the Beacon Hill neighborhood and the city at large. It is important to stress the catalytic role of the state humanities council, which links the Simpson Center, El Centro de la Raza, participating faculty, and the community of students. State councils in other parts of the country, including Illinois, have also taken the lead on developing the Clemente Course in their regions. Students who do well in the course receive college credit from Bard; many have gone on to college.

The Clemente Course in the Humanities, with Bard College as the credit-bestowing institution nationwide, was created by Earl Shorris in 1995 as an experiment in bringing the long-term poor out of poverty and into a life of public agency.³ Shorris, a New York editor, essayist, and novelist, believes that real civic participation follows from the self-reflection encouraged by reading and studying the traditional humanities: literature, philosophy, history, and art. The work expected of students in the seminar is roughly equivalent to what would be expected of a student at a first-rate university. Students receive support for childcare during course meetings, along with meals and transportation on those nights. Shorris hoped that the ambitious study of the humanities would enable poor individuals to become “public” beings, undoing the public policy tradition that treats the poor as purely economic subjects. “By the autumn of 1999,” Shorris writes, “more than 400 students were attending the Clemente Course,” and there were 17 Courses in the U.S., with plans for more.

Shorris’s historical inspiration was the relationship between the black church and the civil rights movement, which had in common a passion for literacy, rhetoric, history, ethics, music, and democracy:

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. recognized this connection of church and politics and used it to focus his movement, but the church he brought to politics was the church of the humanities, the education for politics. The movement headed by Dr. King did not

mobilize people without politicizing them; he took people prepared by the humanities and gave them focus for their politics. The sense of autonomy or the possibility of autonomy, of choosing to begin, was already there.

Reflecting on these rich examples of collaborative public scholarship in the arts and humanities, how do we move forward in the spirit of both/and practices? Michael Frisch, in his presidential address to the American Studies Association, delivered in Detroit in October 2000, helpfully articulates the non-reductive principle of both/and, which is fundamental to the new public scholarship in the arts and humanities: “the holding of different values at the same time without implying confusion, contradiction, or even paradox”:

In collecting... a book of narratives based on life-history interviews with Buffalo, New York steelworkers in the aftermath of the evaporation of a once-mighty steel industry, I was struck repeatedly by how regularly and easily interview subjects moved around the convenient categories presented to them—frequently of an either/or nature.... They both liked their jobs and hated them. They identified with the union and/or the company yet felt betrayed by either or both. They saw themselves as victims of the plant closings yet refused to act or feel victimized. They were deeply nostalgic and yet fully engaged with moving on. They resisted the very notion that their lives were defined by their work situation, past or present, offering instead a more seamless web in which worlds of family, neighborhood, and community were woven together with work and workplace in their own identities.

Applying “different values at the same time,” different kinds of knowledge, in public and community settings is an art that can be taught and learned. In a report on collaborations between the timber industry, communities, and government agencies, Steven Yaffee, Julia Wondolleck, and Steven Lippman of the University of Michigan’s School of Natural Resources and Environment ask, “What facilitates bridging?” “Bridging,” as they use the term, means collaboration among several different organizations. Their account of successful cultures of collaboration rings true for work in the public arts and humanities. They emphasize the presence of ambiguity, difficulty, complexity, and diversity—all characteristic of cultural work--in the situations that are best served by collaboration. The arts and humanities are sites of other key elements named by Yaffee and his co-authors: [“?”] a sense of place, an inclusive approach, a tolerance for small successes.” All of these elements, they note, can be “intentionally promoted through creative efforts.”

In what situations is collaboration advantageous? Here, again, the authors use terms that will sound familiar to artists and humanists. Collaboration, they argue, thrives in projects that the participants experience as fluid, uncertain, and calling for improvised strategies. In sum, Yaffee, Wondolleck, and Lippman transform complications that are typically viewed as barriers to community partnerships into conditions of possibility.

When conditions of discouragement become conditions of possibility, when ambiguity provokes meaning-making work, when uncertainty produces new knowledge, public scholarship in the arts and humanities has found its voice. We hear that voice, once more, in the writing of Julia Reinhold Lupton, as she explains why public work must be both complex and transparent:

Forming a genuine partnership requires that we agree on common vocabularies and goals, so that different constituencies can achieve both institutionally sanctioned objectives (within their own environments) and achieve new ones (...in the *politeia* that takes shape among partners). Moreover, both material exigencies and theoretical vocabularies should be seen as distributed along all sides of the table: all parties bring problems and policies for negotiation. In the process of solving a mixed set of challenges using a varied set of solutions, the vision of a common good becomes *manifest*—that is, both visible and actualized.

And we can hear the eloquence of public scholarship in the words of Gloria Fike. I met Gloria in July 2000 at a Rural Arts Conference in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. For years, she ran a hair salon and other businesses in New York City, which she combined with supportive involvement with African-American youth, particularly girls. She now lives in the house inherited from her mother in Idlewild, Michigan, the historic town in one of Michigan’s poorest counties famous as a mid-twentieth-century African-American summer resort and cultural center. There, she is working with parents and kids on projects involving poetry and photography. At the state arts conference a few months later, over coffee at 8:30 in the morning, Gloria looked at me and set forth her theory of the proper relationship between past and future, learning and vision, thought and action; community and leadership: “We need to know our history better. As artists, we should be able to see the future first and more clearly. Then we need to move forward with force.”

¹ Scobey

² Scobey,

³ Shorris