

Within and Against the Imperial University

Reflections on Crossing the Line

Nicholas De Genova

Let us compel the war to break in on us, if it must. . . . Let us force it perceptibly to batter in our spiritual walls.

—Randolph Bourne, “A War Diary”

Wednesday, March 26, 2003. Exactly one week after the commencement of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. At an antiwar teach-in at Columbia University, where I was employed as an untenured assistant professor of anthropology, I celebrated the defeat of the U.S. military in Vietnam as a victory for the cause of human self-determination and unequivocally called for the material and practical defeat of the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Like dozens of other faculty members that night, I had spoken for only about ten minutes. Ten minutes: few words in the great scheme of things—but words well chosen. What I said changed the course of my life and career. In this chapter, for the first time in print, and after more than ten years, I examine my experience of “crossing the line”—transgressing the ordinarily unspoken and unwritten limits, however unstable, of permissible speech—and reflect upon the larger significance of this episode of the suppression of dissent among academic intellectuals within—and against—the imperial university.

Unspeakable Violence, Violence Unspeakable

A few particularly inflammatory phrases from my remarks at the teach-in in 2003 were sufficient for my speech to be promptly catapulted into a media feeding frenzy. This was a moment in our disgraceful history when a toxic politics commanded blind and bellicose faith. George W. Bush’s opening salvo in the war against the people of Afghanistan on September 20, 2001, had notoriously provided the occasion for an ultimatum to the world:

“Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.”¹ The overwhelming and asphyxiating mood in the United States during those first two years of the so-called War on Terror manifested itself—to borrow a phrase from Randolph Bourne, speaking of the raging passion for war in the United States in 1917—as “a chorus so mighty that to be out of it was at first to be disreputable and finally almost obscene.”² Those who promoted war in Afghanistan and Iraq hungered after the elusive vindication of an illusory heroism: they cloaked themselves in a sanctimonious sense of their own victimization and armored themselves in a delusional “antiterrorist” belief in their own aggressive “self-defense.” This is precisely why no repudiation of the Iraq invasion could have hoped to achieve any genuine impact, in my view, unless it was as utterly uncompromising, incorrigible, and indeed as belligerent as the nearly hysterical mania for war that bombarded us relentlessly from every mass-media propaganda outlet. The compulsive desire for war, the furious passion for it, and the veritable bloodlust that had been so cynically cultivated and inflamed in the U.S. populace were nothing less than ghoulish clamor for mass murder, a jingoistic craving for the death of the Enemy.

When I spoke at the Columbia teach-in, therefore, I needed to forcibly confront my audience with the inescapable fact that if it was death that the prowar mob was seeking, then it was death indeed that they would reap. After all the treacherous seductions of the illusion of a sort of military capability so technologically asymmetrical that the United States could perpetrate a war without incurring any serious casualties, I had to hurl back at them a vivid memory of the brute and horrific fact of real carnage. Recalling from recent history another U.S. military intervention—one that commenced with a media spectacle of self-congratulation and then culminated in an excruciatingly humiliating defeat, recorded on videotape and launched into a vertiginous spiral of televised coverage: the invasion of Somalia in 1993—I summoned up the largely suppressed (or perverted) collective memory of the battle of Mogadishu.³ Following that decisive skirmish, considered to have been the bloodiest single battle for U.S. soldiers since the Vietnam War, jubilant Somali combatants dragged the corpses of occupying U.S. soldiers through the streets of their capital in celebration of their improbable victory. The grisly mass-mediated debacle immediately instigated the retreat of the U.S. military and the failure of the invasion. Here, then, were the real stakes of the U.S. escapade in Iraq. With the hope that the unfolding U.S. war and inevitable occupation might ultimately be met with a veritable anticolonial

struggle for Iraqi self-determination—in short, another Vietnam—I proclaimed that I would nonetheless welcome “a million Mogadishus now.”

The greater part of my comments, however, had been devoted to providing a historical outline of colonial conquest, genocide, slavery, and imperial warfare as forming the bedrock of U.S. nation-state formation. That same long history, punctuated by U.S. invasions and military occupations, I argued, had likewise been deeply constitutive of a social and political order predicated upon racist violence and oppression. U.S. nationalism and white supremacy have been inextricably linked, historically. I contended that it is necessary, therefore, to repudiate all forms of U.S. patriotism to liberate our political imaginations in order that we might usher in a radically different world, one in which we will not remain the prisoners of U.S. global domination. In this regard, I explicitly confronted the pronounced tendency in the antiwar movement to defensively claim that “peace is patriotic.” Peace is not patriotic, I replied—peace is subversive, because peace anticipates a very different world than the one in which we live, a world where the United States would have no place.

With the militaristic fervor at a crescendo, my defeatist provocation became national (and international) headline news. After all, George W. Bush had just delivered his ultimatum to Saddam Hussein and announced the official commencement of the war only one week prior. The larger framework of my remarks was summarily disregarded in favor of a sensationalized, decontextualized mass circulation of the most inflammatory sound bite: the “million Mogadishus” phrase.

The new president of Columbia University, Lee Bollinger, who had just taken up the position that same academic year, was traveling at the time of the teach-in and could have had no specific knowledge of what in fact I had said apart from what was being reported in the mass media. Nonetheless, commenting from afar, Bollinger—who has made his academic career as a scholar of free speech—publicly declared that he was “shocked” and affirmed, referring to my speech, that “this one crosses the line.” His reaction was issued as a press release and immediately published on the university’s website.⁴ In a subsequent iteration, Bollinger declared that he was “appalled” and summarily denounced my comments as “outrageous.” Significantly, he added, “Our faculty and students, regardless of their position on the war, have not been silent in their denunciation of [De Genova’s] remarks.” Thus *regardless of one’s position on the war*, faculty and students alike were not-so-subtly instructed by the highest administrative official of the university

that both the form and substance of my speech commanded vociferous condemnation; indeed, they were effectively impermissible—I had “crossed the line.” Notably, Bollinger had prefaced his judgment of my speech by affirming that “because of the University’s tradition of academic freedom,” he normally did not comment about statements made by faculty members. Thus he emphasized that the scandal of my speech was expressly not “normal”: it was an exception.

Following Bollinger’s initial response, the chair of my department (and my immediate administrative superior), Nicholas Dirks, in response to a query from the *National Review*, sent an e-mail reply that was then posted online and also quoted in the *Columbia Spectator*, the student newspaper on campus. Dirks evidently seemed to studiously model his statement on Bollinger’s but went still further: “I cherish the principles of freedom of speech and academic freedom. . . . However, I am deeply concerned when the academic obligations of debate and critique are sullied by sentiments that seem profoundly *out of line* with the values and commitments that are fundamental to academic life” (emphasis added). By implication, I could not very well be expected to enjoy the protections of academic freedom if I myself was culpable of “sully” the very foundations of academic life. By purportedly violating my own obligations, Dirks implied, and by sabotaging the very values that otherwise should uphold the sanctity of that tradition of free inquiry and expression, I had committed an unpardonable transgression. Dirks added that he was “personally appalled” and “repudiated” the offending content of my speech.⁵ It is not difficult to discern in these carefully crafted phrases an anticipation on Dirks’s part of the not-implausible prospect that he might soon be required to justify my summary termination. Meanwhile, my excommunication from the academic community of debate and critique—at the very least, at Columbia—was progressing with furious rapidity. As Dirks alluded, this was for him less a matter of free speech, academic or otherwise, than a violation of the “values and commitments” that constitute the (normally tacit) boundary of a shared way of (academic) life and thus was deemed to threaten the communal foundations of the university.

Why indeed were these officials of the imperial university not more appalled and outraged by the *real* atrocities that the United States war machine was perpetrating against innocent civilians in Afghanistan and Iraq than the violent imagery I conjured with my words? Bollinger notably concluded his various statements with regretful laments for any undue suffering my words might have inflicted upon the families of “American troops. . . in

harm's way," and Dirks expressly repudiated "any statement wishing violence against soldiers or civilians alike." Thus Bollinger explicitly invoked his sympathy for the aggrieved families of the U.S. military participating in the invasion and, with callous disregard for Iraqis, thereby implicitly aligned himself on the side of U.S. nationhood. More ambiguously fashioned as a rejection of "violence" as such, Dirks's comment nonetheless made direct and emphatic reference to the soldiers themselves, not merely their families. But what exactly is the work of soldiers, if not violence? More specifically, what indeed was the express mission of the U.S. soldiers being deployed in Iraq, if not violence and occupation? Was it truly plausible that the invasion, otherwise touted as a campaign of "shock and awe," might be conceivable as anything other than a massive orchestration of disproportionate (imperial) violence? And if U.S. soldiers were indeed, in Bollinger's hackneyed phrase, "in harm's way," weren't the people of Iraq being systematically and mercilessly subjected to immeasurably and incomparably greater harm? Indeed, weren't the "American troops" the very ones inflicting the most devastating harm?

"The Idea of a University": Theory and Practice

If these officers of the imperial university found my rhetoric offensive, weren't they the ones truly at fault for disgracing the values and obligations fundamental to academic life? I refer to their flagrant and instantaneous disregard of the requirement of reasoned discourse and argument—the duty of thoughtful engagement and debate—in favor of outright denunciation. It was a denunciation, moreover, based on no substantive or direct knowledge of what I had said. I repeatedly made efforts to contact Bollinger to meet in person, or at least speak by phone, in order to clarify for him what I had actually said. After all, his telephone line and e-mail account were operating an automated reply that explicitly referred to me by name and passed judgment upon what I was purported to have said. He repeatedly made public statements to the press with regard to me while having never even superficially made my acquaintance.

On the other hand, I was in frequent telephone contact with Dirks, who was my senior colleague and chair of my department, in his capacity as the administrative official directly charged with handling my situation, but similarly he was never once interested in any substantive discussion of anything that I may have said or been alleged to have said. After initially verifying only that I had indeed called for the U.S. military to suffer some woefully

large number of “Mogadishus,” and asking whether I was at all inclined to make a public apology—and thereby confirming that I was not—his interactions with me became entirely confined to the practicalities surrounding my rather complex and apparently precarious circumstances. Whereas we had previously enjoyed some semblance of collegial rapport, Dirks now assumed a role that was strictly managerial. And he likewise reserved his denunciation of my “appalling” speech exclusively for public consumption. There was no place for dialogue or debate, no considered discourse or reasoned disagreement; my speech was simply “out of line,” beyond the pale. I had simply become a “problem” to be managed.

Here, it is useful to situate these dilemmas within their proper sociopolitical context—one that directly concerns the problem of the imperial university, as such. History is also instructive in this regard. In 1917, Columbia University penalized two faculty members, James McKean Cattell and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, for their public opposition to World War I with the summary termination of their employment, leading to the resignation of the renowned historian Charles Beard in protest.⁶ Responding to these events, in his essay “The Idea of a University,” Bourne eloquently noted,

The university produces learning instead of steel or rubber. . . . As directors in this corporation of learning, trustees seem to regard themselves primarily as guardians of invested capital. They manage as a sacred trust the various bequests, gifts, endowments which have been made to the university by men and women of the same orthodoxies as themselves. Their obligation is to see that the quality of the commodity which the university produces is such as to seem reputable to the class which they represent. . . . the reputation of a university is comparable to the standing of a corporation’s securities on the street, the newspapers taking the place of the stock exchange. The real offence of Professors Catell and Dana seems to have been not so much that they were unpatriotic as that they had lowered the prestige of the university in the public mind. . . . No attempt was made to discover whether the newspaper accounts were true. Chatter and rumor were sufficient to convict them. Why? Because on the stock exchange it is by rumor and prejudice that the value of securities is hit, not by evidence. . . . The mischief lies in what people think, not in the actual facts. And for this purpose newspaper chatter is authoritative.⁷

Bourne's critique of the corporate character of the university and its susceptibility to rumor and "bad press" in the World War I era remains equally valid today. Why else would a man such as Bollinger, a scholar of free speech, have no interest whatsoever in the substance of the offending speech beyond the incontrovertibly "authoritative" accounts in the news media? If the press was identifying Columbia with the scandal of "treasonous" speech, what mattered was that this could only do damage to the prestige of the university in the mind of a public that abided by the orthodoxies of the state during wartime.

Uncanny as it may seem, later in 2003, Bollinger himself published an op-ed piece in the *Wall Street Journal* with exactly the same title as Bourne's essay. "With all the pressures toward the closing of our minds that come with conflict in the public arena," Bollinger wrote, "it's not a bad idea to have special communities like universities distinctly dedicated to the open intellect."⁸ No, not a bad idea at all. Yet for university officials like Bollinger and Dirks, as for the "trustee autocracy" that Bourne decried generations earlier, what ultimately matters is, precisely, bad publicity. Widely publicized allegations of "sedition" or "economic heresy," which are perceived to diminish the value of the university's commodity and to degrade the institution's corporate credibility and respectability, are deemed infinitely more consequential than sustaining a space of genuinely uninhibited, robust, and wide-open freedom of speech and expression.⁹

My Private Iraq War

In the immediate firestorm of controversy surrounding my remarks, a campaign by wealthy and influential donors to the university's endowment, as well as 104 Republican members of the U.S. House of Representatives and numerous other public officials, demanded that my employment be terminated. Reportedly, the filmmaker Steven Spielberg personally called Dirks to threaten a lawsuit if I were not promptly dispatched from my job. Simultaneously, I was subjected to numerous graphic, aggravated, and repeated death threats—by phone, e-mail, and post—and underwent bewildering disruptions in my ordinary personal and professional life as a result of security considerations.

My home telephone began ringing nonstop from early on the morning of Friday, March 28, when the story broke in the New York City tabloid *Newsday*. The anthropology department office was similarly riddled with enraged

inquiries about my whereabouts and hostile denunciations. In addition to contact information for my own and numerous other Columbia offices, my home address and phone number had been posted online—or perhaps had been announced on a talk radio program where the host was inciting people to harass me—and were circulating wildly. Callers to my home number recited my street address and supplied lurid assurances that I would soon be meeting my doom: “We know where you live. We’re coming to get you now!” My home telephone was so barraged with harassing calls that it abruptly and inexplicably became inoperative the day after the story first appeared in the news. During those first days, furthermore, television camera crews were camped outside my home, day and night, in SUVs ominously adorned with patriotic bumper stickers and tinted windows. Then police detectives assigned to “investigate” some of the more readily traceable threats to my life assured me that the FBI was also keeping an eye on my case. Those same cops also intimated that there were plans (which never materialized) to hold a hostile demonstration in front of my apartment building. My family and I immediately went into hiding.

My e-mail account was plagued with 25,000 to 30,000 irate, anguished, or harassing messages (including numerous threats of violent retribution). Bollinger later revealed that the telephone lines in his office suffered the same fate and that he also received more than 20,000 e-mails.¹⁰ Indeed, assuming that virtually all his incoming messages sought to demand punitive action against me, an automated response was activated on Bollinger’s e-mail account as was an automatic recorded message when anyone called the university switchboard and mentioned my name, reiterating the university president’s public denunciation of my speech (while also affirming that it was nonetheless protected by the First Amendment).

On the first morning after our flight into hiding, my partner and I found ourselves having brunch in a cafe with the friend who was hosting us. As if staged for a film, our first day “in hiding” was greeted with the discovery that the woman at the next table was reading a story about me in the Sunday *New York Post*, including large photos of me that had been reprinted from the Internet. I learned later that, among other things, that Sunday edition of the paper had devoted an editorial to openly promoting the fantasy of a violent reprisal against me for my “seditious” speech: “Where’s the Ohio National Guard when you really need it? Seriously? Hey, if a campus crank can wish for personal calamity to befall U.S. forces in Iraq, why not fantasize

about a volley of Kent State-style militia musketry rattled off in his general direction?"¹¹

After more than a week later, we eventually resumed daily use of our home. However, because so many random strangers had been inspired to describe in graphic detail all the gruesome acts of violence that they desired to inflict upon me (and in some instances, also upon my family), we continued spending the nights in a different “undisclosed” location that had been arranged by the university, until the campus real estate office eventually offered us a new faculty apartment nearly three months later.

During this period, crude handmade flyers with my photo printed on them and designating me an enemy of both the United States and Israel were posted by a Zionist group called the Jewish Defense Organization (JDO) throughout the neighborhood around Columbia. Unbeknownst to me at the time, the JDO was said to have organized a paramilitary training camp somewhere in the Catskill Mountains in upstate New York. They were a splinter faction from the Jewish Defense League and part of the larger Meir Kahane movement, renowned for the assassination of Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and numerous other murders and bombings. This splinter group’s national director, Mordechai Levy, had a history of arrests—for attempted murder, bombings, and other aggravated felonies—as well as a conviction and incarceration for felony assault with a deadly weapon and a guilty plea for the assault of a twelve-year-old boy. The JDO’s website, adorned with animated images of automatic weapons, included my photo, home address, and home telephone number, as well as a link to my e-mail and Bollinger’s, encouraging its sympathizers to make contact with me directly to share their outrage and otherwise to intensify the campaign to get rid of me, one way or the other.¹²

At the university, the administration arranged for me to be accompanied by campus security officers whenever I went to teach for the remainder of the semester (as the times and locations of my courses were publicly available and indeed had been publicized in a story in the *New York Times*).¹³ Students had to show identification and get checked off a registration list in order to enter my classroom. Meanwhile, as I went about my private life, I was occasionally accosted on the street. There were episodes when unexpected and seemingly suspicious incidents around our home sent my family into a panic. Under these utterly unpredictable circumstances, I had taken to carrying weapons with me at all times and continued doing so for a very long time thereafter. I had invited the war home, and it came crashing in upon

my whole little world, battering down the fragile semblance of security and privacy that had previously enshrouded my domestic life.

Becoming the Object of Controversy

There were some efforts mobilized to defend my freedom of speech, to support me in the face of such fierce animosity, and to express concern about the perceived failings of my department and the chilling statements of the university administration. A few days after the story broke in the news, my colleague Partha Chatterjee wrote an e-mail on March 31 to the rest of the anthropology department faculty from India, where he was spending the semester, underscoring how crucial it is to guard the university as a very special space protected from the “demands of nationalist politics and patriotic obligation.” He encouraged our colleagues to contemplate the importance for us as faculty of being unhindered in our efforts to invite students to engage in the necessary thought experiment of trying to see the U.S. military from the standpoint of its Somali or Iraqi victims. Acknowledging that the scandal surrounding my speech “could have happened to any of us,” Chatterjee affirmed unreservedly, “I stand by Nick at this difficult moment.” He received rebuttals immediately—likewise by e-mail, copied to the entire faculty (minus myself)—from Rosalind Morris and David Scott, as well as one of the untenured faculty.

Morris, assuming the mantle of self-anointed authority on the De Genova affair (having been the only member of the anthropology faculty present when I spoke at the teach-in), “respectfully” disagreed and assured Chatterjee and the rest of the faculty that my “patently ridiculous” and unnuanced comments “took the form of advocacy” and even exceeded what had been reported in the press.¹⁴ Morris fervently asserted,

The result of Nick’s importunate intervention has been the wholesale denegration [*sic*] of Columbia University’s faculty and especially its anti-war activists. It will be months, if not years, before Columbia faculty can speak for progressive causes without being derided for arrogance and accused of encouraging vulgar blood-lust. It has led to death threats against members of this faculty and the abuse of our staff. It has crippled our department, violated its image, and led to the threatened withdrawal of funds and students from our field. I do not hold Nick responsible for the violence of others, and he is not to be

made accountable for the debased mob tactics that he was so perilously close to inviting when he suggested the nobility of fragging. Nonetheless, we, his colleagues, have yet to receive any acknowledgment of the predicament to which we have also been subject, nor has the peace movement on campus received from him any expression of remorse for the damage it suffered . . . this seems a minimal gesture of goodwill.

In this litany of grievances—whereby I had allegedly instigated a veritable calamity of denigration, derision, abuse, threats, crippling, and violation upon the department, the university, and “especially its anti-war activists”—Morris suggested that I had indeed encouraged “vulgar blood-lust” and came “perilously close to inviting” precisely the sorts of “debased mob tactics” that now the department as whole was suffering. Her conclusion was a general one: “In these times, care and thought for the consequences for one’s words are . . . necessary. . . . Public discourse is not private speech, and now, more than ever . . . it behooves scholars to insist on . . . attending to the social spaces in which our words travel.”

David Scott likewise responded directly to Chatterjee, copying the entire faculty e-mail list. Although he confirmed that he too could “empathize with the sense of outrage and anger that might have led Nick to make the remarks he made,” he judged that my comments had been “calculated to be inflammatory” and thus insinuated that my speech had been irresponsible:

Precisely BECAUSE the University is to be preserved as a space for the active cultivation of freedom of speech among faculty and students it must ALSO insist on the cultivation of responsible participation (however radical, indeed especially when radical) in public discourse in the context of the University. This is even more important in the context of a “teach-in” which is, afterall [*sic*], in part a pedagogical exercise. . . . Finally, I’m not sure what you mean when you say that you “stand by Nick at this difficult moment”. I too am prepared to defend his right to express his views. But I want to insist that in so far as the occasion is not primarily one of polemic (as in sloganeering at a street march) but one of reflection even if also one of advocacy, there must also be a demand for careful expression and an expectation that a speaker is accountable in some way to the community that shelters such speech.

Scott also specifically objected to my challenge to the preoccupation of the antiwar movement that it appear patriotic (which he agreed was a mistaken tactic). However, he deemed my frontal repudiation of U.S. nationalism to have been “strategically” ill-advised in my speech: “I believe,” he contended, “that the anti-war movement ought to refuse to be dragged down that road at all. . . . In my view the anti-war movement must state categorically and repeatedly that talk about ‘patriotism’ is an obfuscation and underline and elaborate that this is an unjust and imperialist war.” In other words, whereas I had explicitly sought to problematize the compulsion to champion opposition to the war as “patriotic” and advocated rejecting that position within the antiwar movement, Scott, although he essentially agreed with my critique, judged that I had been injudicious to address it substantively, because it was not “strategic.”¹⁵

Thus the general reaction of these purported antiwar and anti-imperialist colleagues was that I had violated an unspoken and unwritten code of *responsibility* to which I was “accountable” regarding what is permissible for academics to say in order to not perturb or recklessly endanger what Scott designated “the community that shelters such speech.” Sadly, it was precisely these sorts of pronouncements from the self-styled “Left” within the imperial university that most vigilantly sought to police the parameters of propriety and thereby assumed a vanguard role in the repression of genuinely audacious speech. For Morris, “advocacy” itself was beyond the pale, whereas for Scott, there was no room for “polemic,” and the task was rather one of “reflection”: the academic community should presumptively be “pedagogical,” “careful,” and circumspect in its demeanor. Indeed, this political imperative within the academic milieu for an aggressively depoliticizing rhetorical “civility” and cautious circumspection were merely the most immediate manifestation of a more pernicious social and political pressure, exerted from all sides, to utterly suppress or at least significantly curtail any expression of unapologetic protest or fearless dissent.

Beyond the resentful and exasperated discussion confined to the internal precincts of my department, other faculty who fashioned themselves as spokespersons for the campus antiwar movement publicly joined the mass-mediated condemnation of my speech. Renowned historian Eric Foner, who had been one of the organizers of the teach-in, in a telephone interview with the *Newsday* journalist who initially broke the story to the public at large, disparaged my comments as “idiotic” and “completely uncalled for.”¹⁶ Later in the afternoon on the day the story first broke, Foner was quoted yet

again, now on CNN.com (as well as in an interview with the *New York Times*, printed the following day), declaring my statements to have been “reprehensible.”¹⁷ Another organizer of the event, political scientist Jean Cohen, credited in the campus newspaper with having first had the idea for the event, effectively denounced me as an “outside agitator”: “He and the press have hijacked this teach-in, and I’m very, very angry about it. It was an utterly irresponsible thing to do. And it’s not innocent. This was a planned undermining of this teach-in. At the last minute someone couldn’t speak, and he just kind of appeared. He ended up on that platform by accident, almost by manipulation.” Cohen reportedly said that as soon as it was clear that there was an opening in the program, “[De Genova] was right there, all ready with his speech—which makes me suspicious.”¹⁸ Of course, Cohen’s wild and paranoid speculations revealed simply that she was in fact utterly ill-informed about the actual circumstances of my participation. (I had indeed been invited by another organizer of the event—my friend and colleague Hamid Dabashi, the person responsible for the panel on which I spoke.) Thus in this climate of jingoistic hostility and professional intimidation, the vast majority of the ostensibly “antiwar” faculty at Columbia, in a desperate effort to recuperate their own credibility and legitimacy, scrambled to distance themselves from me and repudiate what I was purported to have said. Indeed, very few people ever truly knew what I had actually said. It was sufficient that the news media were energetically circulating a few “scandalous” phrases, removed entirely from the larger substance and context of my speech. The desperate attempt to depict me as a veritable “outside agitator” merely verified what was in fact the immediate and irreversible consensus by which I could only be considered an outcast—a de facto untouchable, a persona non grata—within the Columbia “community.”

Within those first few days of the eruption of the scandal, likewise on March 31 (the date of all three of the e-mails among the anthropology faculty), at least forty-five PhD students in anthropology petitioned the department’s faculty on my behalf. Some of the initiators of this petition were among the foremost organizers of antiwar activism on the Columbia campus. Already well aware and acutely sensitive to the rising hostility among many of the faculty toward me, these students appealed,

In light of the recent remarks made by President Bollinger, it is crucial to affirm our commitment to Professor De Genova’s critical role in the life of our department and university. University life must

be, especially in these times of internationally condemned war and crisis, committed to open and honest debate protected from retribution. Given President Bollinger's public claims to champion free speech and diversity, it is alarming that his statement has foreclosed the possibilities for diversity of opinion and debate in the university. The statement has in effect isolated and endangered this valuable member of our community without carefully engaging with his critical intervention. We believe that it is the role of our department and university to encourage, nurture, and protect critical thinking and political dissent. . . . We therefore call upon the department to resist participating in the distancing of the university from Professor De Genova.

When my classes were cancelled during the first week of the turmoil while I remained in hiding, furthermore, a large group of my students staged a silent protest on campus, sitting in a circle around an empty chair representing my absence, with their own mouths gagged with U.S. flags to symbolically invoke how I had been silenced by the wider campaign of intimidation.

The pressure from students on my behalf provoked the convening of a town hall-style meeting to discuss the controversy within the anthropology department. Remarkably, I was never informed of the event by any member of the faculty and was never invited to participate in the conversation. At the meeting, against the students' demands for a more robust defense of my freedom of speech, several faculty members now publicly and passionately alleged that I had acted irresponsibly and had done unpardonable damage to the reputation of the department. Meanwhile, I was sitting in my office across campus, uninvited and effectively excluded from this department event.

In the following week or two, a letter of solidarity signed by some three hundred academics was delivered to my faculty colleagues in the department as well as the higher administrative officers of the university. This petition declared,

We are . . . concerned about ways in which [Columbia University] may act, officially or implicitly, to punish [Professor De Genova's] exercise of free speech and contravene the principle of academic freedom. At a time when all of our rights to free speech, non-violent association, and legal dissent are under attack, we support Professor De Genova's right to have spoken freely as an invited participant

to an open forum. We would like to register our strong opposition to any personal, professional, or legal retaliation that might be directed at him for having made these remarks.¹⁹

Notably, among many other distinguished scholars, this petition included the signatures of Bertell Ollman (who had an offer of the chairmanship of the Government Department at the University of Maryland rescinded in 1978 due to a controversy over his politics) and Ariel Dorfman (who was driven into exile from Chile by the brutal coup d'état in 1973 that ushered in the Pinochet dictatorship and condemned many of his colleagues to torture and death).

It was only in the aftermath of this pressure from academic colleagues across the United States (and indeed from some other countries as well)—but also only after Bollinger had already declared definitively that I would not be fired in response to the political clamor for my termination—that Dirks, in his capacity as department chair, finally (anonymously) posted an official statement on the departmental website on April 18. Notably, Dirks's official departmental statement was posted unilaterally, in spite of the vociferous desire of the more antagonistic members of the anthropology faculty to draft a collective statement; it declared,

The department is strongly committed to the principles of the First Amendment and of academic freedom. Professor de Genova will neither be fired nor reprimanded for his statements, which will also have no bearing on periodic academic reviews affecting his employment at Columbia. . . . it must be noted that Professor de Genova's statements do not represent the position of the department. Nor do the remarks of any other individuals stand for the collective views of faculty. The department's affirmation of the rights of all individuals to speak freely in no way binds us to support any particular statements.

Here, indeed, was a rather admirably straightforward statement that correctly affirmed that my speech ought to be seen as comparable to that of anyone else among the department's faculty, both in its putatively free and protected status and in its irreducible singularity.

Affronted all the same by what they deemed in the petitions from students and fellow academics to be an implicit allegation that they were colluding with the larger atmosphere of hostility and retaliation, a cohort of my

ostensible colleagues, catalyzed in particular by the fervor of Rosalind Morris (accompanied by Nadia Abu-el-Haj, an untenured member of the faculty in Columbia anthropology's sister department at Barnard College), became intensely involved in drafting a more expansive and purportedly substantive response to the petitioners. Eventual signatories predictably included David Scott, as well as Michael Taussig and others. (Not surprisingly, most of the untenured faculty at both Columbia and Barnard were among them.) They contended,

The petitions make inaccurate and unfair allegations against the Department, and . . . reveal a lack of full knowledge about recent events at Columbia University. . . . [W]e want people to know that our affirmation of Professor De Genova's rights in no way binds us to a statement of support for the content of his remarks. Many individuals have expressed disagreement with Professor De Genova's statements. . . . In this context, we feel it is important that you know the nature of the conversation that has occurred since the Teach-In. . . . In other words, the disagreements with Professor De Genova are various and substantive, but they do not consist in a rejection of his right to dissent. They merely extend such rights to all participants in the debate. . . . We are, moreover, deeply distressed that the intellectual and discursive energies of our colleagues may be dissipated in contests that have no ground in substantiated truths, but that inhabit the realm of rumor. . . . We hope that these statements are read as manifestations of our respect for free speech. We also hope that readers understand why our affirmation of this right cannot become the grounds of our own silencing.

Hence the mobilization of concerned intellectuals to express their solidarity with a colleague who was being subjected to an extraordinary campaign of vilification over his speech was perversely transfigured into an occasion for the alleged "silencing" of some of those who were taking part, to varying degrees, in the vilification.

Although the statement sought to verify and briefly outline the nature of an array of objections to my speech (the details of which I have omitted here),²⁰ what is supremely duplicitous in this text is that *none* of those expressions of disagreement with my remarks—literally, *no part* of "the conversation that . . . occurred since the Teach-In"—ever involved an actual exchange

with me. My ostensible colleagues had made me the *object* of their objections, but I was never once invited into a dialogue or debate of any kind. By issuing a collective statement accompanied by a list of signatories, moreover, this rejoinder performatively presented itself *as if* it were enunciated in the name of the department as a whole (although several prominent members of the faculty had declined to sign). To ensure that their grievances would be noted, the organizers of this effort literally gathered e-mail addresses for every individual petitioner possible and sent out their reply. For many of the recipients, this statement served merely to confirm their worst fears.

Throughout these days and weeks after the story broke, I was hounded constantly by the television, radio, and print news media. My remarks became a favorite *bête noir* for the full rogues' gallery of right-wing pundits on television, radio, and the Internet. I was even invited to a live debate with Newt Gingrich and Sean Hannity, which they proposed to hold at the Columbia University Law School. In this context of intense adversity, with the barrage of harassment and death threats unabated, even after the initial two or three weeks, I was eager to have a more full representation of my point of view heard. I therefore granted an interview to the seemingly stodgy *Chronicle of Higher Education*, whose editors then ran the piece—without my knowledge or consent—under a headline nominating me “The Most Hated Professor in America” (April 18, 2003). Hence the widest public forum for news and discussion within the U.S. academy broadcasted a rather sensationalist confirmation that, within the imperial university, some forms of dissent could only be deemed anathema, indeed loathsome.

Becoming an Object of Toleration

In the variety of adverse reactions of my colleagues and administrative overseers, there was a rather telling consistency in their obligatory declarations that they, *of course*, “defended” my First Amendment right to free speech. Beneath this liberal pretension and their apparent confidence in the unquestionable fixity of that supposed “right,” one nonetheless detects the persistent trace of a very palpable anxiety about the extent to which such civil liberties were in any sense secure or reliable in the prevailing political climate of securitarianism under the War on Terror’s official “state of emergency.” Moreover, inasmuch as these commentators (from Bollinger down through Morris, Scott, and the sundry signatories of the statement in response to the petitioners) were unanimous about my speech being “protected,” they

routinely affirmed that I was “within my rights” to say whatever I wanted. My speech, therefore, was strictly *lawful* (that is to say, not criminal), even if it was morally repugnant or politically reckless. My speech, then, was rendered an object of their *toleration*: it was something to be “tolerated,” not because it was in any sense “deserving,” but because affording it such grudging tolerance was a necessary evil in the self-interest of preserving the presumable “rights” or liberties that these colleagues felt to be endangered even for themselves.

Within this liberal framework, of course, the form of repercussion would not be the prohibitory mode of censorship but rather the *inhibitory* mode imposed through *censure*. In other words, insofar as I was untenured, a cacophony of denunciation was meant to effectively silence me through an injunction to *self-censorship*. My structural position ordinarily ought to have ensured that I inhabited a condition of sustained and protracted vulnerability to the punitive professional recrimination of an eventual denial of promotion and tenure. When I violated the tacit terms of that academic covenant—which pervasively encourages scholars to speak and write in disguised, Aesopian, obfuscatory language and exalts the exchange value of apparently sophisticated esoteric complexity—the penalty was not overt official sanction but instead a concerted silencing that could be enforced only through the multifarious manifestations of political disapprobation and professional disregard. During the six years after the teach-in that I remained employed there, I was never again invited to speak publicly at Columbia—about neither my scholarship nor my politics—except by students. I had been summarily made into a pariah in my home institution.

Two months after the controversy over my speech erupted, Bollinger addressed the families of graduating students in his commencement address. Predictably, he framed his remarks with the obligatory gesture toward the future and the prospective careers that awaited the young people who were celebrating the completion of their educational experience at Columbia. Bollinger explicitly signaled the salience of the events of September 11, 2001, for this generation, and he unreservedly upheld the notion of U.S. global hegemony as their special collective responsibility:

What is the New World to look like, with the United States as the dominant military, economic, and cultural power on the planet? As a society, we are just beginning to feel our way into this New World. . . . What are our responsibilities? What should be the character of our

relationships with the other parts of the world? . . . These are the kinds of future-shaping questions that confronted the early graduates of Columbia, like Hamilton, Jay, and Livingston, who had to figure out the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and this is the magnitude of the questions now confronting you, and us.

Given the recent (and still fresh) scandal surrounding my remarks, furthermore, Bollinger also invoked the dilemmas of free speech, with recourse to a rather revealing analogy, which I quote here at length:

Eight decades ago, in 1918, five Russian aliens living in New York City were arrested for distributing leaflets praising the Russian Revolution, denouncing President Woodrow Wilson for military actions in the First World War, and calling for a general strike among workers, especially workers at munitions plants. The case became a landmark in the development of our principle of freedom of speech because of a famous opinion by Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. Holmes had no sympathy for the speakers, whom he called “poor and puny anonymities,” or their message, which he called a “creed of ignorance and immaturity.” But he argued that our Constitution has a “theory” and that theory is that “the ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas—that the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market. . . .” This means that the First Amendment should protect speech until the point at which it “so imminently threaten[s] interference with the lawful and pressing purposes . . . that an immediate check is required to save the country.”

But there is, and was, another view. A well-known law professor, John Wigmore, challenged Holmes. The nation was at war, he said, the outcome was uncertain, soldiers were dying, and munitions were critical. Holmes was “blind to the crisis—blind to the lasting needs of the fighter in the field, blind to the straining toil of the workers at home, obtuse to the fearful situation which then obsessed the whole mind and heart of the country.” Here we have, he said, a “misplaced reverence” for freedom of speech at the expense of our proper concern for fellow citizens. And, so, to him the “moral right of the majority to enter upon the war imports the moral right to secure

success by suppressing public agitation against the completion of the struggle.”

Holmes, in fact, was on the losing side of this decision, but his dissenting views carried the day with history—with history, that is, up to now. The feelings we have that I have called familial, and that live in an extended orbit . . . including the soldiers who fight on the nation’s behalf, often clash with the seemingly abstract values and principles we also embrace for social and other purposes. That was true one hundred years ago; it is true today; and it will still be true one hundred years from now. I believe Holmes had it right (although I prefer different reasons), and Wigmore did not. But that is not my point. My point is that now and in the future we will need, as much as ever and perhaps even more so, to bear in mind the underlying sources of the tensions we feel in difficult issues, to bear in mind how those before us resolved them, and to bear in mind that some hard questions never will and really never should disappear.²¹

Thus Bollinger sought to defend his position yet again, this time by assuming the posture of the pedagogue. By implication, he seemed to reaffirm with this analogy that the message of one Nicholas De Genova—an untenured assistant professor and, as such, indisputably a “poor and puny anonymity”—was one of “ignorance and immaturity.” But the immediate passions of the moment, the quasi-primordial (“familial”) feelings that many might extend so far as to encompass the nation’s soldiers, had to be tempered by the established wisdom acquired with the long view of history: the “seemingly abstract values” of free speech and a “free trade in ideas . . . in the competition of the market” had to be protected in order to ensure “the ultimate good.” These were “hard questions” and “difficult issues,” Bollinger acknowledged, but he reminded his audience on this auspicious occasion that he had Oliver Wendell Holmes and the Constitution on his side.

The Imperial University: Autonomy as “Self-Policing”

This sort of self-congratulatory justification on Bollinger’s part for his refusal to buckle under the tempestuous pressures of the political moment, however, was hardly the genuine and devout commitment to the freedom of speech and expression, *as such*, that it pretended to be. There was always another unspoken dimension. Shortly before Bollinger’s speech to the

commencement audience, the outgoing provost of Columbia, Jonathan Cole, gave a lecture on “Defending the Idea of the University in Troubled Times” (May 9, 2003), published thereafter as an essay on “defending the university post-9/11.” Long esteemed as a stalwart liberal champion of academic freedom, Cole contended explicitly that “we, in defending the idea of the university, must educate the public about why we defend the faculty whose ideas offend many people.” His reasoning was quite simply that those who would seek to enforce the majority opinion did not adequately comprehend that they are merely the “current beneficiaries of a predominant point of view” and that “the tables can turn quickly.” Moreover, in Cole’s estimation, there was a special significance to the scandal surrounding my speech. Not only did it involve a dramatically greater sheer *quantity* of adverse reaction from the general public and alumni in the form of irate e-mails, letters, and phone calls than other comparable controversies, but it also signaled a qualitative shift. The De Genova case was “important,” Cole clarified, “because the type of protest took on a different character.” Citing the petition from 104 U.S. congressmen demanding my dismissal, he explained, “It is deeply troubling that nearly a quarter of the members of the House of Representatives should have such a profound misunderstanding of the basic principles governing a university—in particular, the process of self-policing through application of organized skepticism that actually worked at Columbia in this case through the criticism of his speech by colleagues.”²² Cole contended that my remarks were “immediately—*immediately*—criticized as totally inappropriate by other distinguished faculty members who took part in the teach-in” (emphasis in original), and presumably it is this that he sought to depict as “organized skepticism” and robust criticism. In fact, “immediately” (i.e., during the teach-in), there was virtually no real substantive intellectual engagement or debate, merely a few very brief remarks taking exception to particular details of my speech. Be that as it may, however, the more crucial proposition here concerns what Cole had to say about “the basic principles governing a university.” In this regard, he explicitly quoted the petition from Congress that noted that I had “not yet earned the promise of lifetime academic employment,” namely, *tenure*. Thus what was “deeply troubling” for Cole was that so many elected officials seemed oblivious to, or irreverent toward, the fact that universities have their own internal mechanisms for “self-policing.”

Indeed, it is the tenure process that serves as the most decisive disciplinary technology within academia. Cole seemed to insinuate that the

bombastic sort of opportunistic meddling in the internal governance of the university, instigated by J. D. Hayworth and his Republican cohort in Congress, was an affront to basic democratic protocols with respect to academic freedom of thought and expression. We have our own ways of dealing with the likes of Nicholas De Genova, thank you, Cole seemed to reply. We can police our own ideological parameters quite efficiently enough without your clumsy and ham-fisted intrusions into the sanctity of the scholarly precinct.

For his part, Hayworth understood well enough how the imperial university works. In his original letter to Bollinger (dated April 1, 2003) urging that I be fired, Hayworth nevertheless dutifully invoked “a deep appreciation for America’s tradition of academic freedom.” Subsequently, however, he repeatedly clarified his position that there was indeed nothing “academic” about my intervention at the teach-in and it therefore did not deserve the protection of academic freedom: according to Hayworth, “it was hate speech, pure and simple.” And while he admitted that I had a “right” to speak however I might, he contended that I did not enjoy any comparable right to employment at a prestigious university. Two weeks after initiating his campaign to have me terminated, following Bollinger’s official rebuke, Hayworth derisively affirmed his sense that Columbia’s officialdom was merely “[hiding] behind the highfalutin principle of ‘academic freedom’ and the First Amendment,” insisting that for such “nutty professors” as the “mouthy” Nicholas De Genova, academic freedom was truly the last refuge of “seditious” scoundrels. More important, however, Hayworth smugly proclaimed, “I predict that when the time is right, Nicholas De Genova will be quietly denied tenure.”²³

This, after all, is almost precisely what happened. A few years after the events, when the scandal had long subsided, Columbia quietly denied me promotion in 2007 and preempted the possibility of my being considered for tenure review.²⁴ In the letter officially notifying me of the senior anthropology faculty’s decision, the portion concerning the putative basis for the verdict reads, “It is the [tenured faculty]’s judgment that, while you have a noteworthy record of teaching and service, you have been sufficiently productive in terms of your record of publication, and you have begun to achieve outside recognition for your work, there remain substantive reservations about your scholarship. In particular, with the focus on your singly-authored book, the [tenured faculty] concluded that this did not demonstrate the high level of scholarly achievement necessary for tenure at Columbia, which is the chief criterion for promotion to Associate Professor.” Notably, the singly authored

book specified in the letter—one of three scholarly books that I published during the four years following the 2003 teach-in—had won two awards and was a finalist for another. Just one year after the scandal, Dirks, formerly chair of the Department of Anthropology, had been appointed executive vice president of arts and sciences at Columbia. Bollinger, for his part, went on to heavy-handedly preside over one public free speech controversy after another.

Intellectual Freedom . . . or Scandal as a Way of Life

Here, it is instructive to recall the poignant remarks of Edward Said, the Palestinian scholar who, until his death in September 2003, was indisputably Columbia's most eminent professor. Speaking in particular of universities in the Arab world, Said depicted a bleak scenario for intellectual freedom whenever the demands of nationalist politics prevailed in academia: "Alas, political conformity rather than academic excellence was often made to serve as a criterion for promotion and appointment, with the general result that timidity, a studious lack of imagination, and careful conservatism came to rule intellectual practice. Moreover, because the general atmosphere . . . has become both conspiratorial and, I am sorry to say, repressive—all in the name of national security—nationalism in the university has come to represent not freedom but accommodation, not brilliance and daring but caution and fear, not the advancement of knowledge but self-preservation."²⁵ Said originally delivered these remarks in South Africa in the immediate aftermath of the fall of apartheid as a cautionary tale. He was specifically concerned to identify the pitfalls of a nationalist consensus that might foreclose the possibility of free, open-ended, and critical inquiry in scholarly life. "If the academy is to be a place for the realization not of the nation but of the intellect—and that, I think, is the academy's reason for being," he asserted, "then the intellect must not be coercively held in thrall to the authority of the national identity."²⁶ Paradoxically, these insights may finally prove to have become even more pertinent in the imperial metropole than in those fledgling states that have variously sought to institutionalize their "national liberation" in the wake of decolonization and postcolonial sovereignty. For if every nationalism is truly a stultifying foreclosure of our imaginative political horizons, the cruel and decadent imperial national chauvinism of the United States is surely more invested than any other in suppressing any

radical alternatives to the existing world order, which the U.S. nation-state has itself largely produced and seeks to continue to dominate.

At the height of the controversy over my speech, amid the mad scramble to rebuke and delegitimize me, it was Edward Said—for me, a very esteemed and precious senior colleague—who summoned me to his home to offer his support and counsel. At the time, Professor Said was nearing the end of a very long battle with leukemia and the repeated torment that resulted from its medical treatment with chemotherapy. I did not know Edward very well, but we had collaborated as part of a very small circle of Columbia professors operating as the Faculty Committee on Palestine, which had launched a campaign in fall 2002 for the divestment of Columbia University funds from firms doing business with the Israeli military. It had been Bollinger's very first baldly political act as the university's president to denounce our efforts: he had lambasted the analogy between the Israeli occupation of Palestine with South African apartheid as "offensive and grotesque."²⁷ A few months later, during the ongoing media firestorm over my antiwar speech, sitting in his parlor, Edward was deeply alarmed to learn that I had granted an interview to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (which had not yet appeared in print). He was convinced that it would only serve to do more damage. (When the interview was published, the *Chronicle* unmistakably proved Edward's words to have been prophetic.) He imparted to me a most valuable and profoundly memorable lesson: "Never talk to the press!" Edward had earned this sage insight through hard personal experience (particularly when he was pilloried in the media for symbolically throwing a stone across the Israeli border with Lebanon). Edward's words will always remain with me as a lasting gift. He understood, as I was quickly learning, that it did not matter what I might say now any more than it mattered what I had said in the first place. The society of the spectacle in which we live is one in which the mass media opportunistically exploit, feed upon, and systematically distort every instance of scandal as an end in itself.²⁸ Thus the news media can never provide a genuine forum or platform for the substantive articulation or clarification of any complex intellectual, ethical, or political position, particularly any that radically disrupts or seeks to subvert the dominant order of society.

I had publicly dared to follow through the logical implications of my opposition to the invasion by explicitly affirming what for me was the only sound conclusion—that one must actually endorse the defeat of the imperialist aggressor, the United States. My remarks had been intended as an intervention into the vital debates within the antiwar movement in the United

States, beginning on my own campus. What ensued was something that no one had anticipated. In that spectacular context of unrelenting and unforgetting publicity, if university faculty across the United States had not been adequately forewarned by the Columbia president's initial insinuation that I was culpable of an unpardonable kind of extremism and had committed a sort of rhetorical treason, there followed countless subsequent verifications that my career and my life itself were imperiled as a consequence. As many of my department's international graduate students argued in my defense, my position was indeed the virtually unanimous and uncontroversial position of the *global* antiwar movement outside of the United States. It was only scandalous—indeed, unpardonable and intolerable—within the imperial university of the United States. Ironically, in his scholarly work on British colonialism in India, Dirks himself has written, “No imperial ambition can ever be unencumbered by scandal. Indeed, scandal is what empire is all about.”²⁹

Notes

1. George W. Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” White House Office of the Press Secretary, September 20, 2001, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

2. Randolph S. Bourne, “The War and the Intellectuals,” in *War and the Intellectuals: Collected Essays, 1915–1919* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1999), 4.

3. By the perversion of collective historical memory with regard to the Battle of Mogadishu, I refer of course to the nationalist revision of those events in the Hollywood film *Black Hawk Down* (2001). Remarkably, historical consciousness of what had actually happened in Somalia just one decade earlier tended to be so shallow that news reports routinely, indeed ubiquitously, framed my remarks with explicit reference to the cinematic representation of the real events. By 2003, the mythologized Hollywood version had evidently acquired a more enduring truth and significance.

4. Lee Bollinger, press statement released March 29, 2003, and posted on the Columbia University website as “President Bollinger’s Statement on Recent Comments by Assistant Professor De Genova,” http://www.columbia.edu/cu/news/03/03/statement_Genova.html.

5. Nicholas Dirks, e-mail reply to the *National Review*, as reproduced online and partially quoted in Margaret Hunt Gram, “De Genova Teach-In Comments Spark Fury: Bollinger, Professors Denounce His Call for ‘a Million Mogadishus,’” *Columbia Spectator*, March 31, 2003, <http://media.www.columbiaspectator.com/media/storage/>

paper865/news/2003/03/31/News/De.Genova.TeachIn.Comments.Spark.Fury-2036920.shtml.

6. See “Quits Columbia; Assails Trustees,” *New York Times*, October 9, 1917, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=FB071FFA3A5F157A93CBA9178BD95F438185F9>. See also the derisive editorial “Columbia’s Deliverance,” *New York Times*, October 10, 1917, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9807E2DA113BE03ABC4852DFB667838C609EDE>.

7. Randolph S. Bourne, “The Idea of a University,” in *War and the Intellectuals: Collected Essays, 1915–1919* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1999), 152–53.

8. Lee C. Bollinger, “The Idea of a University,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 15, 2003, <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/president/docs/communications/2003-2004/031015-idea-of-a-university.html>.

9. Bourne, “The Idea of a University,” 154; I allude to Bollinger’s book, *Uninhibited, Robust, and Wide-Open: A Free Press for a New Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

10. Lee C. Bollinger, “Academic Freedom and the Scholarly Temperament” (Benjamin N. Cardozo lecture), *The Record of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York* 60, no. 2 (2005): 328.

11. “Columbia ♥ Hate,” *New York Post*, March 30, 2003, <http://www.unitedjerusalem.org/index2.aspx?id=268648&Date=3/30/2003>.

12. For background, see generally the Wikipedia entries on Levy (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mordechai_Levy) and the JDO (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_Defense_Organization). This was merely one example among many of a conflation of my opposition to the Iraq invasion with comments that I had made in April 2002 at a public rally at Columbia in support of the people of Palestine. Those pro-Palestinian remarks had originally become the object of a much smaller scandal instigated by coverage in the *New York Post* but were later revisited frequently in denunciations of my opposition to the Iraq War.

13. *New York Times* readers were informed of the Columbia University building and room number as well as the day of the week that my undergraduate course met; see Dan Barry, “For a Future Soldier, Life on a Liberal Campus Can Be a Battle,” *New York Times*, April 2, 2003, B13, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/02/nyregion/nation-war-war-home-for-future-soldier-life-liberal-campus-can-be-battle.html?pagewanted=2>.

14. An editorial in the student-run campus newspaper, the *Columbia Spectator*, had similarly made the charge that the teach-in was to be faulted for conflating “teaching” with “advocacy.” In a letter to the editor (dated March 28, printed March 31, 2003, alongside my own letter responding to the coverage of my speech), Eric Foner, a professor of history and one of the event’s organizers, responded sarcastically that the editors needed to consult “a resource they seem

not to have previously encountered—the dictionary.” Supplying a definition of the term *teach-in*, Foner affirmed that the essence of such an event was precisely “the combination of education and advocacy.” Morris would appear to have fallen into the same misconception. See <http://www.columbiaspectator.com/2003/03/31/letters-editorprofessor-qualifies-quotation-article-and-addresses-criticism>.

15. In an editorial comment (dated May 2003), opening an issue of the academic journal that he founded, Scott states that “we live today, wherever we live, in a fundamental ‘state of emergency’” characterized by “an ominous global project . . . taking shape with ferocious speed”; David Scott, “Editorial Comment: Our Times,” *Small Axe*, no. 14 (September 2003): v. One is left to wonder what indeed Scott would consider to be appropriate as a response to an “emergency.” Of course, writing in a small-circulation academic publication does afford some rhetorical license. In an essay in a later issue of the same journal, Scott writes, “We live in Dark Times. They do not favor forbearance, they do not shelter generosity, they do not encourage receptivity. They are, rather, obdurate times . . . that seem to require a new routine of silencing and assimilation, a new regime of prostration, submission, and humiliation. . . . But Dark Times . . . need people who can give us illumination—and calls them forth into the public realm. . . . They are people whose vocation of dissent enables us to glimpse some possibility in ourselves and in others hitherto obscured by the priority we give to the solace of a good night’s rest”; David Scott, “Stuart Hall’s Ethics,” *Small Axe*, no. 17 (March 2005): 2. It is regrettable that my own vocation of dissent—whatever its shortcomings—which propelled me nonetheless irreversibly into the public realm during these dark times, never met with Scott’s forbearance, generosity, or receptivity.

16. Ron Howell, “Columbia Professor Calls for ‘a Million Mogadishus,’” *Newsday*, March 28, 2003; reprinted by the *Sikh Times*, http://www.sikhtimes.com/news_032703b.html.

17. Tamar Lewin, “At Columbia, Call for Death of U.S. Forces Is Denounced,” *New York Times*, March 29, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/29/education/29PROF.html?ex=1049605200&en=b2571f49df0e2981&ei=5062&partner=GOOGLE>.

18. Gram, “De Genova Teach-In Comments Spark Fury.”

19. The petition was publicized online on the website of Historians against the War, on a page concerning “Civil Liberties and Academic Freedom”; full text available at <http://www.historiansagainstar.org/freedom/genova.html>.

20. For considerations of length, I have opted to omit these details. A fuller discussion will appear in my forthcoming book, *Crossing the Line: A Memoir of Free Speech during Wartime*. Notably, these various objections and criticisms of my comments were apparently based entirely on the news media reportage or Morris’s representations of my speech.

21. Lee Bollinger, “2003 Commencement Address,” Columbia University, May

21, 2003, <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/president/docs/communications/2002-2003/030521-commencement.html>.

22. Jonathan R. Cole, “The Patriot Act on Campus: Defending the University Post-9/11,” *Boston Review*, Summer 2003, <http://bostonreview.net/BR28.3/cole.html>.

23. J. D. Hayworth, “Mouthy Professor Should Be Fired,” *Arizona Republic*, April 14, 2003, <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/opinions/articles/2003/04/14/20030414hayworth14.html>.

24. Tenure at Columbia operates on a seven-year model, whereby there is a fifth-year review at which one may be promoted to associate professor (without tenure)—or terminated with no prospect that an ensuing legal dispute could ever result directly in a granting of tenure.

25. Edward W. Said, “Identity, Authority, and Freedom: The Potentate and the Traveler,” *Transition* 54 (1991): 4–18.

26. *Ibid.*, 13.

27. Telis Demos, “Bollinger Dismisses Faculty Petition for Israel Divestment,” *Columbia Spectator*, November 8, 2002, <http://www.columbiaspectator.com/2002/11/08/bollinger-dismisses-faculty-petition-israel-divestment>.

28. See Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967; repr. New York: Zone Books, 1995). For a fuller discussion of the so-called War on Terror in terms of the society of the spectacle, see Nicholas De Genova, “Spectacle of Terror, Spectacle of Security,” in *Accumulating Insecurity: Violence and Dispossession in the Making of Everyday Life*, ed. Shelley Feldman, Charles Geisler, and Gayatri Menon (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 141–65. For a fuller discussion of the Debord’s original theorization of this concept, see Nicholas De Genova, “Alien Powers: Deportable Labor and the Spectacle of Security,” in *The Contested Politics of Mobility: Borderzones and Irregularity*, ed. Vicki Squire (London: Routledge, 2011), 91–115.

29. Nicholas Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 35.