

no purpose. Similarly, Jud's skin color, while relevant to the question of race, is less significant than other racial cues hidden in the text. Once again, I refer Steig back to my article for a close analysis of this textual evidence.

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Passion and Mental Work

To the Editor:

Contextualizing contemporary criticism of our profession in a long tradition of American anti-intellectualism, Martha Banta protests against the tendency to evaluate mental work using principles of industrial productivity (Editor's Column, "Mental Work, Metal Work," 113 [1998]: 199–211). Banta's historical parallels are useful, and her resistance to the quantification of mental labor is admirable. Yet her column goes awry as soon as she invokes "passion" as a philosophical consolation for disenfranchised scholars. Giving up at the outset on *PMLA*'s "leverage in the world of 'decision makers,'" Banta suggests the journal instead "encourage our right to take passionate interest in our work." Passion for reading and writing is, of course, a good thing. But in Banta's argument passion is not just a good or even a "right" but an obligation: "If you never had it, then you ought not to be in this business" (206). As such, passion becomes a given that Banta defends from scholarly inquiry and deploys against the spirit of intellectual freedom that she means to promote.

"By what signs is authentic passion to be recognized?" Banta asks. Indeed, if those of us who don't have it are to get out of town, then we must learn to recognize it. Banta's question acknowledges that some passion is inauthentic and that distinguishing the authentic kind is not automatic but depends on "signs." This is so even though it is one's own passion that is at issue. But Banta's answer to the question of discerning passion is circular: passion "is known by the swell of intellectual joy that comes from reading a work [. . .] or from exploring the forms a language takes" (206). I must recognize the authenticity of my passion by feeling an authentic passion: passion acts as the sign of passion. All this circularity accomplishes is the substitution of "joy" for passion in general. It is not passion in general that is an obligation, then, but passion of only one sort. If in reading I am moved to suspicion, puzzlement, fright, or (as may happen) indignation, should I question the legitimacy of my motivations? Do these emotions make me write for the wrong reasons?

I'd assume that Banta was using joy as an innocuous, accidental example if she did not, in a surprising turn, go on to criticize the Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities for seeking scholars to study the "cultural conventions and codes that attempt to fix, ritualize, and control" the emotions (the words of the Getty's program description, quoted by Banta). Why on earth should Banta object to the Getty's "stated intention" as she cites it: to "bring scholars together to study the variety of ways in which the passions have been represented and classified" (206)? There may be a causal connection, she suggests, between "dwell[ing] on the representing of the passions" and "fear[ing]" one's "own intellectual passions" (207). It is as though she assumed we couldn't study passions and feel them at the same time. In the logic of the column, passion is strangely and singularly excluded from investigation, inspiring research but not to be probed itself, at least not as convention. Because Banta wants passion to be "the ruling force of one's intellectual work" (206), it is particularly disturbing that she shrinks from including passion—which drives research—from scrutiny *in* research. Further, the movement of her argument, from its eloquent description of cultural antagonism toward mental work to its rather sudden praise of passion, raises questions about the relation of passion to this cultural context. Banta's juxtaposition seems to lend passion the power to compensate scholars in place of other rewards and to place on scholars the duty of accepting its compensation. Given her discomfort with the Getty project, it is hard not to conclude that, on some level, she does not want us to look too closely at the "cultural conventions and codes" that support our passion for work and thus keep us doing what we do.

There are indeed reasons to wonder why we feel so passionately. That we do I don't question; that we always should I do question. Graduate students who expect prolonged and perhaps permanent unemployment, lecturers who endure intolerable wages and conditions, assistant professors who bear the burden of rising expectations and diminishing support, and all the rest of us grateful professors, at best underpaid and undervalued as no other professionals are in proportion to their investments and facing intensifying political hostility—we all keep doing this because we "love" it. We are educated to love it, to take it because we love it, and sometimes to love taking it. And *PMLA*, as Martha Banta writes, is always "waiting to see the happy results" (208). At least Banta's column shows well why it is time to make critical passion an object of inquiry.

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