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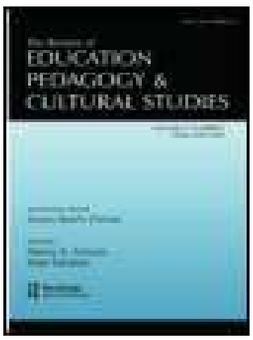

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Bolt-holes and breathing spaces in the system: On forms of academic resistance (or, can the university be a site of utopian possibility?)

Darren Webb

We live in the era of the corporate-imperial university. The notion of "the corporate university"[1] points to the academy as a marketized sphere in which the costs of education are shifted from the state onto students; students are positioned as consumers of an individual investment good even as they experience higher education as an extended period of underpaid labor preparing them for an even longer period of crippling debt; teaching is dominated by performance indicators linked to customer satisfaction and human capital formation; the workforce becomes increasingly casualized, insecure and exploited, a precariat operating within a censorious culture of audit, surveillance, and performance management; research is transformed into a high-stakes competition, framed by a regime of indicator fetishism, discouraging long-term research while encouraging research fraud; self-governance disappears as the administrator displaces the academic as the central figure of the university; a culture of organized mistrust permeates the institution, leading administrators to create an ever-more-elaborate bureaucratic cage within which the academic can safely be contained; an increasingly standardized and technically oriented curriculum undermines academic freedom and critical inquiry; universities enter into partnerships with business, subsidizing training costs while operating more like for-profit corporations themselves, developing and marketing their own commercial products; an obsession with corporate branding is accompanied by a dance in which universities track and mimic each other's moves, becoming almost indistinguishable from each other; the sector becomes awash with vision and mission statements, each identical and identically vacuous; capital investment projects escalate at the same time as academic staffing levels fall; cities are colonized, communities are dispossessed and displaced, to create new architectural monuments to grace the covers of overseas marketing brochures that could not be more at odds with the dismal realities of the under-resourced departments students actually encounter.

The notion of "the imperial university"[2] locates the academy within the network of state apparatuses of control, discipline, surveillance, carcerality,

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and violence, highlighting the alliance between the academy, state power and state formation, the delegitimization of dissent and the retrenchment and intensification of the academic-military-industrial complex. The university is viewed, not as an innocent institution for the public good, but rather as a site for trialing new forms of oppression and exploitation, an institution intimately involved in the reproduction of inequalities. The university is recognized increasingly as a corrupt and criminal institution complicit in patriarchal, colonial and racist systems and processes; a criminal institution comparable to the police as a racialized, gendered and class-based force of authority, surveillance, enforcement and enactments of everyday patterns of structural violence. Cleansing and sanitizing movements of dissent to render itself fit for bourgeois consumption, the university uses the discourse of diversity and inclusion as a rhetorical tool to manufacture consent and mask organizational whiteness. Not merely a marketized sphere, higher education now operates as an oligarchy working with government and business to preserve its own privileges. Forging closer and closer ties with the military as a key source of funding, the strategic imperatives of the military-industrial complex increasingly shape the face of academia.[3]

A key element of the critiques of both the corporate and the imperial university is the erosion of academic freedom and the disciplining of dissent. The scope for resistance is becoming narrower and narrower. The role of new public management is central here. In addition to creating more competition between universities, and giving more financial autonomy to universities, the NPM approach highlights the importance of increased hierarchical control within universities (Busch 2017, 19–20). Individuals with goals not in line with those of their employer are deemed a "moral hazard," to which increased discipline, managerial control and technologies of intimidation are the rational response (Di Leo 2013, 54; Morrison 2016, 124). "Mind your language" and "be careful what you say" are common exhortations and "universities appear to be moving backwards to the era of medieval institutions, where conformity to dominant values was upheld as a principal virtue" (Furedi 2017, 2).[4] An insidious environment of perpetual anxiety forces conformity and quiescence. The corporate-imperial university consolidates its position while dissenting voices are quashed or forced out (Hall and Bowles 2016; Williams 2016).[5]

On the whole, the academic community has lacked the will to fight (Tuchman 2009; Giroux 2011; Halffman and Radder 2015; Jemielniak and Greenwood 2015). Not without justification, academics have been characterized as "among the most conservative, ineffectual and disorganised of workforces," forever deferring action behind the cowardly mantra of "we need to pick our fights" (Docherty 2016, 22-3; Anon 2017, 43). To the extent that the crisis of the university has generated critical responses, these have tended to look backwards with nostalgic longing to Humboldt (Bebbington

2017), Newman (Walton 2011), a post-war "golden age of academic freedom" (Thomas 2011), or a (mythical) past when the university stood as a "citadel of reason" pursuing truth, goodness, and beauty (Inglis 2014, 34–35). If only the university were left alone to realize its guiding purpose of deepening human understanding, we are told, then all would be well (Collini 2012; Barnett 2013). Although it may be harsh to describe such responses as "the lamentations of losers" (Halffman and Radder 2015, 180), there is certainly something about them—something about the writings of a Martha Nussbaum or a Stefan Collini, about organizations like the Council for the Defence of British Universities and the Campaign for the Public University—that smacks of fusty old dons gathered round a bottle of port harking back to a past that never was.

The five stages of grief can all be recognized in these lamentations. There is the denial, the anger, the attempt to bargain to retain some vestiges of that which has been lost, the depression and then the stoic resigned acceptance. The question raised in this article is a simple one: What more can be done? Is resistance possible within the corporate-imperial university? How, where and by whom can it be challenged? I approach these questions as a functionary within a U.K. university and also as a political utopian, as someone who has called repeatedly for renewed utopian thinking and practice both in general and within the sphere of education more specifically (see Webb 2009, 2013, 2017). What can we utopists do to counter and resist the trajectory of the corporate-imperial university? To put a more positive gloss on the question: to what extent can the university serve as a site of utopian possibility? What utopian potential inheres within the contemporary corporate-imperial university?

Creating utopian spaces within the corporate-imperial university

In the 1960s it seemed perfectly reasonable to ascribe a utopian mission to the university. The expansion of the higher education sector saw the creation of a wave of new "utopian universities"—universities deemed to be "utopian" in terms of their architecture, curricula, modes of teaching, internal policies and structure (IHR 2014). It was not uncommon to refer to the university as a "utopian community" (Gray 2012, 54). As late as 1994, Edward Said was maintaining that the Anglo-American university remained a "quasi-utopian space" (Said 1994, 82). Sustained criticism of the corporate-imperial university began to take hold in the mid-1990s (e.g., Readings 1996; Slaughter and Leslie 1997), shortly after Said's study of the modern intellectual, and it has become increasingly difficult to locate utopian possibilities in the curricula, policies and structures of the contemporary academy. A growing number of academics feel compelled to resign their posts in the face of intolerable working conditions. Writing in *The Times Higher*, one such

academic claims that there is no longer scope for resistance within the university. The university is such a constrained space that the battle to reclaim it from the managers and bureaucrats "can only properly be fought from the outside" (Morrish 2017, 49).

There are some, however, who still believe in the utopian potential of the academy. For Henry Giroux, "utopianism consists of the seemingly outmoded idea that education, in the broad sense, consists of intervening in the world in order to change it" (2000, 140). Giroux has consistently argued that the university remains one of the few democratic public spheres where a truly transformative "militant utopianism" can operate (e.g., Giroux 2002, 101; 2014a, 49). Others concur, placing heavy emphasis on the process of creating spaces. Thus, even within the corporate-imperial university there is scope for "the creation of autonomous spaces for radical teaching and learning" (Coté, Day, and de Peuter 2007b, 334). The role of the utopian educator is "to create a space for experiments in new forms of thought and practice" (Firth 2013, 261), "opening intentional spaces that enable unintended possibilities" (Fenwick 2006, 19). Through "our pedagogies and academic work," we can create "insurgent spaces within the academy" (Chatterjee and Sunaina 2014, 43), "anti-imperial spaces … within the imperial university" (Falcon et al. 2014, 266). Indeed, we are called upon "to devise such spaces in academic life and to fashion them where possible" (Dallyn, Marinetto, and Cederstrom 2015, 1042).

The key to the utopian response to the corporate-imperial university, then, seems to lie in *creating spaces*. The utopian academic asks "What spaces of possibility are open to us?" and adopts "an ethos of experimentation that is oriented toward carving out spaces for resistance and reconstruction here and now" (Coté, Day, and de Peuter 2007a, 320, 317). In such a spirit, this article explores three specific "spaces" of resistance, reconstruction and utopian possibility: the classroom; the undercommons; and the occupation. The article argues that although these spaces offer scope for fleeting, transitory, small-scale experiences of utopian possibility, they function more as bolt-holes, breathing spaces, and places of refuge. The article concludes by arguing that the "utopian" academic does have a role to play, but this lies in exploiting their own privilege and working with students, communities and movements outside and divorced from the university.

The utopian classroom

In *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks heralded the university seminar room as "a place where paradise can be created" (hooks 1994, 207). How might we conceive the contemporary seminar room as such a space? It is important to remind ourselves here that domination is always partial and "leaky" (Giroux 2000, 144). Mainstream educational settings are not completely

closed and educational practices are not totally controlled (Evans and Giroux 2015, 33). Spaces for "utopian pedagogical experimentation" still exist (Dyer-Witherford 2007, 59). It is still possible, for example, to teach "radical" courses that link everyday life to the production of values and power (Coté, Day, and de Peuter 2007b), to offer "subversive" collective readings of utopian texts (Seyferth 2009), and to practice "disruptive" pedagogies that encourage the emergence of counter-narratives (Adsit et al. 2015). There is scope still for a dialogical pedagogy that prefigures in the very process of collaborative learning the kind of social relations that might characterize an alternative way of being. In the classroom, "we can show [students] that there are possibilities for doing things another way, that we don't have to live like this if we choose not to do so" (Shannon 2009, 188).

But let us acknowledge the limitations. A seminar, an undergraduate module, a Masters program—these are going to do little to challenge the corporate-imperial university. The utopian educator may work hard to protect their autonomous learning spaces, and to make these sites for experiments in new forms of thought and practice, but we should not overestimate their transformative potential. Here I note four limitations to the utopian classroom:

Firstly, there is often a profound disjuncture between the claims made on behalf of a particular program or project and the realities of its enactment. Mike Neary's "student-as-producer," for example, sought "to design an alternative model for the university, as a rehearsal for an alternative social world within which it might subsist" (Neary 2010). Informed by Marx, Benjamin, Lefebvre, Debord, and others, student-as-producer "brings revolutionary pedagogy to life" and prefigures a postcapitalist society characterized by "from each according to their abilities" (Neary 2012a, 5–6). On paper, then, it seems that Neary—occupying a position of power as Dean of Teaching and Learning at the University of Lincoln between 2007–2014—was creating a transformative utopian space in every classroom across the entire campus. The reality, however, was somewhat more modest. Beneath the endless references to radical thinkers past and present, what student-as-producer actually did was enhance the research component of the undergraduate curriculum (Neary 2014) while being pragmatically "mindful of the need for the university to survive and prosper" (Neary 2010). A worthwhile endeavor certainly, but hardly a revolutionary project prefiguring post-capitalist society. The field of critical pedagogy/radical education is heavy on bombast and the realities of the utopian classroom often fall short of the theory-heavy promises.[6]

Secondly, a focus on the classroom as the site of utopian practice is sometimes accompanied by a simplistic model of social change. Even in its most revolutionary formulations—in the work of Paula Allman (2001), for example—the classroom interactions of the utopian educator are directed towards transforming individual consciousness. It is then assumed that

enlightened individuals, newly conscientized, will leave the classroom and somehow bring about social change (Lissovoy 2009, 198; Cho 2013, 94). At its worst, utopian pedagogy shares the quasi-colonial understanding of change typical of the corporate-imperial university. Wink, for example, tells us that radical pedagogy "starts in the classroom but goes out into the community to make life a little better" (Wink 2011, 24). Darder, too, talks about an emancipatory pedagogy that seeks to "reach beyond the boundaries of the classroom into communities, workplaces, and public arenas" (Darder 2009, 158). Here we have a process akin to the manifold "outreach" activities undertaken by higher education institutions, through which communities are blessed by interventions from the academy, "reaching out" to make their lives a little better, in a contemporary form of noblesse oblige (Seybold 2008).

Thirdly, the corporate-imperial university draws strength from the utopian classroom, happily accommodating sites of resistance in order to recuperate them as symbols of its tolerance (Oparah 2014). The utopian classroom might be seen as "a release-valve for intellectual dissonance … supervised by its very enemies" (Inoperative Committee 2011, 4). A release valve because, as Michael Apple has long complained, radical pedagogy is often adopted to resolve personal crises brought about by the "contradictory class location" of academics who want to portray themselves as politically engaged (2013, 14). Spaces of experimentation within the academy may have as much to do with "a certain ritual of self-display" as they do with any form of genuine commitment to social transformation (Ĉiĉigoj, Apostolou-Hölscher, and Rusham 2015, 272). Students, too, are aware that "radical" courses on campus serve as a "vaccination" against future outbreaks of radicalism in society at large (Anon 2010c, 32). As one group put it: "A taste of the poison serves well to inoculate us against any confrontational radicalism" (Anon 2010b, 15). This release of dissonance is supervised by its enemies in the simple but very real sense that contemporary university governance includes so that it can control (De Nicola and Roggero 2011, 36).

Finally, the utopian classroom will never be anything more than a fringe performance to be tolerated at the margins. The university, of course, is hostile to radical learning spaces "trying to establish outcomes contrary to the logic of the market" (Albert 2007, 324). It is well noted that critical/radical/utopian spaces within the academy are shrinking (Shear 2008, 56; Canaan 2013; Amsler 2015, 169, Lawrence 2015) and that departments offering perspectives challenging the mainstream risk closure (Seybold 2008, 117–118; Adsit et al. 2015, 22). It is also worth highlighting that the utopian university is unviable in the absence of wider systemic change because, quite simply, "any university that operated along these lines would quickly become irrelevant to the vast majority of people who need an education that provides them with a better chance of finding work" (Holmes and Research and Destroy and Dead Labour 2011, 13). The utopian classroom, then, will remain

a novelty to be controlled within the corporate-imperial university. And "as long as the radical is in the minority, as long as the radical is unable to drive campus culture, nothing is threatened" (Prashad 2014, 330).

The utopian classroom is more a safe haven to retreat to than a space that can spearhead social transformation. I am taken in particular by Zaslove's (2007, 98) description of *utopian pedagogy* as "an exiled form of education" in search of "bolt holes and breathing spaces in the system." This is a powerful and illuminating metaphor. The dictionary definition of bolt-hole is, "A place where you can escape and hide from something that is dangerous or unpleasant." The "search for bolt-holes" captures something of the reality of utopian pedagogy within the corporate-imperial university. The utopian classroom creates a breathing space in the suffocating environment of the formal education system, a safe space in which one can hide from the dangerous spread of market forces and the unpleasant stench of neoliberalism. But the utopian educator is forever on the back foot, retreating, as spaces shrink. The utopian classroom may offer refuge and respite but something more is needed.

The undercommons

"The undercommons" is associated with the work of Fred Moten, Stefano Harney (Harney and Moten 2013) and Stevphen Shukaitis (2009; Undercommoning Collective 2016). At one level, undercommoning is concerned with creating spaces within the academy—"liminal and recombinant spaces" for "subversion" and "sabotage," as Shukaitis puts it (Shukaitis 2009, 173). These spaces are infused with a utopian dimension as they are inhabited by a network of radical alliances who resist elitism, enclosure, commercialization, and "seek to mobilize the unique historical location and material power of the university to imagine and build a world beyond the present order" (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014, 12). By undercommoning together and forging solidarities, the tensions and contradictions of the contemporary academy can be transformed into "visions, actions and experiments for a radically different world" (Undercommoning Collective 2016).

But the undercommons is more than just the creation of spaces with utopian intent. It is a shifting matrix of spaces, processes, relations, and structures of feeling. Harney and Moten do attach importance to teaching and the classroom—in particular as an opportunity to refuse the call to order—but the undercommons exists in institutional cracks outside the classroom: in stairwells, in alleys, in kitchens, in corridors, in smoking areas, in hiding. The undercommons is a community of maroons, outcasts, and fugitives, not of responsible teachers. It is "always an unsafe neighbourhood" (Harney and Moten 2013, 28). In fact, the undercommons is best described as a way of being: a way of being within and against one's institution and a way of being

with and for the community of outcasts (Melamed 2016). Within and against the corporate-imperial university, the subversive intellectual is unprofessional, uncollegial, impractical, disruptive, disloyal, unproductive, unreliable, "obstructive and shiftless, dumb with insolence," forever refusing the call to order (Harney and Moten 2013, 34). With and for the undercommons, *hapticality* describes a way of feeling that is at once unsettled—"to feel at home with the homeless, at ease with the fugitive, at peace with the pursued"—and intensely intimate—"the capacity to feel through others, for others to feel through you, for you to feel them feeling you" (97–98). Together, the maroons of the undercommons engage in study; a mode of sociality, "a kind of way of being with others," walking and talking and thinking and working together "in a way that feels good, the way it should feel good" (111–112, 117).

There is a definite utopian project at work here. Moten tells us that "I believe in the world and want to be in it. I want to be in it all the way to the end of it because I believe in another world in the world and I want to be in *that*" (Harney and Moten 2013, 118). The undercommons is presented as an entry point to this other world in the world. It is a "utopic commonunderground," a utopia "submerged in the interstices and on the outskirts of the fierce and urgent now" (Moten 2008, 1746; Harney and Moten 2013, 51). The call to both disorder and to study—what Freire might have termed the utopian process of denunciation-annunciation—becomes an ontological enactment of something that is already here (Harney and Moten 2013, 133–134). For Harney in particular, the undercommons as a way of being can be understood in terms of rhythm. It is a new rhythm working against the global rhythm of work, the "global assembly line tearing apart the functions of man," the rhythm of inputs and outputs every facet of which must be "measured and managed" (Harney 2015, 174–176). In contrast, the rhythm of the undercommons is "a militant arrhythmia" that unsettles the rhythm of the line, "invites us to feel around us" and brings the utopic commonunderground into the open (177–178).

It is easy to be seduced by the language of the undercommons. Embodying and enacting it, however, is difficult indeed. Being within and against the university, refusing the call to order through insolent obstructive unprofessionalism, is almost impossible to sustain. Halberstam (2009, 45) describes the undercommons as "a marooned community of outcast thinkers who refuse, resist, and renege on the demands of rigor, excellence, and productivity." A romantic and appealing notion for sure but refusing and reneging on "the university of excellence" will cost you your job. When Moten describes subversion as a "series of immanent upheavals" expressed through "vast repertoires of high-frequency complaints, imperceptible frowns, withering turns, silent sidesteps, and ever-vigilant attempts not to see and hear" (2008, 1743), one is reminded instantly of Thomas Docherty, disciplined and suspended for his negative vibes.[7]

Being with and for the maroon community is difficult too. First of all, "Where and how can we find/see the Undercommons at work?" (Ĉiĉigoj, Apostolou-Hölscher, and Rusham 2015, 265). Where and how can one find those liminal spaces of sabotage and subversion, and how does one occupy them in a spirit of hapticality, study, and militant arrhythmia that brings the utopic underground to the surface of the fierce and urgent now? Beautiful language, but how does one live it? Networks do, of course, exist—the Undercommoning Collective, the Edu-Factory Collective, the International Network for Alternative Academia, to name but a few. These are promising spaces for bringing together and harboring the maroons and the fugitives. But networks are typically short-lived, and—as Harney and Moten warned—there is a danger of institutionalization, of taking institutional practices with you into alternative spaces "because we've been inside so much" (Harney and Moten 2013, 148). And so, predictably, meetings of the fugitives come with structure, order, an official agenda, and circulated minutes. The outcasts convene in conventional academic conferences, with parallel sessions, panels of papers, lunch breaks, wine and nibbles (e.g., Edu-Factory 2012). These spaces offer time out, welcome respite, a breathing space, a trip abroad, and then one returns to work.

If hapticality, the touch of the undercommons, is "a visceral register of experience … the feel that what is to come is here" (Bradley 2014, 129–130), then this seems elusive. It is hard to detect a sense of the utopic undercommons rising to the surface of the corporate-imperial university. Moten describes the call to disorder and to study as a way to "excavate new aesthetic, political, and economic dispositions" (Moten 2008, 1745). But this notion of *excavating* is highly problematic. It is common within the discourse of "everyday utopianism"—finding utopia in the everyday, recovering lost or repressed transcendence in "everydayness" (Gardiner 2006)—to describe the process of utopian recovery in terms of excavating: excavating repressed desires, submerged longings, suppressed histories, untapped possibilities. But the fundamental questions of where to dig and how to identify a utopian "find" are never adequately addressed (see Webb 2017). Gardiner defines utopia as "a series of forces, tendencies and possibilities that are immanent in the here and now, in the pragmatic activities of everyday life" (2006, 2). But how are these forces, tendencies and possibilities to be identified and recovered? For Harney and Moten, it is through study, hapticality and militant arrhythmia. These are slippy concepts, however, evading concrete material referents.

What is it to inhabit the undercommons? Those who have written of their experiences refer to "small acts of marronage" such as poaching resources and redeploying them in ways at odds with the university's designs and demands (Reddy 2016, 7), or exploiting funding streams "to form cracks in the institution that enable the Others to invade the university" (Smith, Dyke, and Hermes 2013, 150). For Adusei-Poku (2015), the undercommons is a space

of refuge which is all about survival (2015, 4–5). We who feel homeless in the university are forced into refuge. We gather together to survive. We may gain satisfaction from small acts of marronage, but this is less about bringing the utopic common underground to the surface as it is a form of "radical escapism" (Adusei-Poku 2015, 4). Benveniste (2015, v) tells us that: "The undercommons has no set location and no return address. There is no map for entering and no guide for staying. The only condition is a living appetite. Listen to its hunger for difference." We need more than poetry, however. And we need more than a series of minor acts of resistance. As Srnicek and Williams rightly emphasize, resistance is a defensive, reactive gesture, resisting *against*. Resistance is not a utopian endeavour: "We do not resist a new world into being" (Srnicek and Williams 2016, 47). The undercommons, when one can find it, is a bolt hole, a place of refuge, a breathing space in the system. We need something more.

The occupation

Can the occupied building operate as a site of utopian possibility within the corporate-imperial university? Reflections on, and theorizations of, two recent waves of occupation—"Occupied California" 2009–2010 and the UK Occupations 2010–2011—have answered this question affirmatively. The "occupation" should not be understood here as solely or necessarily "student occupation." It goes without saying—though sadly so often does need saying—that "faculty also have a responsibility to fight with and for students" (Smeltzer and Hearn 2015, 356). Though led by a new historical subject, "the graduate without a future" (Schwarz-WeinStein 2015, 11), the importance of faculty support for the occupations was emphasized on both sides of the Atlantic (Research and Destroy 2010, 11; Dawson 2011, 112; Holmes and R&D and Dead Labour 2011, 14; Ismail 2011, 128; Newfield and Edu-Factory 2011, 26). Long before Occupy took shape in Zuccotti Park, "occupation" was being heralded as the harbinger of a new society and a new way of being.

If we return to the notion of creating utopian spaces, the key aim for some of the occupiers was to create communes within the university walls—to *communize* space (Inoperative Committee 2011, 6).[8] Communization here is understood as a form of insurrectionary anarchism that refuses to talk of a transition to communism, insisting instead upon the immediate formation of zones of activity removed from exchange, money, compulsory labor, and the impersonal domination of the commodity form (Anon 2010a, 5). As one pamphlet declared:

> We will take whatever measures are necessary both to destroy this world as quickly as possible and to create, here and now, the world we want: a world without wages, without bosses, without borders, without states. (Anon 2010d, 34)

This is a revolutionary anarchism that takes the university campus as the site for a practice—communization—that not only prefigures but also realizes the vision of a free society. Heavily influenced by *The Coming Insurrection* (Invisible Committee 2009), but tapping into a long tradition of anarchist theory and practice from Hakim Bey's Temporary Autonomous Zones (Bey 1985) to David Graeber's Direct Action (Graeber 2009), occupation becomes "the creation of a momentary opening in capitalist time and space, a rearrangement that sketches the contours of a new society" (Research and Destroy 2010, 11). It is "an attempt to imagine a new kind of everyday life" (Hatherley 2011, 123). Firth (2012) refers to these momentary openings as critical, experimental utopias:

> Such utopias are … simultaneously immanent and prefigurative. They are immanent insofar as they allow space for the immediate expression of desires, satisfaction of needs and also the articulation of difference or dissent. They are prefigurative to the extent that they allow one to practice and exemplify what one would like to see at a more proliferative range in the future (26)

The ultimate aim is for the practice to spread beyond the campus through a dual process of provocative rupture—the idea that insurrectionary moments can unleash the collective imagination and stimulate an outpouring of creativity that blows apart common sense and offers glimpses of a future world (Gibson-Graham 2006, 51; Shukaitis and Graeber 2007, 37)—and "contaminationism," that is, spreading by means of example (Graeber 2009, 211).

It may well have been the case that communism was realized on the campuses of Berkeley and UCL, that a momentary opening in capitalist space/time appeared through which another world could be glimpsed. The occupation, however—whether California, London, or anywhere else—is likely always to remain a localized temporary disruptive practice. A practice with utopian potency, for sure, in terms of suspending normalized forms of discipline and opening new egalitarian discursive spaces (Rheingans and Hollands 2013; Nişancioğlu and Pal 2016). In terms of wider systemic change, however, "small interventions consisting of relatively non-scalable actions are highly unlikely to ever be able to reorganise our socioeconomic system" (Srnicek and Williams 2016, 29). What "the occupation" demonstrates more than anything is the reality of the corporate-imperial university, as the institutional hierarchy, backed by the carceral power of the police and criminal justice system, inevitably disperses the occupiers—often using militarized force—and repossesses the occupied space in a strong assertion of its ownership rights not only to university buildings but also to what constitutes legitimate thought and behavior within them (on this see Docherty 2015, 90).

The significance, and utopian potential, one attaches to campus occupations depends in part upon the significance one attaches to the university as a site of struggle. For the Edu-Factory Collective:

> As was the factory, so now is the university. Where once the factory was a paradigmatic site of struggle between workers and capitalists, so now the university is a key space of conflict, where the ownership of knowledge, the reproduction of the labour force, and the creation of social and cultural stratifications are all at stake. This is to say the university is not just another institution subject to sovereign and governmental controls, but a crucial site in which wider social struggles are won and lost. (Caffentzis and Federici 2011, 26)

Clearly, if this is true, then the form the struggle takes, and the example it sets, is of immense significance. Srnicek and Williams describe as "wishful thinking" the idea that the occupation might spread beyond the campus by means of rupture or contamination (2016, 35). However, if the university really is a key site of class struggle (Seybold 2008, 120; Haiven and Khasnabish 2014, 38), a site through which wider struggles are refracted and won or lost, then the transformative potential of the occupation needs to be attended to seriously.

The analysis of the university offered by the Edu-Factory Collective is, however, outdated. Sounding like Daniel Bell writing in 1973 about how universities had become the "axial structures" of post-industrial society (Bell 1973, 12), the analysis does not hold water today. Moten overdoes it when he tells us that "the university is a kind of corpse. It is dead. It's a dead institutional body" (Moten 2015, 78). What is clear, however, is that "focusing on the university as a site of radical transformation is a mistake" (Holmes and R&D and Dead Labour 2011, 13). As has been widely noted, there is very little distinguishing universities from other for-profit corporations (Readings 1996; Lustig 2005; Washburn 2005; Shear 2008, Tuchman 2009). What does separate them is their inefficiency, due in large part to the fact that universities operate also as medieval guilds, with faculties "ruled by masters who lord over journeymen and apprentices in an artisanal system of production" (Jemielniak and Greenwood 2015, 77).

If the university is a sinister hybrid monstrosity—part medieval guild, part criminal corporation—which has no role other than reproducing its own privilege, then no special status can be attributed to campus protests. In this case, "A free university in the midst of a capitalist society is like a reading room in a prison" (Research and Destroy 2010, 10). A reading room in a prison. Another apposite metaphor. The occupation is a safe space, offering temporary respite, a place to hide, a refuge, a bolt-hole, a breathing space. As with the utopian classroom and the undercommons, what the occupation suggests is that "defending small bunkers of autonomy against the onslaught of capitalism is the best that can be hoped for" (Srnicek and Williams 2016, 48).

Conclusion

Zaslove was right to characterize utopian pedagogy within the corporate-imperial university as the search for bolt-holes and breathing spaces in the system. He himself suggests that, "All university classes should become dialogic-experiential models that educate by expanding the zones of contact with wider communities" (2007, 102). Like so many others, Zaslove sees dialogic-experiential models of education beginning in the classroom then expanding outward. The literature is full of references to "exceeding the limits of the university classroom" (Coté, Day, and de Peuter 2007a, 325), "extend [ing] beyond the boundaries of the campus" (Ruben 2000, 211), and "breeching the walls of the university compounds and spilling into the streets" (Research and Destroy 2010, 10). This all brings to mind Giroux's notion of academics as border crossers (Giroux 1992), but it also paints a picture of academics taking as their starting point the university and *from there* crossing the border into the community and the street.

The University can be the site for fleeting, transitory, small-scale experiences of utopian possibility—in the classroom, the undercommons, the occupation. It cannot be the site for transformative utopian politics. It cannot even be the starting point for this. Given the corporatization and militarization of the university, academics are increasingly becoming "functionaries of elite interests" inhabiting a culture which serves to reproduce these interests (Shear 2008, 56). Within the university, "radical" initiatives or movements will soon be co-opted, recuperated, commodified, and neutralized (Gibson-Graham 2006, xxvi; Seybold 2008, 123; Neary 2012b, 249; Rolfe 2013, 21). Institutional habitus weights so heavily that projects born in the university will be scarred from the outset by a certain colonizing "imaginary of education" (Burdick and Sandlin 2010, 117). And we have long known that the university is but one space of learning, and perhaps not a very important one at that. Identifying the academy as the starting point for a utopian pedagogy privileges this arcane space over sites of public pedagogy such as film, television, literature, sport, advertising, architecture, media in its various forms, political organizations, religious institutions, and the workplace (Todd 1997).

Perhaps the emphasis on creating radical experimental spaces within the academy needs to shift toward operating in existing spaces of resistance outside it. Haiven and Khasnabish argue that many social movements function already as "social laboratories for the generation of alternative relationships, subjectivities, institutions and practices" (2014, 62), providing "a space for experiments in knowledge production, radical imagination, subjectification, and concrete alternative-building" (Khasnabish 2012, 237). Why locate utopian pedagogy in the university when "critical utopian politics" can take place in "infrastructures of resistance" such as intentional

communities, housing collectives, squats, art centers, community theatres, bars, book shops, health collectives, social centers, independent media and, increasingly of course, the digital sphere (Firth 2012; Shantz 2012; Amsler 2015; Dallyn, Marinetto, and Cederstrom 2015)? Moving beyond short-term, localized, temporary modes of resistance, utopian pedagogy would work across these sites to develop a long-term strategy and vision.

There is a role for the academic in utopian politics, but not in the university-as-such. The utopian pedagogue has a responsibility to exploit their own privilege and to work with students, communities and movements outside and divorced from the university. As Shear rightly notes, academics (and especially those working in the humanities and social sciences) "inhabit a privileged space in which critical inquiry concerning social hegemony and political-economic domination" is possible (Shear 2008, 56). Within the university, however, spaces for embodying and enacting this kind of inquiry have become constrained, compromised, monitored, surveilled, co-opted, and recuperated. As I have argued throughout this article, utopian pedagogy has become a search for bolt-holes and breathing spaces in the system. Beyond the academy, however, there is a role to play. As Chomsky (2010) tells us, with privilege comes responsibility. And as Giroux frames it, this is an ethical and political responsibility to provide "theoretical resources and modes of analysis" to help forge "a utopian imaginary" (Giroux 2014a; 153; 2014b, 200). This means putting one's knowledge and resources to use in the service of a collaborative process of memory- and story-making, pulling together disparate inchoate dreams and yearnings in order to generate a utopian vision that can help inform, guide, and mobilize long-term collective action for systemic change.[9]

Notes

1. The characterization of the corporate university outlined here is drawn from, inter alia, Barcan (2013); Bousquet (2008); Brown (2011); Brown and Carasso (2013); Busch (2017); Collini (2012; 2017); Couldry (2011); Di Leo (2013); Donoghue (2008); Dyer-Witherford (2007); Edu-Factory (2009); Giroux (2011, 2014a); Goodman (2015); Halffman and Radder (2015); Jovanovic (2017); Lustig (2005); Nussbaum (2010); Rustin (2016); Sauntson and Morrish (2011); Seybold (2008); Slaughter and Rhoades (2010), Tuchman (2009); Washburn (2005); Williams (2011).
2. The characterization of the imperial university outlined here is drawn from, inter alia, Carey (2016); Chatterjee and Sunaina (2014); Docherty (2015); Falcon et al. (2014); Giroux (2007); Hamer and Lang (2015); Harney and Moten (2013); Melamed (2016); Meyerhoff and Noterman (2017); Morrison (2016); Mullen (2014); Oparah (2014); Prashad (2014); Reay (2011); Schwarz-WeinStein (2015); Smeltzer and Hearn (2015); Smith, Dyke and Hermes (2013); Undercommoning Collective (2016); Williams (2016); Young (2016).
3. Examples of the militarization of the academy are generally drawn from the United States (e.g., Giroux 2007; Chatterjee and Sunaina 2014). To provide a U.K. example, between 2010–2015 the University of Sheffield received nearly £30 million from companies involved

in the arms trade—including Boeing and BAE systems, the world's second and third largest arms manufacturers (Forge Press 2015). In a real signal of the convergence between academic, industrial and military strategic priorities, recent press releases celebrate how the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre—the University's flagship development—won an award for a robotics innovation that will save BAE Systems millions of pounds over coming years in the costs of producing its military aircraft (AMRC 2017; Machinery Market 2017). Official publicity for The Advanced Manufacturing Park, within which the AMRC is located, proudly declares that "technology developed at the AMP is already being used within … the next generation of military … aircraft" (Creative Sheffield 2016). There is nothing extraordinary about this. As Lubin notes, the withdrawal of state funding means that universities "seek out military relationships in order to substitute for declining public investment" (Lubin 2015, 122). What is more interesting is the University of Sheffield's unabashed response when faced with student protest against "arms manufacturers bankrolling universities" (Forge Press 2015). The response reads, "We will continue to develop our partnership with these companies in order to position the University of Sheffield as a research-led university in the global environment" (Forge Press 2015). The university will continue to develop lucrative and mutually beneficial research partnerships with the world's largest arms manufacturers to enhance its global corporate branding. Surely a statement that epitomizes the brave new world of the academic-military-industrial complex.

4. The example of Steven Salaita is a clear case in point. When, in August 2014, the faculty decision to hire Salaita at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was overturned by Chancellor Phyllis Wise and the board of trustees, this highlighted the insidious process of silencing and repression inscribed within the corporate university. Wise and the trustees were responding to pressure from private funders who took issue with Salaita's critique of an Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip (Goodman 2015, Hamer and Lang 2015). As Goodman notes, "The need to compete for private funding allows corporations to influence academic agendas and hiring, where keeping rich donors content takes precedence over issues like racial justice, free deliberation, and the right to opinion" (Goodman 2015, 339).
5. To give an example from the United Kingdom, in January 2014 Professor Thomas Docherty was suspended from the University of Warwick for 9 months. Docherty has been an outspoken critic of the marketization of higher education and of the authoritarian management and exploitative employment practices adopted by his own university (Grogan 2015; Morgan 2015). Warwick denies, however, that his suspension was in any way connected to these criticisms. Rather, he was suspended for giving off "negative vibes" that undermined the authority of the former head of his department. The case against him included "inappropriate sighing," "making ironic comments" and "projecting negative body language" (Gardner 2014). A blog post, written at the time (then hastily withdrawn) by a senior associate of the solicitors hired to prepare the case against Docherty, helps make (terrifying) sense of this. It stated that universities "may encounter high performing employees, who, although academically brilliant, have the potential to damage their employer's brand. This could be through outspoken opinion or general insubordination. Irrespective of how potentially valuable these employees may be to their institutions, the reality is that, in consistently accepting unacceptable behavior, institutions may be setting dangerous precedents to other employees that such conduct will be accommodated. From a risk perspective, it is also much harder to justify a dismissal, or other sanction, if similar conduct has gone unpunished before" (cited in Inglis 2014, 34).
6. To be fair, Neary is acutely aware that Student-as-Producer was "recuperated … denying the subversive intent out of which it originated" (Neary 2016, 92). Feeling increasingly constrained by the "necro-neoliberalism of higher education," he took the decision "to

move outside the university" and help establish the Social Science Centre in Lincoln, a co-operative higher education project run by academics and students (Neary 2016, 90, 92). The recent growth in co-operative educational projects in the U.K. is a promising development.

7. See Note 5. Docherty himself talks of "the clandestine university" existing behind the curtains of the official university (2015, 120), and of "clandestine modes of underground co-operation" (2016, 71) characterized by "being together" and "commonly sharing," taking time to think, listen, and talk to each other in the spirit of affinity and connectedness (2015, 66, 101). Unlike Harney and Moten, however, Docherty clings onto the conviction that the university can be saved. The university is a social good with a responsibility to help shape the world (2015, 44). Like other British scholars (Collini 2012, 2017; Barnett 2013), the university needs simply to rediscover and reclaim its social role (Docherty 2016, 109).
8. The occupation is a complex and contested space, and, of course, not all occupations or occupiers have communization as a goal. For many/most, the occupation has more modest demands (localized institutional concessions, for example; Kumar 2011). For an overview of the fractious debates in California, see Anon (2010a). For the United Kingdom, see the tense exchanges within the Leeds occupation (https://reallyopenuniversity.wordpress.com/). The letter from Venturini is especially interesting, explaining his leaving the occupation because it had lost its utopian spirit. For Venturini (2010): "An occupation is an experiment, an exploration of the social relations that should be in a future world." This is the understanding of "occupation" discussed here—occupation as a potentially "utopian" practice, strategy, and experience.
9. This article was written long before the UCU (University and College Union) industrial action commenced in the U.K. The proofs were read (on a non-strike day) in the midst of the most prolonged period of strike action in UK higher education history. The extent to which this marks a decisive shift in the nature of, and scope for, resistance within, against and beyond the university is as yet unclear. On the one hand, the academic community, well noted for its general quiescence, has come together in a display of solidarity that has surprised even itself. As one academic notes: "We have found strength in each other. Whilst the neoliberal university seeks to individualise us, to cut us off from each other, to set us up in opposition to each other and to our students, in this strike—this collective action—we have found each other" (Punkacademic, 2018). Social media is alight with tales of study (as Moten and Harney understand it) taking place on the picket lines. There is "a new and jubilant tenor" and a "delight in camaraderie" as an "emboldened" workforce says Basta! (Morrish, 2018). On the other hand, however, this unprecedented show of solidarity has been sparked by proposed changes to the pension scheme into which academics in many universities pay. What we are fighting *for* is a less drastic cut to our future pensions than those proposed by our employers' organization Universities UK. We are fighting *for* a loss of deferred earnings that is not quite as severe as our employers have proposed. While the dispute is threatening to spill over into wider issues related to the marketization of higher education, as yet the struggle is targeted at resisting change (to our pensions) rather than effecting change (to the edifice of the university).

Notes on contributor

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