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THE ABOLITION OF THE UNIVERSITY

On Cleaning: Student Activism in the Corporate and Imperial University

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In the past year, over 100 university campuses in the United States and elsewhere have witnessed student protest, specifically against institutionalized racism and in response to symptoms of the university's neoliberal, capitalist and imperial culture. This article outlines the emergence and confluence of the corporate and imperial university, producing and reproducing the violence of consumer culture, academic containment, and institutional control. This case study of a small, elite, liberal arts college in the United States will unravel the messiness of the contact zone where university administration and student protest meet, and its meanings for those of us who find ourselves ever-contained within spaces of higher education. Through critical discourse analysis and participant observation, I provide some preliminary mapping of how the university sanitizes—how it keeps itself 'clean'—and the different ways this is interpreted, confirmed, and resisted by its campus community. Queer and feminist readings of pollution, dirt, and bacteria contextualize the university's response to student activism, and daily operation, in the politics of containment and cleanliness.

> [It] is the intricate process by which the reductive and universalizing powers of the market are lived at the level of the conceptual and the intellectual and how the resulting divide between the general and the particular, between the social and the individual, constrains our ability to recognize and to redress the profound human costs of a system that is utterly dependent on the repression of a knowledge of social injustice.
>
> Janice Radway (1997: ix).

Introduction

About 150 students congregated at the bottom of Prolutum University's sloping hill, with a tense combination of excitement, exhaustion, and anxiety emanating from their eyes and bodily movements. Cars were shuttling sleeping bags and blankets to a nearby house that was volunteered to hold the belongings of those who were preparing to stay overnight in Prolutum's Admissions office. After driving one of the cars, I arrived back to the spot just a minute before one of the organizers, a 22 year-old African-American woman, began calling everybody into line. Rather quickly, the densely packed group of people made their way up to the newly renovated, red brick building. As soon as we entered, ten students moved quickly, taping off areas where people could sit, having researched the fire code regulations the night before. Members of the Association of Critical Collegians (ACC) made homes out of various corners of grey carpet—some sitting and finding spaces to read, others grabbing some of the already prepared red and black spray painted cardboard signs to head outside: 'diversity not diversion', 'community not conformity', 'reclaiming our education'. Students were taking a stand on the kinds of oppression they faced within the campus community, and demanding attention.

Standing on the stone steps, we noticed an employee from Buildings and Grounds standing nearby the building (one of the only people of colour employed on campus) directing those who worked in the Admissions Office to head down to the student union. It was clear that the university had been aware of what the ACC had planned for that Monday morning, and had made plans to address the situation—that is, ensuring that business as usual could take place in an alternative space. From the first few moments of what would turn into a 100 hour-long sit-in demonstration, the

administration of Prolutum University took measures to ensure that outside of the Admissions Office, the institution's daily functioning would continue as usual. Tours, information sessions, and other events related to the self-marketing of the university were simply dis- and re-located, and staff were trained accordingly. A movement started with two weeks of underground planning, initiated by four women of colour, both began and was regulated within ten minutes of its commencement.

I want to begin a discussion about US universities, student activism, and the whiteness of space by drawing upon an important ideation of how vectors of power run through us, how new kinds of precarity both demand and engender new forms of sociality—ways of knowing and being in the world. Radway's words provide an entry point to the discussion of how neoliberalism and empire find themselves nested within the hearts and minds of individuals and institutions. The above narrative is my own felt account of attempting to resist the steeping of universalizing market forces into the body, and also an endeavour to create a different kind of well-oiled machine in the name of looking for something different, for what Ashon Crawley might call 'the otherwise' (2015: n.pag.).

There has been a noticeable rise of college activism in our time of neoliberal global precarity, following from perpetual war, uncontracted and flexible labour, and heightened forced global migration, to name a few contemporary violences. Like the academic and civil rights movements of the 1960s—those that achieved the recognition and inclusion of Ethnic Studies, Cultural Studies, and Women's Studies—student activism today has transpired precisely because of the international, national, and local forces that call it into being (Ferguson, 2012). Specifically, and on campuses situated in cultures of whiteness and heteropatriarchy, these symptoms of the current moment become hyper visible—manifesting within university communities and too often being written off as individualized experiences and complaints. I offer some preliminary tracing about how student activism on one small, private liberal arts college campus, Prolutum University,[1] was read, interpreted and managed by university structures, and absorbed into the very assembly that its own movement was rallying against.

[1] Prolutum University is a fictional name given to the case study. This study, while about a real place,

As scholars of critical educational studies have suggested, institutions of higher education in the United States operate in an environment imbued with values legitimated by our economic system (Readings, 1996; Tuchman, 2009; Washburn, 2005). Following political scholars such as Wendy Brown (2015), I understand neoliberalism to name an economic and historical moment that engenders social and political conditions of being. In this sense, the neoliberal present, named as such, suggests not only configurations of the nation-state, but also the ways in which economic terms come to inform individuals' own thinking, feeling, relations, and interactions with one another. In the context of the university, neoliberalism and privatization work through both its structures and community. The drive for corporate profit and the rise of individualism contextualize how these values influence and become embedded within university culture. Specifically, terms such as accountability, logic, and efficiency are rehearsed within spaces of higher education, moulding the university as a corporate machine. The historical relevance of the university, its inception as a space of cultural imperialism and legacies of academic repression, policing of (racialized/queer/marginalized) bodies, and militarization of education provide some context to the university as both a corporate and imperial space. In the same way that critical geographers have theorized projects of urban gentrification in terms of cleaning, containment, and control as a 'cleansing of the built environment and streets from the physical and human detritus . . . to make the city over into a pleasant site of and for bourgeois consumption' (Wacquant, 2008: 199), I theorize the cleanliness of the university space—how Prolutum University cleans and sanitizes movements of activism and dissent, and particularly, the events that took place in the Fall of 2014.

My point of analysis is a 100 hour-long sit-in demonstration, in which over 300 students slept in the Admissions building, asking the university to take a formal

with real, material effects and affects on people and the institution, is also a project that seeks to open the conversation about university life and cultures and spaces. While the specificity of the institution matters, it also does not in that the university written about in this article could also represent other spaces of a similar kind. Looking at patterns, similarities, and emulations of institutional response and student activism across time and geographical space offers a worthy opening in thinking about these ideas in higher education.

stance on the institutionalized racism and anti-blackness that manifests on its campus.[2] The protest gathered momentum from the nation's #BlackLivesMatter movement, importantly timed and ardently connected (Garza, 2014; Kelley, 2014; Taylor, 2016). Particularly notable about the sit-in was the way in which it made visible, through an anonymous social media app, the kinds of cultures of whiteness and institutionalized racism that students were rallying against. During the sit-in, students who didn't participate wrote reactionary posts: *'White people won, Africa lost. Sorry we were so much better than you that we were literally able to enslave you at our will';* and, *'Racism is a problem worldwide, and if you can't take it while you are here you're pretty fucked when you graduate'* are but two examples. What helps guide my analysis is that the sit-in helped engender the conditions whereby the cultures of racism that were previously invisible to administration were actually made more present by its resistance. In an attempt to name both the issues the sit-in addressed and also how the university was to address the sit-in, administrative responses took up the language of 'diversity', 'inclusion', and 'civility'. As a demonstration, the sit-in was capitalized on as a branding mechanism through which the corporate and imperial university reads and absorbs individuals and social movements. How do these formations simultaneously erase and also render legible the conditions of institutionalized racism and organizational whiteness for those from whom they are hidden?

In this article, I use critical discourse and institutional analysis as methodology, situating my own presence and influence within Prolutum University. I then contextualize the historical transformation of the modern university in terms of corporatization, neoliberalism, and imperialism as read through the example of Prolutum University. Weaving through theoretical framings of queer, feminist, and critical race theorists, I speak to institutional habits, using the petri dish as a metaphor for how we might think about the university space, envision the dynamics of activism, and think about (certain) bodies as 'matter out of place' (Douglas, 1966: 42). In recounting

[2] There is an important gap and opportunity here to understand the ways in which student activism is also inherently shaped by the corporate culture of the university. While necessary, this project goes beyond the scope of this article.

these events, I hope to illustrate how readings of the sit-in demonstration both affirm and raise questions about contemporary institutional life. This project works as an intervention into the scholarship on the corporate university and also into the whiteness of institutions, and calls attention to why we cannot separate these two bodies of literature. By addressing these concepts in tandem, this article adds both nuance and dimension to our understandings of higher education, and to what we might unravel by looking at the conditions of university life through the lens of those for whom the academy has historically been inaccessible; those who have always called out the habitual patterns of institutions as a kind of muscle memory, holding itself in its own rehearsals of surveillance; those who are demanding something different. I close or, rather, leave open this project by thinking about what this critique might offer in a world dominated by institutions, containment, and individual regulation as we search for spaces of hope.

Methods: tensions in practice

Didion (1984: n. pag.) poses as rhetoric, but also perhaps invites a real question: 'what is going on in these pictures in my mind?' The proposed research project emanates from my own experiences as a student activist, and my attempts to string together, tear apart, dis-member and re-member those stories. Like Didion, I believe the stories we are able to tell enable us to live more meaningfully, reflectively, and lead more just lives. Following important work by feminists of colour (e.g. Anzaldúa, 1999; Behar, 1997; Lorde, 1987), as well as theorizing my own experiences, as I have done elsewhere, has both helped make sense of myself and also engendered new questions. In some ways, my background as a student activist grants a certain kind of legitimacy and legibility to the work I want to bring to the table. However, I simultaneously struggle with my own representation as a white-presenting woman of colour. I have a different kind of representational relationship than many others who are more often visibly racialized, and who also took part in the movements I outline in this article. Though my body is regulated in other ways—as queer, as a woman—power emplaces itself differently on my skin. I articulate these thoughts not because I have an answer as to how I negotiate these tensions in practice but, rather, because grappling with

their complexity might provide another lever that I could use in doing this work. The systems of oppression that keep my relationship to this project complicated are precisely those which this project seeks to address. My experience as a student activist is what drives my passion for this project—the organizing that is happening on college campuses in the United States is certainly not to be dismissed. Its urgency, in a time of incredible violence, demands attention.

Thus, I have an intensely emotional relationship to Prolutum University and the dissent described in this project. Feminists of colour (e.g. Anzaldúa, 1999; Christian, 1987; Lorde, 1987) have historically argued that giving voice to feelings and narrative, and particularly those engendered by systems of oppression and political/epistemic violence, is an important way of both knowing and doing. Following their legacies, this article intends to both know and do using my personal experiences as a way to illuminate this analysis.

I localize this project to a case study of a small, 'elite' liberal arts university. The use of case studies rather than a large survey approach is a common qualitative method that allows the exploration of an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. Rather than carrying out a broad overview of universities, this case study allows for microscopic analysis. Yin's (2009) definition of the case study suggests that 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin, 2009: 13). The latter part of this definition is particularly important to the subject of universities and student activism, as we understand certain kinds of student protest as produced due to the conditions of the university space. Case studies offer a more holistic approach that remains useful in that they are also bounded by time and activity (Stake, 1995). By following Strega's (2005) epistemic concept of research-as-resistance, this project aims to open up dialogue for the ways in which research can act and enact hope through aiming to articulate the nuances of experience that can often be overshadowed within the breadth of surveying.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a method is necessarily weaved throughout the body of this article. CDA was first coined by Norman Fairclough (1980), and encompasses a multi-layered approach and intersection in order to understand how

to read our world. He notes that while the primary form of critique that becomes associated with CDA is ideological, it is important to understand CDA as a tool for three forms of critique: 'ideological, rhetorical, and strategic' (Fairclough, 1980: 12). Ideological critique seeks to understand the ways in which social relations act as a site of transfer of power; rhetorical critique speaks to the persuasive mechanisms used in individual texts in order to articulate certain ideas of grandeur; strategic critique looks towards the strategies used by 'groups of social agents' for the aims of ideas produced within the previous two forms. Through rhetorically analyzing material from Prolutum University, in addition to the ideological and strategic critique engendered through the very act of naming the university as a space imbued with power, I find CDA central to my work. Following Foucault (1978), discourse both reflects and shapes the way we experience the world around us—that is, an analysis of discourse is an analysis of what people say and do. Its reverberations, alongside and intertwined with that of institutional analysis, shape this project.

Understanding the Transformation of the Modern University

The corporate and imperial university

I want to call attention to the historical tracings of the university, as they foreground my own thinking regarding how the university and its culture is continually shaped by global and national political, economic and cultural forces. While scholars such as Bok (2013) and Geiger (2015) have undertaken the task of historically mapping higher education in the United States from 1604-onward, my point of analysis is the transformation of the 'modern' American university—a model based on the simultaneous and co-dependent growth of liberal arts and democracy, to the 'post-historical' university (Readings, 1996). The former emerged during the formation of the Welfare state and Keynesian economics, generating the rise of governmental participation in ensuring the public good, and centralization (Judt, 2010). In recognizing the Deweyan concept of the school as a microcosm of society, the university was also focused on the formation of community, intellectual pursuit for the sake of the common good, and the collective over the individual (Washburn, 2005). In other words, the desire for the utopic city upon a hill had been projected into university spaces.

However, during the 1970s, we begin to see the decline of the Welfare state, and can draw parallel declines through the decentralization of the university. With the rise of privatization, a diminishing of the social contract between citizens, and the cult of privatization that we now recognize as big businesses and corporations (Judt, 2010), institutions of higher education underwent radical transformation. Around the 1980s, the university separated into what Washburn (2005: 46–7) terms Humanists and Scientists, with separately operating professional schools. The university also de-emphasized undergraduate teaching as its professional rewards structure shifted towards individual research and publication. These are, of course, the live university cultures in which we find ourselves today, as I am sure many within the university might attest to—we might read a call for papers for *the abolition of the university* as merely symptomatic of such intensity.

Giroux's (2002) definition of 'corporate culture' is important for its contextualization in higher education. It refers to:

> an ensemble of ideological and institutional forces that functions politically and pedagogically both to govern organizational life through senior managerial control and to fashion compliant workers, depoliticized consumers, and passive citizens . . . in which citizenship is portrayed as an utterly privatized affair whose aim is to produce competitive self-interested individuals vying for their own material and ideological gain. (Giroux, 2002: 429)

Echoing Giroux's ideological assessments, we might also observe the ways in which the current condition of higher education in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world has taken on a particular relationship with states and markets. Slaughter & Leslie (1997) name this emergence 'academic capitalism', and anlayze its two main components. The first element they interrogate as structural, related to neoliberal policy that has recently re-structured higher education through funding streams, influential linkages in organizations, and regulations that have tied the academy to the state and market. The second is behavioural/cultural, and addresses the market-like actions and ideologies that affect the individual actors and overall

culture of higher education. Recognizing the former is both relevant and necessary to my study: since culture is inherently and perpetually informed by structure, I illustrate the cultural aspects of Prolutum's cultivation of excellence and self-evaluation, the positioning of students as consumers and trustees as managers, and the ways in which these processes get mapped onto and shape university life.

As a small, elite liberal arts college, part of the mission statement of Prolutum, which describes itself as a highly competitive institution committed to academic excellence and interdisciplinary study, highlights the university's commitment to intellectual engagement. Of particular note is the way in which it argues the need for a 'global perspective with *an entrepreneur's spirit*' ([Prolutum] University website, 2015, emphasis added). The market logic in the 'entrepreneur's spirit' language mixed with ideas of excellence, its apparent goodness/objectivity, and globalization speaks directly to Giroux's concept of corporate culture. The *need* for excellence is consonant with those supporting pushes for academic achievement and mobility; however, excellence is not an ideology in that 'it has no external referent nor internal content' (Readings, 1996: 23). Excellence, or achieving excellence, articulates (metaphorically and materially) a kind of currency within the internal measures of a particular field. It is a means of ranking within a closed system—excellence in Biology is not, and should not mean, the same skills and or traits as excellence in Sociology. Excellence, or standards of excellence, is a purely internal unit—a question of relativism—wherein students are situated as consumers within an internal market of achievement (Moore, Neylon, Eve, O'Donnell and Pattinson, 2016).

More broadly, the structure of today's universities also emulates the business management model of corporations and big businesses. In many ways, the name that Yale, Harvard and Northeastern University have given to their board of trustees as *the Corporation* is no euphemism. Along with other forms in which the university emphasizes business, the managerial attitudes of administrators and governing boards have introduced 'different kinds of relationships with the professoriate and students. Increasingly, they try to govern them rather than govern *with* them' (Tuchman, 2009: 21, emphasis in original). The role of the university administrator often resembles that of a corporate manager, including responsibilities of monitoring

behaviours such as loyalty, discretion of one's work, and managing faculty meetings. In other words, the Board of Trustees is a particular kind of authority akin to financial boards of large corporations. It is the institution's filter, regulating and ensuring that members inside the institution do not jeopardize the kinds of activities that they oversee: donations, endowment, and the image of the university.

At Prolutum, the Board of Trustees is responsible for approving the professors that get employed, tenured, and promoted; the Board is also responsible for faculty members' salaries, and selecting the professors that receive university awards. If the political beliefs of faculty members do not line up with the image that the university is trying to produce—or, inversely, if they enunciate a kind of dissent that is intolerable to the Board, then they have the ability to contain such dissent in order to control the image and production of the institution. Tuchman (2009) illuminates the ways in which academic branding is one of the central features the university uses to help self-advertize or self-promote its image. As evidenced by Prolutum University's increasingly modernized website aesthetic, there is now greater emphasis placed on online learning, and creating a certain 'kind' of Prolutum University student. The university thus creates a particular image palatable to national and international standards of 'excellence'—the internal market(s) of achievement within the university are projected onto a global and competitive arena of achievement. Not only does this work to create a kind of branding as articulated by the heavy protection of their name, but it also treats students as consumers, and faculty research as a means for increased globalization.

Prolutum encourages their students to engage in what it considers to be 'global' issues, beginning with the Global Engagements (GE) requirement built into the curriculum. In their four years at Prolutum, students must take one course that, 'analyze[s] the conditions and effects of cross-cultural interaction, so that they will be prepared to responsibly confront the challenges of the 21st century' ([Prolutum] Website, 2015). Prolutum also urges their students to study abroad and/or off-campus for at least one semester, taken up by about 60% of Prolutum students. As demonstrated by website materials touting its students as 'global citizens', students are posited as a kind of export rather than as individuals, further moulded into people

whom the university claims are worthy and capable of entering into a competitive job market. Prolutum also holds workshops where students learn how to market the 'skills' they acquired during their study abroad experience on their resume, affirming the way in which students are positioned as consumers—receptacles to collect an assortment of skills and knowledge. This conception of student learning is what Freire (1970: 36) terms the 'banking' model of education, 'in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits'. Freire's theory opens up a critical space in which to recognize how knowledge itself is turned into venture capital, in that it is used to extend the reach of the university and increase the size of the business. The university does not promote learning for the sake of learning as its first objective, but rather, learning for the sake of globalized/ing citizens and employable bodies, for the purposes of globalization, profit, and self-promotion and image.

In the same way that knowledge is marketed as capital worthy of investment (e.g. via donors and politicians), the research in which university faculty engages is seen as having another kind of globalizing effect. Tuchman (2009) traces the history of university research, and points to the Bayh-Dole Act of 1983 as a commodification of research, which granted a federal patent policy that extended the right to discoveries as a result from any grants applied to from any federal agency. In other words, universities own all the research produced using their funding and space. It was through this act that research at the university level became commercialized, representing a significant deepening of the university's capitulation into the global capitalist regime—the 'transformation of knowledge into capital' (Tuchman, 2009: 59). This act is yet another iteration of how the university changes as we venture further into this particular economic and cultural moment of neoliberalism.

As the United States has witnessed with the focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) concentrations, Race to the Top—the 2009, testing-based competition amongst K-12 public schools which institutionalized STEM as a national goal—and other emphases placed on math and science over the past decade, numerical and 'practice-based' disciplines are often prioritized over subjects such as the humanities or social sciences. For universities, this is further

paired alongside the prospect of monetary gain, which gives greater material value to maths and the sciences than other disciplines. To fund natural science research is to make a monetary investment from which the university might reap profit in the future. Investment into natural sciences means an investment into medicine, or an investment into technological advance—and should those investments reap material benefits, such as medical discoveries or technology, the university holds claim. At Prolutum University, 71 out of the 94 (75%) total funded student research positions for the summer of 2015 were granted to the natural sciences. To use Readings' (1996) term, the university operates as a 'transnational bureaucratic corporation', looking to produce global citizens, research, and innovation through disciplines that are and have historically been profit-generating.

The university's evidentiary investment in scientific research returns us to our discussion of Prolutum's stated goal of forming global citizens who are both willing and able to participate in the global market. As argued by scholars such as Harvey (2003), globalization is an integral and dependent component of neoliberalism—highlighting the need to expand and legitimize the free market in the international arena. Globalization, according to Albrow (1990), 'refers to all those processes by which the peoples of the world are incorporated into a single world society, global society' (cited in Shimemura, 2002: 1). Other scholars have gone further to argue that globalization is actually a homogenizing force of world culture by way of Americanization—the influence and dominance of American culture in a global society (Mohanty, 2003; Palmer & Cho, 2011). It is not a far stretch, as has been taken up by Tomlinson (2001) and McChesney (2001), to argue that this force can be summed up as 'cultural imperialism' in its erosion of local cultures and ideological spreading of American consumer values and material goods, a critique which frames globalization by way of world dominance of American capitalism. Returning to the context of the university, the institution primes its consumer-subjects as ready to participate in the global market, simultaneously creating itself as an imperial space in which its actions extend outward into the global arena.

Chaterjee and Maira (2014) trace the roots of the university as an internally imperial space to the historical legacy of academic containment and repression in higher education. Noting three moments of ideological policing—World War I and the McCarthy era of the 1940s-1950s, the COINTELPRO era from the late 1950s to early 1970s, and the post-9/11 era—the authors use historical data explain the university's contemporary imperializing effects. The logic of academic containment and academic freedom emerged co-dependently, beginning in the United States during World War I. Chaterjee and Maira articulate that especially as the professoriate began to build strength at the end of the nineteenth century, there were only a few scholars who dissented or challenged the status quo. As Schrecker (1986) evidences, the conception of 'academic freedom' materialized as a way to pacify this minority. However, with the 'relative insecurity' that was felt by many in the profession, 'the exclusion of ideas as well as behaviour that the majority did not like [created] an increasingly internalized notion that advocacy for social change was a professional risk for academics' (Chaterjee & Maira, 2014: 23). The notion of academic freedom, according to the AAUP's Seligman Report of 1915, was embedded in the 'overall status, security, and prestige of the academic profession' (Schrecker, 1986: 18). Thus, academic freedom is deeply bound up with academic containment. Furthermore, Reading's (1996) conception of the post-historical university notes the ways in which the university's purpose shifts from national intersects to national interests in globalization. The surveillance of the university is thus integral to economic globalization, as well as for the development of human resources and human and material capital.

Mapping Chaterjee and Maira's (2014) along with Reading's (1996) historical evolution of the university, Prolutum University's ideological policing of certain (racialized, classed, gendered) bodies is evidenced through the politics of what 'kind' of classes faculty are allowed and expected to teach, and which research projects receive funding. For example, younger faculty members of colour are more likely to have their curricula questioned by administrative bodies, and, in turn, their students. Related to the above analysis of the corporate space, the university's academic containment or cultural imperialism occurs in preservation of neoliberal and Americanist values, and with similar goals of self-maintenance and image production.

There exists a certain threshold of dissent or critique—pushback to only a certain extent. De Genova (2014: 303) offers an example of 'crossing the line' in this context, when he speaks at an antiwar teach-in at Columbia University about the 'historical outline of colonial conquest, genocide, slavery, and imperial warfare as forming the bedrock of US nation-state formation.' By linking white supremacy and US nationalism, De Genova claimed peace as subversive, and therefore called for resistance to all forms of US patriotism. The university president at the time publicly remarked that De Genova had 'crossed the line' and his statements were not supported. This was followed by campaigns calling for his termination from the university, as well as tens of thousands of harassing and threatening messages sent to his e-mail account and home address. The university administration's denouncement of De Genova's academic and political statements and lack of support for De Genova as a person and scholar when he was caught under fire, is telling of (the lack of) the value of individual scholars when measured against the branding and imagery of the university.

At Prolutum, similar events took place regarding the political ideology of a faculty member who spoke out against the glorified drinking culture, and the ways in which its veneration works to serve the school's alumni networks and white elite. After a series of emails, then published online, the professor was also sent harassing and threatening messages on multiple forums. De Genova (2014) narrates the shift in positioning of the deviant professor from an object of controversy to an object of tolerance in the campus community—illuminating how one can self-police in order to remain employed. I highlight these experiences in the academy in order to call attention to the ways in which 'academic freedom' might represent a false truth. The imperial university, inducing a kind of self-policing and self-repression among faculty, remains a space of heavy surveillance. And, as proven by national historical memory, this is especially true for women and academics of colour. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 79% of all full-time faculty are white, and 84% of all tenured faculty are white. Men are still twice as likely to hold tenure track positions than women (NCES, 2013). Thus, and with additional understanding from scholarly narratives regarding university climates written by women and faculty of colour, we know that the tenure review process operates as a penultimate

disciplinary technology by ensuring this kind of self-policing takes place. This manifestation of cultural imperialism through academic containment is deeply tied to the historical evolution of the university, as well as to the university as an institution embedded within neoliberal capitalism and globalization.

The whiteness of institutions

Arising out of feminist and critical race scholarship, explorations of institutions and conceptual understandings of the institutional bodies and subjects are crucial to unpacking their (re)affirmations over time. Sara Ahmed (2013: 7) cites philosopher Merleau-Ponty's (2010) model of the habitual body in explaining that time is 'the very model of an institution', in that it is simultaneously a beginning and an end, or what Ahmed (2013: 1) suggests is 'a realization and destruction . . . if an institution is to open something, then an institution is also that which has begun; it is both the order already given to things, and something that disturbs an order of things; a re-ordering is a new ordering'. This guides my understanding of the organization of institutions, and particularly educational institutions such as Prolutum University. Not only does an institution create, or institutionalize; but when it does, the process gets disrupted in relation only to what has already begun or been assembled. Supporting thinkers in sociology, political science, and economics regard the emergence of 'the new institutionalism' as concerned with understanding institutions as processes rather than fundamental and static structures. Rather than assuming their existence, scholars such as Nee (1988) and Ahmed (2013) among others have attempted to give an account to how institutions take form, especially as reflective and reflexive of their surrounding political, economic, and social climates. Considering the university as a neoliberal, corporate, and imperial university space, we can begin to unpack the kinds of institutional bodies produced in the here and now.

Thus, what Ahmed (2015) names as the institutional body suggests that this problematic is not only about how bodies inhabit institutional spaces, but is also involved with 'the mechanisms whereby certain bodies come to be assumed as the right bodies by an institution' (Ahmed, 2015: 4). Enacting what Bourdieu (1991) terms the 'habitus', certain bodies act and inhabit the movements that the institution itself deems productive. That is, it becomes relatively easy for certain bodies to survive and

thrive within the institutional space, and further discipline themselves into performing well in that space. Theories of critical whiteness studies suggest that whiteness operates as neutral within most institutionalized spaces, giving name to what kinds of bodies are able to claim space, or are deemed an institutional body. Dyer (1997) suggests that whiteness defines itself by having no content—a negation that is crucial to its own security of occupying that position. Wielding this power, then, is manifested in how white bodies not only fulfil expectations of and abide by cultural codes of the institution, but also refuse to see why it is that other bodies, or identities, are out of place, or not included. I quote Ahmed (2013) at length as she offers:

> institutional spaces are shaped by the proximity of some bodies and not others: white bodies gather, and create the impression of coherence . . . If we think of institutional norms as somatic, then we can show how institutions, by assuming a body, can generate an idea of appropriate conduct without making this idea explicit. The institute "institutes" the body that is instituting, without that body coming into view. If institutional whiteness describes an institutional habit, then whiteness recedes into the background. (Ahmed, 2015: n.pag.)

By drawing our attention to the self-negating properties of whiteness, Ahmed's critical formulation allows us to analyze whiteness as silence: not only does the institution become a space of the habitus, but it also creates subjects steeped in the productive functioning of daily habits. With recourse to our conversation of the university as a corporate and imperial space, it becomes clear that the kinds of habits *valued,* or the bodies that subscribe to the cultural codes of increasing corporatization and self-surveillance, prove to be more successful in navigating the university.

Thinking alongside other feminist and critical race scholars who speak to cultures of whiteness in institutions of higher education (e.g. Alexander, 2005; Applebaum, 2010; Torres, 2003; among many others), Ahmed (2012) uses the habitual embodiment of institutional whiteness to speak to the politics of inclusion and exclusion on university campuses, in conversation with other feminists of colour who have posed critiques to the language and concepts of diversity and inclusion within higher

education (see Alexander, 2005; Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009; Mohanty, 2003; Puwar, 2004). Diversity becomes incorporated into institutions, and further, 'diversity management' (Ahmed, 2012: 13) serves to regulate conflict and dissent. According to Mohanty (2003) diversity is a discourse that 'bypasses power as well as history to suggest a harmonious empty pluralism' (cited in Ahmed, 2012: 14). Alexander (2005) speaks to how diversity and inclusion are used as rhetorical tools to manufacture cohesion, and serves to mask whiteness and institutionalized racism. At Prolutum, advocating 'for diversity' or to do 'diversity work' are tropes that are often repeated on the university campus, and have become institutional goals of the school. As Ahmed (2012: 26) notes, 'the habits of the institutions are not revealed unless you come up against them', and this is the framework by which I enter into an analysis of the very resistance that revealed itself. Habits of whiteness, and the ways in which they get (re)articulated through the lenses of neoliberalism and empire, are the very force against which students mobilized and fought in their sit-in protest at Prolutum in Fall 2014.

Dissent & The Detection of Deviation

Loaded with years of historical memory and experience at Prolutum University, the sit-in demonstration in the Fall of 2014 was the first student-initiated, drastic demand for change in over ten years. The action steps presented by the students addressed all areas of campus life as it related to structural racism and the experiences of students of colour on campus. It was a product of a group of students asking the administration to listen to what they had felt, experienced, and witnessed in the institution's campus environment. Daily, community members of colour face discrimination and micro-aggressions, representative of the institutionalized racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and other systems of domination that are enacted within campus culture. Recalling Ahmed (2012), the institutional habits that are embodied by white members of the Prolutum community re-affirm the conception that certain bodies rightfully identify with the cultural codes of power, and other (racialized/gendered/classed) bodies are made to not belong. The sit-in was calling out the structurally violent processes of exclusion.

In the documents created, printed, and disseminated by the Association of Critical Collegians (ACC), there were written examples of hate that individuals had experienced—all recorded from only the two weeks of term before the sit-in. These ranged from, 'a first-year student of colour [sic] [who] was approached by a white student on the second day of school and was told, "I can't believe they let students like you in here"' to 'a professor who is a woman of colour [sic] . . . trying to go to her office on a Sunday and was reported to campus safety as a "suspicious person" by a white student'. The ACC presented the university with a set of 21 action point items, falling under the categories of admissions, financial aid, curriculum/faculty, and student life. While this was the beginning of week-long insular deliberations in the President's office, wherein over 800 community members took part, reactions from students outside the administration's buildings were telling. As on other college campuses, important information in the form of backlash can be found in virtual spaces such as Yik Yak, an app that allows individuals to post anonymously; Yik Yak has been the main source of instances of written death and rape threats towards student protestors. What I'm interested in for the purposes of this article are the ways in which this platform is actually a space where the whiteness of institutions—particularly their silence and institutionalized racism—manifests in ways that are intelligible to the current normative sensitivities to whiteness:

> *'It's not my fault that the most noteworthy think your people have done is to convince us not to enslave you anymore . . . And you couldn't even do that without our help'.*
>
> *'Sorry my parents worked hard enough to pay for your financial aid. I didn't come to school for you to waste their money'.*
>
> *'If you don't want to deal with the realities of living in a white world, don't try to'.*
>
> *'In honor of today, I will only hook up with a minority tonight'.*

The support shown for the posts is measured through a number of 'up-votes'–akin to a 'like' on Facebook. While these sentiments are quite familiar to students of colour through daily interactions—expectations of certain kinds of communication, questioning of whether students of colour belong at Prolutum, professors asking students to speak on 'behalf' of an identity—made visible on social media in ways that reveal a culture of power that is intentionally and consistently made absent by the university's management of diversity. The visceral nature of these campus responses evidence how the diversity at Prolutum represented a 'manufactured cohesion' (Ahmed, 2012; Alexander, 2005) in order to serve the public image of the university. While some white students, faculty, and staff genuinely desire a more socially integrated campus, the corporate university's investment in advocating for 'diversity' lies within its falsified production and profit maximization.

Throughout the sit-in, despite some of the campus response, there were a number of students working to get the news of the demonstration beyond Prolutum's campus. In conversation with news sources, television channels, and radio broadcasters, members of the ACC were able to get their message heard by both local and national reporting agencies, spreading the news of Prolutum's campus activism far beyond their physical location. Recalling Tuchman (2009), this became a worry from a communications perspective because negative publicity—or an illumination of the oppressive culture on campus—costs both money and power. The administration carefully monitored the ACC's language in public forums, as evidenced by the number of emails we received from the Dean of the College throughout the course of the week. As an example, the ACC twitter feed was active during the week, offering its 1000+ followers live updates as responses were received from the administration. If there was a piece of information that was deemed 'inaccurate' by the administration, students were asked to remove the tweet. For example, when the feed tweeted that the administration had 'kept us waiting for a response', students received an email asking to correct this language to less accusatory tones. Representatives from the administration stated that because they never offered a time at which a response would be released, to have been 'kept waiting' conveys 'inaccurate communication' about what was occurring (Personal correspondence, 26 September 2014). Even while

the demonstration was taking place, the pursuit of transparency and surveillance, as Tuchman (2009) and Washburn (2005) also suggest, gives voice to an investment in the public image of the university—to ensure that the University as a corporate entity would retain the money and power that the sit-in could have cost them. These forms of communication suggested tones of 'collaborative effort' between the 'peaceful protestors' and university administration. Sending out an average of two emails per day during the sit-in, the President's rhetoric focused on the demonstration's aims to 'support inclusion and diversity', and assured the Prolutum community that the administration would respond with the same sort of 'civility' that they used to describe the protest (Personal correspondence, 22–26 September 2014). It is here that we might recall Chatterjee and Maira's (2014) 'academic civility', and how we might read this as symptomatic of imperial cultures of academic containment.

Cleansing and Decontamination

As articulated in the above analysis, while some institutional subjects are made to belong, and therefore inhabit and reproduce the structures of the university space, others are both marked and made to feel as though they do not belong within the larger habitus. As opposed to the kind of ontological complicity that unmarked/white bodies experience within institutional spaces, other bodies are marked as 'trespassers, who are, in accordance with how both spaces and bodies are imagined (politically, historically, and conceptually) circumscribed as being out of place' (Puwar, 2004: 9). With this experienced (dis)location and demarcated boundaries of who becomes an insider versus outsider, not only does the institution enforce cultural codes of power through processes of affirmation, but it also inscribes onto 'out of place' subjects that they do need to fit in. Therefore, the 'space invaders', as Puwar (2004: 8) notes, are pushed by both internal and external forces to conform to the institutional climate. Through this process, individuals who are able to successfully navigate and conform to power structures become transformed *into* institutional subjects, even though their identity profile may constitute them otherwise. Ahmed (2000) articulates that the production of subjectivity is constituted only in relation to the stranger—that entity which is recognized as being out of place.

This recognition of the subject versus the stranger is well articulated in the metaphor of the petri dish. That is, within certain spaces, some bacteria are more likely to thrive, while others are not. Those bodies less likely to thrive, that is, racialized, gendered, classed bodies, are only deemed as such when in relation to the host bacteria in the petri dish—the 'good' bacteria, or the institutional subject. As a consequence, we might understand how certain bodies are characterized as 'matter out of place' (Douglas, 1966: 44). The 'bad' bacteria are then pushed to the periphery, excluded from the petri dish, or are assimilated or productively folded into the normative population. However, there comes a point when the 'bad' bacteria become threatening to the health of the petri dish itself. The 'bad' bacteria then become autoimmune; they attack the healthy or 'good' bacteria that allow the petri dish to function as usual. Here, we find important relevance to the Association of Critical Collegians' social movement: the autoimmune bacteria. Social movements that question or call out by name the systems of domination that operate as part and parcel of the institutions are the autoimmune phase of the 'matter out of place' bacteria. However, and as Derrida (2002: 83) articulates, autoimmunity is also a 'contradiction or counter indication' in that its logic is both 'self-protecting and self-destroying, at once remedy and poison'. It is precisely the revelation that the so-called 'bad' bacterium operates within a source of weakness in the petri dish, or source of resistance to the power of the university, which causes it to attack part of itself. Derrida presents autoimmunity as 'a double-bind of threat and chance, not alternatively or by turns promise and/or threat but threat in the promise itself' (Derrida, 2002: 82). Therefore, the threat of certain bodies, and thus social movements born out of the mass power of those bodies, comes with their power to dis-order—the bacteria's power to infect or invoke disease (and dis-ease) to other parts of the university (or petri dish). While the university as a corporate and imperial space clearly provides certain kinds of incentives for self-cleaning and maintenance, the ultimate goal *is* to create an environment where members of the campus community *do not* disrupt the daily functioning of the university—happy (and clean) enough so that they do not become autoimmune bacteria.

In the lens of Ferguson (2012: 4) who suggests, 'foreign subjects [are] made recognizable through their regulation', the language of diversity, inclusion, and civility

represents a kind of management and strategic (read: productive, sanitizing) framing of the sit-in demonstration. That is, the sit-in or the sentiments expressed by the sit-in are no longer positioned as actions polluting the air of 'happiness' (Ahmed, 2010), but, rather, the sit-in becomes co-opted into the image of the university. It is positioned as something *wanted* and for which the university had strived. This point is furthered by the website platform that was curated by the university, branding the entire sit-in movement as 'Prolutum for All'—presenting the changes that were to be made to the institution as an initiative started by the institution itself. The language and rhetoric not only affirms the corporate culture that exists, but also serves as evidence of the mechanisms employed to ensure that the sit-in demonstration was seen as nothing other than welcomed, part of, and perhaps even planned by the university.

In confluence with the materials produced by Prolutum's administration, the campus culture produced by students and faculty was equally sanitizing in the months following the demonstration, or, as regarded on campus, 'the events of last semester'. Refusing to name the sit-in indicates a reluctance to recognize its importance, or the magnitude of the issues it represented. Some students name the sit-in as the origin of racial tensions that continue to exist on campus, rather than a manifestation of institutional histories of discrimination. Many faculty members are reluctant to speak about the sit-in at all. Others term it 'an act of rebellion' or, worse, a 'cry for attention'. No longer did it represent real and persistent issues, but, rather, an event whose purpose was to gain attention from the administration, sentiments echoed by students on campus. Many made it clear (mostly in anonymous forums) that they were 'sick of' hearing people 'complain' about being at Prolutum. *'If you don't like it here, you don't have to stay here. But don't spoil it for those of us who do have a good time'*, an anonymous post read. With the same kind of 'business as usual' mentality reinforced by the administration, students have turned the sit-in into a kind of discursive formation—it represents an event that upset people in the past, but also one that the community has since 'gotten over'. The cleaning mechanisms the university employs manifest in the mundane functioning of the day to day. As a participant observer, I heard the subtle ways that the sit-in was disavowed in relationship to the historical scheme of Prolutum University. Others have written that they

think the ACC, made up of 'impoverished free-riding pussies' [sic], has transformed Prolutum into a 'liberal cesspool', because (and most likely in part because of the sit-in) the speaker for the 2015 commencement was a professor of African-American Studies.

I recognize the ways in which the institution has re-located what manifested as 'matter out of place' by cleaning and re-integrating the events into the daily habits of the institution. The rhetorical use of describing the 'civility' of the 'collaborative' work of the sit-in plays a hand in both invalidating and trivializing its significance whilst calling for action which includes 'teaching' *more* diversity and inclusion. Further, the way the institution has also brought Black speakers to campus in the name of representation, whether or not the voices behind those faces are intended to actually challenge the status quo of institutional life, is consonant with the original intentions of the ACC. This indicates that Prolutum has indeed returned to business as usual.

At Prolutum today, the legacy of the sit-in manifests in the forms of increased programming, reiterating what it means to 'teach diversity and inclusion' via YouTube media clips and advertisements for the zeal of Prolutum students. To lament the lack of 'civility' and indeed articulate that students do not 'feel fully included' begs questions about the politics of inclusivity and prompts further conversation regarding whiteness as property. Yet, what does this indicate about students and student movements using this same rhetoric? As Robin Kelley observes, there lies a 'tension between reform and revolution, between desiring to belong and rejecting the university as a cog in the neoliberal order. I want to think about what it means for Black students to seek love from an institution incapable of loving them—of loving anyone, perhaps' (Kelley, 2016: n. pag.). Diversity and inclusion become a checkmark that the university maintains in order to keep status quo, and I suppose this begs a question that haunts this project: is there another option?

Conclusion

Through understanding the university as a corporate and an imperial space, and the mechanisms by which it is corporatizing and imperializing, this project offers an analysis of how such a space deals with student activism. Thematically, this arti-

cle covers three main territories. First, it provides a necessary understanding of the contemporary US university as shaped by the national politic. Second, it seeks to understand how the space of an individual university (Prolutum) influences how the university at large performs a kind of cleansing function. As argued, this cleaning and sanitizing is a significant manifestation of the current neoliberal agenda reflected and reverberated within global society. Thirdly, this article addresses the way in which activist movements and the corporate and imperial university renders legible certain (e.g. racialized, gendered, classed) bodies. Going forward, I hope that this project opens up space of understanding, critique, and applicability to other university contexts of student protest. While the sit-in demonstration at Prolutum was but one of the many forms of activism on one specific college campus, the project of the corporate and imperial university and student activism has endless and necessary possibilities—it is important that we commit ourselves to this task.

Radway's epigraph (cited in Gordon, 1997) illustrates the power of market logic both intentionally to obscure and to gain supremacy at the cost of human suffering. I have attempted to examine several iterations of this process as it manifests on one university campus, and in the same stride, perpetuate certain kinds of violences. By attempting to render legible human experience for the purposes of an ethnographic study and the production of research, I question the kind of violence that I induced in order to bring to light the violences of the university. This, first and foremost, is my biggest limitation to this study. What does it mean that I produce work within the academic machine? Is this project simply another form of self-exclusion from its processes? Given that the basis for this article was an honours thesis project at Prolutum University, is there something to be said about how the university might commodify this research into another 'student accomplishment', rending my project merely as more fuel to power the university's marketized standards of excellence, which are used to sell its academic programs? What might it mean for us to negotiate this tension, and what does it mean to sit within its grasp?

My interests in exploring the theoretical and foundational dynamics of how students and administrators interact within a contact zone of protest lie in trying to get closer to naming the ecological environment of the US University in today's political

climate. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's (2013: 115) suggestion that 'the uncanny feeling we are left with is that something else is there in the Under commons [of the university],' requires us simultaneously to understand tensions of how the dynamic, and neoliberal and imperial, terrain shapes student movements, themselves, and also to realize that we have not yet given up the kinds of radical hope needed to imagine an alternative. It seems to me that this imagination might enliven such an oppositional project through naming and seeing that which we are up against. In conversation with Stern and Brown (2016), who offer a critical example of how qualitative studies in education might allow us to find 'armed love' and 'critical hope' in what can often feel like hopeless and loveless places, it is my hope that this article occupies a similar niche; that we might further critically analyze our own collusion and resistance within formal and informal educational spaces; and that we might do this as a way of un-knowing and un-doing what the corporate and imperial university has, for so long, disciplined us to know and do.

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