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Introduction: Out of the Ruins, the University to Come

> *Today, how can we not speak of the university?*
> —Jacques Derrida (1983: 3)

The two of us wrote this introduction together, but the two of us are many. One of us is a contract faculty member who holds a tenuous-track position at York University, which aspires to be a "comprehensive university." One of us is an associate professor with tenure at the University of Western Ontario, which aspires to be "among Canada's leading research-intensive universities." Even though we work in different institutions with their own histories and occupy different places in a stratified terrain, what brought us together, and what connects us to so many others, is a desire to know what constitutes the university in crisis today. What distinguishes this issue of *TOPIA* from past theme issues is that it is not only a publishing event *within* the university, but it also "belongs to the history of the university" (Derrida 1983: 20).

In the early 1980s, Jacques Derrida deemed it impossible to disassociate the work we do in the humanities and the humanities-oriented social sciences from "a reflection on the political and institutional conditions of that work" (1983: 3). This still seems impossible to us. But we are also aware that there are many faculty members who do not wish to think about or engage in these issues, who prefer to be left alone to do their research and teaching. These days, it is common to overhear something like this: "I don't know how it gets sorted out. And I increasingly don't want to know how it gets sorted out." The idle talk of the university approaches a Zizikean structure of disavowal: I know the university is in trouble, but nonetheless I act as if I do not know this. But surely it is no longer possible to maintain this kind of denial when university students are in the streets around the globe; in Spain, Britain, Greece, Egypt, Chile, the United States, Russia, Mexico and beyond, students fight for their right to education and against austerity, tyranny, neoliberalism and rabid global finance capital. In Canada, as "publicly funded" education is replaced by "publicly assisted" education and the numbers of precarious professors swell along with the cost of tuition and student debt, we have seen the longest and

largest student strike in history and tens of thousands of people in the streets for months in Quebec.

In the 1990s, the ascendency of neoliberalism upset the university's foundation and orientation to knowledge, the state and the market. In the 2000s, both public and private universities became increasingly engaged in what Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades (2004) have named "academic capitalism," restructuring and stratifying the labour force, monetizing research and courting corporate dollars in earnest. By the end of the decade, noted cultural critics Nick Couldry and Angela McRobbie (2010) declared the idea of the university in England "dead" in the wake of the Browne Report, which defined higher education as a "lightly regulated market in which consumer demand, in the form of student choice, is sovereign in determining what is offered by service providers (i.e. universities)" (Collini 2010). This view of universities is now well entrenched in Canada. The 2005 Rae Report commissioned by the Ontario provincial government called for tuition to be deregulated and for loan limits to be raised. This reform, couched in the rhetoric of egalitarian access, increased government funding while ensuring that the banks' business of "supporting" students would grow. More recently, as policy researchers have declared the entire Ontario public university sector to be unsustainable (Clark, Trick and Van Loon 2011), provincial education minister Glenn Murray, clearly enamoured with the Bologna process, proposes to reform higher education by accelerating degree granting; increasing online education, "entrepreneurial training" and technology in the classroom; creating a system of standardized, mobile credits that can move easily between institutions; and admitting a larger number of lucrative international students. Murray puts forth these proposals in a report entitled "Strengthening Ontario's Centres of Creativity, Innovation and Knowledge"—is it an accident that the words "university" and "college" are absent from this title? As a new kind of enterprise infused by the spirit of networking and entrepreneurialism, the university is now a very different place to think than the universities we attended.

Bill Readings's (1996) account of the rise of the corporate university of "excellence" anticipated the fate of the contemporary university, both public and private. Today, the rhetoric of "excellence" rings as hollow as a marketing catchphrase, and the quest for efficiencies and the evaluation of teaching "outcomes" and research "outputs" continue to displace academic values and faculty judgment. The mantra of innovation, the hegemony of technoscience, the flow of money and information, the administrative use of information and communications technology for the integration of faculty into client self-service systems, the casualization of academic labour, and the indebted student define how the production of knowledge is oriented and how the university works. The parliamentary public university, where the faculty senate is a counterbalance to the president and the board of governors, has been dissolved. The university now primarily functions as a site of capitalist circulation and accumulation rather than of reasoned argumentation. Our experience leaves us with the sinking feeling that the university is beyond rehabilitation. In this sense,

it feels as though this theme issue on "the university" is too little and too late. And yet…there clearly *are* pockets of resistance, sites of counter-institution, practices of utopian pedagogy, contract-faculty strikes and myriad forms of student activism. Could it be that the university as an idea, process or experience is still alive? Have these crises revived the spirit of criticism, contestation and debate, which spills, now, outside the university walls and into the streets, just as it did in Paris in the 13th century? As knowledge and learning are enclosed on one front, new fronts open up, reminding us, as Derrida writes, that "the decision of thought cannot be an intra-institutional event, an academic moment" (Derrida, 1983: 19).

The articles and offerings collected here focus on a variety of different universities, players and practices in their analyses, but they share much in common. All attempt to assess the impact of university transformations on students, staff, faculty and broader communities; all are determined to uncover the contradictions, limits and productive possibilities that these transformations might provide, and all share a preoccupation with the university's future, presenting concrete suggestions for how we might forge a different path. Although most essays focus on Canadian universities, others from the U.K., Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. demonstrate the global reach of neoliberalism's discourses and material effects inside higher education. Indeed, it is obvious that, no matter our particular institutional affiliation, students, faculty and staff alike now work and study in what Andrew Ross has called "the global university" (Ross 2009). While we are thrilled to have the insight and wisdom of senior scholars such as Janice Newson and Claire Polster represented here, we are truly excited to include work by many young scholars as well. Enda Brophy, Myka Tucker-Abramson, Sandra Jeppesen, Holly Nazar, Filip Vostal, Julie Gregory, Brian Whitener and Dan Nemser are all inspiring thinkers at the beginning of their careers, grappling with the university's unstable transformations. The stakes are far higher for them, but the clarity of their voices and their incisive observations bode well for the future.

The issue begins with Enda Brophy and Myka Tucker-Abramson's clear-eyed assessment of the "double crisis" of the university and the capitalist system, and the points of productive tension and resistance this crisis calls forth. Taking up the case of Simon Fraser University, the authors focus on the thoroughgoing structural changes that have taken place there since its founding as a part of the utopian expansion of Canadian higher education in the 1960s. From its progressive championing of social justice and civil rights and its reputation as "Berkeley of the North" to its current incarnation as a free-market real estate developer in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, circulator of valuable corporate dollars, and innovator in new forms of educational private-public partnerships, Simon Fraser is firmly enmeshed in logics of capitalist rationalization. But, the authors contend, the "neoliberalization" of the university produces its own contradictions and antagonists; those whose lives are most directly affected by these transformations are enraged, networked, organized and striking back on numerous fronts.

Janice Newson also examines the contradictions that can emerge in the space between utopian ideals and material reality. Professor Newson, who has been writing about the transformation of the Canadian university for well over thirty years (including in her groundbreaking work *The University Means Business*, co-written with Howard Buchbinder in 1988), turns her attention here to the state of feminist scholarship and women's studies. She notes that the success of academic feminism has taken place alongside the entrenchment of corporatization and the instrumentalization of university administration and governance, and provocatively interrogates the implications of this. Underlining yet another salient contradiction, she points out the ways in which even the most progressive scholars in the pursuit of one noble goal—establishing the legitimacy of feminist scholarship, for example—can undermine their own best interests by ignoring another: the struggle against corporatization and for academic freedom.

In her analysis of university securitization and branding, Julie Gregory also examines ways in which professors, staff and students can unwittingly support administrative rationalizations that operate against their best interests. While student activism has often been blamed for the intensification of safety audits and security measures on campus, Gregory reveals how these initiatives tie neatly into Carleton University's attempt to attract students and parents via marketing and branding. A safe campus is a great promotional hook, and better promotion can secure more students whose tuition fees can fund the technology needed to create a top-of-the-line securitized space, which in turn makes for a great brand identity, and so on. She links these developments to the corporate-military logic now dominant on campus; at the same time as Carleton markets itself as having the latest in security equipment and measures, she notes, it shifts the legal responsibility for any harm that does occur entirely onto students, and works to render issues like sexual assault invisible.

Neoliberalism's tendency to render invisible specific issues, identities and subject positions is also explored by Sandra Jeppesen and Holly Nazar in their examination of the controversy surrounding the funding of the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto. The authors argue that the criticisms of the school by both faculty and students, which rely on defences of academic freedom and the assertion of human rights, still bear the marks of capital, corporatization and colonialism. The authors challenge us to assess our investments in hierarchical power relations in the academy and to work to make "academic freedom" a reality for everyone.

Clair Polster's article, based on institutional ethnography, examines the new administrative politics and practices that have reconfigured the social relations between administration and faculty. She finds that faculty members tend to respond to "what new administrative practices appear to *be*, rather than to what they *do*," and argues that faculty should pay attention to more than just rising administrative

salaries. Managerialism has infiltrated faculty senates, transformed the faculty into one "stakeholder" among others, and positioned faculty members as "resource competitors and entrepreneurs." Polster asserts that academics must observe their own responses to these changes and guard against recuperation within the dominant corporate logic. Instead of vilifying individual administrators or lamenting the loss of power and privilege, professors need to engage in well-reasoned and in-depth analysis of the problem of administrative power and the structural causes of their current situation. She goes on to outline several strategies for changing faculty-administrator relationships.

Filip Vostal and Susan Robertson assess the "third way" mission that has appeared in the British academy through the lens of what they call a "politics of time." Once separated from outside social rhythms, the university has been drawn in to processes of social acceleration as a result of policies and funding regimes that bring business into the university and ideas and innovation into the economy. This has given rise to a new bureaucratic class in the university composed of knowledge brokers and mediators, who must add value to the knowledge produced by deploying it with "fast mobility" and "vehicularity." These processes are where the circulation of knowledge capital begins, further dissolving the boundary between knowledge production and application. Despite the hype surrounding knowledge mediation, however, innovation rarely takes place; instead, an academic culture of "sameness and uniformity" results. The authors conclude with a call to develop "a diverse ecology of temporalities and forms of productivity" within the academy, with an eye to "the possibilities these would generate for new kinds of social relations and social understandings."

Brian Whitener and Dan Nemser's offering also highlights the university's increasingly central role in the circulation of both knowledge and finance capital. The University of Michigan is a model for a "new university," where higher education has become secondary to facilitating flows of over-accumulated capital. The authors identify four different locations within the university "which operate as sinks, or pools for investment and accumulation: student loans, construction contracts, research and development and endowments." From the perspective of university academic planning, the circulation model is a success; more and more universities are reconfiguring their missions and "chasing the dollars." But from the perspective of students and faculty, this deep integration of flows of capital circulation into the logics of the university has disastrous results, including an increasingly fragmented academic labour force, less student aid for those who need it, and more student workers and student debt. Whitener and Nemser's sketch of this process helps us to identify where a new politics of the virtualized university needs to be enacted: at the points where immaterial flows of capital are materialized. During the eighty-five-day contract-faculty strike at York University in 2008–09, for example, the administration, with the backing of faculty senate, pre-empted the striking CUPE Local 3903's picketing strategy by cancelling classes, even as the construction of

the York Research Tower by unionized construction workers and the other business of the university continued as usual. Following Whitener and Nemser's argument, this local would have needed to develop a strategy to block the flow of capital into the construction of the research tower in order to "attack…the chokepoints in the system of circulation."

Moving from monetary to emotional forms of investment, Paul Magee examines his experiences with university audit culture in Australia. While most critics focus on the violence and irrationality of quantitative performance audits in the accountability-driven, neoliberal university, Magee interrogates their qualitative dimensions, specifically the self-report. Using Jacques Lacan's work on the libidinal function of scholarly work and the myth of the ideal "I," he argues that audit culture produces "a diffuse egomania" in its wake. But he also contends that this egomania has always been at the core of scholarly tradition in some form or other; indeed, scholars generally resent neoliberal valorization processes because they diverge from other, more tried and trusted "forms of narcissistic validation." Magee calls for us to widen "into open antagonism" the relations between those whose emotional investment in their own authority makes them ideal managers in, what we could call, the neoliberal "audit-ocracy" and those scholars who wish to work for "the autonomy of academic values" alone. Sean Phelan also examines the question of faculty members' investments in the university's "banal managerial and discursive regime" in his offering. Drawing on Nick Couldry's notion of "voice as process" and Ernesto Laclau's category of "the demand," Phelan advises that, instead of complaining that they no longer have a voice, faculty should be asking, "under what conditions can faculty voices be heard?" He zeroes in on the university-media relationship. Media power means that media visibility comes to influence university decision-making and makes some things more "hearable" than others, generating an "official university" that stands over and above the one that is lived and experienced. Phelan contends that the mediatized condition of the university calls for a collective, political strategy of "*publicly* contesting"—by any media necessary—"the repressive effects of the official university within the university itself and in the wider social world that consecrates its authority."

Éric George begins with a similar querying of the intellectual grounds upon which an academic might reasonably pose a critique of his or her own authorizing institution, and highlights the difficulty of enacting critique in general within the enclosures of the neoliberal global university. George proceeds to examine the structural transformation of Canadian universities and public education through the lens of two concepts we seldom hear or read about on campus these days: alienation and emancipation. Drawing on numerous French and Québécois sources and tracing the shift from the Fordist period of public investment to the extended period of post-Fordist disinvestment, he examines the future of research, the student population explosion, working conditions, the professor-student relationship, and student career-mindedness. In the "Maple Spring," George finds a "renewed push for

an unrealized project of the Quiet Revolution: free education from preschool to university." Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, Nick Mahony is attempting to define some productive alternatives within and against the university in his work on the "Creating Publics" project at the Open University in the U.K. Informed by a critical social science approach, Mahony describes a series of pilot "public-creation" projects, which offer opportunities to collaborate, experiment and share experiences with diverse publics in the creation of knowledge. While these projects show much promise, the enterprise of "creating publics" also faces challenges, such as high resource costs and the difficulty of negotiating different contexts and public values. Mahony contends that any rethinking of our lived practice within the public university must also involve revitalizing our public encounters, redefining "what it means to be public" and engaging with art history and criticism.

We conclude our offerings with Wade Rowland's appreciation of the late David Noble. In the mid-1970s, Noble combined Karl Marx and Harry Braverman to write the social history of rationalization in U.S. higher education. During the first wave of the virtualization of the university, he authored the now-classic *Digital Diploma Mills,* an account of the effects of technological innovation and the coming online university. While his preferred method of changing the university was to tackle issues of academic freedom and integrity through lawsuits and the courts, Noble's first scholar-activist principle for understanding how the university works was to "follow the money." He was a vigilant campaigner against the transformation of academic knowledge into a commodity, and against university-corporate "partnerships." From a former graduate student, we learn that every course he taught was a path from alienation to emancipation.

After the deadline for submissions to this issue had passed, we witnessed the longest, largest student strike in the history of Quebec and Canada. It inspired us to articulate the circuit of academic work with the cycle of student struggle. So we asked students, activists, professors and a journalist to contribute to a gallery of voices and images that might begin to document what became known as the "Maple Spring." These images and short pieces illustrate a strategy of refusal—a refusal to be quiet and docile—as the long-endorsed commitment to free higher education in Quebec was taken one step closer to destruction by Jean Charest's government's plans to increase tuition. The student voices you hear in these pages demonstrate the intelligence, passion, bravery and commitment that informed a strike that was much maligned and misunderstood, especially in English Canada. To this day, we remain stunned by the inability of the press, politicians and others to recognize the significance of these events and their connection to other struggles against austerity and neoliberal policies around the globe. As pundits in English Canada raced to the bottom, admonishing Quebec students for being "spoiled," tuition fees across the country continued to rise; average student debt is now at record levels of $27,000, and the Canada Student Loan program is rapidly reaching its threshold of $15 billion (Mason 2011).

By September 2012, even though 20,000 students had voted to remain on strike, the universities in Quebec were open again. Bill 78, passed on May18, 2012 rendering public protest illegal, was still in effect. And then, on September 24, newly elected Quebec Premier Pauline Marois repealed the tuition fee hike and the draconian law. However, as long as the neoliberal austerity agenda continues to shape higher education policy, we would do well to remember the words of this strike placard: "la grève est étudiante, la lutte est populaire" —the strike might about the students, but the struggle involves us all.

In 1996, Bill Readings exhorted us to dwell within the "ruins" of the contemporary university pragmatically and without recourse to nostalgia and romanticism. He argued, "pragmatism recognizes that thought begins where we are and does away with alibis. By thinking without alibis, I mean ceasing to justify our practices in the name of an idea from 'elsewhere,' and idea that would release us from responsibility for our immediate actions" (1996: 153). We wonder what Readings would make of today's completely transformed global university—now a mall, a bank, an entertainment complex, a branded experience, a construction site, a tourist destination, and a retail enterprise that peddles "innovation," "creativity" and "information" alongside its cool hats and hoodies. Dedicated to capital circulation, the global university trades students, construction contracts, endowments and debt like a Wall Street brokerage firm. The "ruined" university Readings described as marked by "sedimentations of historical differences" (171) is barely discernable now. Buried by the gleaming research tower and displaced by the celebratory rhetoric of "the knowledge economy" the metaphor feels quaint.

And so, the diagnosis is in: we are out of the ruins, and the global, flexible, neoliberal university is in ascendance. Its contradictions, as it displaces dying nationalized public-university systems, are everywhere in evidence. The University of California state system, for example, recently announced it can no longer afford to educate graduate students from California and will now admit only more lucrative out-of-state and out-of-country quarry (Jaschik 2012). Canadian public universities are working to win excellent "human capital" in the "global talent market" by increasing international student enrollments (Fullick 2012), while simultaneously promising to take no opportunities away from Canadian students (Baluja 2012). In the U.K., the removal of the annual block grant to universities pits disciplines against one another for student/consumer dollars. Free student choice in an unfettered education market is heralded as the great leveler—the mechanism that will expose low-functioning, non-competitive universities and low-yielding fields of study. Except, of course, if that "free" choice veers away from more expensive classes in medicine, science and technology; these fields will, of course, be subsidized.

But as many of our contributors and the Maple Spring make clear, other, more generative and productive contradictions exist as well; to be sure, there are openings, refusals, détournments, protests and paths around and away from these

developments. One of the most significant of these is the publishing boom on the subject of the contemporary university that has occurred in recent years. Readers will no doubt notice the healthy number of publications on the university reviewed in this special issue. Indeed, so great has been the volume of journal issues, books and edited collections that Jeffrey Williams has declared the emergence of a new field of "critical university studies" (Williams 2012), noting the central role of cultural studies in this trend. Indeed, cultural studies' origins as an "anti-discipline" (Nelson, Treichler and Grossberg, 1992: 2) and its ongoing commitment to innovative modes of inquiry that stress the necessary co-implication of rigorous intellectual work with progressive political action make it ideally suited to the project of "critical university studies." Now more than ever, we need cultural studies to trouble the university, and we hope this special issue contributes to that project.

But, while there can be no question that critical intellectual work is central to social change, the reality of tens of thousands on the street and the multiple exigencies of the current historical juncture push all of us working in the neoliberal university to confront a crucial question: how is it possible to enact a meaningful critique of the university system while continuing to function within, and reap the benefits of, that same system? How long can this particular contradiction be maintained until, in the words of student contributor Kevin Paul, it "bursts into the open, and the nature of the struggle irrevocably changes"? How long until the professoriate, students and staff come to see themselves "as they are"?

Critics such as the Edu-factory Collective argue for an "exodus" from the university altogether—for its dissolution into the streets, into autonomous knowledge production and self-valorization, into the "common" (Edu-factory 2009). Others are not willing to cede the ground entirely. Readings exhorts us to act "responsibly" within the university institution, paying attention to the ways in which we might preserve the activity of thinking and the role of the intellectual without resorting to nostalgic ideas about our social role. Derrida insists that the "strongest responsibility for someone attached to a research or teaching institution is…to make…its system and its aporias as clear and as thematic as possible"; as noted above, work that engages critically with the "politico-institutional structures that constitute and regulate our practices" is one way to enact such a "responsibility" (Derrida 1992: 22–23). To be sure, the intensifying transformations of the university system taking place around the globe today open our eyes to the fact that "(t)he University is not going to save the world by making the world more true, nor is the world going to save the University by making the University more real" (Readings 1996: 171). But we must also ask: what are the limits to this kind of institutional pragmatism? Where does it lead us? What of the future?

What *does* responsible action look like for those of us working within the global university today? This remains an open question—for the university to come…

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