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Compliance and Resistance Within Neoliberal Academia

Biographical Stories, Collective Voices

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Susan Gair
College of Arts
James Cook University
Douglas, QLD, Australia

Tamar Hager
Dept. of Education & Gender Studies
Tel-Hai College
Upper Galilee, Israel

Omri Herzog
Department of Cultural Studies
Sapir College
Sha'ar Hanegev, Israel

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Contents

Setting the Scene: Research and Writing Against the Neoliberal Grain

Susan Gair, Tamar Hager, and Omri Herzog

Abstract This chapter outlines our collaborative research and writing project which recounts personal stories regarding everyday survival in the neoliberal academia. It begins by depicting the characteristics of academic neoliberal regime, such as authoritarian managerialism, accountability processes, standardization measures, performance indicators and benchmarking achievement audits. As previous research shows, neoliberalism impacts the everyday lives and wellbeing of academics, prompting us to take a deeper exploration of academic selves. The chapter then goes on to describe our methodology, collaborative autoethnography, introducing the advantages and disadvantages of personal stories as a research method. It ends by outlining our working method, exploring how we collectively wrote, shared, discussed and reflected on our texts.

Keywords Neoliberal academia • Audit culture • Academic selves • Performance • Collaborative autoethnography

The names of the authors are arranged in alphabetical order. The three authors contributed equally to the writing of this manuscript.

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Susan appeared on screen sitting at a desk covered with papers and books. It was 6 PM in Townsville, Australia. She apologized for not being able to stay for long because her grandchildren were coming over. In Tel Aviv, Israel, Tamar, who first appeared against the background of her study at 11 AM, was constantly changing rooms and corners in her flat, apologizing for the unstable Wi-Fi connection. Omri's face looked hazy in the light from the window of his rented flat in London. Originally from Sapir College, Israel, Omri had tackled COVID-19 while on a sabbatical in the UK. He was apologizing for his drowsiness at 9 AM caused by working late into the night.

Work meetings via computer screen have become common during the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital images have replaced human contact. Yet for us it has been a routine for the last two years. In fact, the decision to write about life in neoliberal higher education had been dominated by Zoom from the end of 2018. During the two years of our collaboration we have met virtually quite frequently to refine our ideas, plan our writing retreat in London, consider and then reconsider the book structure and discuss the division of our work. We shared ideas in exciting conversations full of disputes and divergent thinking. Zoom and emails served as a shared space for continuous discussions, for writing in real time, for sharing relevant texts and for exchanging international, local and personal stories as our collegial relationship deepened—the climate crisis, the pandemic, the fierce bushfires in Australia, the outbursts of violence in Israel, individual academic accomplishments, failures and tensions, family dramas and holiday plans.

Other transnational research and writing gatherings have been conducted in a similar way, mixing the professional and the personal. Before the pandemic, when budgets could be allocated and flights were still an option, international research projects like ours allowed physical face-to-face meetings somewhere on the globe. Our book was at first quite a common pre-pandemic academic venture. We met frequently online, we had one encounter "in person," face to face, away from our respective countries and we mostly wrote separately at our desks in Townsville, Tel Aviv and London. Yet our research has its singularity and uniqueness. Rather than describing, analysing and theorizing common neoliberal institutional processes, we chose to write personal stories in which we have explored and reflected on their damaging effects on our everyday lives as academics.

While negotiating disciplinary and national differences, we were enthusiastic to discover that despite strong similarities in our stories, each of us had interesting unique experiences to tell. At first the notion of a collection of articles seemed most appealing. An edited collection is easier to produce and edit and everything is faster; it is a better method in the

"publish or perish" regime. But we wanted a different book, one that goes against the grain and introduces deep co-thinking, collaboration and dialogue among scholars into the academic context. We wanted to question the way academic knowledge is created and represented through theories and generalizations. We aspired to challenge the standardization of academic writing forms. And we wanted to defy feelings of isolation and competitiveness which are integral parts of our everyday academic lives.

Our autoethnographic stories illuminate the emotional, psychological and mental costs of engaging in a highly stressful working environment. They primarily are divided across three chapters, each dealing with a different academic task. The first addresses the construction and management of an institutionalized "proper" academic CV; the second raises issues concerning the complexities of publishing within the framework of the constant neoliberal demand of "productivity" and the third tackles the challenges of teaching diverse classrooms of students/clients. Our stories demonstrate the impact of the contemporary neoliberal academic regime on our own emotional wellbeing, and on our relationships with research partners, students, colleagues, management and people in our personal circles. The critique of the neoliberal academy is thus a woven thread throughout the book, and it is personalized, hesitant and cautious.

Personal stories have been used as a research methodology during the last few decades by researchers who have believed that other research methods are futile, insufficient or inadequate for exploring certain social and cultural phenomena (Hager, 2019). Evading disciplinary jargon and professional language, personal stories provide immediacy—an artfully strategic elicitation of insights, feelings and experiences which allow deep immersion in the world portrayed—a sense of verisimilitude, and an encounter with dynamic, messy and chaotic reality (Banks, 2008; Brewer, 2010; Diversi, 1998; Frank, 2000; Rinehart, 1998).

In the neoliberal audit culture, where everything is measured and numbered, such a research method is uncommon and exists only on the margins of the social sciences and the humanities. Diminishing the significance of analytical generalizations, it emphasizes narrativized and particularized data usually regarded as superfluous by most academic discursive practices.

However, grounded in feminist epistemology, our research is based on the notion that the personal is political, and thus our individual detailed experiences illuminate recurring mechanisms of oppression and coercion in the academic maze. Determined to write our autoethnographies in dialogue, we present our collaborative writing as an alternative to the increasingly individualistic and competitive ethos of academic culture which

tends to dismiss the fact that all knowledge is constructed by intellectual exchange and cooperation. Therefore, our project could serve as a challenge and alternative to current academia.

From Universitas to Neoliberal Academia

The COVID-19 pandemic led to an extensive worldwide closedown of academic campuses, sending faculty and students to work online at their homes. However, as lecturers we were aware of previous attempts at diffusing digital tools into higher education, introducing them as being more efficient and cheaper than face-to-face seminars and lectures. The pandemic ironically has provided a magnificent opportunity and an immediate laboratory to examine this familiar capitalist vision.

The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben (2020) expressed his concerns regarding the extensive use of online teaching in a post he submitted during the global lockdown. He referred to the disappearance of the teachers' and students' physical presence as their being "permanently imprisoned in a spectral screen." He emphasizes how virtual teaching has killed group discussions, the liveliest part of instruction.

However, he was particularly bothered by:

> […] the end of being a student [*studentato*, studenthood] as a form of life. Universities were born in Europe from student associations—*universitates*—and they owe their name to them. To be a student entailed first of all a form of life in which studying and listening to lectures were certainly decisive features, but no less important were encounters and constant exchanges with other *scholarii*. […] This form of life evolved in various ways over the centuries, but, from the *clerici vagantes* of the Middle Ages to the student movements of the twentieth century, the social dimension of the phenomenon remained constant.

Agamben evokes one of the oldest models of a "Western university" initiated in Bologna during the twelfth century. Students who came from all over Europe to study in the city and hence were deprived of citizens' rights decided to protect their common interests by organizing themselves (Moore, 2019). Employing the commonest term for corporation (a guild, a trade, a brotherhood etc.), and community being in use at the time, they called themselves "universitas scholarium," the university of students in Bologna (Verger, 2003). When such student associations became powerful, and gradually spread to other parts of Europe, they could control

learning establishments (i.e. Bologna, Padua), appointing the professors, hiring their services for a year, supervising their teaching and fining them when they failed to fulfil their duties (Verger, 2003). Students could also threaten the municipal and clerical local authorities saying that if their rights were not acknowledged they would move away, taking the prosperity and wealth they had brought to the city elsewhere. The power of students' *universitas* was better exemplified by the decision of the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa in 1155 to grant the students and faculty of Bologna immunity from civil law, thus initiating what has later been known as academic freedom, much eroded lately in the current neoliberal academia.

However, in focusing on his concern for the evaporation of students to within the digital space, Agamben disregards another mediaeval model—the University of the Masters (universitas magistrorumet). At the University of Paris, teachers were those who lacked citizenship and needed to protect their interests, and thus created an organized community (Moore, 2019). At such a university, like Paris and Oxford, the teachers were full-fledged members of the institutions, gradually becoming a status group which transcended local and disciplinary boundaries. Possessing a distinctive corpus of knowledge, they enjoyed a high degree of cultural and social prestige which is still recognized today mainly when referring to "academic celebrities" (Verger, 2003). By pushing the scholar-teachers away from the campuses, compelling them to use digital technologies to converse with screen-images of their students and colleagues, COVID-19 has in fact threatened to terminate not only the survival of the universitas scholarium, the university of students, but also the universitas magistrorumet—the community of the masters.

Moreover, these institutional processes also defy the vision of the modern university represented by Wilhelm von Humboldt in the nineteenth century. In a memo published by Humboldt in 1810, prior to the building of the University of Berlin, he argued that the university should produce new, rationally scrutinized knowledge as well as cultivating students to become responsible free thinkers and researchers. "Attending lectures is only secondary," he demonstrated. "What is essential is that for a series of years one lives in close connection with like-minded people of the same age, who are aware that in this same place there are many thoroughly learned people, dedicated solely to the elevation and diffusion of science" (quoted in Ruegg, 2004, p. 21).

Another concept of academia that could be relevant here is the welfare university that flourished following the Second World War, mainly in the

1960s. During that time, universities opened their gates to diverse population in the United States and Europe, challenging institutional meritocracy, providing scholarship and stipends to all people who wanted to study, and job opportunities, good salaries and research funds to faculty even for those engaged in the humanities (Williams, 2006; Moore, 2019). Although the postwar university represented the democratic vision of equal opportunity, it was also built on the spectre of perpetual struggle. Students' movements which flourished all over the globe were the principal medium for successive transformations, such as the civil rights movement, 1960s–1970s student power and grassroots democracy, 1970s feminism and more (Marginson, 2011). Despite differences within local contexts, these movements shared a persistent call for equality and freedom to all people, irrespective of political, religious, socioeconomic and cultural background, and occasionally cooperated with interested faculty who held anti-war, anti-racist ideologies (Moore, 2019; Marginson, 2011). Academic institutions during these decades were diverse and bustling with intellectual interactions as well as activism—demonstrations, sit-ins and other types of provocations, actions and events.

These three concepts of the university demonstrate that these institutions serve several roles: an educator, a producer of knowledge and a social institution. Philomena Essed (1999, p. 212) describes higher education institutions as "functional structures and social relations between students, academic staff and administration the nature of which is informally determined by cultural politics privileging some groups and excluding others." Campuses have been perceived as social spaces, as microcosmos of society at large, where people from different classes, ethnicities, nationalities, sexual preferences physically meet. A common vision has been held by academics who are engaged in diversity work, like Essed and Sara Ahmed (2012). Such academics are familiar with the complexity of institutional hidden curriculum, that is the transmission of norms, values and beliefs in the institutional social environment and the opportunities of changing oppressive social structure it potentially entails. This mandatory institutional space which encourages the essential intellectual and social interactions began to evaporate as use of technologies infused academic life and accelerated when campuses were closed down during COVID-19.

However, it would be wrong to assume that these perturbing processes are new ones. Our academic experience reveals that teachers and students, as they were defined by the old universities and by Humboldt's more modern vision, started vanishing several decades ago, not by a pandemic

but rather by neoliberal ideology and practices. The logic of the capitalist market has turned the universities from quasi-independent communities of scholars engaged in free thinking in a fertile supportive institutional climate, into an educational market economy where teachers are service providers, students are customers and the administration dictate the institutional rules and actions.

This is the academia that the three of us have experienced for many years, where we teach, research and have been engaged in administrative and community work. This is the academia we are exploring via our personal stories written about and within the neoliberal maze. To fully appraise our accounts some explanation and clarification regarding the neoliberal institutional context is needed.

Negotiating the Neoliberal Culture

Neoliberalism is grounded in logics of globalization, marketization, privatization and individualization. It has penetrated most areas of public life as well as public institutions, changing their culture and functioning with increasingly disastrous effects. Jane Goodall (2019) defines neoliberalism as a set of political beliefs, values and practices informing heightened regulation, accountability, competition and justification of public expenditure. Early proponents of neoliberal ideology were optimistic and promoted its potential to bring freedom from poverty and inequality through universal involvement in the market economy. Yet it assured only the "survival of the fittest," turning out to be predominantly about corporate control and competitive self-interest (Goodall, 2019, p. 58).

Neoliberalism infiltrated higher education from the 1980s in the United Kingdom, United States, Australia and Canada and increasingly in other parts of the world, through authoritarian managerialism, "accountability processes, standardization measures, performance indicators, [and] benchmarking achievement audits" (Brule, 2004, p. 247). Rising targets on research grants and annual publication outputs have been common examples of eagerly collected metrics in such a regime. Norms and values of education as a public good of the previous decades have been gradually abandoned, while knowledge has become a product like any other (Olssen & Peters, 2005; Naidoo & Williams, 2015).

Jarvis demonstrates that so-called quality has "become an increasingly dominant regulatory tool in the management of higher education sectors around the world," imposing "quasi-market, competitive based

rationalities […] using a policy discourse that is often informed by conviction rather than evidence" (Jarvis, 2014, p. 155). Other phenomena include the branding and marketing of the university/college; the decline in public spending on higher education; the speed-up of academic careers and the casualization and precarity of the teaching workforce as well as the decline of tenure track positions, research opportunities and promotion paths (Maskovsky, 2012; Connell, 2013). The challenges for academics are thus complex:

> diminishing budgets, multiplying audit mechanism ensuring 'accountability,' technological developments that appear to throw traditional teaching practices into question, closed publishing models, spiralling student-staff ratios, … increasingly rigid and competitive research funding mechanisms, and perceived threats to academic freedom and independence. (Whelan, 2015, p. 131)

Consequently, as academics we live with eroding conditions, uncertainty, ever-increasing teaching, administration and service loads, and prescribed publishing targets to demonstrate our worth. In such a climate, lack of achievements and inadequate financial resources are viewed as personal failures rather than as a reflection of larger systemic problems (see e.g. Gill & Donaghue, 2016). The emotional costs, as Rosalind Gill (2016, p. 40) reports, are "exhaustion, stress, overload, insomnia, anxiety, shame, aggression, hurt, guilt and feelings of out-of-placeness, fraudulence and fear of exposure." Yet these embodied experiences are silenced in the public spaces, that is conferences or departmental meetings, and only talked about in informal locations such as corridors, coffee breaks or during intimate conversation with friends (p. 40). When Gill decided to break the silence, she seemed to comply with the common academic notion that moaning, complaining and unhappiness are undesirable, therefore, reframing these responses as "analysis or a (political) demand for change" (p. 41).

The unhappiness, high levels of stress and weariness are intensified when having to teach students who are referred to and behave as consumers (Ball, 2012; Naidoo & Williams, 2015; Molesworth et al., 2010; Saunders, 2007). Early expectations that if referred to as clients, students would become empowered autonomous beings, exercising free choice, has been defied by their growing passivity and instrumental learning (Naidoo & Williams, 2015). We, their teachers, have gradually turned into

anxious and oppressed suppliers compelled under increasing audit surveillance to avoid autonomous judgement about curriculum and pedagogy in the interest of our students (Connell, 2013, p. 108).

In such a context, educators find it increasingly difficult to fully embrace the liberal humanist motivation to turn their students into either free responsible thinkers who create new well scrutinized knowledge or courageous critical agents with aptitudes to recognize, analyse and work towards reducing injustices. This confirms Henry Giroux's argument that, due to the controlling and "corrosive effects" of the neoliberal corporate culture, civic discourse would be eroded (Giroux, 2002, p. 425). The pressure to obey market considerations obligates teachers to deliver quantifiable and measurable services and skills, limiting their educational assignment to prepare their students for the capitalist and corporate job market (Brule, 2004, p. 248; Vallally, 2019; Connell, 2013).

Using Giorgio Agamben's term "bare pedagogy," Giroux (2010, p. 185) describes current academic education as a pedagogy that places "an emphasis on winning at all costs, a ruthless competitiveness, hedonism, the cult of individualism," while minimizing and even removing ethical considerations. Such a context preserves social, national, ethnic, class and gender hierarchies and divisions and appears entirely at odds with dissent thinking and radical critique of social and political power relations as well as with values like social justice, equality, anti-racism and care for others (Giroux, 2010; Jones & Calafell, 2012; Feigenbaum, 2007). Lynch (2006) points out that such circumstances pose a challenge to academics who develop a "counter-hegemonic discourse, a discourse that is grounded in the principles of democracy and equality that are the heart of the public education tradition" (Lynch, 2006, p. 11). Social justice discourse which often causes discomfort, and/or elicits controversy in the classroom, leads to accusations of politicizing what is expected to be (and never was) a neutral space.

Therefore, teachers who persist in challenging their students with social critique are facing hostile learners as well as antagonistic colleagues and administration (hooks, 1994; Jones & Calafell, 2012; Hager, 2015). Since students' evaluations of teachers' aptitude can determine an educators' career progression, promoting counter-hegemonic discourse becomes a risk many teachers are not willing to take. Moreover, social activism in such atmosphere may become "something one does after hours […] a private pursuit or hobby […] even frowned upon" (Bowles et al., 2017, p. 2). Since pressures to invest in publishing and gaining grant money are

increasing, free time is very sparse and is expected to be used "productively."

How can academics resist such an oppressive climate which seems to deprive them of purpose and agency? In researching neoliberalism, we encountered articles and books which attempt to pursue "alternative priorities, resistances and refusals" to the market-driven academia (Bottrell & Manathunga, 2018, p. 2) *Resisting neoliberalism in higher education: Seeing through the cracks* (2018), for example, is a collection of articles which shed light on how academics negotiate and survive the managed life and diminishing space of "traditional" academic objectives by finding ways to work in collegial ways, thus defying neoliberal logic in teaching, researching and writing.

Our project is an addition to these illuminating ventures which expose the hidden costs of an academic's daily routine in the present higher education net, while challenging and opposing neoliberal oppressive processes. It is rooted in feminist epistemology, and as such it does not accept the standard academic distinction between the rules of knowledge building and the constructed knowledge itself, acknowledging the fact that this division is an inaccurate abstraction intended to create a fictive external vantage point from which one can objectively and neutrally look and evaluate knowledge (Duncan, 1996). According to researchers such as Nancy Hartsock (1983), Donna Haraway (1988) and Sandra Harding (1987), intellectual activity is always implemented from a certain standpoint, thus it is situated knowledge, and therefore, by definition, it is non-objective but rather subjective and politically biased and its bias is an integral aspect of the research. Academic knowledge, which reflects a political standpoint of white western male and capitalist values, remains unmarked, transparent and positioned as analytical and as academic status quo (Haraway, 1988, p. 581; Duncan, 1996, pp. 3–4). Feminist researchers called for examination of what this standpoint excludes, in our case, stories opposing the neoliberal rule which damages academic knowledge, institutional interactions and the wellbeing of individuals (Harding, 1987, p. 29; Scott, 2004, pp. 20–21). Our project is thus not a clear-cut academic theoretical critique, but rather an embodied act of resistance to the individualistic and competitive ethos entrenched in the academic setting. In such context, subjectivity becomes a key site of political struggle against the current governmentality (Ball, 2016). Writing our personal accounts regarding the impact of neoliberal regime on our views, beliefs, academic practices and persona becomes our opposition to this oppressive institutional regime.

Collaborative Autoethnographies

When we imagine a successful scholar in the contemporary academy, we picture, often with envy, a rational, ambitious, driven, individualistic, competitive, efficient, calculated and accountable subject, whose apparent masculine prototype discloses that he is often a male. We rarely identify with this competent-focused persona, but rather have often felt unqualified and powerless when contending with institutional pressures and workloads. However, when meeting colleagues and members of management, we are compelled to adopt the invincible neoliberal façade of those who effortlessly carry the burden of the unbearable academic demands. Gradually this recurring effort becomes a ritual performance which presents itself as "our real self." Observing our colleagues navigating the same labyrinth, we are sometimes, perhaps incorrectly, convinced that they have undergone a real personal transformation.

Philip Mirowski (2013, p. 117) sees these subjective processes and shifts as forming a fragmenting self, providing a gloomy description of the outcome:

> The fragmentation of the neoliberal self begins when the agent is brought face to face with the realization that she is not just an employee or student, but also simultaneously a product to be sold, a walking advertisement, a manager of her résumé, a biographer of her rationales, and an entrepreneur of her possibilities. She has to somehow manage to be simultaneously subject, object, and spectator. She is perforce not learning about who she really is, but rather, provisionally buying the person she must soon become.

Our book explores this disturbing fragmentation by interrogating our experiences with the enforced neoliberal performativity and with the awareness of turning into human capital. By telling our biographical accounts—autoethnographies—of coping with current academic pressures, we oppose the familiar "academic biography" we must provide to promotion committees, while creating and contributing new knowledge regarding the daily lives of academics under neoliberal governability and managerialism (Cannizzo, 2018).

Autoethnography has been theorized as a form of autobiography scrutinizing the cultural, social and political context. Heewon Chang (2008, 2011) defines it as a research method that enables researchers to use data from their own life stories as situated in sociocultural contexts in order to

gain an understanding of society through the unique lens of the self. Ellis (2004) suggests that its primary focus is a certain self, or some aspect of a life lived in cultural context. If "culture circulates through all of us," she writes, "then how can autoethnography not connect to a world beyond the self?" (Ellis, 2004, p. 34). Observing the self as embedded within a certain social context implies that autoethnography differs from the autobiography criticized by Bourdieu for "divorc[ing] the life trajectory from any social constraints" (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 9), by providing sociocultural interpretation of self-society connectivity (Chang et al., 2013). Focusing on the self, this approach often is criticized and defined as uninteresting self-indulgence by academic hegemony which overtly promotes and values objectivity, neutrality and the (false) distancing of the researcher from his/her subjects (see e.g. Delamont, 2007; Bradely, 2016; Chang et al., 2013).

Inscribing individual identity within and relative to a socio-political context also entails the transcendence of familiar and instinctive everyday conceptions of selfhood and social life. Personal stories which are written and read within the social, political and cultural context of the current academia do both. They adhere to and confirm the competent individualistic academic persona, and at the same time challenge its construction, thus revealing how it is conjured and embedded in the power relations of the academic audit culture (Reed-Danahay, 1997). Moreover, as reflective observers, we, the authors of these autoethnographies, transgress our automatically assigned selfhood, in the process acquiring multiple identities, displaced and necessarily "not at home," in the stabilized definitions of the power structure (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 4). Therefore, although our stories at times echo the familiar image of the accomplished academic, they equally reflect other personas and thus predominantly testify to the fluidity and hybridity of the self, disclosing among other things its contradictions, hesitations, anxieties, anger, insecurities, stress and satisfactions.

Janet Gunn demonstrates that the real question of autoethnography is not "Who am I?," but rather "it is a question of 'where do I belong? […] the question of the self's identity becomes a question of self's location in a world" (Gunn quoted in Neumann, 1996, p. 184). Positioning through autoethnography problematizes social and political perceptions, challenging the fallacy of the self/other, individual/social dichotomies (Spark, 2002, p. 217), while posing representational questions such as: Who is representing whose life? What interests does she/he represent?

However, depicting, dismantling and resisting the neoliberal academic self requires a partial collaboration with, and appropriation of, the discourse developed within the neoliberal academia, that is concepts, methodologies and ways of writing. Our autoethnographies, then, can be written and read as a cooperation with hegemonic power (they use academic jargon and will contribute to our promotion, and will be measured by the academic metrics) and simultaneously as a rebellious and subversive response to this power (by questioning neoliberal notions of meritocracy, quality, difference and objectivity).

Caren Kaplan (1998) and Sidone Smith (1998) also have stressed the oppositional potential of autoethnography. Kaplan classified it an "out-law genre […] autobiographical but eclectically 'errant' and culturally disruptive" (Kaplan quoted in Smith, 1998, p. 433). Out-law genres, wrote Kaplan, "require more collaborative procedures […] more closely attuned to the power differences among participants in the process of producing the text. Thus, instead of a discourse of individual authorship, we find a discourse of situation; a 'politics of location'" (Kaplan, 1998, p. 208).

Following Kaplan, we see our autoethnographies as collaborative multivocal texts. However, writing our autoethnographies in dialogue, we take the collaboration further. Chang et al. (2013) define collaborative autoethnography as a research method that combines the autoethnographies of several researchers situated in a certain sociocultural milieu—in our case the academia—interacting dialogically. Collecting and sharing autobiographical materials, analysing and interpreting this data collectively, we gain deeper insights regarding the neoliberal academia as a sociocultural phenomenon (Chang, 2008, 2011; Blalock and Akehi 2018). Since we come from different countries, disciplines and experiential perspectives, our stories represent multiple points of view on neoliberal cultural scripts and systematic oppression. Collaborative autoethnography is a powerful method of community building. It enhances trusting relationships, provides for deep listening, promotes creativity and offers collegial feedback and mentorship (Lapadat, 2017; Chang et al., 2013).

Yet, while writing together we also faced methodological and ethical challenges, such as role division, individual accountability, ethics of authorship and data ownership. Very early on we realized that the book's final version would not be exactly what each one of us personally aspired to. As individuals we have developed distinct rhetorical styles and different disciplinary habits. Collaborative writing compelled us to negotiate and to compromise. Yet the power and the significance of such writing depended

on our ability to conceive the intellectual gains of minimizing power struggles and questions of authority, while enjoying the experience of working and learning from each other. It entails retreating at times to the shadows and letting others lead, a move which is less common in the individualist neoliberal academic training and writing. As others who were engaged in similar collective academic work, we see our project as a radical act of resistance against the hegemonic discourses of individuality who push us all to compete (Brooks et al., 2020; Charteris et al., 2016; Hernandez et al., 2015).

For us, it has been an interesting and rewarding journey which has enabled us to better comprehend the obstacles and difficulties we confront in our respective institutions as well as the prices we have paid and still must pay for surviving the neoliberal maze. Moreover, it provides us with some understanding regarding our ability to develop adequate strategies of resistance, refusing to abridge our existence into being solely human capital.

Writing in Dialogue

Collaborative academic writing is quite a challenge. In the past, the three of us co-authored articles with colleagues, but they were based on a division of responsibilities: Each writer had their own role and segments and their respective final word. The old unofficial academic guidance was that co-authoring should be used infrequently, at least in the humanities, because of the ethos of individualized research capital. It has been less respected, and is also ranked lower, especially if the author doesn't appear first in the list of authors. More recently collaborations across disciplines (mainly in exact, life and social sciences) have gained increasing favour. Yet it still reflects academic hierarchy and intellectual ownership as echoed by the order of authors' names on each publication (see e.g. Efthyvoulou, 2008; Igou & van Tilburg, 2015). How do we step down from this pyramid into a more equal sphere? How can we write collaboratively, without a hierarchy or a distinct division of responsibilities?

In our video meetings, we discussed how we would like to work together. For Susan and Omri, it was their first experience in collaborative writing using the distinctive methodology of collaborative autoethnography. We decided there would be no supreme editing authority, and we wouldn't allocate responsibility for various contents. Each of us was to write a story, send it to the others for reading and editing, and then we

would assemble the chapters together. Chapters do not "belong" to anyone, and personal stories would undergo a shared metamorphosis, zapping between personal and political-systemic stories, reflecting coinciding perspectives and similar experiences.

These decisions were accompanied by uneasiness. Some of us were concerned that basing a book on our personal stories would put us at institutional risk. It seems perilous in the current competitive academic climate to write a book which emphasizes our difficulties and failures in academia rather than our accomplishments in coping with the demands of the neoliberal system. It could label us as wilful and incompetent, or as indulging ourselves with complaints while other people dream of acquiring our permanent academic positions.

Such disqualifying framing however is in fact an effective type of censorship which prevents academics from disapproving the current academic regime (Gill, 2016). It threatened to silence us. Fearing to be criticized for self-indulgence, we thought to replace our personal stories with interviews with other academics. It took us some discussions to realize that by transforming the original plan—to tell our own stories—we were in fact silencing ourselves and re-censoring significant knowledge.

Initially there were four of us. A British researcher was part of our team at the primary phases of our thinking. After writing the first drafts, she decided to leave, being concerned that this research and writing project was outside her usual academic field. In the neoliberal academia you are expected to be focused and efficient and exploring subjects out of your academic discipline is often regarded as a distraction. Perhaps it has been an example of how neoliberal academia forces academics in senior positions to restrict their interests and their intellectual horizons for the sake of promotion.

We'd hoped to bring a young German scholar in the postdoctoral phase on board, but he was engaged in the Sisyphean task of applying for grants and building a proper CV for a permanent academic position. Being a historian, he was concerned that a book which lies outside the bounds of his field of expertise and criticizes current academia might taint him as a subversive non-compliant, and problematic for the academic system. We regretted his decision, because the voice of a junior academic who was just starting his career was important to us. Yet, being aware of the difficulties of finding a permanent academic post and the necessary adherence to the rigid "specialization" system, which requires a coherent professional portfolio of publications, his decision was sensible.

Fairly protected by our academic privileges—Tamar and Susan are associate professors and Omri is a senior lecturer—we continued with the project. Perhaps only in these advantageous positions can critical uncensored stories and opinions be voiced without damage to careers. Too often it seems that current academia behaves like commercial companies, disciplining and punishing rogue junior workers who criticize and challenge the rules of the game, regarding them as unwanted rebels. Our permanent job positions might make us somewhat immune to such reprimands.

Via transatlantic video sessions and lots of discussions and arguments, we shaped a work process. The first step for each of us was to write a story based on a personal experience relating to each theme. We exchanged these stories in a shared folder. We read and commented on the others' stories, aiming to support and mentor each other in order to develop and improve our accounts. Here we encountered the first pitfall. We are trained in diverse genres of academic writing. Crossing the boundaries into personal narratives, which do not necessarily adhere to citation of sources and to analytical argument, was not always straightforward. In the first few rounds, we wrote comments like "No need for this theory here," "You need to give more details," "But how did you feel? Try and describe your experience more" and "Then what happened? And don't stop here." We had to constantly keep each other from slipping into the academic comfort zone of the imposing researcher/writer, who exercises superior authority while imposing unequivocal interpretations. We had to evade the familiar academic tone, formal, discreet, empirical and distant. Our task was to write about academia from within the academic setting while using essayist and literary tools. It meant using the first-person, recording and describing in detail events, real characters, experiences, weaknesses, dilemmas and failures.

At the beginning of this road, still somewhat unsure (What would it ultimately look like? How will our voices merge?), with partial drafts and quite a few creative barriers, we met in London. It was crucial to meet face to face, to overcome self-constraints, to put forward ideas for stories and to think them through together, and to offer each other a supportive shoulder. It was hard work. We met in London and spent a week together, working on our chapters and stories. Each morning we met to talk and write. Gradually we got to know each other. Our discussions prompted stories; we held writing sessions, sitting side by side in different libraries or in our hotels, taking coffee breaks to discuss new ideas and different angles of our subjects. These sessions and our dialogue invaded our stories.

The week went by quickly. Back at our desks in Australia and Israel we confronted a crucial moment of writing and editing. In our video meetings we wondered how to reflect upon the fact that our stories were written in cooperation and collaboration when representing each theme. How to construct auto/biographies or auto/ethnographies in the dialogue of academics in neoliberal reality within each chapter and as an overall structure of the entire book? In collaborative writing, there is no chief writer-editor who decides what stays in and what is left out, what is the frame story and what needs to be shortened or tightened.

We grouped together the three stories in each file and continued working in rounds. Each chapter had a first editor, who arranged the order and wrote the frame story that reflected our dialogue back in London. Next, we transferred each chapter to the second editor and then to the third. But the dilemmas intensified. We wondered whether at this point, when the chapter was already organized, we could intervene in the personal stories, ask questions, suggest cuts. To what extent and in what way should we invade each other's narratives and/or step aside and let the other take control over our own story or the dialogue?

Eager to learn from the experience of others, we read accounts of collaborative writing endeavours (i.e. Brooks et al., 2020; Charteris et al., 2016). We discovered that there was no prescription. The writing process depends on participants' personalities and aims, and it involves constant negotiation and consequently each venture is unique. It seems that each collaborative project entails traversing a terra incognita, where writers must invent rules, rather than obey dictated ones.

The editing tool that proved to be controversial was Track Changes. Should we use it, thus leaving the changes we made visible while passing on our edited version or send a clean copy to the next in line? It was a crucial question, not just a technical one, because our preferences clearly illuminated our sensibilities and habits. At times, we have found it hard to agree about the "best interests of the text," and who decides what those are. Susan edited with comments, Omri preferred to send in a clean copy, Tamar worked with Track Changes. Friction and disagreements ensued, but also creative solutions and new ways to support one another. Writing together we learnt required flexibility: In each chapter, we worked differently. One chapter was reedited in increments, back and forth, without Track Changes; we each received a clean copy and changed it as we saw fit. In another chapter we used Track Changes, with each one adding, accepting or rejecting.

The episodes accumulated, and it was their lack of uniformity or imperfection which makes them powerful. Our subjective perspectives dictate uncertain, hesitant and at times even indecisive writing as well as apparent information gaps. These qualms and data cracks exist in every research, yet unlike traditional academic writing, we point them out and don't obscure them. They are an integral and organic part of the process.

Thinking and writing differently provided opportunities to experience the possibilities inherent in the Greek word akadēmeia—a grove outside the city walls. Our book allowed us to cross the academic barriers and stay for a while in the "wood" surrounding the neoliberal labyrinth. Looking from there at our professional territory we could see ourselves and the system that has both fed and oppressed us clearer and more deeply.

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The Manufactured CV

Susan Gair, Tamar Hager, and Omri Herzog

Abstract This chapter addresses the construction and management of an appropriate academic CV. Tamar begins by describing the barriers, hurdles, timelines, narrow calculations and self-constructions needed in negotiating the university promotions process. Next, Omri describes his somewhat unsuccessful efforts to expand graduate students' understandings of how an acceptable CV might be re-imagined. Susan picks up this thread of valuing professional practice, but concludes that theoretical and research knowledge may not be as valued as it could be in social work practice, while management support for field placements is less valued on the academic list of achievements, thereby contributing to a fraught juggle of priorities in the neoliberal academy.

Keywords Curriculum vitae • Academic biography • Promotion • Metrics • Assessment • Research-informed practice

We gather around a table in the Welcome Trust library. There is an antique map on the table, and we try to navigate for a space without moving it,

The names of the authors are arranged in alphabetical order. The three authors contributed equally to the writing of this manuscript.

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being aware that the guard is watching. It is a very welcoming space since unlike other libraries the rules allow us to converse. It is our first writing retreat meeting in London, and we have to clarify our plans for the coming five days. The three of us are very excited. Since starting on the project, we have met only virtually through video conferences and suddenly, we are here together three-dimensional human beings sitting in a real library somewhere between Australia and Israel. The first text we are going to write as decided in our previous virtual meeting is about the function and place given to academic curriculum vitae in neoliberal academia.

It coincides with the current news that Tamar had been promoted to associate professor. It was a long and exhausting journey, with strict rules, intricate but at the same time, involved amorphous and murky quantitative calculations. When she tells us about it, it sounds like a macabre comedy.

Susan has been an associate professor for five years already, gaining approval in 2014. We ask her about the journey she underwent. She says that when she applied for promotion, she believed her CV portfolio met the criteria. "I had a lot of publications, I had brought in some grants, and I had done lots of service for the university and in my profession," Susan tells us. "It was true that some of my teaching scores were less than outstanding, but I felt I could explain. I often taught difficult content that many students found hard to embrace in the short term and I had scholarly publications that reported on my ongoing critical efforts to achieve excellence in teaching and learning." Overall, Susan thought she had accomplished what was needed to be eligible for promotion, although "she suspected the Dean was not wholeheartedly supportive." The application was unsuccessful. "The promotion committee encouraged me to apply again. The second attempt at promotion was again unsuccessful. And I felt quite disheartened."

Omri asks Susan whether she'd thought of leaving the university. "I considered it." Susan responds, "but after a while, I realised that my job gives me the freedom to read, converse with likeminded colleagues, teach and supervise students, and to do research that I believed could contribute to social work. I realized that I could enjoy what my job without the promotion. In the end it all worked well. There were changes in management. The new manager asked me why I didn't apply for promotion. I told him that I had already applied and had been unsuccessful. He said to apply again, and he would support me. And that's how it happened, on the third try."

As in any institution, the outstanding CV is necessary for hiring and promotion. But it's not the only factor. The web of considerations is complex and not very transparent. We have all experienced it; almost every academic in the world has experienced it. It involves organizational politics

which means that there are people to whom the system is favourably inclined for various reasons, some of them personal. Omri recalls that at the university where he wrote his doctorate, it helped a lot if you'd been born into an academic household. "Diversity is a pretty word," he states "but it remains mostly a declaration of intentions. In a consistent fashion, the sons and daughters of professors at this institution advanced quickly; it was very clear. They had acquired the academic habitus and appropriate social connections at an early age. They had a structural advantage over people from the outside." "And you'd better belong to a distinctive discipline," Tamar states. "The system may talk a lot about being interdisciplinary, but at the moment of truth, having a broad research scope could become an obstacle."

We are quiet for a while staring at our computer screens. The guard approaches us to see if we are not damaging the antique map. "I have an idea," Tamar says. "I will tell the story of my promotion. It could give us some insights as to how our CV becomes a source of permanent stress and therefore an effective managerial control and regulation tool."

Tamar's Story: Are We Huge Calculators?

The paradigm of academic promotion has not changed for more than one hundred years. This fact I learnt from "Paywall: The Business of Scholarship"—a documentary addressing ways of resistance to the current corporate industry of academic publications—which I was watching as part of my preparations for writing the story on my curriculum vitae. This claim did not surprise me. Having spent several decades in academia, I was familiar with the almost unchanging non-transparent and objectifying promotion procedures which prevent candidates from having a voice. These procedures include collecting documents from the candidate, such as his/her CV, academic biography, teaching assessments and publications. They also involve gathering reference letters, preferably from unknown strangers in the same discipline and field, who are instructed to provide unbiased opinions and judgements of the candidate's academic proficiency, performance and achievements. They also require discussions of the collected material by several committees whose meeting schedule is intentionally concealed and whose members are not personally familiar with the candidate's accomplishments. This apparent anonymity is regarded as the proper way to achieve objective and fair judgement in order to reach a rational decision on the candidate's qualities, competence and aptness for the academic guild. In practice however, the process always

involves a hidden institutional and personal political agenda which is rarely discussed, while the lack of transparency and the non-involvement of the candidate in the process prevent him/her from defending her/himself against negative assessments and undesirable final decisions.

These procedures, which diminish the candidate's agency, were shaped long before higher education institutions turned into neoliberal alcoves. Yet my personal experience demonstrates that the demands of objective assessment, efficiency, standardization, productivity, accountability and excellence, which are the foundation of the neoliberal audit culture, objectify individual scholars even further. The need to measure our/my academic activities and achievements is reflected in the increasing importance of the CV and its by-product—the academic biography.

Throughout my academic career I was always instructed to keep my CV up-to-date and complete, since it has a major role in establishing my professional status and salary, and consequently my psychological and emotional state. During the process of my promotion to senior lecturer, I learnt about the need to write an "academic biography." "What on earth does that mean?," I asked a member of the promotion committee, when we happened to meet in a corridor on our way to our classes. "Do they want me to write an autobiography of my academic upbringing, that started with my mother's studies of economics during the 1940s in the Tel Aviv branch of the Hebrew University before Israel was established?" It was quite rare then for women to study at a higher educational institution, and I was proud of my mother, yet the tone in which I mentioned it to my colleague was ironic. I knew very well that my mother's achievements, my family's history and their impact on my decision to choose an academic career were irrelevant to the document I had to draft. "Should I recall my confusion when writing my application to the university in my twenties? Having to choose a discipline struck me as a depressing restriction, since I wanted to devour so many kinds of knowledge." My questions challenged the narrow meaning that the academic system awards biography. "Potentially, I could write a novel about an intellectually curious young woman who's enamored with learning, yet has gradually become … an efficient professional academic, with intellectual horizons confined to specific subjects matching her academic specialties." My colleague wasn't amused by these ironic musings and implied criticism. Obviously impatient, he retorted: "The committee wouldn't have time to read your prose, and you'd better focus on what's important. The biography should list your achievements in terms of teaching, publication, grants, and service to

the community. No more than five pages. I'll send you my biography as a model of how to write it." Five pages? I wanted to protest; how can I condense my academic efforts into five pages? But before I could ask this last irritable question, my colleague turned away and disappeared down the corridor.

The CV and the academic biography I submitted were of course impeccable. Academic socialization teaches you to obey institutional instructions regarding how to construct a proper profile of a serious successful scholar. For example I had to highlight my individual research and writing achievements while diminishing my joint efforts with colleagues and students to construct new knowledge. I exchanged the "we" pronoun with the "I," feeling quite uncomfortable in the process. So, although I was very critical of this neoliberal scheme, I was also very keen to remain in academia since I really liked teaching, researching and writing. Becoming a senior lecturer was one of the requirements for holding a position. If you want to stay in academia you need this advancement, I told myself while writing my biography. And this dictates that you express your criticism towards the academic establishment only behind closed doors, and next time don't dare to articulate your disapproval in the ears of promotion committee members. Although I wanted to resist what was regarded as "unimportant," "unnecessary" and/or "irrelevant" information about my life as a teacher, a researcher, a writer and an activist in the academic setting, I was in fact complying with the system. Yet for a critical academic like me, such complicity had its psychological and emotional costs.

* * *

"Just a little push and you'll be there, the dean had told me […]". His voice was matter of fact, businesslike. On my way out of his office I felt enormously tired, and I crumpled onto a couch in the waiting room. One of his assistants asked me whether I'd like a glass of water. No, I'll just close my eyes for a moment I said, and when I did, I could see huge armies of journals marching onto a laptop screen and merging with drafts full of red-lined mark-ups all erasing and rewriting themselves. I found myself counting: one, two, three, four, but only high-impact journals, high-impact one, two, three, four, five, six. We won't be able to promote you; we simply won't, if they're not high impact. I opened my eyes. The

assistant stood above me with a glass of water. “Won’t you take a sip? You look pale” (Hager, 2017, p. 251).

This type of dizziness and daytime nightmares following conversations on promotion procedures with academic managers, which I described in my fictional story “Under Broadmoor,” is an unspoken shared experience of most academics. It is often regarded as just one of those unpleasant moments in our climb to the academic summit and therefore addressing its emotional, psychological and occasionally physical costs is considered on the threshold of self-indulgence. However, silencing it, in my opinion, does a disservice to the academic community.

During these “CV meetings,” the academic managers (i.e. head of departments, dean, rectors and others) examine the document which structures our professional options, our salary and consequently our psychological and emotional state, pointing to our faults and inadequacies while self-assuredly proposing possible revisions which will correct our mistakes and ineptitudes. This process of repair is supposed to result in construction of a proper and institutionally satisfying CV and thus our academic personality and our future.

Unlike my fictional character, I have rarely allowed myself to expose my vulnerability after such encounters. Like her, however, I had to consider my CV’s imperfections in order to be eligible for a promotion professorship. I had to account for a lack of publications in high-impact journals, too many papers in unranked journals, and one, to my academic shame, in a paid-open access platform, This last failure elicited a repeated question by colleagues and managers: “What were you thinking?” which lingered in my ears for months. “Take it out, it will ruin your chances.” the dean advised in one of our meetings. “And why on earth did you publish book chapters? They lack any ranking. Nobody counts chapters. Don’t bother publishing them in the future, at least not now when you are in the process of promotion (when exactly was I not in such a process, I was thinking). Fifteen published articles after your last promotion is a good number. I see you are very interdisciplinary—it is an unusual mix of history, education, cultural studies, gender studies, and sociology.” His face showed his confusion when he looked at the list of my publications. “I am worried about this abundance. We will definitely have to explain how all this fits together.” His use of the “we” pronoun seemed to indicate his concern for my academic fate which provided me with some consolation. “Your challenge is to explain your association with several disciplines and fields of research. We will see.”

Returning to my room after the meeting, I felt exhausted. I sat staring at an empty computer screen, feeling waves of anger, helplessness and despair. The prospect of writing a text that would justify why, for 20 years, I was interested in a variety of subjects and wrote about them, seemed to me a troubling nuisance. Why do I need this promotion anyway? Unlike most of my colleagues I didn't plan my academic life in order to achieve it. I was quite surprised that, despite my disciplinary chaos (I teach mostly in the Education Department, yet most of my publications belong to gender and cultural studies), I was potentially considered qualified for possible promotion. To relieve feelings of incompetence and inadequacy, I uploaded my CV on the computer screen and, following the dean's method, started counting. I counted published papers; I counted submitted papers; I counted planned papers; I counted research projects; I counted grant applications and I counted teaching assessment grades. One, two, three, four, one two three four. While counting I was aware that, by counting, I was complying with the institutional notion that the quality of my/our incessant knowledge-work is less important than the quantity of my/our "manufactured" products. I visualized my colleagues sitting in rooms in various campuses all over the world, looking numbly at their CVs on computer screens and calculating numbers, indexes and counting endlessly, one, two three. Did academia turn us into huge calculators? The image of the first room size computer at Tel Aviv University, which I saw as a child with my father, crept into my mind.

Wanting to erase this nightmarish image, I walked to the yard; I looked at the blue sky and the grass around me. This normal sight had a soothing effect. Why did my research addressing infanticide in Victorian England, the nuclear debate, feminist methodologies, activism and teaching have to be quantified, losing its importance in the process?

When my/our impression is that the significance of our research is overlooked and our intellectual contribution is somehow discounted and our CV becomes just a list of items, it is not surprising that we look for shortcuts to raise numbers of publications, grants, teaching grades, community service. And these shortcuts sometimes lead us to deviate from our research ethics.

The fictional researcher in "Under Broadmoor" almost crossed ethical boundaries when trying to obey her dean's instructions to publish more and faster. She had travelled all the way to England to interview Helen, whose great-great grandmother had been hospitalized in Broadmoor, a psychiatric prison during the second half of the nineteenth century. The

hospitalization occurred after she had killed her child. In what seemed like a horrible stroke of fate, Helen's grandmother, who had lately died, had handed all her children over to care. Although the researcher is driven by curiosity to meet Helen and to hear her sad story, her real aim is to produce a few new articles about the continuous misery of her family. Yet her research "object" is discovered to have an agency. During their conversation Helen declares her intention to write and publish the family story with her daughter. "'How wonderful,' I said politely, feeling a tinge of anger and disappointment as I suddenly realized that I was losing my chance to tell a family story" (Hager, 2017, p. 253). Yet this frustration is gradually transformed into a disturbing realization of the intellectual shallowness and the unethical and exploitative dimensions of this planned research. "What had I been thinking? Writing a quick and easy paper about her? I would need another ten years of exhaustive research. What did I know about her and her contemporaries? Nothing at all save what Helen had told me now and what little I had read in the months leading up to our meeting. A meeting for purposes of research, this was how I had justified the trip to London, filling out the funding forms. This was what I had called it to myself too, every time I had thought of it. Over the past year, without realizing it, I had turned Helen into my research project. But this research project was an actual living breathing woman" (Hager, 2017, p. 254).

Helen is a fruit of my imagination, but the fictional researcher is me in many respects. In the current academic climate, my intellectual curiosity often turns into calculations of publishing feasibility. Questions like how long a research project will take and how many articles it will enable me to produce are part of my academic life. CV expectations to publish more and faster too frequently damage my/our wellbeing, but may also, and this is for me more worrying, hurt the lives of others—the human subjects of our research, in this case my fictional Helen. I also distrust our research results. When we must publish a lot and do it fast, we don't have enough time to develop ideas, explore and think. In such circumstances, can we really account for our produced knowledge?

* * *

Three years ago, when I was considered eligible for promotion to associate professorship, I was asked to update and revise my CV and my academic biography. At that point my academic socialization and my

previous experience silenced my cynicism. I didn't even question the content anymore. I knew that I had to write a short convincing story about my research, writing, teaching and community service. It had to be clear and credible and it had to show how valuable I was for the college, for my discipline and for the academic community at large. Yet as the dean had prophesied a year earlier, my multidisciplinary academic enterprise, cherished in theory by the neoliberal ethos as a sign of my broad horizons, was in practice less to my advantage. I was asked to pack and then repack my academic biography, yet despite my efforts to show the logic of my academic adventure, the members of the promotion committee, most of whom had come from the exact and life sciences, stayed unconvinced and demanded a pre-evaluation process. Two prominent Israeli scholars were asked to comment about my achievements and to confirm that my file (at this phase I was gradually losing my human agency, turning into a record, a dossier, which passed from hand to hand) made me eligible to undergo the promotion procedures.

Passing this first test successfully I was asked to revise my CV and my academic biography yet again, adding new items if any, emphasizing my academic contributions and the praise I had received from editors, reviewers and peers. My passion for knowledge which often led me to get involved in eclectic projects and to jump from one subject to the next had to make room for a unified and organized narrative which described a rational scholar with a clear intellectual vision who had planned her academic career in cultural and gender studies ahead. It was so unlike me that every time I read this story I either laughed or could not avoid being impressed by this woman's goal-oriented life. The most complex mission however was ranking the journals in which I have published my work.

Neoliberal academia is designed to rely on statistical and content-indifferent measures, enabling managements to assess scholars and their publications without having to be familiar with their field of expertise. These measures include the scholar's number of publications, the ranking of the journals (i.e. IF) in which they were published and the number of times these publications were cited (h-index and I index). These three seemingly objective measures are supposed to reflect the academic quality of a researcher (Vansover, 2019). Data shows that journals in the social sciences and the humanities are less cited by the academic community than journals in the exact and life sciences. American Pulitzer Prize reporter Michael A. Hiltzik claims that while, in the exact sciences 75% of articles are cited, in the social sciences, the figure is 25% and, in the humanities,

only 2% (Hiltzik, 2015). Since most of my publications have been in humanities journals, my chances to excel in neoliberal terms were close to zero.

This understanding made me wonder whether cited articles should inevitably gain a higher value status. Thomas Samuel Kuhn's (2012) argument regarding the difficulty in accepting research which opposes current theories and paradigms implies that original articles which address innovative ways of thinking, undermining accepted disciplinary notions, will unavoidably be mentioned less often, while established theories have better chances to be cited by the scientific community. Review articles which serve as background for current research have relatively higher quoting scores. But does that mean they are of higher quality than articles that provide innovative vantage points and are less cited? I suspect that the current ranking system encourages academics to defend their careers by staying in the mainstream. Bruce Albert, the editor of *Science*, confirms this suspicion:

> Any evaluation system in which the mere number of a researcher's publications increases his or her score creates a strong disincentive to pursue risky and potentially groundbreaking work, because it takes years to create a new approach in a new experimental context, during which no publications should be expected. Such metrics further block innovation because they encourage scientists to work in areas of science that are already highly populated, as it is only in these fields that large numbers of scientists can be expected to reference one's work, no matter how outstanding. (Albert, 2013, p. 787)

Looking first at the Journal Citation Report (JCR), which annually publishes journals' Impact Factor (IF), and is considered the most widely used measure of journal quality, I discovered that this index contains 12,000 journals, 8500 in the exact sciences, 3000 in the social sciences and only 500 in other fields. Only a few of my journals were rated in this index and even those received very low scores. For three full days I surveyed the internet looking for other measures that would reflect the quality of my academic work. Navigating Scopus and Scimago Journal @ Country Rank (SJR), the h-index and other measures, I became aware of how vast the field of content-indifferent indexes is. Gradually my publication list was filled with small numbers which I copied diligently from online sites. This is what it looked like:

Hager, T. (2008). Compassion and indifference: The attitude of the English legal system toward Ellen Harper and Selina Wadge, who killed their offspring in the 1870s. *The Journal of Family History: Studies in Family, Kinship and Demography, 33*(2), 173–194 IF 0.333, History 53/89, CiteScore 0.400, Art and Humanities 190/250, SNIP 0.631, SJR 0.168 Art and Humanities 240/400, Art and Humanities Q3 (Q2 at the time of publication) (13 citations).

I stared unbelievingly at these numbers which lacked any substantial meaning. (I knew that the calculations were done by using various mathematical formulas, but the different numerical evaluations given by each formula to the same journal were a riddle, which I was too tired and uninterested to solve.) Yet for three days I obediently worked to turn my CV into a numerical chart. Increasingly, my academic lives lost the sense they used to have before I started this meaningless task. What was I doing? I wondered looking out of the window, feeling a sense despair.

Omri and Susan were amused at my numerical items. They thought it was hilarious and could easily be turned into a humorous sketch. I could see their point. The picture of a serious researcher investing all his/her academic research skills and efforts in participating in assessment rituals of promotion committees is quite comical.

I could visualize a crowded meeting room—a group of men and a few women, the most prominent academics in the institution—sitting around a table with a tray of sandwiches, a bowl of fruit and piles of documents. "The subject now is a humanities researcher," the secretary declares. "We are going to open the file of x." Obediently they all open the relevant file; one of them turns to the sandwich tray and takes one. The lines and lists have made him hungry. "So, about the list of publications," one of them reasons, "I would say that the third article got only 0.21 and this is not enough, but 0.32 of the fifth article looks much better." "You can see that she got a better grade in article number 15, 1.32 and the Q is higher," says another, "It seems that she has learned lately to turn only to high profile journals." "Yes, she is improving," another participant confirms leafing through the document impatiently. "But since none of her scores is above 4, I would consider asking her for two more publications in high-impact journals with a rate of at least 5." The others nod in agreement; one takes an apple and bites into the red fruit.

There were moments, looking at obscure colourful graphs on my computer screen and visualizing the promotion committee discussing

numbers, that made me laugh. All this crazy useless effort, I thought. I was sure that the committee people don't really understand or do not bother to investigate the meaning of all these numbers. It seems senseless that serious scholars eat sandwiches while appraising knowledge by using a system they don't really comprehend only because neoliberal academia quantifies everything.

The meaninglessness of it had become apparent to me two years earlier when, as participant in a research group on the public role of academia, I had heard a lecture by a computer science researcher on content-indifferent measures. I learnt that the h-index correlates the number of citations of my work against the number of journal articles we publish, yet by randomly changing the mathematical formulation one can transform whole careers. He changed the h-index formula by dividing the same figures differently, showing how this slight insignificant change could either ruin or improve academic credentials. He was clearly advising against content-indifferent measures suggestion to go back to content-based assessments. One of the participants was concerned: "But this is the only way to accomplish unbiased judgment," he said. "How else can we objectively appraise academic achievements? You cannot rely on peer reviews since political maneuvers are everywhere." The computer science man did not smile when he said: "I wish I could confirm your aspiration for h-index to allow unbiased judgement. Yet sadly that is not how it works. It is only an arbitrary number that confers nothing about the value of scholars and their work."

The thought that in neoliberal academia, work assessment is based on random estimations, which only a few people can decipher, forestalls any chuckle. "I cannot write a brilliant satire," I said to my friends. "It is not amusing to consider the damage done to knowledge and to scholars' lives by quantifying it."

* * *

At lunch time we sit in the cafeteria. The guard didn't allow us to leave our bags behind, so we hope to find a comfortable corner after the meal. We order food while sharing insights regarding Tamar's criticism of promotion processes and academic evaluation methods. "Can we as senior academics in the departments where we teach, stand in opposition to the system which feeds us and critique it?," Omri asks. "After all we are at the very center of it, armed with the power it provides us, and to a large

degree representing it as well?" The discussion is quickly heated. It is a topic we feel strongly about since each of us is affiliated with an academic institution, yet at the same time opposes the way it currently functions.

Omri is worried that our stories might be perceived as hypocritical. "We are, at least according to our titles, at the top of the pyramid; our standing is assured. It seems too easy, here in London, far from our institutions, girded with the title of a professor or a senior lecturer, to protest against the system in order to write a book and gain academic credentials. We can't ignore the fact that this book will be a significant item in our CVs and academic biographies. So perhaps it would be too pretentious to expect to have our cake and eat it too."

Susan says she doesn't want to write a book of complaint. "I've had my disappointments," she says, "but also lots of support. Yet I don't think that pointing to university drawbacks and blind spots, means betraying the institution." Anyway, as Susan sees it, the institutional methods of evaluation such as the assessment of CVs, have their advantages since they enable head of departments and deans to check faculty members' accountability. Otherwise, how can you know if someone is doing her job properly? "I would say," Susan articulates the sentence carefully being aware she might be stepping into a minefield, "that the neoliberal academia has its positive sides."

Tamar refuses the notion that academic audit culture has constructive aspects. She is visibly upset by the idea. She demonstrates that in her opinion our shared book should introduce an unequivocally critical position towards the capitalist agenda of present-day higher education institutions. How can one find any advantages in a system that drives academics to compete with one another, produces more at the expense of quality and sidesteps innovation? "I have learnt from Sharon Doherty (2002) that in the face of such an unjust regime we have three options. We can either give up dreams of equality and justice and adopt the neoliberal mindset which accepts and even cherishes the current state or entirely refuse to comply with the rules and consequently be forced to leave. We still have the third option to resist the system from within. This entails partly obeying institutional repressive dictates yet refusing to fulfil others." In Tamar's case it has led her to decline managerial positions, like head of the department, choosing instead an activist stance by, for example, initiating multicultural and gender equity units or by serving for five years in the workers' union. "Some say that by choosing an activist position, I am in fact declining real institutional responsibility. I don't think so. I don't believe that

you can improve the system from academic managerial positions since you are frequently compelled to serve the neoliberal agenda, often deserting personal values and ideals. I saw it happen to my colleagues."

"That's exactly the problem," Omri says. "[T]he refusal of faculty who hold humanist values to take managerial positions and risk their ideological beliefs, means that the seniors who remain in power, are those that have internalized the neoliberal rules. Junior lecturers and young researchers cannot afford challenging or resisting the system since they risk their chances to be promoted. How demoralizing the academic power structure has been was revealed to me a few years ago."

Omri's Story: The One-Way Corridor

I was then invited to a conference of doctoral students at the Literature Department of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. I was invited because I am a graduate of that department and I work at another academic institution in that field. The heads of the department wanted me to talk to the research students about "success." They wanted the Master's and Doctoral students to meet with graduates who work in literary fields in academia, in order to instil inspiration and hope; to demonstrate to them that there is a professional future in literary scholarship, that it is certainly possible to succeed and make a living from it in the academic market.

That of course isn't true, at least regarding most doctoral graduates. Only a small number of them will ever be accepted into the universities or colleges in Israel. The nature of the academic labour market dictates that the demand for jobs is significantly greater than the supply. The department heads are well aware of that, but they feel it is their duty to wrap the scholarly commitment in a glittering marketing package. "Your investment is going to bear fruit" they regularly reassure students.

The reason I was invited to the research students' conference was not because I am an exceptional scholar (I'm not), but it had to do with the fact that soon after I finished writing my doctorate, I joined the team that established a new department of Cultural Studies in a public college in Israel. Prior to that, I experienced worrying months of indecision, familiar to anyone who has crossed the finish line of a doctoral project: whether to leave the academic life or stay and thus settle for employment as a casual low-ranking academic teacher, or perhaps solicit postdoctoral grants, thus participating in the academic rat race of building a strong case before applying for a competitive academic position. The solicitation of

postdoctoral grants, which are rare and competitive, is always driven by a combination of optimism, naivety and constant anxiety.

I was eventually saved from this tormented conflict, when I was granted a position as a head of a new department. That success was dependent mainly on good timing—that is luck. The opening of a new department is a rare opportunity for jobs. But perhaps it wasn't entirely due to luck. I was given an opportunity because I'm a good teacher, and because I have been writing literary and cultural reviews regularly in the press for many years, so my name has been known in literary circles. I wasn't given the position because of my CV, or the impact factor of my publications, which were few at the time. I gained it due to trust. That trust was dependent on the vision of the founder of my department; a scholar but also a noted author who has lived both in and out of academia. She gambled on me because of my public writing, and not because of the academic output chronicled in my academic CV. It was in fact a case of scandalous luck—unfair, non-competitive, happenstance.

The invitation to the conference came six years after I had completed my doctorate and left the institution, and I was flattered to be invited back. I was glad to tell the research students about my journey and following my experience I also urged them to demand that the institution provide them with appropriate training for various jobs in the literary world: workshops on translation, editing and journalistic writing on literature and culture. I told them that they must be offered information regarding the literary market structure, relevant agents and possible roles they could occupy.

It was important for me to clarify to them that there is a world outside the bounds of academia. Universities sign up research students because they are funded by the number of students who earn higher degrees. But Humanities departments are shrinking, and only a few graduates will find work in higher education institutions. It was important to me to point out that a broader horizon of opportunities exists beyond the academic walls, because I remembered the hermetic ethos of research, as it has been conducted in the academic departments: an ethos barricaded against the labour market outside it. I wanted to clarify to them that they have power: the power to demand that their department be provided with skills and intellectual knowledge enabling them to survive in the cultural world, should they choose (or be forced) to go there. I thought and still think that the responsibility of the academic institution towards its students

should not be restricted by its own purposes. Public intellectuals have many options, and such opportunities are especially missing in Israel.

Perhaps I was naïve. How can students demand new skills and content from an academic department? And from whom exactly should they demand them, in an academic entity that protectively secludes itself from the outside? At least that's the situation in Israel: a small consolation for Israeli intellectuals—who feel under attack, misunderstood, facing a cultural climate of opposition to academic elitism, contempt for intellectualism and therefore take refuge in their indignation. Most of these academics write articles in English, travel abroad, are no longer collaborators in Israel's dwindling intellectual worlds, beset by a constant sense of alienation and resentment.

Nonetheless, despite what Tamar thinks, neoliberalism does have some dubious advantages: the students are "clients," a concept despised by many academics—rightly so, in large part. Clients, as in any organization that provides services, are a nuisance, even though they are necessary in order to receive funding and survive economically. In this sorry state of affairs, the clients have consumer power. Other literature departments that do offer such skills are more successful, more attractive. Pressure by students may nudge the institution out of its comfort zone, enable it to open to the outside and enable its students to engage in what they love and what they've studied.

I stood there, slightly agitated and certain of my justness, facing about a dozen young scholars. I gave examples, waved my arms, spoke fervently: the imperative of the CV is not exhausted by following the well-trodden path, I said, because that path may lead to a dead end. But there are other possibilities, even for someone who has chosen to study literature. It is your right to demand and to receive these skills, I told them, and you are also entitled to develop non-academic elements of the CV: edit books, write reviews and opinion columns in the press and cultural websites and participate in commercial launches and festivals. If this is the field you love, the field that excites you, then take part in it: not just in case academia should not accept you, but because it can be thrilling and rewarding.

But the more the presentation progressed, the more I felt a cloaked swell of fury arising against myself. The anger had to do with my remarks coming across as patronizing—for having them come from my lips; someone already in a secure position. To them my words were confusing and threatening. In retrospect, I believe what happened was this: When I said to them, "Write in various venues, not just academic," what they heard

was "Don't commit yourselves to scholarship." When I said to them, "Become familiar with the world of literary editing," what they heard was "Deviate from the course you're now taking, the one-way corridor of completing the doctorate, dismembering it into articles for submission to peer-reviewed publications, ultimately to arrive at self-fulfillment, excellent pensionary rights, and worthy symbolic status." The discomfort was directed back at me because they felt I was encouraging them to betray the path they stood upon, everything they had been promised by their teachers and supervisors, by virtue of their very standing as "research students"—a betrayal that could have grave consequences for their futures.

They weren't entirely mistaken. Yael—who sat in the back row, whom I had known previously from the reviews she had published in the press (and done them capably)—raised her hand and spoke. She told us all—as though to emphatically disprove my desperate and dangerous attempt to subvert them—about the opposition she encountered when she began to write reviews of contemporary literature. She said that her popular writing in the newspaper had aroused deep suspicion towards her: an oppressive disapproval which was conveyed to her as a covert message by her teachers, intimating that she was not dedicated to her scholarly work, that she was a populist and a traitor to literary scholarship. She was accused of wasting her time on a public discussion of books that aren't "important enough," because their academic significance had yet to be proven. Her doctoral supervisor summoned her to a meeting and in a friendly fashion, motherly and protective, she proposed to her that she stop publishing reviews. She told her that "it doesn't make a good impression." What she meant was that it wasn't relevant to her CV; it gave the impression that she wasn't "being serious"—not just academically, but in terms of her habitus in the academic world. The unfortunate divide between literary scholarship and the literary market must be absolute. You can be a critic, or a literary editor, or a translator or a publishing house lector—OR you can be an academic.

Her story didn't surprise me. I recognized this type of warning, even though I hadn't directly been the object of one at the time. I remember that I once wrote a newspaper review of *Fifty Shades of Grey*—a cultural phenomenon that I found highly significant, because it reflected a broad and hidden collective agenda. The book's phenomenal success was gripping testimony to gender power relations and to passion and fantasy in contemporary culture. My review was a serious critical article, which demanded intellectual reflection. The success of the book was like a riddle

I had to solve. (See, even now I'm still apologizing. It's a ridiculous and unnecessary apology, but old habits die hard.) After the review was published, I arrived at work to find staff members gaping at me and making ironic comments, literally raising their eyebrows: Is this what you're interested in, what you're investing in—*Fifty Shades of Grey*? I had instantly turned from a promising scholar into a frivolous populist. They hadn't read the review, let alone wasted their time on the book. But just my going outside the institution, outside the rules of the CV, was testimony to my infantile rebelliousness, my irresponsibility, my vulgar surrender to the power of popular ratings.

Yael rejected my attempt to unlock the students' imagination about the breadth of opportunities available. Her experience had proven my efforts as mistaken and dangerous. And she read the academic landscape much better than I did. Academia's distaste for current developments in the literary world is expressed in the indoctrination drilled into young literary scholars, according to which nothing of interest is happening in the field of contemporary literature, and it's best to stay away from it. The head of the department had proudly told her students that she "doesn't read literature written by living people." She related with arrogance towards contemporary texts whose value and impact we cannot assess due to lack of perspective. And therefore, young scholars are sent repeatedly to study the great novels, the same ones their teachers also studied. The reasons for this conformity are clear: a stable contemporary canon which offers academic surety towards promotion and acceptance as a "serious" scholar hasn't yet taken shape; it's preferable not to take risks in order to avoid being suspected of populism or lack of historical depth. From a research aspect, it's far better to remain in the relatively secure domain of the traditional writers and writings and just add to the existing research.

That's the situation, and those at the presentation unanimously agreed with Yael. To stay away from the contemporary literary market is wise—so research students do not risk their standing and prospects within academia. But it drives a sharp wedge between the active literary market and academia: new books are hardly ever read in the academy (even though students undertake their literature studies because they love to read—or used to read—the literature of their time). When scholars and teachers do not teach, review, research or edit contemporary literature, that is are not actual agents in the ongoing literary arena, the latter is more given to the decisions of the marketing people in the popular printing houses thus creating a vicious cycle. The quality of contemporary literature is perceived as

inferior, and therefore there is no point in dealing with it in a scholarly fashion; and because there is no scholarly engagement with contemporary literature, there is no resonance enabling an assessment of the quality of new and good books. This is where the contemporary literary arena is entirely irrelevant to academia, and academia in turn is entirely irrelevant to the contemporary literary arena.

So what's left? What's taking place in the corridors of the literature departments is a closed cocktail party of commentators who respond to each other, devise examples of the thinking of smart people who once lived in Paris, or regarding the theoretical whims of the hour. As in Franz Kafka's *In the Penal Colony* (1941), the machine writes its own apparatus on the body of the convicted. In an introverted world that has raised the banner of narrow expertise as testimony to academic legitimacy, and with the energetic assistance of neoliberal techniques of academic promotion and reward, it seems that the study of literature has lost its potential for activism.

Literature unwittingly devotes itself to steps already taken, histories already told. Large portions of the scholarly activity are characterized by the elaboration of minute differences, differences in differences: articles that are nothing but footnotes, again and again relating between a canonical work and its creator's biography or using the text to demonstrate an expectable theoretical argument. This is the research norm, making it possible to place articles and achieve publication in the leading periodicals, which exclusively—and in very similar ways—determine how literature may be discussed. The greater irony is that this conservatism is anchored precisely in a theoretical platform that rejects it: poststructuralist elevator music accompanying a rather oedipal drama of academic initiation.

When Yael told of her conversation with her supervisor, she was accusing me, without saying so explicitly, of being misleading and naïve, of not understanding the system and providing foolish counsel. I didn't know how to answer her, because she was right: she had been punished for transgressing. She hadn't played the game the way you're supposed to, and now she regretted it. The others listened to her, nodded and cast accusatory glances my way, and I still didn't know how to answer. I felt I couldn't disappoint them and reveal the statistics regarding the percentage of graduates who obtain a position in the academic system. The reason they were there was precisely because they hoped to beat the odds. And then there is the gulf between the price paid by independent agents within the academia and the slowness of academia's gravitation towards renewed

relevance. Academia has no choice. It must happen. If academia wishes to survive, it must be more relevant, more involved on the outside. However, that was not these students' concern: to be a good academic, if I may put it bluntly, is to manufacture a CV. And while I was proposing to unlock their CV and future potential, they knew the traditional CV was the sole mirror of one's worth in their world.

In Hebrew, the concept of CV (*korot hayim*—literally, "happenings of life") suggests that the events that accompany life shape it in its entirety. But a CV is of course a biographical document that functions as a declaration of one's capital in the academic labour market, and also exposes its boundaries and limits. It includes the familiar items: academic positions, peer-reviewed publications (in order of importance: books, articles in periodicals, articles in anthologies, reviews and critiques), participation in conferences, awards, scholarships and research grants. It is measured by quantitative parameters, regarding publishing output (how many articles published, how prestigious the periodicals in which they appeared), fundraising (how much of it collected) and signs of recognition (which awards won). As Tamar has already demonstrated, while assessing the CV, promotion committee members don't read articles (sometimes they read a short writing sample usually nothing more than paying lip service), but they quantitatively measure the output by impact factor in a given year (the number of citations, received in that year, of articles published in that journal during the two preceding years, divided by the total number of "citable items" published in that journal during the two preceding years) and by the number of their publications. They also examine career "consistency," that is whether you distinctly adhere to a specific intellectual field, have special expertise; whether you can be subsumed under one of the predetermined rubrics of intellectual classification. And They take no notice of non-peer-reviewed publications.

I feel compelled to repeat the obvious: most of the influential writings of our times—Woolf and Pound, Shklovsky and de Saussure, Cixous and Irigaray, Foucault and Barthes, Blanchot and Levinas—were not peer-reviewed. They would not have successfully passed any review mechanism. Public writing—in the press, artists' books, postscripts in non-academic books, essays—is of no consequence in inward-looking academia. It is an addendum to the CV, at its irrelevant margins—even though it testifies more than anything to the Eros of scholarship, intellectual passion, the thirsting for knowledge and originality.

Neoliberal academia upholds the tools of objective measurement. The IF for example, the measure most appreciated, is a formula invented by Eugen Eli Garfield and contributed to the fortunes of two corporations in succession, the latter one is Clarivate. Yet this measurement is evidently arbitrary. Other formulas owned by other corporations such as Scopus and SJR, produce different calculation for the same journals. However, in a privatized and exposed neoliberal market, which sets value by output, this is the easiest way to assess the value of labour. The academic marketplace classifies academics on the basis of the products that maintain the global system of the publishers' market. Much has been written about the *luft gesheft* of academic publications, the great majority of which are read by only three people: the writer, the editor and the reviewer. It's an industry with an inbuilt market failure: it works according to the laws of supply, but much less—in fact, almost never—according to the laws of intellectual demand (except for academic superstars, an issue deserving of a separate discussion).

The market's failures are a well-known fact. A new article is no longer good tidings, but a piece of mass merchandise that appears and then fades back into the dizzying abundance of publications, most of which are inaccessible to the public and function according to the rules of industrial standardization. The manufactured CV is a friend to academic success, but often a foe to independent thinking: not because scholars are not interested in or capable of breaking through imposed boundaries, engaging in original intellectual endeavour or challenging basic assumptions, but because they cannot afford to do so. Their fate may be sealed in the academic court that rewards the "peer-reviewed" and indicts the "non-peer-reviewed."

All this I didn't say to the students facing me at the Hebrew University. I felt it wouldn't have been fair. It wasn't the time or the place to say it. They are captive, struggling for their futures within rules they haven't chosen nor can they change. In this race, it's every man and woman for themselves, each CV for itself.

* * *

"But maybe this is wrong." Tamar notes. We are back in the Welcome Trust library happy, to find our previous table empty. The guard is not around so we move the antique map and put down our computers, planning to work and talk intermittingly. Near us a group of young

intellectuals is engaged in an enthusiastic discussion. Nobody hushes them. On the other side someone is reading a text, typing quickly, maybe the summary of its content. "What is wrong?," Omri asks, "The choice to avoid telling them that they are victims of a misfunctioning system which takes advantage of their intellectual aspirations. In fact, I don't tell them myself. I even encourage them to continue their academic studies and aspire to be scholars. Maybe I should tell them since, by not warning them, I am damaging their future."

Tamar relates that when she was working on her doctoral dissertation she worked as editorial board coordinator for a daily newspaper, and then as assistant editor of a magazine. "Contrary to the young researchers in Omri's story, I had no illusions," she says. "I knew that my chances of getting a tenure track position were very low. And anyway, I wasn't sure that I wanted to stay in academia. I aspired to write literature and I thought I would make a living out of editing. But then a friend invited me to teach at an Israeli branch of a British college that grants an academic degree to teachers who only have a diploma. It was a very significant year in my life—because it was feminist and critical academe. But then the husband of one of my colleagues who was at the time the head of the education department in Tel Hai College invited me to teach academic skills, so I started teaching there." At about that time *A Completely Ordinary Life*, her collection of short stories, was published. "And then the job was expanded and instead of a literary author I became an academic. But for many years I stayed ambivalent regarding my academic career and I still hoped to be a writer."

Omri had worked as a literary critic and editor, and made a living working in the advertising industry. But then he had been invited to head a new Cultural Studies programme and found himself in academia. Susan was also an accidental academic. She came from a professional field: "I worked for a church group, finding students homestay accommodation and volunteered at The Women's Shelter for victims of domestic violence while studying my undergraduate degree. While working on my PhD I was tutoring at the university and did a locum at the Women's Hospital. Later I worked with the Department of Family Services as a community resource officer, and then as a group facilitator for a domestic violence perpetrator programme and a post-traumatic stress disorder unit at the Mater Hospital. I did not see myself as an academic, I just wanted to work with women and children. But then I was encouraged to apply for a lecturer position when it came up at the university."

What do these stories tell us? Apparently, none of us planned to be academics. Did these stories signify however that we begin our careers in a less demanding and competitive academia? We doubt it. It seems that luck, mere chance and personal connections played a significant role in our academic game. Even now young scholars with an excellent CV may remain without a proper job for years, while others who accomplish less yet happen to be in the right place and time and/or have the right connections may find a tenure track position.

Omri's story also reveals that in the humanities, although professional experience and work in the field at times increase chances of finding an academic job, the current neoliberal regime despite its talk about employability doesn't give value to students' acquisition of professional practice and frequently even hinders or prevents them from acquiring necessary skills. Susan says that in social work the estrangement between academia and the field in some ways is mutual: university management don't really value professional experience, while the field may see academic theoretical contributions as less relevant.

Susan's Story: A Self-defeating Cycle

In the real world of social work, a theory-research-practice divide is evident, she says. But it is different from and perhaps in contrast to Omri's story. Most students cannot wait to finish their degree and leave their theoretical studies behind to do the "real world" work they have been learning about.

They are eager to exit academia because many of them have been studying part-time for many years—mature-aged students often desperately juggling studies, family responsibilities, paid work, poverty and their own mental health. Ironically, these circumstances are quite similar to those of the clients they will serve after graduation (Baglow & Gair, 2019). To list a degree on their CV, social work students must successfully complete all course work plus two full time field practicums of three months duration, each in a welfare organization. In turn, these practicums produce an additional but often devalued workload for both practitioners and social work academics. It is this important intersection of theory, practice and research in the discipline of social work, along with the neoliberal academic workload and what "counts" on the CV that I highlight here.

"How many students will you have this semester?" our Field Education Coordinator asked me pointedly. You know we all have to be liaison for six

students each semester now, because we have more students and less staff. "Well, I still have some money left in my Services Account," I tell her, "so I will use that money to pay for a casual contract for someone to do some of them." "Well, how many will you do yourself and how many will you buy out," she asks, somewhat frustrated, "and who will do them? You need to give us names." I know she thinks it is better if I don't buy out my agency visits to students, but I feel the pressure to keep my publications count up and focus on at least getting one small research grant this year—and I can't do it all! It is the case that on their field practicum, which accounts for almost six months of their degree programme, students need academic input and guidance. "Maybe I will do two," I tell her. "Well, you know the organisations and the students prefer university staff to visit them in the agencies rather than sessionals." She sighs, and her voice trails off as she enters her office across the corridor.

I know she is right. The weight of this professional dilemma returns to haunt me every semester. I tell myself assertively that I need to be single-minded. No academic has been promoted for their ongoing commitment to supporting students on their field practicum. It is true that our academic role is divided into research, teaching and service. Teaching has gained traction as a highly worthwhile area of scholarship in more recent years. Service also is seen as important, and lots of things count for service. Serving on a university ethics committee or academic board or serving as an equity officer for matters like bullying, stalking and racism, all of which I have done, count as university service. And service to your profession counts, for example serving on professional committees, being a reviewer for professional journals or serving on editorial boards—and all which can take an enormous amount of time. Supporting students on field practicum is very important too but it is one of those valuable but invisible roles. And service and teaching do not have the elite status of research on the academic CV.

I felt guilty about the conversation in the hallway, about "buying out" student liaison visits to the agencies. Placements are critical learning times for students, and students are always very anxious about their practicum. It is a "make or break" moment in their studies—a hands-on extended test where they must demonstrate they can apply theory to practice across two three months placements—and they need significant support to get through. University staff visit students on a varying number of occasions, depending on how well the placement is going, they read students' journals, and they push students to stretch their thinking and learning

wherever they are located, most commonly in sectors such as health, mental health, homelessness, child protection, disability or domestic and family violence.

But the metrics are looming. How many publications did I achieve last year, what research did I complete, what grants or awards did I gain—our head of department will ask. I wish the quality and relevance of the research was considered more important, but quantity seems to trump quality. If I cannot produce an adequate list of achievements, then unfortunately my teaching load will be increased. Like service (including supporting students on practicum), teaching is a privilege and an opportunity to make a difference, but I do not want my teaching load to be further increased, because then the opportunities to contribute to new knowledge through research is less possible. Each year it is a stressful skirmish to carve out time for research; meanwhile an internal battle with my "ethical self" about my obligation and accountability to our students on field practicum ensues.

But this is the neoliberal academy. The workload, outputs and research benchmarks have increased significantly even from a decade ago, with accelerated timeframes. Equally, students are core business for the university, and they must be highly satisfied with their learning experience while acquiring demonstrable graduate attributes. I find it almost impossible to complete all expected workload milestones—yet I must try. So, paying for sessional appointments to undertake my role to support students on field placements is one way of reducing my teaching/supervision workload. It could be seen as a workload choice, but it feels more like an ethical compromise. This "choice" is also for my own survival and mental health.

But there are deeper ramifications that I wanted to illuminate in making this move to casualize my support role for students on their field practicum. In doing so, I know that I am feeding the "practice-research divide" that is undesirable but palpable in social work. It is a false divide, I tell students, research must inform practice and practice must inform research. The skills of practice and research are very similar I assert in the classroom—listening, observation, open questions, clear method, documenting stories, recording, empathy, critical reflection—the skills and knowledge you need for social work practice are the same skills you need for theorizing about and researching your social work practice.

There is a strong sentiment in the profession that social workers in the field are doing what they are trained to do and staying in the academy to focus on theory and research to inform that practice can be seen as an

anathema to this practice-based profession. Students and bystanders seem to hint at a notion that those who do not have enough skills to be grassroots social workers stay on or return to the academy. What is your practice history some ask, and when did you last practice social work? Do they ask that of medical researchers?

But social work academics do need to keep their links to the field, including through supervision of students on their practicum, at the same time emphasizing the links between theory and practice. In every subject in our degree programme theories are linked to practice. Yet students seem keen to sideline theories as soon as possible. I think once graduates have been in the field a few years they regret time not spent focusing more on theories and research-informed practice. But by then they are caught up in their own organization's neoliberal culture: reduced funding, reduced staff and enormous workloads. Time for revisiting theories and undertaking their own practice-based research may be fleeting thoughts in the everyday chaos of grassroots practice.

Osmond and O'Connor (2006) discussed theoretical knowledge as playing a critical and long-established role in social work. They were interested in exploring the diverse theoretical knowledge base used by social workers in Australian child protection practice. They admitted their findings could be described as alarming. They said that while some social workers' interest in research may have motivated them to volunteer to participate, the emerging data was clear. Social workers in the study did not discuss their practice as informed by theoretical knowledge. Osmond and O'Connor revealed that no participant in the study referred to any empirical research as informing their practice, and in the observation phase of the study no participant was observed reading research articles. To exemplify this point, they noted that when asked about theory informing their practice one experienced worker said it all: "When I was at university, I remember reading some articles." In summarizing, Osmond and O'Connor stated that during the time of the study (18 months) no participant referred to, read, considered or appraised any research, even though there is a professional development requirement for social worker to do so. They also reported that in more informal conversations with child protection workers across the time of the study it was conveyed to them that reading about research was seen by their managers as an indicator that they had an insufficient workload. More recently Bigby (2019) reported that staff in smaller to medium sized organizations knew little

about what research was being undertaken in their field in Australia. One important mechanism that Osmond and O'Connor identified for strengthening evidence-based practice was to maintain a purposeful focus in social work training on how theory and research-informed practice will help graduate practitioners make and justify ethical, effective decisions. One such opportunity is to stress these links to students while they are on their field practicum.

So perhaps my laboured point is clearer now—by buying out student placement visits and replacing myself with casual contractors who are social work trained but not active researchers, I am caught in a self-defeating cycle. In making this decision to withdraw my input into students' learning on their practicum and leaving the task to others in order to slightly reduce my workload, I am contributing to the devaluing of research-informed social work practice; the same knowledge base I seek time to contribute to with my publications. And it seems this divide can only expand if theory and research continue to be undervalued or invisible in the field and supporting students to better understand theory in practice is undervalued in the academy.

Meanwhile, in the current neoliberal academy, the metrics clock is ticking, and achievements must be evidenced on the academic CV. The year rolls on, and the same conversation with the Field Coordinator has come around again. "How many students will you take this semester?," she asks.

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Challenging Knowledge In/Accessibility

Susan Gair, Tamar Hager, and Omri Herzog

Abstract In this chapter the authors reveal the complex landscape of access to knowledge within the context of the neoliberal demand for productivity. In the first story, Susan reveals her personal epiphany about the restrictions on access to research knowledge due to publishing paywalls. Next, Omri tells about the devaluation of local knowledge that must be published in English as the language of academic globalization. In the final story, Tamar discusses the dilemmas faced in publishing her own book, exposing two aspects of knowledge inaccessibility: the expensive prices of books published by prestigious academic publishers and the devaluation of academic work when choosing more accessible popular or internet venues. She concludes by highlighting the perpetuation across time of various barriers to knowledge in academic settings.

Keywords Academic paywall • Intellectual colonialism • Local knowledge • Open access • Public intellectuals

We are walking along Upper Woburn Place. A few minutes ago, Omri arrived at the lobby of Endsleigh Court where Tamar and Susan are staying. It's a

The names of the authors are arranged in alphabetical order. The three authors contributed equally to the writing of this manuscript.

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central street and the traffic is heavy. We wait impatiently at the crossing, feeling a sense of urgency. Although the day has just started, the writing retreat is too short, and we feel every minute is crucial. Turning right into Euston Road, we walk quickly towards the big red brick building of the British Library. Our plan for today is to talk less and write more, and the British Library seems like the best option. We can sit separately and write, but if we lose track or focus, we can sit together and find a way out of the muddle.

First, Omri and Susan need to subscribe to the library. To use the comfortable chairs in the reading rooms, one needs a reader card. It is relatively easy to get one, if you have two items of identification, one with proof of address. During the 1990s when the library was still located in the British Museum, you had also to prove that you are an academic or an independent scholar and that the British Library is the only place you can access the material needed for your research. Tamar remembers standing there, in front of a serious clerk, holding a letter from Tel Aviv University where she was a PhD student, waiting to give a speech she had prepared in advance, demonstrating her urgent need of library services. Her confidence evaporated when the administrator asked her coldly and condescendingly whether she cannot find the same material in one of the university's libraries. Instead of insisting that she is entitled to the library's treasures, she mumbled apologetically that she didn't really know since as an Israeli academic these libraries are also closed to her; therefore it would be really helpful and she would be very thankful if he could issue her a reader card. "Please sir, please," she almost begged. Luckily, she was found eligible for the library services and could join the other privileged readers.

We stand in line. There is always a queue to enter the library. Despite online access to books and articles, to be in the actual place and hold real books and documents seems to attract scholars and laymen/women alike. Next, we stand in another queue, this time for the subscription. Having to negotiate with an impatient clerk, we eventually receive the cards, and head to the chosen reading room—Humanities 1. Outside the reading rooms we notice many people, mostly young adults, who sit very close to each other sharing narrow spaces. Can they get reading cards? Maybe because we are professional academics, we are oblivious to the existing obstacles and the selection process. But perhaps these young people are just not interested in crossing the reading rooms' gatekeepers since they have their own ways of accessing information.

Earlier on we decided that we are going to dedicate this day to writing about open access, a subject Susan brought up when we worked on the book proposal. In one of our online meetings, she appeared quite excited.

Apparently after watching the documentary *Paywall: The Business of Scholarship*, she became convinced that if used properly, open access publishing could become a dissenting method challenging restriction on knowledge distribution posed by neoliberal academia. Yet discussing the issue further, we realized we would have to address some complications, for example the fact that academic corporations are those who own most of the open access publishers; or the meaning of making our intellectual property freely available; or freedom of access to whom—to our work partners, members of our local community, worldwide audiences?

Now in the British Library before entering the reading room and finding our own chairs, we sit down in the café discussing and clarifying our current writing plans. Susan wants to tell us why open access publishing is in her mind linked to her success or failure as a social work academic.

Susan's Story: Knowledge Kept in the Shadows

I have recently completed collaborative research looking at how grandparents can better maintain relationships with grandchildren after child protection concerns, she reminds us, and I have six grandchildren so the topic is quite close to my heart. After undertaking a literature review, it was clear to me this was an under-researched topic. The research partners were three small, non-government organizations who support families after child protection intervention. What the partner organizations wanted from the study was for child protection workers to be more inclusive of grandparents, to see them as a critical lynchpin who can hold things together in the family and help maintain children's wellbeing, identity and culture, or who can help in decision-making when out-of-home care is needed for a child.

Findings identified that some grandparents had been caring for their grandchildren due to adult parents' mental health issues, homelessness, drug use or incarceration, or when the parents were unable or unwilling to care for their children. These children often were returned to parents over time, but relationships between the grandparents and adult parents commonly became strained. Even relationships with their grandchildren could become unexpectedly fragile if adult parents separated, divorced or remarried, if there was conflict in the family or if adult parents discovered it was the grandparents who had reported the neglect of the children to child protection services. For example in the pilot study, one grandmother explained that her daughter "was working in a brothel and taking the children with her … so I went to the Department of Child Protection. …

[Afterwards] I was treated like the evil grandmother. There was absolutely no contact" (Gair, 2017). Grandparents were adamant that the decision-making by child protection staff was ill-informed, not in the best interests of children, and not in line with their own policies and procedures. Grandparents wanted their voice and stories to be heard.

Towards the end of the project, we had co-written several manuscripts with the partner organizations making clear recommendations for changes to child protection practice. After notification of our first publication in the international journal *Child and Family Social Work* I sent a rejoicing email to our partners—with a link to the online journal. In response, one of the partners promptly replied that they were happy for me that the article was published but they could not access it online because they did not have a paid subscription to the journal and could not afford to take out a subscription. I was embarrassed at my university-centric naivety regarding available access to professional journals, but I was suddenly struck by the huge implications of this single statement.

In that moment I realized that most Australian government and non-government child protection services, workers, policy makers and support staff would not see our article detailing the research findings, and would not read the recommendations made, unless they had a paid-up subscription to each specific journal where our publications appeared. It was a shocking realization of the professional gulf between the academy and professional social work practice—a gulf I had previously argued was quite minimal. Seen by some as the great divide between the "ivory tower" and professional practice, I had made the case to my students that theories and research were just different facets of practice. I agreed with others that in these times of widened university participation, the ivory tower did not really exist anymore despite the common perception. But I had ignored the vital prerequisite of accessibility. Of course, I immediately emailed the three partners a copy of the article, but the wider injustice was not so easily remedied.

How could social work practice ever be the "evidence-informed practice" I was teaching about if highly relevant research findings could not be accessed by workers and policy makers? How could this huge gulf have escaped my full awareness? I shared this exchange between myself and our research partner with colleagues, but few of them reflected back to me the shocked realization that I was feeling. Perhaps they thought I was very naïve to think the reality was anything different.

The following week I was invited by our librarian to attend the local screening of *Paywall: The Business of Scholarship*, a movie. As I watched the documentary, I again felt the growing shame—I had been such an uncritical participant in this whole neoliberal market-driven business of publishing. Basically, the documentary laid bare the closed, insular business model of publishers and how access to academic publications is an invisible privilege basically only open to academics and students while they are studying but closed to anyone else. This screening at my university appeared to be somewhat of an act of insubordination by the unassuming university library staff, spotlighting a growing issue of knowledge inequity that most academics seemed oblivious to. Nevertheless, when I tried subsequently to build an alliance with them focused on how we might start to address this problem, it did not really gain any traction. Perhaps after raising it, they believed it was up to others to challenge the status quo. What I have realized is that publicly funded research being generated in public universities for the betterment of the community is getting lost in translation and is not being used to benefit the community. It seems obvious—we need to *open up access* to knowledge that is generated in the academy.

"Open access" in this context most often refers to free access in the public domain which is said to have proliferated after initiatives such as the Budapest *Open Access Initiative* in February 2002, the *Bethesda Statement on Open Access* Publishing in June 2003 and the *Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge* in 2003. Several journals across a range of disciplines allow free open access, making scholarly research available to a wider audience. However, some of these publishers may restrict access, for example through early online release only, delayed access or sample articles only. Closed, subscription-based journals still dominate, where charges apply for open access (e.g. gold access; bronze access). Charges can sometimes be devolved to funding bodies (if you have any funding) or to individual authors or readers (Siler, 2017). University archiving in e-repositories increasingly is permitted (Green access) by journals for pre-print versions only, otherwise charges or embargo periods apply.

To enable unlimited access to closed journals, journal subscriptions are purchased by universities. These costs have risen sharply in recent years. Such subscription fees and open access fees seem to have been accepted as legitimate given a journal's reputation in the academic marketplace. Smaller journals have sought to join with more prestigious publishers to gain increased legitimacy, accepting that associated increased fees and decreased access were inevitable, even desirable. Yet many universities

producing research are publicly funded institutions—fees have already been paid through public funding for their ongoing operation, salaries and research.

Some say progress towards open access is steadily advancing. Academics are familiar with social networks and platforms that more recently have helped disseminate research findings, such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate and Academia.edu. These platforms often host copies of full texts with agreement from authors who are breaching publisher contracts. But again, how often are these platforms accessed by the public, or by health and welfare practitioners in their everyday practice? I have heard reports that institutional resistance emerging internationally against high-profile publishers' subscription and access costs is growing. For example Harvard University previously had highlighted the untenable situation of unsustainable journal costs and encouraged its faculty members to make their research freely available through open access journals, and to reconsider publishing in journals that keep articles behind paywalls. Meanwhile institutions in Sweden, Germany and Norway reportedly are not renewing subscriptions to Elsevier from 2019 (Qureshi, 2019; Sample, 2012).

Publishers behind paywalls were quick to observe the growing underground open access movement and accelerated journal offerings as the internet became more widely accessible. A parallel movement sought to discredit emerging open access journals. Many smaller or lesser-known journals subsequently began to be identified as being of disputable origins (and perhaps some were); a situation where questionable authors published questionable findings in dubious publications. Journal names began to appear on circulated lists of "predatory" or "rogue" publications. Academics were told that publications in these journals would not be "counted." Open access journals and rogue journals were understood by some people to be one and the same. I do not remember hearing any of my colleagues questioning "who were the rogues" in academic publishing. Academic institutions advised that only well-recognized publishers could be trusted with our research manuscripts and paying large fees for open access was acceptable and desirable if you could afford it, to increase readership of your work.

After weathering years of highs and lows in the academy, my focus had not been on the ethics of publishing in closed journals. This deeper pondering only occurred after those two above-mentioned key events jolted me enough to reconsider "closed access" as a social justice issue. Scholarship disseminated only through the restricted scholarly marketplace of

subscription journals seems to be the antithesis of social justice. Instead of providing public access to information for the greater human good, scholarly publications exist in a tightly controlled, closed system, where the findings of important, taxpayer-funded research are published in subscription-only journals and additional public funding is required (university library subscriptions) for the academic community and students to access the research findings. Still more money is required for open access. As identified by Scherlen and Robinson (2008), and more recently by authors such as Arunachalam (2017), what seems to have escaped academics' attention, even as they write about social justice issues, are ethics and equity concerns associated with open and closed publishing.

More recently, I had been wondering whether I should pay the expensive open access fees being demanded by high-profile publishers from my own wages to increase distribution of my publications. There has been increasing unsolicited lobbying of authors to pay open access fees to make their work more widely available. I wanted my work to be read but I saw it as succumbing to what I believed were unreasonable pressures to come up with the funds myself. It is not like academic authors are paid for their authored work. They are the unpaid labourers in the business of publishing, but the product of their labour is sold many times over. Yes, it is a marketplace, I know, and a market is about supply and demand. But this is a distorted marketplace because the product—scholarly research findings, critique and produced knowledge—is not linked to consumers who would benefit, that is the public; rather the supply is only linked to other producers.

So why don't we challenge and change the system? One reason, as we discussed in the previous chapter, is the controlling power of metrics. Within the university, metrics are commonly used to inform academic workload calculations, in decision-making for awarding internal grants and conference funding, and in ascertaining academic promotion eligibility. As Tamar and Omri inferred earlier managers seek specific metrics that demonstrate the worth of a piece of research, and in turn the worth of the researcher, as reflected in the impact factor of the journal that accepted the manuscript, and their readership and H-Index. The status of a university is mirrored in its high-profile, highly published researchers.

As pointed out by Scherlen and Robinson (2008) and Lincoln (2018), while the advent of the internet has facilitated potentially limitless knowledge-sharing pathways, conversely it has contributed to the privatization of public knowledge. Then again others argue that academic

knowledge has never been freely available to the public. But does that justify continuation of an academic closed shop in this booming internet era of unlimited information sharing? Siler (2017) reported that academic publishing is an industry worth US $10 billion per annum and rising. Frankly, the whole business of publishing in the last decade points to publishers, universities and academics behaving badly.

At some point, as academics we have become highly self-focused on what is needed to survive in the academy. We seem to have forgotten why we are there—to grow public knowledge and contribute to public good through research and education. Denzin and Giardina (2018, p. 2) pinpoint the essence of the problem when they reflected that with academics' preoccupation in the "very real war of survival" in universities, are we becoming "lost among the forest and missing the trees which stand in front of us"? We have become desensitized to the mounting pressures and demands of the academy while remaining beguiled by the available, competitive (reducing) rewards including tenure, internal research funding, sabbaticals, funded conference attendance, promotion and being eligible to supervise higher degree research students. I have been espousing the need for evidence-based practice in social work to students for years but have been blinded to the reality of the gulf between research and practice that I have contributed to by publishing behind the paywall.

But to be fair, let's widen our gaze. Barner et al. (2015) identified that academics in the current "publish more, publish now" environment desperately seek to undertake research and produce multiple publications from the same study findings (named as "salami slicing" by one publisher I know) just to survive, preferably publishing in high impact factor journals. Without trying to shirk accountability for being self-focused, neoliberalism needs to be unmasked in this "market economy game" of academic publishing. Academics live with uncertainty, ever-increasing teaching, administration and service loads, and prescribed publishing just to demonstrate their worth. And neoliberalism is much more than just a market economy discourse. It is more like a Trojan horse seemingly releasing barriers to be methodically leapt over, or like an unseen virus that has infected academic life by stealth.

Ironically, there is mounting pressure for university researchers at my university, and presumably elsewhere in the world, to build research partnerships with communities so research engagement and impact can be demonstrated and measured. With a passing glance this engagement and impact agenda looks like a timely intervention and a win-win for all involved. Through university/community collaborations research and

scholarship can be translated into policy and practice for real-world impact. But how can impact happen if practitioners, organizations, policymakers and the public cannot access this scholarly work because it is behind the paywalls, hidden and inaccessible?

The reality is clearer to me now. Scholarship through traditional subscription journals behind paywalls reinforces exclusion and elitism and renders the latest university engagement and impact crusade as little more than rhetoric. And the bottom line for me is that in my discipline the core values are social justice, integrity and equity. Yet as a social work academic I am ashamed to admit I have become enslaved by the academy to the detriment of my own profession and its core values. I have listened to warnings against finding a home for my publications in free open access journals, instead seeing subscription journals as the safer, more beneficial harbour, and I have conveyed this accepted wisdom to my postgraduate students until recently.

But why have I and other academics unquestionably gone along with the rhetoric of the "prestige behind the paywall" as compared to the "dangerousness" of free open access? What perverse situation have we found ourselves in when in abiding by these prescribed publishing rules our research work is barely read, it cannot contribute to informed practice in our disciplines, it does not contribute to any public good and it hardly contributes to our required citations count unless more money is paid? And I ask you, is it possible to strive, survive, publish and also be activist against the system all at the same time? Yes, I answer, because that is what academic scholarship is: research, critique and recommendations for a fairer world. By complying, we continue to silence our own voices.

As Allen (2018, p. 40) admits, "currently, publication in most open access journals does not receive the academic credit that is afforded more longstanding and traditional journals." But the problem is so much bigger. Have publishers acted with transparency and integrity as custodians of our intellectual property or have they kept it locked in the shadows? Have academics acted with integrity? What if we provoke a radical transformation? We can resist publishing predominantly behind paywalls, encourage our institutions to stop subscribing to expensive journals, support credible open access journals and call for appropriate academic credit from our Heads of Departments for legitimate open access publications? We would be standing up for the common good, social justice, equity and shared knowledge, and rejecting narrowly prescribed, "legitimised" closed access publishing.

* * *

Susan's activist call is a breath of fresh air. But is it enough to replace high-ranking closed access journals with free open access venues to attain social justice? Tamar is occupied with this question but although she sits next to Susan and Omri in the reading room, she resists disturbing them. They both seem so absorbed in writing. The public availability of our research, she wants to tell them, won't bring the called-for "revolution." As academic scholars we must first gain public faith by traversing the gulf we have created between them and us while climbing further up the ladder of the ivory tower. Currently most people see academic knowledge as incomprehensible and irrelevant to their everyday existence. To renew their trust, we should change the way we write. We need to give up academic jargon understood only by few and stop producing multiple publications from the same study findings which add to nothing. If we become more intelligible and produce more meaningful articles, we will obtain public credibility and thus the accessibility of our work would have an effect.

But Tamar's speech must wait for later. Omri is busy exploring the challenges of accessibility from a different angle. In the cafeteria a few hours earlier he said that after years of confronting what seemed to him to be the reinforced "dictatorship" of English within the neoliberal academia, his piece addresses the difficulties of academics whose native tongue is not English, and so is their audiences. "We are required to publish exclusively in English," he said, "and those who were born and raised outside Anglophone cultures like myself and Tamar, are destined either to lose their local and sometimes immediate audience in the process, or if choosing to write in our own language, risk being regarded as disqualified or incompetent by the academic community." Susan said that she was not aware until now how privileged she was as an English speaker in the academic maze. Now in the reading room, Omri writes fast and freely in his native language.

Omri's Story: Lost in Translation

My mother tongue is Hebrew. Even though I picked up some German words from my parents, who used the language when they didn't want me to understand them, and although I studied English from the third year in primary school like most Israeli children and later Arabic in high school, Hebrew is my first language. I write in it, speak it, it mediates my thoughts.

Stories I write for this book too, I'm writing in Hebrew. It's easier and faster, and mainly it allows me to be more precise in what I say: the intermediate spaces between the words, the various shadings of the language, are intimately familiar to me. They are my playground, and I know every piece of playground equipment—its tiers and curvature, its colours and the experience it can provide.

Afterwards I will give the story that I'm writing now to Diana Rubanenko, a translator whom I regularly work with, to translate into English. Sometimes I write directly in English—these are cases in which the aesthetic of the text is less crucial to me, where its musicality or tone is marginal; usually these are articles to which I am less attached. I will ask Diana to edit them for me. In either case, I then read the translated or edited text and correct things that seem to me aberrant, and sometimes even reconstruct sentences on a faltering intuition, trying to capture the music of the English language as I know it—in the same way that an immigrant comes to know the new country in the course of time, but at the same time always stumbles into unfamiliar corners.

The reason why I linger over the way in which this text is being written is because this kind of longwinded writing procedure (writing, translation, corrections, linguistic proofreading) is the lot of many academics who are not native English-speakers. It includes a dialogue between at least two people: one who specializes in the content of and is a signatory to the article; while the other receives payment for giving it English resonance, but usually remains in the shadows upon publication.

As is well known, English is the language of the international academic community. Three hundred and eighty million people, slightly less than 5% of the world's population, speak it as their mother tongue, but 1.75 billion people speak it as their second or third language (Neeley, 2012). English is an international language, the language of globalization—not only in the academic field, of course, but also in the music, film and food industries, in business and politics; in short, every field that touches upon the economic centre of the West.

English is the global academic language due to historical processes that it is unnecessary to specify here, unless I should wish to use such terms as the eurocentrism of the canon of knowledge or intellectual colonialism. My daily research work doesn't deal with them. It entails publishing in English, as I belong to an international community; I want to read and be read by my professional colleagues and fellow scholars, students and the

general public. English serves as a common denominator for intellectual endeavours around the world, a bridge connecting scholars, researchers and ideas.

But as in any case of a global economy, there is a price to be paid. It must be paid when the global power becomes more and more dominant, when it becomes a monopoly in its field. Global forces restrict the possibilities open to local producers. This is true regarding how McDonald's disseminates the hamburger culture at the expense of local foods; it's also true regarding Taylor Swift's hits which top the charts everywhere in the world, or Marvel's blockbuster films. The free global exchange of such goods makes the world a smaller place, for better or worse, as it allows the free movement of intercultural exchanges, mainly of the periphery towards the centre (but less in the opposite direction). So too with academia: ideas cross borders by means of the English language. Edward Said (1990) calls this "worldliness." He writes that the philosophical home is not the writer or the nation, but the world. However, this academic "world" is available to us primarily in English.

Globalization, including that of the academic industries, creates a distinctive hierarchy between powerful and widely distributed goods, which belong to the cultural centre and use it as a reference point, and local goods whose translation into the global economy is difficult and sometimes even impossible (Huggan, 2001, p. 4). They belong to and address a place, a specific landscape—human or geographical.

I talked over these ideas with Tamar, who told me that she had once participated in a conference where the keynote speaker, a Brazilian woman, demonstrated that while she was constantly required to explain her culture, the British and North American scholars were exempt from this obligation. But someone like myself, who finds himself listening or reading American or British papers, occasionally doesn't understand cultural or historical nuances that are presented as self-evident. My task—as someone who belongs to the periphery of the English highway—is to understand the people of the cultural centre; it is not their duty to explain. That's the privilege of the global centre.

Sometimes my belonging to the international academic community is put to a test. Like any academic, I'm not always completely satisfied with every article I publish. Some of the articles were written for exploiting loose ends, scraps of thought or papers delivered at academic conferences ("I really should do something about them"). Yes, there are those too. After all, within the neoliberal academic publishing economy, every

resource must be efficiently utilized; every investment must reap its reward, for otherwise it's a waste of time, otherwise we're not doing what we're supposed to do.

(Not all my colleagues would agree with me on this point. Some of them believe that everything they write is original and enthralling, the purest gold. I know them; they abound in the academic landscape, behave as if they own it. And indeed, they are usually the most efficient producers; they tend not to doubt themselves. But I tend to doubt them, because I function in the same system as them, and I am subject to the same constraints. I suspect that they have internalized the rules of the discourse and the academic habitus in such a way that they now find it difficult to distinguish between the essential and the trivial.)

However, there are also articles that I'm proud of, to which I've devoted much thought and attention. They contain an original thought that I believe is of significance in my research field. To be honest, they are not the majority of my academic writings, but they're there, dear to my heart.

I published one of those articles in Hebrew. It was commissioned from me as part of a project on visual culture in Israel, the country where I was born and whose culture I study and critique. It was about the concept of bodily beauty in Israel. My claims don't really matter here, yet I will briefly relate to them, because it's one of the articles I love, that I'm proud of.

Beauty is always a politically charged concept; it's a resource that some have and others are deprived of, due to historical, political and ideological reasons. And this is especially true regarding Israeli culture, which has grown out of Jewish immigrants of different skin complexions and features who came from across the world. Throughout modern history "Jewish" features were represented as a sight of corporeal ugliness. Under newfound sovereignty, this perception has been changing. Yet, which features would be considered beautiful, and why? Which criteria does a culture use to formulate for itself the implicit distinctions regarding beauty?

I wrote the article in Hebrew, because all the primary sources were in Hebrew. I analysed contexts of fashion, Israeli beauty pageants and local television programmes featuring aesthetic makeovers. I was pleased with the option of publishing it in Hebrew because I wanted Israeli students to be able to read it without any mediation or linguistic obstacles; I wanted to critique my own culture in its language and with its tools, and to spark an internal cultural discussion regarding its politics, its covert and overt racism, mediated through the sly, ostensibly neutral concepts of beauty or aesthetics. In essence this is mostly an internal conversation; it won't

interest Belgian, Indian or Australian students or scholars to the same degree. I wrote the article in adherence to the local codes and the possibility of the deeper interpretation that is enabled by presenting them to an audience that is intimately familiar with them, as a self-evident phenomenon in their lives. It was published in an anthology titled *Visual Cultures in Israel*.

A few months later the time came for the yearly evaluation of my academic performance. Like any scholar working at an academic institution, I am required to report on progress in my research to the authorities. I am assessed on the basis of this report, which determines my future research budgets and sometimes, if it was a good year, grants me a lighter teaching load. After about a month, I received the results of the evaluation. I had been awarded no points for that article.

I wondered why. It was a good academic article in my field (something I can't say about all my articles, even not about those which I've published in eminent journals in English). It was quite evident that nobody on the evaluation committee had read it. The appraisal and ranking of academic products in the humanities is not based on their content but rather on the statistical metrics which determines the journal reputation. As regards journals in Hebrew, the situation is complicated: articles in languages other than English are from the outset considered academically inferior, regardless of their content. In Israel, evaluation committees rarely award points to local academic journals, unless the evaluator has a special interest in the journal or has published an article in it himself. Although there is a list of journals in Hebrew that are considered academic, institutions tend to ignore it. My article wasn't included in the conversation being held by the international community of knowledge, and therefore was of no significance.

Over the course of my academic career, my colleagues had repeatedly told not to waste my time and energy on writing in Hebrew: it is insignificant in the evaluation of performance, irrelevant to my calling-card as an academic. I wasn't surprised by the score, zero points, but this time it made me angry; perhaps it was a matter of simple pride, because I hoped that someone would read, respond to and appreciate an article that was so dear to me. Maybe it was a rebellious response to the obscure criteria for the evaluation of articles in a language other than English, which are not assessed by international measures and therefore cannot be assessed transparently or contextually.

And perhaps it was something deeper and more ideological, related to the widening gap between the concepts of "academic" and "public intellectual" in spaces that aren't English-speaking. Here, in the space in which I find myself, you are forbidden to directly address the community that surrounds you, and which you are studying, in its own language, which is your language too. It's a "waste of time" to write for this public; you must write for your academic colleagues, even if only a few of them read what you write, even if the true resonance of what you're trying to say is to be found elsewhere, not in the academic journals which are behind the paywall and only for English-speakers.

I was upset because I felt I'd been punished for momentary deviation from the measurement efficiency of neoliberal academia, manifested by the regime of international impact. Because I was upset, I wrote a letter to the committee responsible for rating the performance evaluations. One cannot begin such a letter with the matter itself. I first had to explain that I wasn't objecting to the need for and significance of participation in the international scholarly community, and that I understood the necessity of writing in English. I had to begin with this self-evident comment in order to clear myself of any suspicion; for otherwise it would be easy to wield immediate demagogic tools against me, to scold and lecture me on the importance of peer discourse and participation in international platforms (I've noticed that the more provincial the academic community is, the greater the importance it ascribes to internationalism).

Only after these opening remarks did I turn to the matter at hand, which relates to four grounds for publications in the local language (again, I emphasized, not as a replacement, but only as a supplement in relevant cases). They're quite simple. First, the exclusivity of the English language in countries which aren't English-speaking turns academia into an ivory tower. The local general audience has little access to intellectual materials in English. It's an ivory tower, because a foreign audience of academic scholars has greater access to any article than its direct target audience, with whom it deals and to whom it's relevant. Second, the exclusivity of English in academic writing—especially when dealing with the local culture or society—is an instrument in the service of inequity within the local academia. Fluency in English has to do with economic, geographical and ethnic variables. In Israel, for example, not everyone enjoys a high level of education: it depends on where your parents came from, whether you grew up in the centre or the periphery, and the economic status of your family. When students who are studying Israeli culture, for example, only

encounter articles in English about their own culture the inequality is reproduced, regardless of students' academic competence. The inequality problem is exacerbated in the case of minority students, for whom English is their third language. For example Arab students in Israel suffer more than Jewish students from the designation of English as the first academic language. They are required to pass exams in Hebrew, their second language, when they enter academia (where their further studies will also be conducted in Hebrew), but they must read all the learning materials in English, a third language, with a different alphabet from the first two languages.

The third ground is slightly disconcerting, because it involves technical aspects of translation. When academic scholars, mainly in the humanities and social sciences, write in English about their local culture, they are forced to invent an English jargon in order to translate local concepts. In translation, the original meaning of concepts migrates to nearby but not identical fields of meaning. It's absurd that Israeli students often join together to translate articles from English to Hebrew—in order to facilitate learning for an exam, or to use the article as a source in writing an assignment. They may hire the services of a translator and split the cost, and he will render the English concept back into Hebrew—in a way that distorts the original meaning, sometimes in a quite comical fashion.

An obvious counterargument is that the students must practice reading English. That's true. But it's detached from reality to believe that convenient access to articles in Hebrew will prevent them from reading other materials in English. Better to be open-eyed and not purist: every academic in Israel, whether student or lecturer, is familiar with the shady industry of quick and shoddy academic translations from English to Hebrew, especially in undergraduate studies (*mea culpa*: I too engaged in it during my first year at university). This industry has a hugely detrimental effect on the students' quality of learning, and even more so their comprehension: the students learn local content through filtered translations. What reason is there to participate in a farcical pageant, in which faculty and students all pretend that English articles are read without mediation, and to abet the distortion of scholarly materials—especially regarding those who study and research the local culture, language, history or literature?

The fourth ground is cultural. Academia in Israel, as in other countries (though perhaps more intensely), conducts itself like a Middle Eastern branch of an American (or Anglophone) colony, and that conduct stands

in strange contrast to the linguistic patriotism in Israel. There are other countries, such as Denmark or the Netherlands, in which the policy regarding the evaluation of articles in the local language is more reasonable. They don't regard with parochial suspicion research that deals with the local culture and is published in its language. A certain share of research in the local language is necessary for public intellectual activity. It is essential in order to inform a well anchored public debate that avoids catchy slogans, fake news and clichés, and to influence policy and cultural and social discursive practices. The vacuum formed due to the absence of research in the public discourse is rapidly filled: by PR people, by opinion-makers, by politicians, by a fast and easy to digest culture that provides simple answers to complicated questions—or in other words, by everything that stands opposed to the goals of academia and its public role. Am I naïve to believe that the train hasn't yet left the station?

The letter I sent was ineffectual, of course, at least regarding whoever read it. The laconic response I received conveyed to me the gestures that must have accompanied the reading of the letter: the hand wiping the brow, the rolling of the eyes. It read as follows: "We have carefully read the appeal you submitted. To our regret, there was nothing wrong with the evaluation process. We wish to remind you that publications in English are necessary for participating in and communicating with the international community of scholars in your field."

The problem doesn't concern the specific professor responsible for the assessment apparatus at the academic institution in which I work. It's related to the cooperation with neoliberal habits of regularizing and measuring output, and even more so to the absence of a broader discourse or policy in peripheral countries that are not English-speaking, that is in most of the world. The discourse must define a policy regarding the weight of writing in the local language in the evaluation of a scholar, and even—if I may go a step further—requiring scholars to publish also in their local language, to a certain extent and when the topics are relevant, as part of their public responsibility. For this it would be necessary to devise a ranking system for academic journals in local languages, one that also takes into account minorities and migrants, and allows in parallel the appraisal and measurement of their quality.

After all, the humanities and certain fields in the social sciences specialize in the critique of globalization processes and study their effects on the depletion of local resources. The critique is written in English, and it's published in American journals or British-global academic presses. Even

this story, as I noted at the outset, is being translated into English in order to be published by Palgrave Macmillan; its content may not change in translation, but its impact certainly will.

That's the trap I find myself in now, together with some of my colleagues who agree in principle and are concerned with what I have suggested here. This text will be published in a global academic framework, instead of in Hebrew. But without this distancing translation I would not have the resources to continue taking action. I would have fewer resources that allow me to say these things in my local language too. The global neoliberal system has trapped me inside it, is colouring my critical opposition in unpleasant shades of hypocrisy and forcing me to cooperate—at least for the time being; at least for as long as I shall be awarded zero points for my most meaningful articles, in Hebrew.

* * *

At lunch Tamar says that she keeps thinking about Omri's frustration regarding the neoliberal trap. For an hour she sat in front of the computer staring at the empty screen. She wondered what her contribution to this ongoing discussion about open access would be. In fact, as an Israeli she feels similar linguistic obstacles. However, researching the nuclear debate, and currently Victorian working-class women, there are no publishing venues for her in Hebrew. "And this shows how parochial the Israeli academy is," Tamar complains. "When I told colleagues that I research mothers who committed infanticide in Victorian Britain, many of them wondered why I don't research Israeli mothers who committed the same crime."

People around us are enjoying the lunch break. Some are sitting on the balcony appreciating the blue sky and the sun. For a while we eat in silence. Tamar recounts that for years she came to the British Library to do research for her book about two mothers who killed their children, which was published in Hebrew. For some time, people have urged her to make it accessible to the international community by publishing it in English as well. So maybe she is interested in the issue brought up by Omri but from reverse—in the neoliberal academia what are the obstacles for making your writing available to the wider, more international audience when living in what is regarded as a geographical and cultural periphery or margins?

Tamar's Story: "You will have a marketing problem"

"Have you translated the book into English yet?" a friend asked me after I had lectured on *Malice Aforethought*, a research-novel that had been published in 2012. The book focuses on two mothers who murdered their children in nineteenth-century England and two contemporary researchers who are trying, not always successfully, to tell their stories. The book had been published in Hebrew by Dvir, a commercial publisher. In the eyes of my academic friends and colleagues I made two wrong decisions: I wrote and published in Hebrew and therefore I confined myself to a restricted local marginal audience and rather than choosing an academic publisher I selected a commercial one, thus withholding it from the academic significance it deserves. Translating it into English was therefore regarded by my professional community as mandatory. "It's on the way," I said in embarrassment, thinking about how slowly the translation was going and how I wasn't doing anything to speed it up, and even wondering whether there was a place for it at all on the bookshelves in English-speaking countries. "You really have to publish it. You must. It's about England but it's also really innovative." I smiled. Yes, it was written as an "inter-genre," and there were not many like it in Israel or anywhere else.

One of the reasons, I suspected, was that neither academic nor commercial publishers tended to take on works that did not belong to any clear genre. So those who wanted to publish their work, justifiably did not even consider such an adventure. "You will have a marketing problem," said my PhD dissertation supervisor, when I told him over coffee about the book I was writing. "They won't know where to put it on the shelf." He smiled but I could sense the implied warning of a future muddle. He, who had published several books, knew the book market better than I did. He was right. The librarian of the college where I teach called me to ask whether it should be classified as fiction or as an academic text. And if it was academic, what was the right disciplinary label: gender studies, motherhood, criminology or legal studies. I was not sure either. "Maybe the best is two copies" I mumbled, "one in the fiction section and the other in the motherhood subdivision?" In bookstores they were perplexed as well. Some stocked it on the literature shelves while others classified it as research.

So, because of the unwelcoming confusion among publishers, bookshops and libraries in confronting my book—which, at first, I had experienced as a sense of power and pride—I was challenging the system—I

gradually lost my confidence in its significance. They must have succeeded in convincing me that there was no place for it in the appropriate publishing space, because it was not exactly academic and not exactly literary; it was not exactly history and not exactly fiction. Nevertheless, everyone who read the book asked me if I had already translated it and whether I had applied to a publisher.

A few days after this conversation, a friend who had been present at the lecture forcefully declared that I had to have an academic publisher. "Don't compromise," she said assertively, "You need a good university publisher, like Cambridge or Oxford or Harvard University Press. Start at the top, and if they don't accept it, go down to B ranking, you know, Bloomsbury, Ashgate. Those are also good. But under no circumstances should you go to a commercial press without peer review. That would mean that it won't be listed in your CV, and you need it in order to become a full professor."

That made me think about her concealed assumptions. She valued the book; she thought that it contained important academic knowledge and she considered that it warranted the highest regard, as she saw it. She assumed that I, like her, wanted to achieve the highest academic rank. She was not completely wrong since up to now I had climbed the academic ladder slowly but surely. I wanted to discuss these basic assumptions with her, but I didn't. I only responded, "Do you think so?" "Yes!" she replied. So now a few months later sitting here in the British Library, during a writing retreat, and composing part of my chapter on open access and the neoliberal academia, I want to challenge some of her suppositions and present some questions.

Assuming that one of the A-ranking academic presses will agree to publish a book like mine that challenges the established distinction between academic and non-academic discourse, and tells in large part fictional stories, maintaining that these tales are legitimate history, will my book and I benefit from that, as my friend had promised? I will have an impressive listing on my CV, but who will read my book? It will be sold with a hard binding (because most of these publishers issue only a few hardcover copies) and will be overpriced. It will be bought only by university libraries and I doubt whether anyone will ever take it off the shelf. Even if there are people who want to read the book because somehow they have heard about it—although university publishers never do anything to advance sales since their books are only meant for a limited audience—they will not be able to afford the exaggerated price (often $150 dollars

per copy). Lending from university libraries or even entering them is barred to those who are not students or lecturers. In other words, my book will be buried on the shelves in universities' reading rooms (following a long discussion regarding the proper section). And this is the best-case scenario since there is always a chance that university libraries, with their limited budgets, will not consider purchasing it at all.

I remember a friend who published a book about theatre history with a respected university publisher in the United States, complaining that no one reads her book. Why should they read it; it was expensive and inaccessible, I wanted to say yet didn't. Instead we discussed the unbearable indifference of potential readers, like many academics, while avoiding the need to challenge the problematic platform of high prestigious academic presses.

So, what is preferable—a listing on my CV or at least a fair reading public? That's an interesting question since it means that academics condemn themselves in advance to the margins of public discourse if they want to get ahead within the guild, just as my friend had clarified in her short speech regarding the right venue for *Malice Aforethought*. Usually, when they/we reach the top of the academic ladder and become full professors, they/we allow them/ourselves to leave the golden cage and go out to the masses. Then we send our books to commercial publishers and write articles in newspapers. But perhaps this should be challenged. Maybe I should refuse to do what is considered appropriate and correct to advance my academic career and try to have my book published by a commercial publisher (although these publishers, as well, are not enthusiastic about publishing an inter-genre book).

And if I have already begun to challenge academic publishing, here is another question: in this neoliberal milieu, aren't the university publishers actually commercial profit-making businesses like any other, and does the intellectual purity we attribute to them because they engage in peer review really make them unbiased? I suspect that in our capitalistic world, it is almost impossible to escape commercial considerations. These considerations frequently determine reductions in the number of words and pages, even among respected academic presses (the contracts we sign include the numbers of words or pages we are expected to produce), and that dictates the nature and evolvement of our intellectual venture. I presume that what distinguishes between university and non-university presses is perhaps their intellectual prestige and their distinct location within the book market matrix. Maybe those publishers, whom my friend termed "the top,"

are simply those that the academic establishment has delegated as its own, and this positioning inevitably awards them an aura of high quality and seriousness.

And now that I think of it, perhaps, because they enable us to gain a respected listing on our CVs and grant us the platform for institutional importance, they allow themselves not only to demand changes in the way we write and in our arguments, but they also appropriate our texts. For example they retain all rights to our work forever, and they give us, the authors, only a small number of copies. We never struggle against these draconian rules because we desperately want that listing on our CVs which will improve our chances to advance professionally and to gain institutional approbation. But this is not described as interference with professional considerations because we receive respectability in return, and so maybe we care less that the publishers prevent us by legal and economic procedures to make our knowledge accessible to the public.

I raise my head from the computer screen looking at a fellow researcher at the opposite desk who was leafing impatiently through a book and then started typing hurriedly. He is probably worried about his own output today. In the neoliberal academia, output counts. We have to be efficient and fast, but our products, as Omri already related, should find their way to the right publishing venues. Otherwise it is a fruitless effort.

Early this morning before going to the library with Omri and Susan for another day of work, I checked my email server, discovering a letter from Adam Rummens, the Commission Editor of Cambridge Scholar Publishing. I read his personal email while drinking coffee: "We would be pleased if you would consider submitting a proposal to publish a book or an edited collection," he wrote acknowledging my scholarly potential by mentioning one of my articles. Reading this I suddenly remembered that a few months earlier, I had received this same mail. Sending it to my faculty Dean, I asked if he knew anything about this venue and whether I should consider it. I inferred that, according to the letter, the press had been established in 2001 by Cambridge alumni although they were "not connected to Cambridge University in any way." The Dean answered, "Absolutely not. They are predatory publishers."

The term "predatory publishers" sounded frightening. No one wants to meet predators outside nature reserves, zoos or nature films. An uncalled morning meeting with a predator on a home computer screen elicits a sense of danger. At any rate it is a powerful image to describe a publisher whose sin in most cases is that publishing with it would be

considered inappropriate by the academic establishment. It is as though we are told that we are not safe in the book market jungle. At a certain moment, if I don't climb a tree or flee as fast as I can, I am doomed to professional annihilation by these blood-sucking presses. What a nightmare!

Because this discussion with the Dean was conducted by mail, I didn't ask what he meant nor did I wonder about the meaning of this metaphor, and truth be told, at that stage I wasn't really interested. I was like the academics Susan described earlier: I didn't question this labelling. In fact, it was convenient for me that he had determined this publisher's fate and had saved me the uncertainty about whether to send the translated chapters of *Malice Aforethought* or not.

But now—discussing and writing about open access with Susan and Omri and seriously considering, against my friend's advice, publishing my book in an unconventional way—I became curious. I wanted to see what this press, determined predatory by the Dean, was like. The publisher had a serious internet site and many book-jacket photographs of works they had published. They had an impressive list of advisory board members from all over the world; one of them was from Haifa University, a name that I recognized. But if the dean says something, he must know what he is talking about. On Wikipedia, there was an entry for "predatory publishing" and reading it, I understood that there were people who had made the effort to determine criteria for the phenomenon, and that Jeffrey Beall, a librarian at the University of Colorado, had published a blacklist of what he identified as such presses, but because of the threat of a legal suit from one of them, he had removed his list in January 2017. Another blacklist of these publishers was later created by Cabell International, a scholarly service company, and the list still exists. However, in order to obtain the information, it contains, you must purchase a subscription. On the internet you can find various catalogues that determine the nature of publishers to be avoided. But ostensibly, it appears that there is no actual agreement about what features make a publisher predatory. The lists of criteria are long, and the accusations vary. Thus, under this category you encounter completely corrupt publishers which invent members of their boards and steal articles from other places, together with publishers whose conduct arouses discomfort only because they deviate from the generally agreed-upon rules of the academic publishing game. This last group publishes books for payment (which is also done at times by well-known academic publishers such as Peter Lang, one of the A-ranking companies) and

invites manuscripts from researchers like me. That was, by the way, Cambridge Scholar Publishing's only sin, and from what I gathered, it does not request payment for publishing manuscripts and its advisory board is respected and completely genuine.

But soliciting manuscripts, I discovered, is apparently the original sin. A serious publisher stated that someone on one of the internet sites does not solicit manuscripts. Inviting manuscripts implicates a company as a predatory publisher, and consequently academics avoid sending it their work fearing it will risk their career. So, in order to survive, these publishers are forced, at times against their better judgement, to continue soliciting scholars' work, immortalizing themselves as presses that should be avoided.

But why is it that a personal invitation to submit a manuscript has become such an incriminating criterion of academic publishers that I, having undergone effective academic socialization, have accepted it without objection up to now? It is also interesting to contemplate what it means that publishers have become unworthy for academic committees only because they seek interesting manuscripts in unusual places—among junior researchers, for example (and, by the way, well-known researchers with public status receive invitations to submit manuscripts from respected publishers, yet it does not damage their reputation or that of the publishers). Does it mean that in order to acquire intellectual significance my manuscripts must be accepted only by places which initially are not interested in hearing what I have to say? The perception that I am the one who must beg for attention rather than the publishers is indubitable. Yet each time that I have doubted this academic convention, I have ultimately received the same summary sentence: "You have to do what they say, because that's just the way it is."

At my desk in the library, I realize that responding to Susan's story on the academic paywall contributes to me personally, since it enables me to question what is allowed and what is forbidden in the academic circles. I assume that this system works so effectively since we, who are professionally trained to ask questions and express our doubts, unquestionably obey institutional imperatives. I suspect that within the confusion and mayhem created by neoliberal academia, which demands that we teach more, publish more and serve the community more, we don't have the time or strength to think properly and challenge the dictated rules. We only hope that someone like my Dean will appear to tell us what to do in specific circumstances, because there is such chaos around us and so much

insecurity. The result is a system that has contracted into a list of regulations, directives and internal discourse, which has become less and less accessible. The result, as we showed in the previous chapter, is that the CV has become an enslavement mechanism, since writing that cannot be listed is not worth investing in.

At a dinner party a week before I travelled to our retreat in London, another friend had told me that she was finally opening her own book website on the internet and beginning to upload stories. She would ultimately upload complete books. It was not a blog; it was really a book website. I knew that it had taken her time to decide to move to this platform, and that it had been a difficult decision. She was not an academic, but she had written academic material and the search for publishers through the years had exhausted her. In theory, she had no obvious reason to search for respected academic publishers, as she had no CV to manage for the higher education market. But in our previous conversations, I discovered that academic notions of manuscript evaluation had been internalized and adopted by non-academics as well. If she as an outsider believed that appreciation of the academic system and the mainstream book market contributes to or even determines the value of a text, it is almost understandable why we as academics hold these views.

Apparently, most of us act like good soldiers but not because we blindly obey orders. More often than not we think that these principles are true, that the establishment's directives of what is perceived as a valuable text, and what is not, are appropriate. We are not just afraid to challenge the rules; we often don't feel the need to challenge. We usually believe that if we publish with a less prestigious publisher, our text loses in value.

But what would happen if I challenged this belief and published on the internet like my friend? I won't earn a hug from the academic guild, but there's a chance that I'll be relevant to a larger audience outside, of whom only a small minority can currently enjoy this material. Perhaps what I have written will add something to someone's life, like others' texts have added to my own. Because of the constricted academic discourse which revolves around itself, the idea of publishing research results on the internet, a thought which had occurred to my friend when she realized that she had no reason to accept rules that would not be useful to her, had never dawned on me. Professional regulations dictate that I would first publish my material via guild channels, in peer-reviewed journals, preferably with A-ranking publishers and only later would I present them to the masses. This latter step however won't contribute to me professionally and

therefore it will only happen if I have the strength and desire to reach a wider audience and if I am not already busy with another research project.

When I spoke to a colleague about the fantasy of publishing my book on the internet, she looked at me wonderingly: "Just like that, without peer review?," she asked. "Without feedback? How will you know that the text really meets accepted standards and that it is approved by experts in the field?"

I discovered that peer review in academia has existed for several hundred years, from when the first scientific journals appeared in the seventeenth century. In principle, these evaluations have power and significance because they may reveal and clarify problems in the arguments and the writing and may propose solutions.

But I have a problem with the way they have become entrenched in neoliberal academia. The work of evaluation is unpaid, but it is part of the advancement process. When we are asked by institutionally respected journals to read articles written by academics like us, we consent to do so even though we have neither the time nor the desire, because of other tasks. We evaluators are usually academics who are flooded with work and who read manuscripts in our/my area of expertise with growing weariness, and even boredom, articles which usually don't enrich us with anything new. And struggling with our/my own impatience, we will sometimes react unprofessionally, reading superficially and responding accordingly, or confronting the author, because the structure of the sentence in the second paragraph angered us/me. When reviewers overcome their exhaustion and impatience, they are very effective and helpful in their feedback, but creeping feelings of exploitation elicited by this unpaid work sometimes result in performing the task inadequately, as a censored type of resistance. It seems to me unwise to place complete responsibility on their/our shoulders for distinguishing between the valuable and the valueless. There might be people outside of academic circles who, for various reasons, are much more interested in the produced knowledge and therefore could potentially review articles much more effectively. But their voices are not heard or do not count because they don't have positions in academia or in research institutions. And since their significant comments are perceived as institutionally valueless and insignificant, and do not contribute to our advancement in the system, it doesn't pay to publish in a way which will enable them to have access to our work, for example, on the internet.

The moment I leave the narrow circle of the guild and turn to various types of open access publishing, with its many possibilities, ranging from

commercial to internet publishing, my writings lose their academic worth and I myself then lose my value as a researcher. So maybe we need to admit that publishing labels such as the publisher's name and logo, the title of the journal—are more important than the contents of the book or article? How many times have my colleagues and I lamented articles and books whose content we were proud of, just because they were published with less esteemed presses and thus, their importance on our CV has lessened or we were advised to eliminate them from our publication list. We knew, as Omri exemplifies, that the same research/article/book manuscript would have gained us esteem if it had been issued by a publisher more respected in academic circles.

The understanding that choosing the right label is central clarifies for me the extent to which neoliberal academia has employed and enhanced the concept of the ivory tower. Since the establishment of the first universities in the Middle Ages, what has been studied and written within their halls has been meant for the selected few who were literate, and often those for whom the published works were in their field of expertise. Even today, when reading and writing has become common, and many national libraries are more accessible than they used to be, professional academic language constitutes a barrier for many people. Feminists often complain that gender studies, which were created by academics active in the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s, are currently irrelevant to them, mainly because of the incomprehensible jargon (hooks, 1994; Mohanty, 2006). The format of academic publication increases distance and alienation and makes relevant accumulated knowledge even more inaccessible. This is particularly striking when an internet platform exists that could easily bring all knowledge to the public.

The three of us, with our CVs and our promotion in mind, decided after long discussions and quite a few shared reservations, to publish our book in one of the "top" academic publishers, as my friend would probably note. It was not an easy decision since Palgrave Macmillan, as all academic publishers, is not a free open access press. Unlike other presses it allows us to buy the option of distributing and circulating our book widely. We promised to ourselves before signing the contract that we would make all the necessary efforts to turn it into free open access. But what if we cannot access the money, or if another project draws our attention and efforts? To what extent are we committed to something that professionally won't pay off?

In the library I look around at the experts who surround me. They are busy with their intensive reading and writing, and suddenly gazing at them and at the loaded shelves around us, I realize that perhaps we experts are cooperating with corporations which have taken control of publishing because that's what maintains our power as knowledge holders. Maybe we academics also are somehow reluctant to freely share our intellectual property with whoever is interested? Maybe there is an (not necessarily intentional and definitely unspoken) unholy alliance between academic experts like us who wish to protect their products and the neoliberal structures (such as publishers, journals universities, research institutes and foundations) which have taken over the publication economy and block public access. This unspoken partnership allows us to feel we are still the owners of the cultural and symbolic capital we have laboured to construct.

Yet are we still the owners of our intellectual property? Haven't we lost our assets to the journal and book industry a long time ago by agreeing to tick the boxes in every contract we have signed, which grants them the rights to our work? Sometimes we lose access to our own work. For example libraries pay huge sums of money to corporations for the use of journals and electronic books. However, the current reductions in library budgets in most universities and colleges mean a severe decrease of subscriptions that occasionally results in our inability to freely access our own publications in library databases.

So who am I/are we fooling?

But despite some attempts to spotlight the system, as Susan related, academic institutions rarely fight the corporations, nor do they object to this control, for instance, by endorsing the input of publishers that are open access. Rather, they grant these corporations power and identify them as respectable publishing platforms (Sage, Springer and others), making it clear that there is something in this structure that is appropriate, convenient and effective for us, the members of the academic ivory tower, which has always been closed off to outsiders.

There are no widespread protest and outspoken challenges to the neoliberal market system controlling research on the part of those who operate within the academic mainstream. Respected researchers like us, the writers of this book, could allow themselves to engage in a struggle or two because most of them/us already have esteemed status and tenure. As it happens, though, the only sporadic protests take place on the academic margins involving mainly those who do not share institutional profits (inter alia, students, temporary contract teachers and researchers in

underfunded colleges). Open access publishers may be part of that struggle, and there are also known pirate sites publicizing books and articles illegally and in opposition to contracts with corporations, enabling researchers to access information subversively. Researchers in universities and colleges like myself also use these channels at present because budgets for libraries are falling and the libraries are less and less able to supply us with up-to-date knowledge. In other words, university collaboration with corporations and their surrender to them, as well as the cooperation of academics themselves, are not only depriving researchers of their intellectual property but also destroying their ability to meritoriously operate within the academic setting and preventing them from doing what they were meant to, creating new knowledge.

The situation is even worse for researchers in countries or institutions which lack resources. Researchers like me, who work in the underfunded colleges, can neither physically nor virtually access richer university research libraries and their databases, and thus their ability to delve deeply into the subject they are researching is impaired. Apparently, the problems of the academic system become acute when we are dealing with the periphery, any periphery.

The many levels of inaccessibility which are revealed when I navigate the academic spaces as a researcher and a writer remind me of the scene from *A Room of One's Own*. In that scene, Virginia Woolf is sitting on a riverbank near one of the Oxbridge colleges, as she contemplates a lecture she has been requested to give about women and literature. It is a calm and pastoral moment at twilight during which a new intellectual idea is born and turns a tiny thought into a wave that does not allow her to continue sitting there. In a burst of emotion, she gets up and strides across the lawn, walking on the grass, but at that moment, the Beadle of the college arrives and demands that she walk on the gravel path as "[o]nly the Fellows and Scholars are allowed here" (p. 6). The original idea has been forgotten, but as she walks, she remembers two literary discussions about a manuscript and that these can be found at the library a few metres away. She decides to go and have a look at them herself, but at the door of the library: she thinks "I must have opened it, for instantly there issued, like a guardian angel barring the way with a flutter of black gown instead of white wings, a deprecating, silvery, kindly gentleman, who regretted in a low voice as he waved me back that ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction" (p. 7). Woolf cannot enter the "venerable" library because,

as a woman, she has no right to be a lecturer at this respected college. She is thus excluded from direct entry to an entire space of knowledge.

"The library is closing in fifteen minutes," the voice of the British Library recording takes me back to the present. Unlike Woolf, no guard blocked our way when we entered a few hours ago. He casually looked at our reader cards and let us in. As a female professor today, I can enter this library and I also can consider publishing *Malice Aforethought* with open access publishers or on the internet, turning it, if I wish, into a protest against corporate rule.

Despite the different circumstances, however, I can't ignore the similarities. The gatekeepers are perhaps no longer white-haired English gentlemen, the space may not be the imposing old universities and the reasons and exclusion systems may have changed, but there is something in Woolf's description that is reminiscent of the physical, institutional and psychological barriers that we all repeatedly experience in regard to the neoliberal academic setting.

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Tackling Difference in a Neoliberal Classr oom

Susan Gair, Tamar Hager, and Omri Herzog

Abstract In neoliberal academia, where students are clients and teachers are service providers, tackling diversity and social controversies becomes a risk. In the first scene Susan recounts her concerns and frustrations when obtaining low scores in teaching assessment after conducting a course addressing the atrocities committed against Aboriginal Australians. Omri's episode demonstrates how consumerism and victimhood culture threaten academic freedom when addressing sensitive topics in the classroom. The chapter ends with Tamar's story of her encounter with a working-class student who defied any attempt to transform his emotional way of speaking with proper academic conduct. Reflecting on her attempt to silence him due to neoliberal demand for industrial tranquillity, she realizes that her compliance threatens to turn her into an enlightened oppressor.

Keywords Diversity • Multiculturalism • Racism • Consumerism • Power relations • Victimhood

The names of the authors are arranged in alphabetical order. The three authors contributed equally to the writing of this manuscript.

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We find a table in the Welcome Foundation café. It's Sunday, and the British Library is closed. The café is crowded and noisy which rules out our plan to continue writing. Instead, we decide to discuss our future plans. We realize that the writing retreat is almost over. Susan is travelling to Los Angeles the next day as part of her sabbatical plans, another foreign land and a new adventure for her. Omri and Tamar plan to stay in London a bit longer. Australia and Israel are so far away and travelling back and forth is expensive, so this negates any option to meet up again while working on the manuscript. We know that instead of exchanging ideas and commenting on each other's drafts as we did face to face for the last six days, we will connect by video conference applications and emails as we had before meeting in London. We will probably miss our long conversations and the time we had to sort out disagreements. How are we going to achieve these productive interactions online?

Susan sips her tea. She's not sure which teaching story she wants to tell. Tamar reminds her of their first meeting at Edinburgh University in 2013 at a conference entitled Racism and Anti-Racism through Education and Community Practice: An International Exchange. Susan's talk then had moved Tamar to tears. It was about an introductory course on working respectfully with Aboriginal peoples, including recognizing and being activist against racism, that she had initiated and had taught in the Social Work Department at her university. Susan shared her difficulties as an educator with the listeners at the conference, also identifying how some students' hostility towards her manifested itself in the low teaching scores she had received in her subject assessments. When she spoke about her disappointment with the students' reactions, and her concern that the feedback would damage her unceasing efforts to turn the course from an elective into a compulsory one, her voice was shaking with emotion. Tamar was overwhelmed. Susan's story resonated with her painful experiences when facilitating a Jewish-Arab dialogue course in Tel Hai College, Israel, for more than a decade. After the talk was over, she approached Susan, sharing with her the similar experience of hurt, frustration and apprehension, when tackling students' resentments towards exposure of social and political injustices that students unconsciously may have been complicit in.

"For me your story was a turning point," Tamar now says. "Hearing it I realized how unfair the academic system is towards lecturers who address social and political controversies as part of the curriculum. The current teaching appraisal of academic institutions completely ignores our long-term educational efforts to raise students' consciousness about social injustices and our efforts to confront their distress. Since teaching assessments focus on measuring students' immediate satisfaction or dissatisfaction, our

contribution to their education as citizens is nullified. Maybe, using your story, we could demonstrate how untenable teaching assessments are in their present form." Susan is silent for a while. "OK," she says at last: "It will be interesting to analyze this experience from the neoliberal angle."

Susan's Story: Blaming the Messenger

Australia is a multicultural society and the ancestors of all who have made Australia home have come from elsewhere, unless they are members of the two groups who are recognized as First Peoples of Australia. These groups are Aboriginal Australians, the recognized first peoples of mainland Australia, and Torres Strait Islanders, whose homelands are the islands of the Torres Straits, located beyond the northern tip of Australia's Cape York Peninsula. For these groups, racism has been an enduring, everyday reality in Australian society since colonization by the British, reflecting the stories of Indigenous peoples in colonized countries worldwide. History records that Aboriginal people on mainland Australia were "dispersed" by white settlers, but in Australia dispersed was a euphemism for murdered. All new arrivals to Australia aspire to gain a better life for their family in mainstream Australian society. They do not aspire to be located on the same socioeconomic level as Aboriginal Australians, because newcomers quickly come to understand where the Indigenous groups of Australia are located on the social and economic ladder, on the bottom rung.

Social work graduates need to have a critical understanding of the intergenerational trauma Australia's Indigenous peoples have suffered since colonization, because as a consequence of colonization, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are vastly over-represented in mental health and child protection services, and in statistics for incarceration, homelessness, suicide, unemployment and early school-leavers—all groups social workers are employed to work with. But many workers just become part of a system that continues to fail Aboriginal people.

I am of English/Irish heritage and I have taught social work at a regional Australian university for almost 25 years. The reality is that increased numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social work graduates are urgently needed to work within and beyond their own communities. Equally, skilled, critically reflective non-Indigenous social work graduates are needed who can provide culturally respectful service delivery. A few years after my employment at the university, I realized that the curriculum I was teaching needed to be transformed to better fit the skills and knowledge needed in our workforce. With support and mentoring from gracious Aboriginal elders I began to better understand the history

and culture of Aboriginal peoples, and the repercussions, legacies and intergenerational damage of colonization including ever present oppression, racism and discrimination. I have had many difficult conversations with students and colleagues on these topics, and I had at times felt uncertain, unsettled, illegitimate, underprepared and weary because of my quest to change the curriculum, and to teach against the grain of accepted discourse. Sometimes I have faced reluctant and hostile students who seemed very uncomfortable with the content being taught. For over a decade, I have co-taught such content with an Aboriginal elder from our region, and we have invited other grassroots Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander guest speakers into the classroom.

Non-Aboriginal students, a significant majority of the student body in all classes, often come to the classroom with limited insight into Australia's violent history and how much stereotypes could impact the way they work. "It is not our fault," students have said over the years in various classes, while a minority have even announced their view that "it is just an excuse for them not getting on in life." It is true, the students did not commit the historical atrocities we were discussing or cause the current disadvantages Aboriginal people faced. But they needed to comprehend the true history in order to understand the present-day legacies for some Australian families and communities. Many non-Indigenous students are less than insightful about how little they know about Australia's historical treatment of Aboriginal peoples, and similarly, less than empathic about how Aboriginal students might feel when they voice their dissatisfaction in the classroom about why there is so much focus on Australia's violent "settlement" past. Students often call for more focus on solutions and less on critical reflection of self. One student recently talked about "going to an Aboriginal community to start a programme for young women who abuse alcohol." It is a familiar theme. Workers implementing seemingly helpful programmes, without any consultation with the relevant communities, in order to fix other people's problems. Such programmes most often fail. Many do not see the need to become more activist to help fix widespread problems of structural injustice and debilitating discrimination that crushes peoples' lives, hope and dignity. Our professional social work body calls for action for social justice, but it is hard to steer students away from wanting to fix people. "We have learnt this history before in high school," some say, only to admit at the end of the course that much of what they learnt in this classroom was new to them.

What had fuelled the need for more curriculum changes was findings from a study we undertook back in 2003. We wanted to find out what was causing many Aboriginal students to drop out of their university studies in social work and welfare studies. As we reported at the time, key themes were that Aboriginal students believed their cultural knowledge was not respected in the university, and they came to realize that "only the white way" was acceptable knowledge and the required way of working. One student wrote that the problem was "Racism, including structural and in the classroom—not challenged by staff." We increased content on Indigenous history, knowledge and ways of working in subjects across our programme after that study. In a more recent survey undertaken several years ago at the end of a 13-week semester, I asked my students about the role of empathy and social justice when working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. What was surprising in those findings was that quite a few students said they would be empathic but would not have time to be activist for social justice, even though the majority agreed with the statement that social action and social justice were core to social work practice.

An evident tension for educators teaching frontline anti-racist practice for social justice is that transformative change regarding a person's personal and cultural beliefs and perceptions can be a long-term project, while the university requires evidence of student satisfaction through formal evaluations over a short-term study period. The university gives high regard to students' satisfaction evaluation metrics, and increasingly students in my classes were making negative comments about my teaching in their formal feedback. Teachers are required to score highly, otherwise the content of their subjects, their promotion prospects and their paid employment at the university can come under scrutiny and even threat. Yet the topics necessarily under discussion in social work requires unsettling subject content that students may not always want to embrace. I am not suggesting here that undertaking these challenging conversations is my experience alone. Kessaris (2006, p. 355) spoke of unpredictability and safety as the key concerns for "black teachers" teaching anti-racist content to white students and she admitted to needing stress counselling after teaching an introductory session on Indigenous studies.

My university is located in regional Australia. A significant number of our students are learners from this locality. Higher rates than the national average of Indigenous peoples live in our region. Equally, as documented by historians, frontier violence during colonization was more violent here

than elsewhere in Australia (Bottoms, 2013). The task we set ourselves was to develop curricula that advanced social work practice knowledge for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, while facilitating non-Indigenous social work students' critical awareness of significant historical and resultant structural legacies impacting the lives and opportunities of Indigenous Australians. Many say that such content should be taught by Indigenous academics belonging to the same cultural groups under discussion. But do they mean we should wait to undertake relevant, necessary curriculum development while Aboriginal students study, graduate, undertake a PhD and become tertiary educators in social work, because only small numbers were graduating, and even fewer were going on to a higher degree. In fact, social work is not a particularly attractive profession to Aboriginal peoples because of social workers' role in the trauma of the Stolen Generation—the forced removal of thousands of Aboriginal children—and the ongoing removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children deemed to be at risk of harm. And if new Indigenous staff were employed in our social work programme, were we going to "dump" on to them the responsibility for developing and teaching such content and in doing so avoid confronting these teaching challenges ourselves?

I introduced new Indigenous content from 2004 in a key elective subject I taught. Formal subject evaluations at my university use questions with a Likert scale from "unacceptable" to "outstanding" to record students' responses, with space for additional qualitative comments. I had recorded "above average" or "outstanding" scores and comments in a range of subjects I taught across previous years. I was surprised to see students' qualitative comments and scores now illustrating a much more mixed response.

In 2007 we developed a new subject with members of our newly formed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory group, with valued input from the Indigenous Student Support Officers working in our Department at the time. Topics in the early weeks of the semester included historical atrocities and violations with specific examples from our region, lived experiences and implications of the Stolen Generation of children removed from their families under policies of assimilation, and more recent examples of structural racism and discrimination within education, health and adult and juvenile justice systems. Later weeks covered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' worldviews, stories, frameworks and ways of working that could be incorporated into culturally respectful social work practice. We wanted to present the true history and enduring social legacies for

Aboriginal peoples and their significant suffering, but also to highlight their inspiring strengths. The final topic in the lecture series is about activism for social justice. Indigenous writers author almost all required subject readings. From 2010 I co-taught the subject in weekly tutorials and workshops with local Aboriginal Bindal elder Aunty Dorothy Savage. We secured local grassroots Indigenous guest speakers who, together with Dorothy, presented an inspiring lecture series.

Formal student qualitative and quantitative feedback indicated that students were impressed with guest speakers and input from the Aboriginal elder who was co-teaching in the subject, and they appreciated the opportunity to listen to Indigenous community workers. But some comments on my teaching performance could be interpreted as bordering on hostile. Students' negative comments were directed at my teaching skills, my knowledge and legitimacy to teach in this subject and my abilities to assess their learning. It seems the spaces I created in the classroom to help them gain critical insight into mainstream complicity in racial dominance and the implications for social work practice aroused their negativity. Feedback scores were the lowest I had ever received in any subject. I felt so disappointed after seeing the subject evaluations I cried.

It was so frustrating and disheartening after all the effort needed to make this subject a reality and maintain its existence. It had been stressful advocating for the development of this new subject when other staff argued a new subject was not necessary and preferably the content could be spread across existing subjects. An ongoing persuasive argument was needed at staff meetings over years for this subject to become a core subject in our degree programmes when some staff preferred it to remain an elective. Advocacy was needed every year since its introduction for the funds to pay all guest speakers for their knowledge-sharing, amid ongoing cuts to our sessional budget. Now the subject would come under threat because of the very low student evaluation scores. While I am paid as an expert social work educator, negative student evaluations could provoke attention and input from managers and administrators about what students are taught or not taught. The feared end result is a severed connection between vital graduate skills and knowledge required in the social work profession and what is taught to produce satisfied students.

So, I asked myself, in trying to recover from the disappointing student evaluations, as a critical educator how can I try to make sense of the students' feedback, and then what changes can we trial to enhance students' learning experiences in the course. Qualitative comments indicated

students gained useful learning from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander weekly guest speakers and were highly satisfied with my Aboriginal co-teacher's contributions and stories, and her feedback on their assessment. Students' dissatisfaction was recorded specifically for questions asking about the university lecturer's management of the subject, my approachability for support, whether they believed the subject objectives were met, and did the assessment and feedback enhance their learning.

Scores and qualitative comments identified that what was unacceptable was my marking, my feedback on assessment (as co-teachers we undertook a lot of shared marking, and we gave quite similar feedback after years of working together), my teaching and overall, my classroom contribution to the subject. Formal student feedback on teaching and subjects is anonymous, so I cannot assume that the feedback denoting dissatisfaction was only from non-Indigenous students. However, over time Indigenous students had offered unsolicited, positive comments about the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in this subject and my respectful contributions in the classroom.

One interpretation of the evaluations is that the subject was a success, because students reported that they found the content and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presenters interesting and useful for their learning and future practice. They just were not satisfied with my performance as an educator. But if that was the case, I wondered, why would the majority of students not have given a higher score? But the majority of students had allocated very low satisfaction scores to the subject overall. Equally, in other subjects my student evaluations remained higher. I thought it was helpful for me to more deeply reflect on these student feedback results.

To start somewhere, I found and read a small number of articles where other educators were discussing disquieting experiences and mixed student feedback in the classroom when teaching about racism. I read about the power of racism to hold individuals and nations hostage to its ideology. Some authors, such as Gordon (2004) and Clarke (2003, p. 134) had discussed Melanie Klein's (1988) concept of "splitting," to understanding the perpetuation of racism. Both Gordon and Clarke highlighted that children, through fear of difference, split the world into good and bad polarities. The good part of self is idealized and the bad is denigrated and projected onto something or someone else. This splitting also can permeate the social and political discourse. Equally, some authors, such as Gringeri and Roche (2010) and Robbins (2015) have highlighted the hazards of such binary thinking because it can lead to discrimination, and

because it is more useful to see concepts as gradients between extremes. Nevertheless, I asked myself, could students be projecting some of their cultural anxieties around racism on to me? Perhaps students thought I was being disloyal to my own culture and ancestors by not defending their past brutality?

The writing of Irene Bruna Seu (2011) was useful at this point. She undertook focus groups to answer a question concerning what members of the public feel, think and do when informed about human rights violations through informative materials such as those produced by Amnesty. Bruna Seu (2011) drew on Cohen's typology of the denial of racism, and positioning theory to explain what happened when participants were faced with competing storylines, the first one their own moral and cultural understandings, and the competing story one of significant violations coupled with an appeal to take up their social responsibility concerning those violations. What participants in that study appeared to demonstrate was a repositioning of themselves in relation to the message and attempts to "shoot the messenger" by discrediting the authenticity of the content or the authority of the speaker.

So, in pondering the content of Bruna Seu's article in relation to my teaching, it seemed plausible that students might be avoiding the racism message by discrediting the messenger. But was it a bit more complex? Students appeared to pick only one messenger to shoot—me. But what if students felt reluctant to appear negative or racist by blaming (shooting) Dorothy (local elder; *good messenger*) or the Indigenous guest speakers (*good messengers*) for their discomfort. Therefore, an available option was to "reposition" themselves, in order to assert their authority as student learners and to discredit my contribution to the course.

It was interesting to me, and somewhat comforting to consider these explanations. Other ideas emerged as possible explanations from various publications, such as facing the hidden truth of one's own cultural group's brutality can jeopardize a person's sense of identity beyond a point that can be easily accepted, at least in the short term, and that local atrocities committed by your own people are more difficult to accept than atrocities committed by other people elsewhere. Some have suggested that in a neoliberal environment, students understand they are buyers in the marketplace with power to demand what content they want without full understanding about what knowledge they need as a graduate.

But what could I do to change students' learning experiences in this subject? Over several years Dorothy and I discussed how to help address

what we thought was non-Indigenous students' discomfort in the classroom because of the challenging subject content. We also wanted to better support Indigenous students; to respect their cultural knowledge and provide a safe space in the classroom. Dorothy had always told stories in the classroom about her family and their lived experiences. So I began to speak more explicitly about my own story, about my cultural origins, how I came to social work, about being socialized into mainstream Australian perspectives and denials about the past violence and ongoing trauma for Aboriginal people. I acknowledged my true gratitude for all the mentoring and guidance I had received from Aboriginal elders and colleagues over almost 20 years. I talked about my shortcomings, and about how it was confronting to learn and difficult to teach about atrocities, and about racism and whiteness. We put more explicit emphasis on cultivating deep listening and empathy and establishing trust and building relationships in the classroom by asking all students to tell their stories about who they are and where they are from. We changed one piece of assessment significantly, and both pieces required more evidence of engagement with subject materials and critical reflection. While we still focused on local examples of injustice, we encouraged passion for collective action in upholding social justice in social work. Student feedback scores over the following years increased to be equal to and sometimes higher than university averages.

I have continued to teach the course, and I have been well supported and mentored by Dorothy on understanding and teaching Aboriginal-related content. She has been a wonderful co-teacher and trusted friend. I have felt less supported by colleagues and by management. While student evaluations can be one source of information to maintain student engagement and improve student learning and satisfaction, the (un)reliability of student evaluations has been questioned by academics over time. This is particularly so when student evaluations are used within a university staff performance management context, or when considering the eligibility of a staff member for promotion. Yet student evaluations still are prioritized by management as core evidence of performance. I felt like I faced individualized reproach from management and decision-makers, underpinned by reasoning not dissimilar to that of the students: an individual was at fault with deficit teaching skills. I believed the subject may be under threat of being "refreshed" or even axed. What would have felt more like a collective approach was open acknowledgement that the subject presented crucial content within a degree programme where such knowledge was

vital for professional practice, and that staff would be fully supported to help improve student satisfaction. I found comfort in these words by Brottman (2003), that for a faculty member to risk teaching courses that students find painful is to risk those same students blaming the messenger for the resultant feelings of unease (because) the most sobering aspects of the human condition are not easy to come to terms with.

But every year new students enrol in the subject and the tensions and doubts begin to emerge for me even though student evaluations have demonstrated quite high satisfaction in recent years. This year one student asked, "Why are almost all the speakers Indigenous? we need more non-Indigenous speakers" in this subject, even though I was in the classroom every week, and students have non-Indigenous teachers almost every week in almost every other subject in their entire degree.

* * *

Susan's story is seemingly a narrative of success in a hostile climate. By changing the course, she and her colleague improved students' satisfaction. But what would have happened if all their efforts had been in vain? What would have happened if the teaching assessments had remained low? Would students' displeasure at the critical content have led to the termination of the course despite its relevance to students' professional practice? Did it mean that, in neoliberal academia, students'/clients' expectations determine the curriculum?

These questions seem to linger in the air. Susan says that she must drink more tea, that telling this story has taken lots of energy. It was lunchtime and we decide to go to a nearby restaurant. We still have to decide about two more teaching stories. Tamar, who is familiar with the area, suggests Italian or Japanese food, but Susan is not keen on eating sushi today, explaining that it is her main meal on campus with not many other preferred food options. We leave the café and are somewhat surprised by the Sunday crowds in Euston Road. After talking for more than an hour about teaching in a regional Australian campus, London's busy streets seem a bit overwhelming. We pass Euston station, which is under reconstruction, while heading towards an Italian restaurant that seems the best choice. There is a feeling of urgency and we walk fast without talking, as if our words would slow our pace.

We are absorbed in our thoughts. It occurs to Tamar that consulting the students about their disapproval of Susan's performance could be

effective; yet it is an impossible step. In the neoliberal academia students are not regarded as our allies but rather as our inspectors and nemesis. For the academic administration they are an effective tool for supervising and controlling the lecturers. How convenient.

The Italian restaurant is quite empty. The waiter is welcoming. We order a bottle of wine to celebrate the end of our retreat and continue the discussion that was interrupted by our silent walk.

Several years after the conference in Edinburgh, while Susan was a visiting scholar in Tel Hai College, where Tamar was teaching, she told her story at the annual conference of the Education Department in front of 300 students. Tamar, who responded to her talk, called on faculty and academic administration to support critical teachers, who were engaged in social justice work. In the discussion that followed some students and lecturers disputed Tamar's demands, asserting that teachers should avoid controversial issues which elicit feelings of discomfort. "Don't tackle conflictual subjects if you are not certain that the space is safe," one of the senior professors said to the audience, turning his back on Tamar and Susan who were still on stage.

Omri drinks his wine and says that his story may complicate our current perspective on the power relations in class. It will question our automatic notion that critical social analysis always serves the interests of political and ethnic minorities. But before he begins to tell us about a complex experience he had in his classroom, we order coffee and a slice of tiramisu cake that looks delicious. We look around. The restaurant has filled up with people eating their Sunday lunch, and it seems quite noisy.

Omri's Story: "Stop telling me how screwed up I am!"

For six years I was the head of a cultural studies BA department. I don't miss that job, especially not the summer before the start of the academic school year. It used to be stressful: Excel reports were sent by email, measuring the rise or drop in enrolment relative to the corresponding period in previous years. One especially worrying year, the college's chief administrator called me: the situation is unsatisfactory, she said, special marketing efforts must be made. So, I did: I called prospective students at their homes, to tell them about the study programme; I volunteered to give public lectures to youngsters still making up their minds; I appeared in marketing campaigns. In all these endeavours, I put on an inviting smile and enthusiastic expression. I had to charm the candidates, to promise

them an exciting course of study, personal attention and future employment possibilities. At times it was slightly humiliating, especially during the telephone calls to the candidates, where I felt a little like a telemarketing representative ("Hi, this is Omri Herzog from the Cultural Studies Department. I see you've taken an interest in studying with us in the past—would you like to hear more?"). But such feelings were irrelevant—it was and still is a part of academic work: to be a salesperson.

These marketing activities, which are seen necessary for academics who fulfil an administrative function, regard students as the clients of an organization that operates in a highly competitive market. As in other consumption arenas, they need to be satisfied clients. To that end, portraits of youngsters smiling in contentment appear upon billboard ads put up by universities and colleges; for that reason, teaching surveys are conducted in which students rank their satisfaction with courses and lecturers. The budgetary allocations to academic departments are determined in part on the basis of the number of students attending them, and therefore most of them (especially in the humanities) are under a constant threat of both intra-organizational competition (vs. other departments in the same institution) and inter-organizational competition (vs. similar departments in other institutions). In ongoing fashion, academic departments conduct wide-ranging activities to enrol students and retain them; they place emphasis on aspects of service and friendliness and spout marketing slogans about training for the labour market, a rich social environment, and even—mainly in the humanities—self-fulfilment and exhausting one's individual fields of interest.

Sometimes, the consumer rights of students are taken to the absurd. A few years ago I was invited to teach at a private college in Israel at which the tuition is twice that at a public college. If the price is higher, the return should be too. However, it doesn't necessarily manifest in academic quality. I shall never forget the elective course I taught there, especially not the very first lesson. When I entered the classroom, I explained to the students that attendance was compulsory. One of the students raised her hand: "Are you new here?," she asked. I affirmed that I was. "So, drop your demand for compulsory attendance," she said. "We don't come to class. What's going to happen when you submit an eligibility list for the final exam?"

Hearing that unsubtle threat, I was speechless. I hadn't encountered such insolence before. But they really did have the power. As a lecturer, I could not submit an empty eligibility list for a course that I was teaching,

for after all, what was I being paid for? But I was also unwilling to concede, because I felt I had to preserve my authority—or at least what was left of it, scant minutes from the start of the course. "Those are the course requirements," I answered her. "Anyone who wants to can choose another course." Some of them left the course, while others stayed and attended classes as I'd demanded. They came equipped with headphones attached to their laptops, watching Netflix or engaging in their own affairs. One of the students was appointed to take charge of the summaries, as she sat in class without headphones. She typed energetically on her laptop, constantly interrupting me to say, "Could you dictate that?" I tried everything—showing clips, inviting guest lecturers, bringing up juicy issues—but besides her nobody raised their eyes to look at me. Her summaries circulated among the entire class, I'm sure, because the final assignments resembled each other so much, citing the same sentences and replicating the same typos. The average grade I needed to attain was 80; the standard deviation in this case was very low. Everyone safely passed the course.

I never returned to teach there, despite the generous pay. I remember feeling actual resentment towards that class; I felt that I was disgracing my chosen profession. In the teaching surveys, the students wrote that I was unpleasant and haughty. It's the only time in my career that I've ever got such feedback, but it was justified. Indeed, I was unpleasant to them. My mistake was that I failed to acknowledge their consumer power, the huge sums of money they'd paid, which were supposed to buy them easy and safe passage to the coveted degree. Could I have acknowledged it? Should I have acknowledged it?

Truly this is an extreme example, parallels to which are hard to find in the public education system in Israel. But even in more reasonable classrooms the situation is liable to be confusing, for both student and lecturer: when a student angrily accosts me, "I paid a lot of money for this course, you can't fail me just because I didn't show up for class!" I severely rebuke him. On the face of it, I mustn't frame the academic learning experience within a relationship of client and service-provider; that would be contrary to the spirit of academe and the students' role in it. They must execute academic assignments, exhibit diligence and persistence, and obey the strict rules of the principle of academic reality. They must earn their degree as junior workers in the academic enterprise, not as its clients.

On the other hand, however, with regard to marketing and retaining students, they certainly are grasped as clients, and the logic of the complaint mentioned above is rooted in that perception. The institution's

administration puts pressure on us to retain our students in order to draw budgetary allocations; the academic staff is sometimes required to bend the academic rules, to forgive and look the other way in order not to lose students. And it isn't only external pressure that is applied to departments from the management. If students don't enrol in a certain elective course because its requirements are too high, for example, that course may be closed and the lecturer—if he isn't tenured—may lose his livelihood. It was my responsibility, as department head. At times I've had talks with lecturers, intimated to them that at least for the time being, it might be best to relax the requirements a bit.

In other words, like any client, the student too influences the decision-making of the organization and the quality of the products it offers. The confusion stems from the duality of the concept of "quality": as it pertains to the student as a young scholar entitled to high-level intellectual stimuli and as it pertains to the student as the client of an organization that awards academic degrees in the framework of a free market, and is of high quality in terms of service, flexibility and adaptation to the clients' needs.

The students' classroom experience is also complicated in another, yet related, context. As Susan previously showed, the academic classroom is influenced by social contexts, one of which involves the interface between a feeling of personal and/or collective victimhood and the accumulation of symbolic capital (and sometimes economic capital too). This has to do with the discursive forms of identity politics, an ideology that has made a significant historic contribution to the recognition of the cultural and historic uniqueness of certain communities. It enables and requires certain ethnic, gender, sexual, political and social minorities to fight for their place in a world that is ruled by the cultural centre, usually identified with a white male elite. It demands that their oppression be recognized and corrected. In the academic context, identity politics has been visible since the 1970s and has tried to undo the exclusion of certain types of knowledge from the traditional curricula (Moran, 2018).

Several decades later, identity politics in neoliberal academe is conducted in cooperation with White guilt and the discursive rules that define it. White guilt is a highly valuable discursive instrument: it dictates a culture of political correctness, which respects minorities and is ever mindful of their sensibilities, and at the same time awards victimhood a preferential civil, emotional and sometimes even intellectual standing (Campbell & Manning, 2018). It's no wonder that everyone conceives themselves as victims: women—and in their wake, men (who can't even "pay

compliments" anymore); minority group members—and the White elite (which is panicked by its loss of power and aspires to make itself great again); immigrants—as well as other citizens, who feel their culture and sometimes their physical boundaries are being violated; members of the LGBTQ+ community—and straights (e.g. who are threatened by changes in the standing of the traditional family). Our culture holds victimhood sacred; but is there any way to market an academic department using a slogan like "Come be a victim—with us?"

Neoliberal academe cultivates the culture of victimized identity discourse, consciously or not, for two major reasons. First, because the ideological principle of neoliberal culture holds sacred the principle of privatization. Identity, for instance, is privatized into sub-communities that are in a struggle over resources, including symbolic ones, under conditions of free competition. The free-market principle doesn't apply only to the dynamic of academic institutions or academic departments competing against each other for recognition, but also to the student communities—each of which is demanding for itself the rights to which it is entitled.

Students, in large measure justifiably, are sensitive to questions of representation. But in free-market conditions and in an environment of limited symbolic resources, this sometimes has an unexpected consequence: the identity struggle becomes a zero-sum game, and recognition of one identity comes at the expense of another. Within the hierarchy of identities, the right of victimhood becomes a capital (sometimes for reasons of historic discrimination, and at other times—most ironically—by virtue of a sense of historic entitlement to rights). It gives rise to a complex political set of sensibilities—especially for someone teaching in a multicultural classroom.

The second reason for the growing phenomenon of victimhood in the classroom is that neoliberal culture aims at maximizing outputs, and so there's a demand for industrial peace at all organizational levels—and mainly in the classrooms. As Susan pointed out earlier, a discourse that touches upon sensitive areas of knowledge—are there any "insensitive" areas in critical thinking?—upsets the system. It invites discomfort (I'm talking here about conducting a sensitive and responsible discourse on charged political or social issues. I'm not referring in any way to demonstrating racist, chauvinist or other views from a position of authority, or to abuse of any kind). Just discussing controversial issues with students can manifest in low satisfaction. In a climate that aims at grasping students as organizational clients, such feelings can be problematic; the system would

do better without them. Therefore, in the classrooms the lecturers must be cautious when they wish to discuss historically, sociologically or culturally charged issues. It might be a challenge, not just when they bring it up—but also when they don't.

It can be complicated to stand before a class and lecture, and on that day, when I stood on the podium in the study hall and delivered a compulsory first-year course, it was especially confusing. The course was called "Introduction to Israeli Culture," and the lesson dealt with postcolonial contexts. I spoke about the racism directed against Jews of Eastern (Mizrahi) origin (i.e. Jews who came from Muslim nations), who arrived in Israel in the 1950s, racism which continues to this day. Jews who had emigrated from Europe only one generation earlier identified them as ignorant, superstitious, violent and unruly; they were considered the "Blacks" of Israel's Jewish population at the time. Historical knowledge reveals harsh realities: Zionist history includes the creation of a gap in levels of education, employment and housing between Jews who originated in Europe and those who emigrated from Arab countries. It remains to this day, confirmed by the data on drastic inequality, lack of equal opportunities and discrimination (Kimmerling, 2008). Those are the subject matters I conveyed to my students, most of whom were Mizrahim hailing from Israel's geographical and class periphery. I felt it was my academic duty to discuss it; to arouse civil and political awareness to the dark chapters in our local history, as mandated by the subject of the course.

Na'ama, one of the brightest and most opinionated students in the course, sought me out at the end of the lesson. She was agitated, speaking excitedly with her friends standing in the short line before my desk. When her turn came, she launched into a speech, fluently explaining to me that it was wrong for me (a White lecturer, of European origin) to explain to her (a student of Mizrahi origin) how much she, her family and her community had suffered and still suffer from discrimination that creates for them a position of inferiority. My lecture, she said, fixes her in that position; it marks her on the basis of her skin colour as the Other of Israeli culture, and of academe as well. "It's about time White lecturers stopped telling me how screwed up I am," she said; "it doesn't help me. It doesn't advance me and people who look like me. It only advances the refinement of your White guilt, you people of academe. I didn't ask to be a victim, I don't want to be a victim," she said. "It would be better for White academe to be more sensitive towards students who are trying to escape the cycle of discrimination and advance in their lives as citizens with equal

rights, without constantly being reminded of their place, the product of a history they didn't choose."

I was surprised by what she said, but there was logic in it. It's a logic that stems from identity politics, but simultaneously turns against it. She used her protest to position herself as a victim, not just of a discriminatory history, but of an academic discourse that victimizes her against her will, in an impossible vicious circle. Na'ama asked me to censor subject matters, because in her view that censorship was a moral and social value, which accords with the identity agenda of students in the course, and her own.

I asked her, in a rather patronizing tone (which sometimes emerges against my will in such situations), what it would mean *not* to talk about these issues. Absence of speech is not identical to silence, because there is something performative about it. "The thing not talked about is present by its absence. It has meaning too," I told her. Must we deliberately turn our attention away from a history of inequality, because it endangers the self-perception of minorities today? To the same degree, students of European origin would prefer not to know about the sins of the Ashkenazi establishment, which is identified historically with their ethnicity. Should unawareness be the solution?

I knew that my response was slightly didactic. But I meant it sincerely, because I understood her and her position. She answered saying she didn't know. The answer wasn't accompanied by a shrug of the shoulders. She'd thought about the question and meant her answer. And then she turned the question over to me: What did I think should be done? But I didn't know either. Identity politics has various means, sometimes contradictory, to manifest itself; by demanding representation, or sometimes demanding lack of representation, according to circumstances. Where do I, who am acting by dint of the authority of academic knowledge (and status), but also of cultural sensitivity, stand vis-à-vis this dilemma?

The expected answer ("Students are not supposed to decide for us what we study and what we don't") isn't acceptable to me, at least not categorically. Knowledge is an unstable instrument at the disposal of all of us—lecturers and students; it can empower, and it can oppress. I began the next lesson by presenting this dilemma to the class. I asked if there were others who felt as she did; I invited them to think about it together. But to tell the truth, most of the students didn't understand what I wanted from them. "Does that mean that the material we studied last lesson won't be in the exam?" one of them asked.

Teaching in diverse classrooms is liable to be a minefield, at least in my discipline, cultural studies, which has a distinctly critical bent. Even when the class is more homogeneous, there are issues that can rapidly ignite. For years, I spoke with students about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But today I will only do so in small classes of advanced students. Regardless of what the students feel (The Israelis are right! The Palestinians are right! Or even: I don't know, and I don't want to think about it!), someone will be offended—the students of a nationalist orientation, the peace-seekers on the Left of the political map, or those in the political Centre, who want to know as little as possible. The discussion in class immediately turns into a battle of political identities, over the question who the victim is—the Israelis or the Palestinians; whose story is entitled to resources of representation. But what's clear is that many students feel victimized by the discourse itself, which is inflicted upon them against their will, confronts them with a narrative they prefer not to confront, that threatens their cultural and ideological identity. This is no pretence: it really does undermine their identity and may even endanger it. It's not their fault and it's not my fault. Maybe it's the zeitgeist that they've grown into. It's hermetical in its sense of certainty, who is the good and who is the bad in their civil story. Its being undermined can truly hurt or weaken.

Sometimes, teaching means being caught between retaining satisfied clients, a culture of political correctness, and identity politics, as well as academic integrity. Lecturers are required to provide in parallel two contradictory needs—contemporarily relevant subject matters, a high academic level and the intellectual rigour it entails, alongside accessibility, friendliness and constant consideration of the students' sensibilities. Is it possible to keep the clients satisfied and meet the systemic demand for conduct that is subservient, well-oiled and devoid of conflicts, without being forced to censor myself from talking or even thinking about sensitive subjects—which are the significant subjects as far as my discipline is concerned?

Any tactic I choose, if I speak or if I don't, may expose me to institutional punishment. The reason for that is however hard I try to deliver a sensitive, grounded lecture, which accommodates and presents different views—it may still be offensive to someone. Every word might be recorded; any perceived offence might draw the finger of blame from students and from the system. But perhaps in this state of affairs, students will be able—regardless of the choice I make—to feel they are victims (like I am now, in my story). That may be rewarding to them, within neoliberal academe and

the discursive space in which it operates, since the victimhood that is granted ex ante manifests their identity politics and affirms it, as well as their consumer power. It is however less rewarding for academic freedom.

* * *

Omri's story elicits the sense of a trap quite familiar to us. Each of us frequently feels caught between contradicting institutional demands, attempting to both satisfy and challenge his/her students-clients. Yet Tamar does not fully accept Omri's analysis of victimhood in the academic setting. "What if the student who expresses his discomfort is truly a victim?" Tamar asks, "Does your discussion of victimhood disavow the validity of her/his argument? I think that your analysis could be perceived as ignoring the social, ethnic, gender and national power structure which are reflected in academia in general and in each class, in particular. Is a white middle-class Jew entitled to victimhood like a student with a disability? Can one ignore such a social hierarchy?"

"I don't think I'm ignoring the social power structures which oppress and victimize ethnic, class, gender, sexual and national groups," Omri answers, a bit annoyed by what he grasps as Tamar's righteous criticism. "I refer to what sociologists Bradley Campbell and Jason Manning (2018) called "victimhood culture." It is characterized by concern with status and hyper-sensitivity to slight. Domination and privilege are the main form of deviance, and victimization is a way of attracting empathy and identification, so rather than emphasize either their strength or inner worth, they emphasize their oppression and social marginalization." Omri clarifies that research shows that victimhood culture, which is manifested by microaggressions among various groups, is quite a common phenomenon in university and college campuses. In a way, it legitimates all self-definitions of victimhood. But, of course, it comes at a price: when everyone's a victim, no one's a victim. And it may blur different degrees of personal or collective disadvantages, discrimination or trauma. Tamar opposes this generalization. She insists that one can and should distinguish between real victims and those who use victimhood as manipulation. White middle-class heterosexual able men for example still have more access to power than any other group, Tamar demonstrates, their claims for social victimhood should be politically challenged.

In the middle of this heated discussion, we ask for the bill. Tamar says that Omri's story and the controversy it elicits makes her realize how

complex it is to tackle differences and social justice in the current academia. In such a climate, the attempt to resist institutional oppression of ethnic and class minorities may turn into an act of compliance with neoliberal norms. "My academic socialization dictates conforming to the academic rules," she explains. "It's hard for me to oppose them since my submission to these norms has made me a successful and accomplished scholar and teacher. Yet my student Meir showed me the possible dangers of such blind obedience, since without even noticing, I have contributed to students' oppression." "Who is Meir?" Omri asks.

Tamar's Story: The Interloper

"You're always silencing me," Meir complained to the class. "Ever since I got to college, I'm always being told, "That's no way to talk" or "That's no way to behave." In Ramle, my hometown, it was perfectly alright to talk like that." He was speaking to me, but he was actually talking to the whole class. We all fidgeted in our seats in embarrassment. We had had ten lessons since the beginning of the semester and Meir's behaviour had aroused discomfort. He spoke too loudly, too quickly and delivered too often confusing and emotional statements which contradicted the attempts of my Arab co-facilitator and me to discuss the fundamental conflicts in Israeli society in a rational, organized and controlled manner, as was the established norm in the majority of dialogue groups conducted in a reality of social, cultural or national dispute (Hager et al., 2011; Bekerman et al., 2006).

Meir's protest came during the course Jewish-Arab Dialogue: Action Research, which was offered by the Education Department at Tel Hai College, a public academic institution located in the northern periphery of Israel. Like most other Israeli institutions of higher education, Tel Hai is dominated by the Jewish hegemony. Hebrew is the chief spoken and written language, while the Arab culture and language of close to 20% of the student body are marginalized to hallways and lawns. Western Jewish culture, customs and holidays dictate the structure of the school year and the academic content. As in any other higher education institution in Israel, Ashkenazi (from western European descent) students equipped with hegemonic western cultural capital feel more "at home" and succeed more easily. Research shows (see e.g. Arar & Mustafa, 2011; Dagan-Buzaglo, 2011; Jabareen & Agbaria, 2011; Naaman, 2015) that Palestinian Arab students, and to a lesser extent their native Hebrew-speaking Mizrahim

(of Middle Eastern and North African descent) counterparts—who like Meir were educated in underdeveloped, underfunded social or geographical peripheries—are marginalized in the academic space. Lacking required social and cultural knowledge as well as academic skills, they often suffer low achievements and feelings of alienation. However, Mizrahi students who frequently identify with their Jewish ethnicity and Zionist values, while giving precedence to local national interests, rather than to universal values of social justice and equal opportunities (see Mizrachi, 2016) are better institutionally positioned than their Palestinian Arab peers. When lecturers complain about students' estrangement, ignorance, incompetence and low achievements, they regularly relate to Arab Palestinians, and thus the helplessness and frustration of some disadvantaged Mizrahi students like Meir becomes transparent.

Like most of the courses in Tel Hai, this class was composed of both women and men, most born in Israel. The Jewish students were Ashkenazi and Mizrahi, and the Arab Palestinians were Muslim, Christian, Druze or Allawi. The majority of the students were middle class, yet the socioeconomic status of Arab Palestinians was always relatively lower due to chronic social, economic and educational discrimination, as well as ongoing acts of dispossession and injustices by the state (Ghanem, 2001; Kimmerling, 2008).

As a working-class Jew from a poor background, Meir was an exception. He grew up in Israel's social periphery, in one of the poorer neighbourhoods of Ramle, a city in which 25% of the population are Arabs, its crime rate is high and its inhabitants' socioeconomic status is one of the worst in Israel. Unlike in other courses, Meir, who, most of the time felt like a fish out of water, as he told me in one of our conversations, remained silent and avoided expressing his opinions. In this course he felt comfortable enough to make his voice heard.

It has always been a unique course. Negating competitive and individualistic trends of the neoliberal academia, it drew on the philosophy of critical pedagogy (Freire, 2007) and provided space for continuous dialogue between participants, who shared their personal opinions and stories regarding their collective, national and cultural identities. The stories were told in conjunction with reading articles on social issues in Israel and on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, along with discussions and assignments in which students were asked to deal with questions of identity, power relations and systems of discrimination, exclusion and racism.

The administration's efforts to standardize teaching and prevent joint instruction did not affect this course which was taught by Jewish and Arab facilitators who invited students to analyse the way social structure was reflected in class, while encouraging participants' cooperation, and mutual support and solidarity in the process of painfully dismantling national, social and cultural hostilities and obstacles. This was not an easy process and my co-facilitator and I made an effort to listen, to give each student the space to speak, to contain negative feelings, to prevent the Ashkenazi students from dominating the discussion and to encourage all those who remained silent to express themselves. We also tried to calm students who felt offended or became irritated because of opinions that had come up in the classroom, so that their anger would not infect others.

By our efforts to contain the students, we hoped to prevent teaching evaluations like "The teachers only give space to those who have similar opinions to theirs," "The teachers prevent us from expressing our opinions," "The teachers only support Arab students," or "The teachers" or complaints made to the head of the department or to the management. By addressing the deepest disputes in the Israeli society, we didn't always succeed in calming discomfort or anger and so we received no small amount of criticism from students and administrators. And when teaching assessments resonated with accusations, and complaints were submitted, I was always struck anew at how the unequal power relations between groups in Israeli society, that were reflected in class, also echoed in the audacity with which individuals were willing to insult and to openly and angrily demand compensation from us or from the college. Those who complained about us were always Jewish students who felt that the space belonged to them and that, as unhappy consumers, they had the right to express their dissatisfaction and anger. Arab students, who had to endure a great number of racist remarks in class, remarks that were made offhandedly in their presence—like "Arabs are terrorists," "You can't depend on Arabs because they lie," "I hate Arabs"—rarely complained, if at all, because they did not think/believe that they would be defended by the academic system.

Every time we were summoned by the head of department/faculty heads/administrators following a complaint, it was demanded that in the future we would make more effort to express balanced opinions, to avoid sensitive issues and discussions that would lead to students' discomfort, and above all, we were required to sidestep our own opinions on touchy political and social matters. Every criticism and reproach reawakened the fear that the course would be cancelled, and with it, the possibility of

discussing openly and honestly the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and the systems of inequality in Israeli society. Terminating the course would also mean eliminating difficult attempts to bridge between participants in order to initiate a new horizon for living together.

Because of our concern and fear of losing this unique teaching platform, we tried to obey the directives we had received from above without really believing that, in a space brimming with disputes, it would be possible to both ensure calm discussion and at the same time, create a meaningful dialogue. Yet again and again, we demanded that students only speak one at a time and we politely quieted those who deviated; we made every effort, even more than in the past, to present subjects neutrally and in a way that would enable everyone to feel comfortable in expressing what they were feeling. At the same time, we tried to assuage students' insulted feelings when others invalidated them. It was difficult and exhausting, and we often failed. But we were ready to make the effort year after year for those moments when Jewish and Arab students were cooperating to conduct activities on campus or protested together against inequality and injustices. Those moments lessened our and the students' despair when facing the growing social and political alienation in Israeli society.

Meir, in his emotional, contradictory and confusing outbursts, endangered our effort to cooperate with the demands of the college authorities and create an objective and balanced dialogue. One time he burst into a discussion on the damages of the Israeli occupation by saying that if not for the policing activities of the military border guards in which he served, Palestinians would constantly be threatening us with acts of terror, and it wasn't that he hated Arabs since his grandmother's best friends were Arab women who worked in the fields of her village. On another occasion, he excitedly erupted into a conversation addressing the segregation of Arab citizens of Israel by relating stories about his close Arab friends with whom he played in the streets of Ramle. But then in the same breath he opined that "if we let the Arabs have everything, there might be another Holocaust." On yet another occasion, he fervently intervened in an argument regarding the nature of life in the occupied territories, comparing two women whose grief had torn him apart. One was an Arab woman whose son had died in front of his eyes, because the soldiers hadn't let her go through a roadblock. He had been so upset by the boy's death that he physically attacked one of the soldiers and only his friends, who kept him away, prevented further violence. The other woman was Jewish, whose son had died when a bus was blown up. As a soldier in

the military police Meir had had to clean up glass fragments and body parts. He described the two incidents speaking fast, stammering, almost in tears, swallowing words, which made it hard to follow his talk. But then he became quiet and said apologetically to the class, but we can't stop the violence, we have no choice. What can we do? We have no other country.

Meir's tales mixed national militaristic statements with humanist compassionate proclamations and provided precious information regarding his military service and living in Israel's social margins. He recounted with longing and empathy how he and his friends sat on the roof every Friday evening and talked of their dreams about the future, until most of them started using drugs, were drawn into crime, and then to prison, and how he had been saved from such a fate. He told us about the social worker who'd said to his mother: "Send him away now to a boarding school. He's smart. If you don't send him away, he will go downhill." And his mother did not at all object to the establishment solution of taking children out of their homes instead of investing money to make the neighbourhood tolerable, and she sent him to the rough life of the boarding school. He told us how in the military police he was loved and respected and acquired friends who supported one another and how together with David, he gave sweets to the Palestinian children.

Meir's storms of blurred inconsistent and passionate stories full of new information, care for others and feelings of hurt, despair, confusion and hope aroused embarrassment and recoil among all of us. Each time he burst in without paying attention to the other students who waited patiently for their turn to speak, talking hastily and emotionally about a piece of his biography, or his opinion regarding a current event, the students fidgeted in their seats and whispered complaints that sometimes turned into louder objections about his inconsiderate and ill-mannered behaviour. These complaints were generally directed towards the two of us, as we were perceived as responsible for discipline and order. How was it that he could burst out like that without taking others into account? What kind of a dialogue was it if a person spoke when he wants, and doesn't listen? Why didn't we stop it?

Not wanting to arouse either their antagonism or that of the administration, we got annoyed with Meir who was seen as a "disturbance," an interloper, an outsider, and we tried to silence him with smiling reprimands—Meir, wait for your turn; Meir, not now; Meir, make it brief. We reframed his comments as part of rational arguments, trying to swallow him up into the seemingly neutral discussion of discrimination and of

repression of minorities in the Israeli society. We constructed logical reasoning, provided evidence, critically and objectively analysed the situation, its results and even our emotions about the situation and its results. We reflected; we contained; we nodded in agreement; we asked questions even when we knew the answers. We used bourgeois codes of polite discourse and theories from the fields of critical sociology, human rights discourse, multiculturalism and feminism in order to clarify details of the chaotic reality that Meir revealed in his ill-mannered emotional inconsistent eruptions, but we actually wanted to mask reality and reduce confrontation. Most of the time, although we camouflaged it well, we were nevertheless, like Meir, mixed up, agitated and filled with incongruities.

Tsufit, who had come from a small town and had shared the story with us of the separation wall that had been built in the town school to separate the Ashkenazi Jews, so that they wouldn't have to learn with the Yemenites, like her, also tried to calm Meir. At least, that's the way she termed the reprimands that she directed towards him from time to time. Like most of us, she had adopted the academic code that presented rational arguments in a neutral tone, in an attempt not to make anyone angry. At some point, during another course titled "Art and Education in a Multicultural Society," Tsufit had spoken about her repression, about the need to make herself fit in, as someone who had come from Mizrahi culture whose way of speaking and thinking was according to her different from that of bourgeois-Ashkenazi academia. "As a Mizrahi woman I have less license to speak than Ashkenazi women have, and I don't intend to insult anyone; Efrat, don't look at me that way."

But it was relatively easier to deal with Tsufit because her criticism towards the hegemonic order was respectful and not wholly emotional. In contrast, Meir continually created irritation because he never accepted institutional-social-hierarchical dictates and refused to moderate his unsuitable and uncivilized outbursts, even at the price of "losing face." Alluding to the repression that lecturers and students tried to apply to him—"you're always silencing me," "In Ramle, it was perfectly alright to talk like that"—he was rebelling against what hooks (1994) sees as the common academic attempts to overlook class, ethnic, national disparities within the classroom, referring to them only outside its walls. He also exposed how academia—in this case, its representatives, me, my colleague and the students—was trying as suggested by Jarvis (2014) to silence voices and to regiment people whose behaviour, attitudes and stories

deviated from those of the polite and rational conduct of the ruling bourgeoisie and the neoliberal regime.

In retrospect Meir's angry criticism of our attempts to silence him made me aware of the superficiality and shallowness of public references to diversity, equality and accessibility in higher education institution manifestos. Eva Bendix Petersen and Bronwyn Davies (2010) demonstrate that in the neoliberal academia "[i]nclusion has been made an 'organizational priority' and gender equity a 'key performance indicator' in deputy vice-chancellors' portfolios, yet inclusion and gender equity have simultaneously become void of any real import" (Petersen & Davies, 2010, p. 96)—a convenient tokenism. The policies of inclusion and the marketing efforts to recruit new target audiences to broaden the economic foundation of higher education bring in students from various ethnic and class backgrounds—that is working-class Mizrahi students like Meir—who previously were almost absent from academic spaces. Consequently, campuses are more than ever disorienting "encounter zones" where national, ethnic and class groups whose members only infrequently meet in other spheres of Israeli life, come into contact (Pratt, 1992, pp. 6–7). It is a seemingly egalitarian encounter: All of the students have chosen what they are studying; they have all met the entrance requirements and they come to the same classes, use the same cafeteria and sit on the same lawns. Yet without advocating diversity and seeing difference as a positive resource to be developed, as suggested by Philomena Essed (1999), radical inequality and intractable conflict as well as alienation existing off campus are reproduced within the corridors and classes.

But diversity and difference in most higher education institutions are not desirable resources but rather tolerated at best. More likely, non-traditional students with their different worldview, social and cultural experiences and manners are regarded as a source of discomfort and a potential institutional risk and thus "needing to be brought within the realm of the same" (Petersen & Davies, 2010, p. 97). This explains our attempts to discipline Meir and to turn him into one of us, that is, to drive him to develop a proper academic self-contained, rational, neutral persona who suppresses emotions, speaks in level tones and avoids unaccepted attitudes.

But it was more than that. Meeting Meir provided an opportunity for me to also examine my own basic cultural and social assumptions about difference, and my pedagogy. For quite a few years, I have been aware that my critical worldview excludes no small number of people with different

worldviews. Like other critical researchers, I tend to interpret the ambivalence of members of minority groups, like Meir, towards universal liberal values as a problem and an obstacle to proper education and knowledge. Although my feminist beliefs negate the pseudo-neutral discourse that has developed in academia, and the neoliberal demand to silence all political or social disagreements for the sake of consumer peace, I, like many of my peers, have found it difficult to deal with the sensitive and painful situations that Meir and many other students have created in their difficulty to embrace academic socialization. In retrospect, I understand that many times, due to my difficulties in contending with tempestuous emotions, I attempted to enforce Meir and other students into academic behaviour that suited the neoliberal ethos and thus, again and again, I missed important opportunities for valuable discussions and knowledge.

As the years go by, I am more and more aware that cooperating with the institutional silencing of difference is a mistake. The encounter with Meir clarified for me more than ever that in order to oppose the disrespect of the neoliberal regime to disparity, I had to begin broadening my interpretive framework to include non-liberal attitudes, in order to create meaningful dialogue between diverse individual worlds and groups—with the awareness that despite disparities and hostilities there are always opportunities for what Pratt presents as "copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices" even within radically asymmetrical relations of power (Pratt, 1992, p. 6).

Gradually my classes turned into what Gloria Anzaldua (2002) terms an "in between space," in which everything is unstable, impermanent and unexpected, and where boundaries are unclear. Being in such spaces exposes us, teachers and students, to other ideas, other people, other worlds, and creates new meaningful knowledge. In these sites my students and I are what the feminist scholar Anzaldua calls border people, mestizas. Open to diverse cultural, social and political possibilities in our encounter, we were "floundering in uncharted seas" and were required to be tolerant to tension and ambiguity taking place in the framework of our meeting (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 79). In such space we have been required to accept contradictions, conflicts, discomfort, suffocation, anger and chaos as an integral part of our teaching, learning and communication.

Being in the intermediate space means resisting the academic obsession, primarily in the neoliberal framework, on presenting rational positions that can be analysed and measured, separating intellect and emotion and eliminating the latter with the fear that it prevents us from being neutral.

It means giving space to knowledge which at times expresses opposition to the academic norms of discourse—because it is not neutral; it is emotional, explosive, impolite, unanalytical, and contradicts itself—pointing to the importance of social hierarchies, local identity and group membership, and hence challenges our attempts at endowing liberal and universal values like social justice and equality.

This knowledge did not only disrupt my ideology or curriculum, it also turned into a work hazard, accompanying me off campus to my comfortable middle-class home in Tel Aviv. At the dinner table, or opposite the television, I conveyed the emotional, confused and agitated stories to my partner, sometimes crying in frustration for the injustices done to my students. I told him about an Arab student from an unrecognized village who disappeared from class after her house was demolished by state agencies; about another Arab student who recounted how when he was a teenager during the Second Intifada, a soldier aimed a rifle at him and made him realize that he would always be a second-class citizen in this country; about the Jewish student from a poor family who told our class, oblivious of the dozen Palestinians present, that she has hated Arabs since when she was a child and had watched in horror a rocket falling on a home when she was running to reach the shelter; about the young woman who had grown up in a settlement in the occupied territories and who had seen her mother mentally collapsing after losing a friend in a terror attack; about Meir who had been saved from a life of crime only by being sent away from his mother and his home.

I have to acknowledge that my antagonism towards fostering disparities also implied my fear and resentment from becoming helpless and vulnerable in the face of misery and injustice. But it also drew on my apprehension of institutional sanctions for encouraging controversies and explosive subjects while not disciplining and calming emotional students down. Despite my feminist beliefs that call for minimizing the hierarchy in class, this anxiety often led me to apply my authority as a teacher who owns the correct and proper knowledge and silence them. This was frequently my reaction to Meir. It was a proof of hook's argument (1994) that the accepted expectation in academia—when we cross the threshold of the classroom, we enter a democratic space, a free area in which the desire to learn makes us all equals—is unfounded.

Reading his last paper, I could finally let myself listen to Meir's voice. He wrote wonderfully and the pictures he drew with words still stay with me. I can see quite clearly a young man navigating through the poor

neighbourhood, sometimes committing minor crimes, and then getting involved in violent incidents at the boarding school to which he was sent by the social worker and his mother, and finally making his way to Tel Hai College against all odds, where he still had to struggle with students, with lecturers, and with me, so as not to be swallowed up by hegemonic middle-class codes and dictates. For me, these pictures challenge the neoliberal project whose aim is to domesticate people like him, to peel off their differences and to turn them into "one of us"—a rational, neutral, polite figure, not one whose knowledge and manners challenge the existing academic structure and call us all to think.

Two years ago, when I asked his permission to share the story of our encounter at a lecture I gave at Tel Aviv University, he wrote to me: "I give you my approval to use my name and anything else that you want, since it is my story." And when I thanked him and stated that "every time I think about it, I remember how much you taught me," he replied, "I also learned from you." This conversation made clear, in my opinion, how attempts by students and lecturers to strive against the neoliberal orientation to silence disagreement and to eradicate diversity make academia more meaningful.

* * *

The waiter hands us the bill with three chocolates. Susan must hurry to the hotel to pack her suitcase. She wants to join us later at the Hayward Gallery exhibition—*Kiss My Genders*—a group exhibition presenting more than 30 international artists whose work explores and engages with gender identity and fluidity. It seems like an appropriate closure of a complicated and confusing attempt to write about diversity within the neoliberal classroom.

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Closing Thoughts: Academic Hazards and Opportunities

Susan Gair, Tamar Hager, and Omri Herzog

Abstract Our personal stories demonstrate the hazards of neoliberal governmentality. Substituting the essence of academic activity—teaching and knowledge production—with bureaucratic measurements, apparently for the sake of productivity and objectivity, diminishes the value of academic work. As the chapter shows, the oppressive regime of the audit culture, which enforces academics to perform as accountable and capable while silencing feelings of incompetence and stress, requires investing intensified amounts of emotional labour, thus increasing tension and ineptitude. Exploring the reasons for academics' compliance with such a distressing system, we warn that these institutional processes might annul campus life, the core of academic training and activity. The chapter concludes by suggesting ways to resist these destructive processes, introducing an academy-ruled students and teachers, as an alternative.

Keywords Procedures • Emotional labour • Collaboration • Campus life • The university of the students and the masters • Resistance

The names of the authors are arranged in alphabetical order. The three authors contributed equally to the writing of this manuscript.

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A year has passed since our writing retreat in London. We are writing the concluding chapter regarding the insights gained from writing our autoethnographies, while struggling with the precarious reality of COVID-19, along with our teaching, writing, social activism and familial commitments. Over one of our video meetings, we express our concern that due to the pandemic we might not meet the deadline. If we don't send the manuscript on time, one of us infers, the book would not be part of our annual assessment report and we wouldn't be eligible for a reduction of our teaching loads next year. Deadlines matter. They are our compass and our permanent source of tension and threat.

The out-of-breath ending of a two years' process, melded with the effort to cope with personal and work-related obligations and still meet Palgrave Macmillan's deadline, reflects the edgy atmosphere of our academic lives documented in our autoethnographies. It is a familiar stress we rarely recount to colleagues or management, but usually try to conceal or deny behind our respectable, self-sufficient, accountable embodied subjectivities. We complain about the audit culture's disrespect of our research, writing and teaching labours only behind closed doors. In public, however, we use these measures to address our own accomplishments, bragging about an article that was accepted in a high impact journal or reporting with pride a high score we received in teaching assessment. When we are ranked low by our students, when our article or our grant application is turned down, we often feel miserable, worthless and wonder about our academic competence. It seems that the audit culture has got under our skin.

This phenomenon hints at how we have internalized what Anat Matar (2011) describes as substitution of the essence of academic activity—the construction of new knowledge—with procedures. Scholars are not promoted for their academic intellectual creation (which only few are familiar with), but rather are assessed by their ability to meet bureaucratic technical criteria—that is the number of publications, scores of journals and of teaching assessments and grants they received.

Technical measures seemingly are more efficient than a thorough examination of intellectual endeavours since they save time and money. Addressing the content of an article or a book, or evaluating teacher-students exchanges and course material, demands commitment, responsibility and the willingness to handle disagreements. Procedures, policies, operational rules and regulations (of excel reports, of teaching assessments), which are based on numerical calculations, promise clear-cut boundaries and industrial tranquillity. However, they also decrease the importance of our intellectual efforts, which are losing their value. Our

stories show how bureaucratic processes reduce our scholarly attempts and excitements into empty formalities and ceremonies, often in the shape of incomprehensible numerical charts, lists and costing tools. In such contexts, performing a skilled, assured, successful and resilient self is an act of institutional survival.

Our academic positions prove that we have successfully adapted the academic game. Writing our book has in fact been a constant struggle against our academic habit to embody performance of excellence and to silence our grievances and criticisms. Our collaborative autoethnographies contest this academic socialization, by exposing queries, doubts, weaknesses, difficulties, hesitations and complaints. They challenge the unspoken rule of staying invincible in the face of neoliberal pressures. The very act of exposing, questioning and protesting thus becomes our own politics of resistance, hand in hand with uncovering the oppressive neoliberal manipulative meritocracy and governability, and their costs. We also aim to expose the international common ground of professional academic life, to prompt rethinking of the basic assumptions of neoliberalism that overshadow our intellectual activities and those of our colleagues. However, as senior academics, we are continually aware that by labouring within this labyrinth we have collaborated with and contributed to the institutional injustice, whenever it offered us its symbolic and cultural capital.

Emotional Labour

Considering our collaborative autoethnographies in the framework of Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of Homo Academicus (1988), our research demonstrated an attempt to exoticize our lives "through a break with [our] initial relation of intimacy with modes of life and thought which remain opaque to [us] because they are too familiar" (Bourdieu, 1988, xi–xii). Sharing stories about the binding requirements for academic success, we have gained a remarkable opportunity to closely scrutinize our mundane daily existence.

Current academic life has become a struggle for professional, emotional, economic and institutional survival. As our autoethnographies demonstrate, academics must perform a variety of tasks simultaneously. They must publish in high-ranking journals. They must promote their CVs. They should obtain high teaching scores and avoid arousing turmoil or offending their students' (or colleagues') sensibilities. They must prepare them for an increasingly diverse and conflictual society and for the professional world. They are required to devote their time to research, to gaining grants and to creating international scholarly networks, but must also be

responsible for students' recruitment, retention and supervision in professional and graduate programmes. They should promote their department and their institution nationally and internationally, while at the same time serving the institutional and the surrounding communities. They need to be relevant cultural and professional agents to their discipline and to the general public. Priorities of these tasks are generally uncertain. It seems that the best advice is to put all our eggs in one of those baskets, while at the same time dividing them among all of them.

Our stories expose this intense work sphere, saturated with conflicts and ambiguity due to the absence of clear institutional precedents. We are all compelled to shift from one task to the next, without knowing if our choices are the right ones. Moreover, the speeding-up of the academic assembly line, the precarious conditions of most academic staff and the declining positions of privileged academics with tenure like us problematize life even further. More and more we hear and read how the academic lifestyle creates substantial mental stress (particularly among academics of low and mid-levels) that may lead to depression, physical illness and—less often but at a higher rate relative to other professions—to suicides (Constati & Gibbs, 2004; Gill & Donaghue, 2016).

Applying Arlie Russell Hochschild's (1983) concept "Emotional Labor" to our interrelated stories allows a better understanding of the subjective and collective costs of academic performance. Jobs which require emotional labour, demonstrates Hochschild, involve face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact with the public, emotional engagement with other people and employers who have control over their employees' impassioned activities. Managing emotions whilst engaging in professional tasks within the workplace is particularly challenging when labour and performances are linked to market agendas and profit motives.

In the current higher education system, academics are required to invest a great amount of emotional labour. We clearly have constant real or virtual face-to-face contact with students, colleagues and administrators. We often work to elicit emotions while being engaged in research, teaching and professional exchanges, while attempting to manage others' feelings and our own. Our stories testify that administrators and management exert control over our psychic and emotional state, that is by evaluating our teaching and research performances in promotion committees, or by assessing our performance by annual reports.

Emotional labour involves obeying certain "feeling rules"—which are "standards used in emotional conversation to determine what is rightly

owed and owing in the currency of feeling" (Hochschild, 1983, p. 18)—learnt and obtained through academic socialization and explicit institutional codes of conduct. Each of us knows in person some colleagues who deviated from these rules and were subject to poor assessments, sanctions and even terminations of employment (Bellas, 1999). Moreover, the institutional and self-expectations to silence feelings of stress and exhaustion resulting from downgrading of conditions, increased surveillance and lack of recognition demand great amounts of emotional work. In the neoliberal space, managing your feelings—performing incessantly on a professional stage (i.e. the class, the conference hall, departmental meetings) as a devoted, excellent, competent, able persona, while managing negative emotions, both our own and others—is an essential, constant task. In such a demanding climate, it is easier and more prudent to obey the rules and regulations of the capitalist market, while neglecting our social responsibilities to encourage the construction of new knowledge, free thinking and working for a better world and the greater good (Moore, 2019).

The three of us chose academic careers because of these reasons. We believed passionately in the significance of knowledge and in our ability to educate young people to become more aware, skilled, critical and engaged professionals and citizens. We wanted to prepare our students to challenge injustice as well as the poorly functioning social system of which we are all a part. The neoliberal academy has partially eroded our substantial vocation, leading us to live with perpetual ethical and professional contradictions. We find ourselves struggling to juggle our beliefs and values and the institutional demands, as well as the competent-academic show we must put on year after year. No wonder we become exhausted, angry and at times even desperate.

The stories we recount highlight the costs being paid by committed researchers and educators in an environment that prioritizes economic measures and students' satisfaction rates over the need to teach complex and controversial, yet significant curricula. We highlight the risks and sanctions that await academics who question and challenge the dictates of the capitalist status quo. We discuss publishers' profits from unpaid labour within a competitive marketplace. We identify how the restricted publications in journals behind subscription paywalls perpetuate the privilege of those with knowledge and exacerbate inequity and disadvantage for communities who cannot access the research findings. We infer how publishing outside the recommended high-profile subscription journals, and

telling local stories for local benefits, is highly necessary but unappreciated.

Disappearing Campus Life

Since our book is composed of our personal stories, students have been presented only as supporting characters in our professional dramas. Yet, their role and experiences within the neoliberal maze highlight the complexity and inherent contradictions of such a regime. Students pay increasing amounts of money to receive education—which until recently was in many European countries a public free-of-charge right—in a competitive market, which sells a product (a degree) and services (lectures, campus life). But unlike other contexts of the consumer experience, the return on their investment does not necessarily relate to their wellbeing. They must comply with a rigid set of demands and assignments; cope with study pressures and penalties. As such, the academy is a unique institution in the consumerist world. Distinct from other items of consumption purchased for money, it does not always provide instant gratification, and is not managed by the consumerist rules of spontaneity, impulsiveness and the drive for pleasure.

For the students, the neoliberal academy seems more like an institution of industrial capitalism. Like any workplace, such as an office or factory, students must display commitment, dedication and hard work; they must apply time-management, generate output, cope with boredom and disappointments. It is an investment that promises profits in the future: students enter academia to "get a degree" and obtain symbolic capital—that will appear as lines in the résumés they present at job interviews, in order to achieve a better position in the "real world."

That motivation naturally weakens the humanities, most of the social sciences and other spheres of knowledge not associated with sufficient salaries but with intellectual and learning passion. Questions about the future role of academic institutions, regarding the acquisition of "impractical" knowledge grow more complex when one considers present-day political trends, among them distrust, alienation and even disdain for intellectualism. The civic status of higher education—in the humanities and some aspects of the social sciences—signifies not only economic uncertainty ("what will you do with that degree?"), but also an individual choice that becomes more and more risky in some political contexts: a

position of privilege that threatens civil consensuses and can even undermine them.

The industrial nature of academic studies was intensified following the extensive adaptation of distance-learning technologies. Young people are already adept at technologies that offer emotional, social and sometimes intellectual models by means of passive response to influencers. The academic system latched on to these methods, which to a great degree align with the neoliberal line. But such methods which enable students to comfortably study via their computers anywhere in the world without relocating to another city, state or country also promote remoteness and isolated learning.

The world of online learning threatens the existence of academia in its current form. Courses and study programmes providing training for the job market are offered everywhere. They also promise, to a great degree of truth, more focused and effective training for professional life. In the humanities, internet sites offer lectures by the world's finest lecturers, making it possible to enhance one's broad knowledge and intellectual skills. In traditional academies too, autonomous profit units are being formed, which provide professional courses and diploma studies outside traditional degree structures. Distance learning will widen the institutions' target population, creating competitive international academic conglomerates at the expense of small regional institutions. The academy can offer a set of well-staged, attractive, recorded lectures that can replace lecturers' physical classroom presence. The competition will emphasize an institution's reputation and brand context; the brand, the values it embodies and its differentiation from others will be more significant than its geographical proximity.

This transformation will also affect research and publications. The transition to online learning (even if only partial) is likely to create a competitive mechanism of natural selection, grounded on the attractiveness of "stellar" researchers—who come equipped with a fine reputation as influencers and opinion leaders: they can help enlist students from across the world. This is likely to dictate a more provocative series of publications that attract attention and further bolster researchers' recognition and reputation but will sideline research perceived as radical or liable to arouse public opposition and damage the institution's political legitimacy. Chiefly, research is likely to ground itself on more popular arrays of knowledge, whose authors win global recognition because of their accessibility and popularity. The promotion procedures we previously discussed are likely

to lose their pinpointing character and the closed inner discourse typifying them. For better or worse, they will foster a new and parallel arena of competition—based on social charisma, on the public status of "stars," and on ideological conservatism in accordance with the institution's target population.

If this disintegration and shallowness are where we are heading, how come academics abstain from resisting this direction and the wrongs it would bring to them/us and to their/our students? Perhaps it doesn't seem so bad to most of us. Discussing with colleagues the exploitation of the existing publishing methods, we realized that many of them don't oppose the unjust system since they believe that content-indifferent-measures allow objective judgement; those among them who are critical fear that resisting the current system would ruin their future career chances.

In *Homo Academicus*, Bourdieu provides another explanation for this tacit cooperation with institutional oppression. Occupying an intermediate position on hierarchies of economic and political power on the one hand, and intellectual authority and prestige on the other, academics' cultural location seems disturbing. We are too economically and culturally comfortable to be in line with artists and writers, yet we are too intellectual to be part of the bourgeois. Our marginal location produces, according to Bourdieu, "an aristocratic resignation" or life of domestic comfort (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 223), which in the current academia is preserved for the tenured few. Yet most academics find some symbolic compensation through "support for society and the hierarchy of values of society illustrated by that sort of spirit of public service […] and dedication […]" to the neoliberal regime. The critical and radical theories developed within higher education institutions are thus only a disguise for lives of middle-class comfort and privilege devoted to the capitalist system, a position which is very remote from any social and political opposition (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 23). The only way to sidestep this trap and regain intellectual life, Bourdieu argues, is by leaving the academy.

The University of the Students and the Masters

Do we have to leave academia, as Bourdieu suggests, in order to restore our intellectual and social vocation? Can we imagine in our capitalist world a different kind of higher education institution that will allow us to study, teach, research and write within an intellectually rigorous but nurturing

atmosphere? We believe we can and should. Samuel D. Museus' claim seems like a good starting-point:

> [I]t is not just important to talk, think, and write about systemic oppression—it is equally vital to recognize how these systems might shape our own thoughts and actions, and use such knowledge to understand how we can more effectively foster greater solidarity within our ranks. (2020, p. 141)

For two years we have fulfilled Museus' vision; in following our shared continuous discussion and criticism of the neoliberal state of affairs, we invested efforts in imagining a more humane academia. In the last pages of this book, we want to share our final thoughts with you.

We begin by asking academics to name and reclaim their daily professional, intellectual and emotional efforts, creating spaces to share their stories with others. Narratives have helped us to reenergize ourselves. Sincere narratives which are told in dialogue and collaboration, combined with informed academic analyses, can serve as a pathway to a more equal and just academia. It is our responsibility to ourselves, to our colleagues, to our students and to future scholars to break the silence and tell the hidden facts about the neoliberal regime and thus challenge current dehumanizing norms, overcome alienation and go beyond negativity through cooperation and solidarity.

Moreover, we are convinced that campus life is the one academic element which should be preserved. For students, the academic campus is not only a place for intellectual exchange, constructing and acquiring new knowledge, but it also serves as a dynamic place of life transitions. It allows for the launching of a new intellectual and/or professional adult identity through study relationships, and a thrilling emotional and social life, away from the family sphere and the close community. It is a vital liminal space, which separates lack of independence from absolute independence: from a binding domestic and school framework to emotional and economic autonomy. On campus, students get to know different people and unfamiliar ideas—but also learn social skills and the possibility of learning about, sometimes reinventing, themselves. If the world moves towards online teaching, this type of interaction and socialization will vanish.

Opposing the idea of closing campuses down, we return to the roots of the university by restoring the mediaeval model, hoping it provides some inspiration. Academic institutions, as we pointed out in the introduction, were invented in the twelfth century through students and masters who

organized themselves in guild frameworks, aiming to protect their drive for knowledge and their civil rights. Can the academy break away from the neoliberal-technological trajectory, and return to the guiding principles of those mediaeval organization, in the globalized twenty-first century?

Neoliberal global frameworks are based on distance networks, prestige and running a production-line churning out degrees (awarded to students and faculty members alike). But looking around us, we see that alongside globalization, community awareness is growing stronger; alongside advanced technology there is a need for interpersonal contacts, networks and relationships in local communities. In parallel with vast comprehensive institutions, more specialized frameworks are taking shape. It's already happening in other industry sectors: food, fashion and television, and the trend can be relevant for the academic field.

We imagine an academia away from its neoliberal configurations: communities of students and their masters-mentors who will voluntarily engage in face-to-face free study about what fascinates them. Theirs will be a meaningful intellectual dialogue without fear and political constraints, which encourages free thinking and intellectual development of all participants. In such an institution, administration and management will lose their ruling and surveillance power and will work to support shared intellectual enterprises and efforts. Knowledge itself, intellectual discussions and debates will be at the core of institutional activities, while professional pressures to produce more at the expense of genuine research, will disappear and the public's respect for intellectual work will be restored. It will be a social humanist haven where all will be absorbed in lively interactions and conversations that create a sense of purpose and satisfaction. This is the academia the three of us imagined during our brief retreat from the neoliberal rat race.

And we implore you, readers who have engaged with our stories, to use your imagination and become academic leaders and social justice defenders. We hope that by using our privileged positions we can collaborate in solidarity with students and colleagues, to defy neoliberalism and transform and revolutionize the academy into an intellectual, just and safe haven for new knowledge.

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