**The Bat Revolt in Values:**

**A Parable for Living in Academic Ruins**

**Martin Savransky**

Goldsmiths, University of London

London SE14 6NW

**Abstract**

Written in the wake of the strike action that has seen academics and students across more than 60 UK universities create new interstices and alliances against the marketization of Higher Education and its generalized forms of impoverishment, this parabolic essay experiments with the possibility of developing a radically immanent approach to the creation and destruction of value, and explores its implications for the concept and politics of “evaluation” at the heart of contemporary transformations in universities across the Global North. In an attempt to dramatize the interstitial spaces the strike has generated, the essay functions as a parable, relaying the complex value-ecology of the Joanina Library in Coimbra, Portugal, with its imperial and enlightened symbolisms, and its colony of bats, as a singular story that might help us envisage some elements of what might be at stake in the immanent transvaluation of the values we generate together inside and in spite of the marketizing University. This is a parable, then, to think with what is still a collective work to be done: the collective work of living, thinking, and doing otherwise in the academic ruins.

**Thinking in Parables: Immanent Valuations**

Parables are stories of a very peculiar kind. As Kafka knew, they are not quite examples of moral or political lessons, for they do not say what is, or what ought to be. But they provoke thought. That’s why many “complain that the words of the wise are always merely parables and of no use to daily life, which is the only life we have.” In his parable “On Parables,” a man concerned with the reticence to think in parables “once said:”

Why such reluctance? If you only followed the parables you yourselves would become parable and what that rid of all your daily cares.

Another said: I bet that is also a parable.

The first said: You have won.

The second said: But unfortunately only in parable.

The first said: No, in reality: in parable you have lost.[[1]](#endnote-1)

Set in unique situations, in the interstices of our present, parables stage little dramas whose analogical gestures do not provide an example without simultaneously posing a problem– without turning it into a provocation that may become interesting by the very fact that the one reading or listening to the story may need to invent her own response to it. In so doing, parables effectively add themselves to, and occasionally alter, the only life we have. This is why, when it comes to living in academic ruins[[2]](#endnote-2), I’d rather think in parables than partake in a grand pronouncement on the general values of a University education. Because, through the problems they pose, parables can help us explore some dimensions of an immanent politics of values and evaluations in a way that implicates us. They can dramatize something that matters without thereby rushing towards general solutions, without involving grand injunctions, or producing mere satisfaction. If this text may *function* as a parable, it is because by thinking alongside the singular story of a library –with its manifold values and its nocturnal inhabitants– it seeks not to make general claims about the nature of the University and its devastation but to precipitate another mode of problematization. One that might lure us, immanently, to experiment with the collective task of living, thinking, and doing otherwise in the academic ruins.

 The story this parable thinks with revolves around the ongoing and multifarious history of the *Biblioteca Joanina* (or King John’s Library), built in the eighteenth century at very center of the University of Coimbra, in Portugal. Located at the highpoint of the city that was once regarded as the Lusitanian Athens, the *Biblioteca Joanina* holds a collection of 55,000 of the most distinguished European works of science, philosophy, medicine, geography, law and theology of the 16th to 18th centuries. It bears its name because it was commissioned by King John V of Portugal, who was keen to impress on this building his own imperial and enlightened mark. Indeed, as one of the threads of this story goes, this baroque and majestic building designed as a temple constitutes a veritable *speaking library*, immanently and materially expressing the Enlightened values of imperial Europe.[[3]](#endnote-3)

 The very decision by an eighteenth-century King to leave his mark on a library which, with its holdings, forms an encyclopedic center of European knowledge, is itself an imperially enlightened gesture.[[4]](#endnote-4) What’s more, the gesture is replicated throughout its entire décor. The library is dressed in a profusion of gold leaf extracted from colonial Brazil, “gleaming as if to defeat the dark,”[[5]](#endnote-5) and aside from presenting numerous Oriental motifs, inside it there is a plethora of decorative references to Portuguese imperial geography. References that turn the library into a sort of prism of the colonial *ecumene*– indeed the center of a *Universitas,* as much a university as an entire universe, whole, totality. The globe itself, “in the form of the armillary sphere,” is inscribed in a flag above the portrait of King John V.[[6]](#endnote-6) The library’s centrality within the University was not merely geographical, but became the vector of an early modern form of *progress–* for“it was necessary for students and masters to familiarize themselves with the books that were being printed at the time (the Rector had a statutory obligation to spend a considerable sum each year for this purpose), in order to avoid the crystallization and stagnation of knowledge.”[[7]](#endnote-7)

Furthermore, these enlightened patterns are inscribed within the building itself. In the *trompes l’œil* painted on the ceiling of each of its three rooms, the central position is occupied by a female personification of Wisdom, indeed, another name for the University: reclining on fluffy clouds while surrounded by symbols of the four continents of Europe, America, Africa and Asia; holding a sieve in her hand, which Carlos Fiolhais tells us symbolizes “the care that is needed to carry out research;” and accompanied, in the third room, by four muses representing Theology/Canon Law, Justice, Natural Sciences, and the Arts, while holding a ribbon with a quotation from Virgil’s epic poem *Aeneid,* which reads: “It is impossible to penetrate the secrets of the earth before gathering the golden foliage of the tree of knowledge.”[[8]](#endnote-8)

 The library was not just erected from the ruins of colonial expropriation, but also from those of a medieval prison which now constitutes its basement. In its imperially enlightened conception, however, the construction of the library did not put an end to the prison. The latter was instead turned into an “academic prison” managed by “academic courts” and used for the “incarceration of delinquent students.” The punishments, we are told, were usually not too severe, although the prison does contain two solitary cells “where the prisoner, as if in a sound box, could listen to the voice of his conscience.”[[9]](#endnote-9) Indeed, the Portuguese empire inverted the order of Virgil’s poem, devastating the forests of the Mediterranean with the aim of constructing fleets capable of expanding empire’s power across the globe, and using the gold expropriated from its colonies to dress its own encyclopedic tree of knowledge. That much is announced, in fact, on the inscription that, topped by an emblem of the Portuguese royal coat-of-arms, hangs over the imposing door of the library, and reads:

This seat for books has august Coimbra given

Whose front crown the library.

Behold, O Lusitanians, this fortress of knowledge,

Where for captains you have books,

For arms and soldiers, fatigue.[[10]](#endnote-10)

Considered amongst the finest examples of baroque architecture, and as one of the most beautiful libraries in the world, *Joanina* not only sustains in its own materiality the immanent realization of the values of the imperial enlightenment.[[11]](#endnote-11) While its holdings can now only be consulted upon special request, the building itself has become an object of aesthetic admiration and cultural commodification, and is today visited primarily by tourists who, even when often unaware of its symbolism, appraise its golden magnificence. To suggest that this is a *speaking* library, therefore, is not just to point out its rich symbolic character, or to imply that the library as such *represents* those values. It is rather to propose, as I shall propose below, that the library itself *is* the very incarnation of the values that it simultaneously expresses. Which is to say that the library is its own *valuation.* Its values are what the building itself *immanently* realizes, even when – as we shall see– aesthetic beauty, enlightened knowledge, and imperial glory are *not its* *only values*. Indeed, the story of the *Biblioteca*

*Joanina* does not end here. There is another story within this story, and I shall return to it later on.

**From the Interstices: Pragmatic Transvaluations**

While unashamedly praiseful of its imperial aesthetics, this first account of the library –rehearsed in every promotional pamphlet, and in virtually every academic appraisal of the building– nevertheless matters, because it forces us to slow down and wonder about what values may be, and how they relate to certain modes of evaluation. Inded, to insist on the immanence of the library’s values is to say that, if there are such things as values at all, they cannot simply be objects of the mind, but must be thoroughly embedded in things, in practices, situations and events that are valuable by virtue of their very facticity. It is to say that the notion of value, of worth, “essentially presupposes that which is worthy,” and as the British mathematician and speculative philosopher Alfred North Whitehead once warned, “the notion of worth is not to be construed in a purely eulogistic sense.”[[12]](#endnote-12) When approached immanently, values are not just what we as individual or collective subjects appraise, but what *makes us* appraise. Values are as specific as things are, because they are inseparable from them. Indeed, “existence, in its own nature, is the upholding of value-intensity.”[[13]](#endnote-13)

And yet, this speculative proposition, that values are thoroughly immanent, that a value-intensity is “the sense of existence for its own sake, of existence which is its own justification, of existence with its own character,” would sound heretical to those who have received a modern education and learned that beauty, magnificence, and glory have no existence save in the eye of the beholder.[[14]](#endnote-14) And it may sound especially implausible to those who have been trained in the critical humanistic traditions: those that have learned that eyes and their values are always already shaped by cultural or historical conditions, that they often reproduce the existing power asymmetries of a given *dispositif*– to those, in sum, that have been trained to unveil the persistence of a hot clash of values behind what is meant to circulate as a cold matter of fact.

It is therefore not entirely surprising that any attention to the immanence of values remains anathema to most critiques of the present state of Universities, which would rather appeal to *general* values of Culture, Truth, Democracy, or *Bildung*, to an abstract “*idea* of a University” –to recall the title of Cardinal Newman’s now canonical text– against which they compare and judge our current academic ruins as a form of perversion, the evil that belongs to every imperfect realization[[15]](#endnote-15). By appealing to abstract values which Universities were meant to imitate, such critiques seek a secure ground from which to denounce the present, and in so doing they produce a curious alchemy of collective resentment and critical satisfaction. They enable academics to “worry about the university” –to borrow the appropriately psychological choice of words of Fred Moten and Stefano Harney– and thus, to be satisfied with debunking, analyzing, and criticizing the logics, the metrics, the values behind the commanding devaluation of their work[[16]](#endnote-16). As such, they have become part of the business-as-usual of academic life.

If I’m here insisting on the immanence of values –the library’s as much as our own–it is not to engage in theoretical polemics, however. This is a speculative proposition, making a wager rather than a stating a consensual fact. And the wager is pragmatic– rather than a denunciation, it constitutes a test on our present: “Have a care– here is something that matters!”[[17]](#endnote-17). I am thinking in parables neither to indulge once again in abstract critiques, nor to make yet another appeal to the general values of the University. I think alongside the singular story of this library, and ponder on the immanence of values, precisely so as to honor, make resonate, and think with another singular occasion: that of the strike against the attempt to introduce so-called “Die Quickly” pensions, which in the spring of 2018 saw staff from more than 60 universities in the UK take the largest industrial action on their records[[18]](#endnote-18). For while it is still unclear to what extent the strike succeeded in putting a halt to the devaluation of staff pensions, it immediately became evident that the strike was about much more than pensions, opening up the production and destruction of values in a thoroughly immanent and pragmatic way. The activities it sparked generated something of a temporary antidote to the way in which the so-called knowledge-economy poisons the sociality of our academic practices: the strike gathered significant support from the Students Union and enabled new and heterogeneous alliances between academics and students, posing and thinking together the question of what brings us in, of how to appraise the values of what we do together, of how to collectively imagine what we may want to be doing together in spite of the institutional conditions we inhabit, of how another way of doing the university may become possible.

 What these collective activities made present, in turn, was that it was no longer a matter of *worrying* about some impending and progressive decline, but about giving to this singular occasion the power to have us –staff, students and other allies– thinking and cultivating together the immanent value of the labour that was being refused. Like a little parable on the only life we have, the recent strike in the UK achieved the opening of a rare and precarious *interstice.* And what this interstice generated was precisely the invitation to “have a care,” to sense that something in the labour we’re refusing *matters*, and that it matters intensely, even if we could not and would not define in advance what its value may be. “An interstice,” Philippe Pignarre and Isabelle Stengers rightly propose in their *Capitalist Sorcery,* “is defined neither against nor in relation to the bloc to which it nevertheless belongs. It creates its own dimensions starting from concrete processes that confer on it its consistency and scope, what it concerns and who it concerns. What an interstice is capable of is unknown [*une inconnue*], except that the notion of the interstice calls for the plural.”[[19]](#endnote-19) It is the interstice opened up during the strike, generating value-experiences whose value remains unknown, that prompts me to think in parables, for it calls for a plurality no abstract proclamation of “the value of the University” can contain. Something matters intensely: what are the immanent values of the labour we’re forced to refuse? What new values are we in the process of generating by and through our collective refusal? How do we orient together the plurality of our practices towards *another* mode of evaluation, towards the possibility of redefining the value of the values our practices immanently actualize?

 Inventing other modes of evaluation becomes paramount because, whenever the *immanence* of values is concerned, evaluations cannot be avoided. If the interstice calls for a plurality of modes of evaluation it is because, while libraries and practices have their own values, they are never *on their own.* No actually existing thing, Whitehead went on to write, “can separate itself from the others, and from the whole. And yet, each unit exists in its own right. It upholds a value intensity for itself, and this involves sharing value intensity with the universe. Everything that exists has two sides, its individual self and its signification in the universe.”[[20]](#endnote-20) When values are immanently engendered, the notion of evaluation designates *the manner* in which value-intensities are shared. It concerns the multiplicity of relations our practices are and could be in, and the shapes that those relationships might take. As such, the question concerning *Joanina* as much as the strike, is one of *evaluation* indeed*,* but not for that matter a question of acquiescing either to the enlightened evaluations of the library that I recounted above, or to the corrosive evaluations involved in the neoliberalizing game of indexes, impact factors, and student “satisfactions.” [[21]](#endnote-21) Above all, it is a matter of insisting on the possibility of engendering a pragmatic *transvaluation* from the interstices, addressing collectively the political ecology of these academic ruins we inhabit while we still can. It is a question of the particular modes of relationship between our habits and our habitats, of the possibility of a collective invention of new and generative *value-ecologies* established between disparate forms of value-intensity.

 This is why Deleuze, reading Nietzsche, suggested that “we always have the beliefs, feelings and thoughts that we deserve given our way of being or our style of life.”[[22]](#endnote-22) And it is for this very same reason that, from the interstice, the general defenses of the University quickly lose their efficacy. Because it is the very transformation of our way of being and our collective style of life that the interstice makes resonate with imperative force: what other collective modes of existence might we become capable of inside and in spite of the corrosive modes of evaluation which the contemporary University encourages us to inhabit? To what other modes of evaluation might these pragmatic transvaluations give rise? How may they transform the value of our practices?

**The Bat Revolt in Values: Political Value-Ecologies**

Echoes of these questions reverberate within the walls of the *Biblioteca Joanina* too, through its interstices and folds. Indeed, I relay its multifarious story not least because a pragmatic transvaluation already takes place inside and in spite of it, one that upends the value of its enlightened values into an altogether different, pluralistic value-ecology. For while it may have been constructed on the ruins of colonial expropriation, the library is despite itself a refuge for another nocturnal colony– a small colony of bats who live at the top of the tall bookstands near the entrance and that, thanks to the building’s environmental conditions, have made the library their home. This is the other story within the story. The enlightened story of the library appraises the bats in passing, as an odd curiosity which just adds to its touristic value.[[23]](#endnote-23) But, *from the own perspective*, which is to say, from the interstice the bats themselves create on top of the bookstands and in the folds of the building, another set of value-intensities is created, one that precipitates a political-ecological insurrection of the library’s enlightened values.

 Given their mode of existence and their style of life, bats could not care less about the imperial-enlightened symbolism of the library. But this is neither because they are *less* sensitive to its value-intensities than humans are, nor because they are incapable of appraising the library’s magnificence. Rather, it is because by appraising their worlds through practices of echolocation, bats “have senses we either don't have, or that we have in a much less developed form, making the way they relate to their environment impossible for us to fathom.”[[24]](#endnote-24) What is at stake, therefore, is the specific perspective of appraisal created in the *relationship* that these bats establish with the library– the divergent political value-ecology they together articulate. From the perspective of these bats, the evaluation of the library as a glorious expression of imperial and enlightened values is upended. Given the bats’ manner of sensing and relating to their milieu, the library discloses a host of other value-intensities, becoming a karstic cavern that not only protects them from the otherwise hot and sunny conditions of Coimbra, but that also provides a rich and generative bioacoustic environment that becomes their very source of sustenance. Indeed, the 55,000 books in the library create a rich and generative milieu, filled with insects and worms on which the bats feed. At night, the bats fly around the library in pursuit of their own interests, communicating with each other and with the library, looking for food. In the process, their droppings literally soil the enlightened vestiges of its décor, performing what after Nietzsche we might call a *bat revolt in values*: effectively cultivating a dramatically different perspective of appraisal of the library itself, transvaluating its values, and regularly forcing librarians and those responsible for the conservation of the library to cover much of its interior surface with felt blankets.

 The complex value-ecology of the *Joanina* Library is thoroughly permeated by power asymmetries between the humans in charge of preserving the colonial, enlightened evaluation of the library, and the colony of bats that through their very practices constantly put such evaluation at risk. The bats are no pest, and their extermination would pose no technical difficulty. And yet, the fragility of the relationship between the humans responsible for the conservation of the library and the bats that inhabit is made perceptible by the very fact that, in spite of all, the bats are allowed to remain there. And they are allowed to remain there because, as they fly at night, soiling everything along their path, they feed on insects and worms that would otherwise feed on the books. There are, of course, other human and technological means of ridding the library’s books from worms, but the worms’ journey through “the incunabulum allows us to see how the sheets were bound together, and whether some bits are newer than others. And the worm-tracks sometimes form interesting patterns that add character to the ancient books.”[[25]](#endnote-25) An odd ecological pluralism keeps the *Joanina* Library in existence. An ongoing process of transvaluations upon transvaluations, each pursued through its own situated, partial and diverging interests and modes of relating. Together, they make present that while the ongoing life of wisdom, of knowledge and thought may be turned into symbols of divine presence, imperial pride, or capitalist commodification, it can never be dissociated from the impure, piecemeal and careful cultivation of the practices and collective modes of existence that engender and sustain it.

 And in this sense the many-threaded story of the *Biblioteca Joanina* speaks directly, I think, of the value-ecologies that make up our own academic ruins too. For indeed, like this library, our contemporary university systems with their indexes, rankings and modes of evaluation are sustained in a situation where they need what the practices that populate them produce, but cannot bear the values these practices generate. While they all require our practices, our work, our learning, our teaching, our thought, the Univerity’s modes of evaluation do not but impoverish the value of their values. Universities feed on the values of a kind of labour their institutional perspectives persistently devaluate. And yet, if our own academic practices are simultaneously implicated in and sustain the marketizing perspectives of the neoliberal University and its modes of evaluation, they may perhaps also become capable of performing their own transvaluation, upending the values the institution upholds. This is why the interstice opened up by the strike matters. Because while our academic practices may be corroded by the burden of sustaining the evaluations to which they are constantly subjected, the “fabrication of each interstice creates its milieu, the manner in which its ‘interior’ and its ‘exterior’ are distinguished, at its own risk.”[[26]](#endnote-26) Like the bats in the library, the interstice of the strike does not solve any problems but it creates the possibility of a *different kind of problematization*. One that, rather than call for further denunciations, or for urgent solutions, requires an ongoing effort of gathering together the tools and practices we might need to cultivate another perspective of appraising the value-intensities that we generate inside and *in spite* *of* the University.

 Thinking in parables, this story speaks of the University by reminding us that –to borrow the incisive words of Fred Moten and Stefano Harney once again*– “*it cannot be denied that the university is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the university is a place of enlightenment.”[[27]](#endnote-27) Dramatizing the possibility of other value-ecologies, this parable insists on the need to learn how to affirm and inhabit *the spaces of refuge* created in the folds of our own institutions. It makes present that impact factors and grants and promotions do not determine the values that our practices generate, and reminding us that no amount of debunking of the measurements, and no amount of defenses of Culture, Truth, Democracy, or *Bildung,* will be enough to resist their general devaluation. They will never be enough, that is, unless we also come up, collectively, with something else. With something a bit more experimental. With something that, if it’s not single-handedly capable of effecting a transvaluation of the values of Higher Education, then at least may enable us *to trust that some kind of revolt is still possible*. Indeed, this might just be what Nietzsche meant by “philosophizing with a hammer:” if we always have the beliefs, feelings and thoughts that we deserve given our way of being or our style of life, it is clear that we cannot think our way out of our way of being *but must live our way into another mode of thinking.*

It may be that, whatever the future *of* the University, it is not the general *idea* of the University that will save it from its own corrosion. Perhaps the idea of the University no longer deserves protection. What may need to be defended and honoured against the ongoing onslaughts, that from which a revolt in values might be possible, is something of what happens inside and in spite of it. For Moten and Harney –and I don’t disagree– this something begins with teaching because “it is teaching that brings us in. Before there are grants, research, conferences, books, and journals there is the experience of being taught and of teaching.” And what they mean is not the outrageous teaching loads, or the course designed to become a book, but the site and practice of teaching as “a thinking through the skin of teaching toward a collective orientation” which they call “study” and I would call “learning.”[[28]](#endnote-28) A transvaluation of those very practices of learning and teaching, one that counters the devaluation brought about by new auditing mechanisms that reduce their value to future employability and “student satisfaction,” is imperative. Especially if this collective orientation that the interstice creates –and that is occasionally still intimated during fleeting moments in class– is going be able to sustain these alliances between students, teachers, and all those who are still brought in in spite of all.

At the same time, teaching is not all our practices involve, and values in and of teaching are not the only values our practices generate. A transvaluation of our values might also require, and precipitate, the invention of a whole other set of practices: of solidarity and generosity, of care and preservation of ourselves and others, of email, of collective hesitation and humility, of slowing down, of thinking together. It will require other ways of being together that might enable a kind of experimental activity, upending the implication of our habits in the neoliberal auditing game by collective efforts to implicate ourselves in something else– in another, more rewarding game, composed of new and multiple perspectives of appraisal. *Which* new perspectives? According to what values? The interstice does not say. Neither do parables. What matters to those who come to inhabit the interstice, to thos who follow parables, is the creation of a collective intelligence: the invention of ways of thinking and doing that resist the command to reply to the question –“*what are your practices worth!?”–* in the manner in which the question is posed.

Like a parable, “the interstice doesn't give any response, but it generates new questions.”[[29]](#endnote-29) Its task is precisely to generate questions that may, if not bring the neoliberalizing processes of devaluation to a complete halt, then at least trouble and complicate its rules by pluralizing the divergent value-ecologies of what we are still passionately involved in doing together. Ones that may inspire in us the beliefs, feelings and thoughts that *we would like to deserve according to the style of life that we are seeking to cultivate together in the academic ruins.* Perhaps the always ongoing and unfinished activity of generating such questions and alternative modes of problematization may constitute an achievement in and of itself. Perhaps thinking collectively in parables may, one thay, come to affect the only lives we have. Something, perhaps, will have been won– not in parable, but in reality.

**References**

Burrows, Roger. 2012. “Living with the H-Index? Metric assemblages in the contemporary academy”. *Sociological Review* 60, no. 2: 355-372.

Busch, Lawrence. 2017. *Knowledge For Sale: The Neoliberal Takeover of Higher Education.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Campbell, James W., and Will Pryce. 2013. *The Library: A World History.* London: Thames & Hudson.

Collini, Stefan. 2012. *What are Universities For?.* London: Penguin.

de Waal, Frans. 2016. *Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?.* New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company

Deleuze, Gilles. 2006. *Nietzsche and Philosophy,* translated by Hugh Tomlinson*.* London: Continuum.

Despret, Vinciane. 2016. *What Would Animals Say if We Asked The Right Questions?,* translated by Brett Buchanan. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press.

Eco, Umberto, and Jean-Claude Carrière. 2012. *This is Not the End of the Book: A Conversation Curated by Jean-Philippe de Tonnac.* New York: Vintage.

Evans, Mary. 2005. *Killing Thinking: The Death of Universities.* London: Continuum.

Fiolhais, Carlos. 2014. *Biblioteca Joanina*. Coimbra: Coimbra University Press.

Fochler, Maximilian, and Sarah de Rijcke. 2017. *“*Implicated in the Indicator Game? An Experimental Debate”. *Engaging Science, Technology & Society* 3: 21-40.

Giroux, Henry. 2014. *Neoliberalism’s War on Higher Education.* Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.

Kafka, Franz. 2005. “On Parables.” In *The Complete Short Stories,* edited by Nahum N. Glatzer, 457*.* London: Vintage.

Loveday, Vik. 2018. “The neurotic academic: anxiety, casualisation, and governance in the neoliberalising university”. *Journal of Cultural Economy* 11, no. 2: 154-166.

Martin, Randy. 2012. *Chalk Lines: The Politics of Work in the Managed University.* Durham & London: Duke University Press

McGauhgey, Ewan. 2018. “Pension strike: university staff are getting a ‘Die Quickly’ pension plan. It won’t work.” *LSE British Politics & Policy Blog,* 8 March*.* <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/pension-strike-explainer/>.

McGee, Micki. 2002. *“*Hooked on Higher Education and Other Tales from Adjunct Faculty Organizing”. *Social Text* 20, no. 1: 62-80.

Moten, Fred, and Stefano Harney. 2004. “The University and the Undercommons: Seven Theses”. *Social Text* 22, no. 2: 101-115.

Newman, John H. 1996. *The Idea of a University.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1996. *On the Genealogy of Morals,* translated by Douglas Smith*.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pignarre, Philippe, and Isabelle Stengers. 2013. *Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell,* translated by Andrew Goffey.Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Savransky, Martin. 2016. *The Adventure of Relevance.* Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Small, Helen. 2013. *The Value of the Humanities.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tsing, Anna. *The Mushroom at The End of The World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Whitehead, Alfred North. 1968. *Modes of Thought.* New York: The Free Press

**Notes**

I am grateful to many colleagues, students, and friends that, in generous conversations, provided me with vital elements to craft this parabolic essay. Among them, special thanks go to Sanjay Seth, Vinciane Despret, Thibault de Meyer, Isaac Marrerro-Guillamón, Sarah de Rijcke, Tjitske Holtrop, and the students and colleagues who attended the “*Is Another University Possible?”* meeting on the eve of the strike. My sincere thanks also go to the *Social Text* collective, including reviewers, for their immensely thoughtful editorial work. Any shortcomings are my own.

1. Kafka, “On Parables,” 457. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. I borrow the expression “living in the ruins” from Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of The World.* [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. see Fiolhais, *Biblioteca Joanina.* [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. see Campbell and Pryce, *The Library: A World History.* [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Fiolhais, *Biblioteca Joanina,* 15. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid., 26. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid., 11. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid., 29. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid., 37. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid., 17. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. see Campbell and Pryce, *The Library: A World History.* [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 109. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Ibid., 111. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid., 109. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Newman, *The Idea of a University.* For some of those general critiques, see Busch, *Knowledge For Sale,* Collini, *What are Universities For?,* Evans, *Killing Thinking,* Giroux, *Neoliberalism’s War on Higher Educatio,* Small, *The Value of the Humanities.* [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Moten and Harney, “The University and the Undercommons,” 101. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid., 116. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. McGauhgey, “Pension strike.” [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Pignarre and Stengers, *Capitalist Sorcery,* 110-111. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 111. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. See Loveday, “The neurotic academic”, McGee, *“*Hooked on Higher Education”, and Fochler and de Rijcke, *“*Implicated in the Indicator Game?”, Burrows, “Living with the H-Index?”among others. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy,* 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. see Fiolhais, *Biblioteca Joanina*. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. de Waal, *Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?*, 238. See also Despret, *What Would Animals Say if We Asked the Right Questions?.* [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Eco and Carrière, *This is Not the End of the Book,* 310. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Pigarre and Stengers, *Capitalist Sorcery,* 113. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Moten and Harney, “The University and the Undercommons,”102. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. see Savransky, *The Adventure of Relevance.*  [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Pignarre and Stengers, *Capitalist Sorcery,* 111. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)