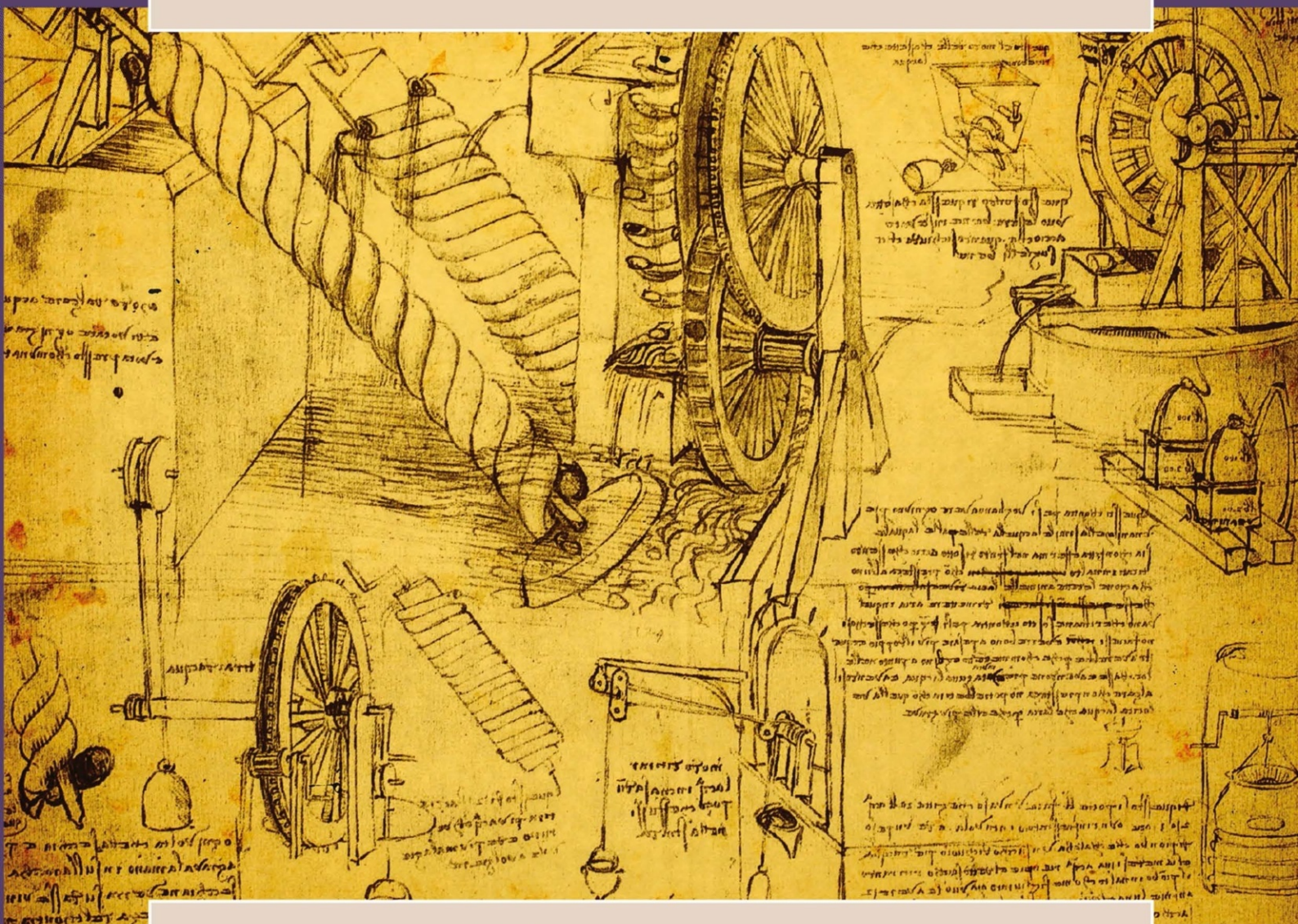
BOLD VISIONS IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Producing Pleasure in the Contemporary University

Stewart Riddle, Marcus K. Harmes and Patrick Alan Danaher (Eds.)



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Producing Pleasure in the Contemporary University

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Scope:
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MARCUS K. HARMES, PATRICK ALAN DANAHER, AND STEWART RIDDLE

1. PARTAKING OF PLEASURE

Regenerating the Working Lives of University Academics

INTRODUCTION

Universities are fascinating places to work. A "provocative social cocktail" (Symes, 2004, p. 395) is one particularly apt description, although for some, the fascination could be ironically expressed as a reaction to the giddying changes and restructures and revisionings that define the contemporary university. As a result, academics with a taste for history may feel some empathy for the legendary Vicar of Bray, a clergyman who kept his job and his head during the tumults of English religious history by abiding strictly to this principle:

> *And this is law, I will maintain unto my Dying Day, Sir. That whatsoever King may reign, I will be the Vicar of Bray, Sir!*

The sentiment is self-serving, true, in that higher authority may change but should be at worst followed and at best ignored, but any academic who has experienced yet another programme being restructured or a department re-organized, or encountered yet another institutional vision statement, should feel kinship with someone determined to keep going no matter how often or how drastically things change.

The institutional, policy and employment changes against and about which the contributors to this collection are writing are well known. Academia finds itself, however reluctantly, in a neoliberal world. The *enterprise university*, as recognized and elaborated by Marginson and Considine (2000), is an approach to a corporatized and de-regulated vision of higher education that governments around the world have found irresistible.

Many universities maintain traditions such as a motto in Latin, but the old classical adage, *Atque inter silvas academi quaerere verum*, or "Seek for truth in the groves of academe", conjures up the ghosts of a genteel world that is perhaps now lost for ever. In the age of the enterprise university, it sometimes seems that the groves of academe have been cut down and salt sown where once they grew. As such, the affordances and aspirations framing academics' work differ markedly from those of previous generations. These circumstances place unprecedented pressures on academics to enact their roles in new ways, yet what this collection of chapters demonstrates is that these same circumstances also create space for

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alternative approaches to reimagining who and what academics are and the character and purposes of academic enterprise.

Each contribution to this volume upholds the proposition that universities and the academic enterprise that they promote matter more than ever. It is certainly possible to put a money value on their importance. Universities are a major source of revenue and in many countries they rank highly as an export industry because of international students. The teaching, the research and the scholarship continue to matter to those responsible for these activities. Given how heavily universities weigh in with regard to cultural and economic capital, the fact that this volume also suggests that the ways that this teaching, research and scholarship can be carried out should matter as well.

That is not to suggest that the volume is Pollyanna-ish. Certainly there are references to dogs, cats, cross-stitching, writing fiction, and other realms of activity that may not come immediately to mind when thinking of academic activity. But these are starting points. Nor are the contributions introspections. Instead the issues that they raise – of finding meaning in work, of taking pride in that work, of the place of first nations peoples in the knowledge systems of the colonizers, of withstanding bullies, working with professional courtesy, amongst others – surely matter regardless of the workplace or the type of work.

Admittedly, some of the context is specific and the pressures discussed are distinctive to the contemporary university. What then is this academia and who are the academics populating it? Shifts in identity, in purpose, in governance and in other realms of existence have led to there being many possible answers to these crucial questions. Perhaps at one-time academia may have been a self-governing community of scholars, although such apparently benign ideals are long past. Nonetheless, academics retain significant amounts of power. They also maintain high levels of professional autonomy, but what is the price of this autonomy?

IN THE GROVES OF ACADEME?

Attention has been given to the growing pressure on academics working in contemporary university systems across the globe to produce research outputs at increasing speeds and intensities. From this perspective, the academic institution produces multiple tensions and moments of crises, where it seems that there is limited space left for the intrinsic enjoyment arising from scholarly practices. The civilized sense of academic activity taking place "in the groves of academe" is far removed from the realities of contemporary pressures.

Few would doubt the transformation of universities. The factors and causes of change vary in tone and emphasis from country to country, but the outcomes have remarkable levels of similarity in terms of implications and outcomes. In Australia, the Dawkins Review (1987) was one iteration of the changes to universities, but the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), Europe and elsewhere all have similar tales of economic stresses and identity crises (Kwiek, 2005). What have been the results? Are the people who inhabit universities now different? Are the incentives and disincentives now different, especially for

research? Does public scholarship for the public good become more akin to working for private enterprise?

These are not very positive questions on the whole. By contrast, in this book, we examine on a global level how pleasure is both possible in and central to the endeavours of academics working in universities. Here pleasure is defined and experienced variously as: affirmation, affordance, flow, focus, fulfilment, happiness, heightened consciousness, immersion, joy, motivation, and self-actualization in various academic environments. The contributions to this volume address in their different ways the issues of work intensification in the university, seeking the spaces and opportunities for pleasure. To be clear, pleasure means the affective engagement with work that feels meaningful. What is affective for one may not be a pleasure for others.

The importance of what follows lies in the ways that the contributors engage with this issue in personal, academic and sometimes political ways. In doing so, they pursue some of the ingenious and often subversive opportunities that academics have pursued to craft meaning, create pleasure, or let off steam. Some of the contributors to this collection have discussed the pleasure in writing, not necessarily about their field of research. In doing so, they follow a long and intriguing tradition. Possibly one of the naughtiest ways that academics have created pleasure is through their writing. Some like the academic detective novelists Michael Innes, Dorothy L. Sayers and Robert Barnard took gleeful pleasure in setting their murder mysteries in universities and colleges and bumping off in print and with great relish fictional analogues of their colleagues.

At the same time, not all pleasure is so murderous. More recently, Jorge Cham's beloved *Piled Higher and Deeper* (www.phdcomics.com), has given relief and release to countless beginning academics. Academics being what they are, many also take to blogs and other sharing sites such as the *Thesis Whisperer* (www.thesiswhisperer.com) to discuss stressors, debate strategies and generally share experiences in a spirit of solidarity. Social media also share pleasurable and humorous accounts of academic life, such as the popular *Shit Academics Say* (@AcademicsSay) Twitter account.

Inevitably, such dialogue can seem inward and precious; after all, any job has its stresses, and one contributor to the blog, *Why do academics work so much?* (Thesis Whisperer, 2013), provided the healthily corrective point of view: "For most academics it's not a life-and-death situation – if a paper isn't published the sky will not fall". That is very true, but other comments stressed other distinctive challenges: "There is NO SUCH THING AS TIME OFF IN ACADEMIA. You cannot escape your own brain, your own thoughts, or the notion that you have to plan ahead …. [T]he only way to take time off is to leave the profession and do something else". Or, on the experience of doing a PhD, "It is something that MUST be suffered through!" These attitudes are actually quite alarming and perhaps academics are too hard on themselves. A recent opinion piece (Watson & Battle, 2016) published in the online research-news site, *The Conversation*, urged academics to lighten up, and even to experiment with comedy as a means of communicating findings:

> To be a humorous academic appears to be an unacceptable oxymoron and those who use humour in their work run the risk of being seen as non-serious, and therefore trivial. Even Erving Goffman, one of the greatest social scientists of the 20th century, is regarded in some quarters with suspicion for his 'sparkling' humorous prose. (n.p.)

These points contribute to thinking about why this book, and why this book now? Already it seems that there might have been too much written about the problems with universities. The educational historian Hannah Forsyth (2014) attempted to call time on what she dubs the "jeremiad genre of university literature across the world". She continues: "It has got to the point where I have come to admire such authors' inventiveness in finding new phrases for 'academics complain about'". Mind you, Forsyth's book, a history of Australian universities, itself finds plenty to complain about, including gender and pay imbalances, the corporatisation of universities, the overpaid executive tiers and the small 'scraps' over which disenfranchised academics fight.

Nor is it automatic that all change is bad. Universities in the past were on the whole elitist and places for the highly-privileged. They were far from inclusive (Symes, 2004), and their staff members were often unregulated rather than recognizably professional. There is a younger generation of academics who have no particular reason to look back with nostalgia at earlier notions of an academic *Golden Age* (Archer, 2008; Bryson, 2004). There is also the possibility that even a painful experience can bring pleasure. At one level why should there even be an assumption of pleasure? Presumably academics are there to work, and pleasure is not required in a workplace.

Many of the chapters that follow grapple with these binaries, including pleasure and pain, private and public, and personal and institutional (see also: Macfarlane, 2015). But there may be a desire to experience pleasure partly in order to do more and better work. In many ways this book is disruptive – disruptive of notions of untrammelled professionalism, of the unfettered right to say what one likes as a public intellectual, yet also of the contrary and counter-intuitive assumption that academics (like all workers and producers) are unthinking ciphers who contribute nothing from their own identities to their work.

PARTAKING OF PLEASURE

It is vital at this juncture to emphasise that we see the "partaking of pleasure" taken from the title of this chapter as mobilizing multiple meanings and as evoking varied values, thereby resisting a homogenising and potentially reductionist understanding. Consequently readers are likely to respond to the subsequent accounts in this book in equally diverse ways. Some or perhaps all of these renditions of academic pleasure might be seen as being solipsistic and self-indulgent. By contrast (or perhaps in addition), these studies might be regarded as demonstrating the agential, deliberative and resilient character of contemporary academics whose efforts to partake of various forms of pleasure constitute

important strategies to enhance their own wellbeing and in the process to maximise their prospects of serving their respective communities and constituencies.

As we foreshadowed in the previous section of this chapter, there are several possible approaches to conceptualizing academics' work and their associated identities and subjectivities. Here we elaborate on three such approaches – the philosophical, political and practical parameters of the partaking of pleasure – that provide a structure for the book.

At the deepest and the broadest levels, the philosophical parameter of the partaking of pleasure accentuates the ontological, epistemological and axiological dimensions of past, present and potential future existences. These dimensions in turn highlight the significance of multiple influences on how individual academics live their lives, the affordances of and constraints on their lives and how they live them, how they conceptualize pleasure and its possible place in their work, and the meanings that they ascribe to that work. These dimensions also help to frame how academics approach the three generally recognised aspects of their work: teaching, research and service or engagement. For instance, individual academics' respective epistemological understandings of what knowledge/knowledges is/are, how it/they is/are created and circulated, and the appropriate values attending its/their reception and influence are likely to flow through into their specific approaches to planning and enacting their teaching programs, their supervision of higher degrees by research students and their research trajectories.

From this perspective, some of the ideas about academic pleasure introduced in the previous section of this chapter can be placed in the wider perspective of being situated against the backdrop (and on occasion of working against the grain) of the sometimes intrinsic and invisible but no less influential outworkings of deeper philosophical ideas.

For instance, a distinctive leitmotif in several of the subsequent chapters is the (usually deleterious) impact of an absence of productive, uninterrupted time on academics' work. This leitmotif was summarized neatly in a study of the careers of academic managers in universities in the UK: "New managerialism … may place different emphasis on time usage and be more concerned to regulate and account for its use by professionals previously allowed considerable autonomy" (Deem & Hillyard, 2002, p. 127).

From a philosophical perspective, time has been theorized in diverse ways, including the conceptualization of temporality in the context of neoliberalism (Herzfeld, 2009), which is another recurring theme in many of the following chapters. In this way, time and its absence or its short supply function simultaneously as an empirical encapsulation of the concerns of many contemporary academics and researchers and as a metaphor for broader affordances and challenges characterising their work. Similarly, a study of UK academics' work concluded that:

> … [the] additive effects of job demands and control on psychological well-being and of job demands and support on both burnout and job satisfaction were shown, corroborating research showing that high job strain is linked to

> ill health and job dissatisfaction in this homogeneous occupational sample. (McClenahan, Giles, & Mallett, 2007, p. 85)

A more explicitly philosophical interpretation of the same phenomenon of academics' work stress and burnout (which again resonates with some of the subsequent chapters) is likely to be alert to greater diversities of experience and nuances of meaning-making that in turn are liable to generate a wider range of understandings of this phenomenon. This is not to deny the authenticity and urgency of emotions (whether positive or negative) experienced by individual academics, but it is to assert that pursuing the philosophical parameter of the partaking of pleasure is likely to place those emotions against the backdrop of other considerations that function both to affirm and to enrich personal perspectives. This is less a plea for some kind of inappropriate generalisability than it is a call for conversation and dialogue among and across academics and researchers whose experiences are diverse yet whose potential interest in and take-up of pleasure are in our view worth cultivating.

This call for conversation and dialogue in turn accentuates the political parameter of the partaking of pleasure that is also explored in diverse ways and to considerable effect in the following chapters. We see this political parameter as recognizing the exercise of multiple forms of power. In some respects this power is centred on the seemingly totalizing capacity of the contemporary state (Finnemore & Goldstein, 2013; Hirst, 2001), and/or of the global forces of late capitalism (Büscher & Igoe, 2013; Crary, 2013) and neoliberalism (Bates, 2014; Newman, 2013), to frame and constrain what academics and researchers can and cannot do. For instance, distilling a growing body of scholarship about this theme, Slaughter (2014) contended "…how marketization has become deeply imbricated in so many aspects of the academy" (p. ix), and she also recorded with words that resonate pointedly and powerfully with many of the subsequent chapters:

> We understood the academic swivel toward the market as being framed by opportunities created by the rise of the neoliberal state, the knowledge economy, globalization, and the growth of transnational capitalism. We tried to work out mechanisms that connected academics to the market possibilities opening up and focused on organizational processes – new circuits of knowledge, interstitial organizational emergence, intermediating organizations, expanded managerial capacity – and also narratives, discourses, social technologies, resources, rewards, and incentives that moved actors within the university from the public good knowledge/learning regime to the academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime. (p. vii)

Relatedly, although from a different perspective, Tuck (2016) identified a parallel among 14 university teachers in the UK between positioning the teaching of academic writing as 'skills' rather than as 'learners' (p. 1612) on the one hand and devaluing the work of the teachers of that academic writing.

At the same time, the political parameter draws attention to the capacity to resist and subvert these exercises of power over academics and researchers. We have

noted above this contestatory capability of pleasure against the increasingly politicized backdrop of the conditions in which academics and researchers work. Several scholars have analysed the potential to undermine the supposedly invincible onrush of the forces of the contemporary world. For example, O'Brien (2017) insisted on both the need and the feasibility to resist 'neoliberal education'. Intriguingly, one demonstration of this resistance could be seen in Al Lily's (2016) initiative of "crowd-authoring" (p. 1053), whereby "…101 scholars of education and technology spread across the globe collaborated in three rounds via email to write a 9000-word manuscript" (p. 1053). Moreover, Al Lily used the evident success of this initiative to call for "… an intercontinental group of academics to form an 'assembly of authoring'" (p. 1053). Additionally, he advocated "Such an assembly of authoring … [developing] into an 'assembly of *action*', with its members explicitly seeking to bring about changes and social interventions" (p. 1053; emphasis in original).

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews with 20 researchers at one Canadian university yielded that "Participants demonstrated agency on behalf of themselves and their institution by engaging in practices they thought would provide space for research that 'really mattered'" (Martimianakis & Muzzin, 2015, p. 1454). The authors proposed something of a generational dimension of this agency: "Younger participants were more likely to resist being 'disciplined'; they identified strongly with conceptual forms of interdisciplinarity and derived both satisfaction and creativity from working in the margins of knowledge spaces" (p. 1454).

Likewise, Collyer (2015) used her qualitative study in four Australian universities to analyse the universities "as sites of contestation between the new professional managers and the established academic profession over the control of the conditions of work, the production of expert knowledge and the worksite itself" (p. 315). She observed, among other findings, that there was "… a dynamic process in which academics innovatively respond to threats to reduce their autonomy, to increased levels of surveillance and other constraints on practice" (p. 315).

This reference to practice evokes the practical parameter of the partaking of pleasure by and for academics and researchers in contemporary universities that is also pursued by a number of the following chapters. From this perspective, practice is neither mundane nor pedestrian, but instead it frames and describes what academics and researchers do, and also why, how, with whom and with which effects they do it. Accordingly, practice generates a prism that enables otherwise implicit and invisible actions by academics and researchers to be analysed and understood.

As the next section of this chapter explains, the subsequent chapters take up the notion of practice in relation to the partaking of pleasure in contemporary universities in diverse ways. More broadly, we see this form of practice as a kind of constrained and contained agency, with individual authors – or pairs or groups of authors – striving for opportunities and outlets for their creativity, intelligence and sense of responsibility, however that sense was manifested. In this regard, the practice parameter both resonates with and builds on the philosophical and the political parameters articulated earlier in this section.

Similarly, considerable scholarly literature attests both to the importance of the practice parameter and to the complexities of enacting that practice within the material contexts of current university life. For instance, a study of "… a practice of division of labour between teaching-oriented and research-oriented staff" (Geschwind & Broström, 2015, p. 60) members in three Swedish universities found that academic managers' strategies for rewarding research agendas "… seem to reinforce existing patterns of division of labour among academic staff" (p. 60) by assigning teaching responsibilities "… to less research-active staff" (p. 60). While the respective researchers and teachers involved in these practices might well take pleasure from them, from another perspective one individual's pleasure is sometimes at the cost of a colleague's less pleasurable experience of the same situation.

This crucial point about differential experiences of situations and about the relativities of participating of pleasure in practice emphasises the material conditions that frame and constrain such relativities in academics' and researchers' work:

> Material resources are an important prerequisite for any research [and university teaching], whether in the form of well-equipped laboratories, up-to-date libraries or fast internet connections, and these in turn provide access to the all-important disciplinary networks that set the ground rules for community membership …. Similarly, it is a country's economic situation that largely determines its level of social development, and ultimately, its academic culture. (Bennett, 2014, p. 2)

These material relativities – which are actually deeply embedded structural inequalities – are manifested in multiple enactments of practice, such as the challenges and opportunities attending early career academics in African universities developing the distinctive knowledge and skills required for effective university teaching (Teferra, 2016), and the equivalent challenges and opportunities characterizing academics' access to and use of electronic journals for scholarly communication at the University of the Punjab (Arshad & Ameen, 2017).

Furthermore, McKenzie (2017) identified another form of structural inequality in relation to practice with regard to what she termed "a precarious passion" (p. 31) prompted by the difficulty of many Australian academics securing full-time, continuing employment in universities today. As McKenzie noted, "These casual employees are disproportionately female …" (p. 31), and they are also younger academics and researchers.

RECLAIMING PLEASURE IN THE CONTEMPORARY UNIVERSITY

It is necessary to situate individual researchers' partaking of pleasure in the context of broader institutional and trans/national flows of power and politics. There are important questions to be asked about the kinds of scholarship that are made possible within the contemporary university. The philosophical, political, and practice parameters of academic work need to be better understood, so that we

might find more meaningful ways of producing scholarly work that is deeply connected to academics' lives. At the same time, we need to be mindful that what constitutes pleasure for one person or group of people might not be feasible or relevant for others, owing partly to differences in personalities and preferences, and partly to the highly varied material conditions and empirical contexts framing the work of academics and researchers in universities today.

The following chapters deploy a range of strategic conceptual and methodological tools in order to provide various accounts of producing pleasure within the contemporary university. While the book is not intended to be read in a set order, chapters have been grouped into broad themes so that common themes and narrative threads might emerge and entwine each other. The mixture of scholarly voices and experiences from around the world, from different disciplinary fields and different levels of rank, also serves to highlight our point that there is no one measure of pleasure, nor of what constitutes the production of pleasurable academic subjectivities. Indeed, we see these chapters as a vibrant collection of different academic lives being performed through the sharing of scholarly writing, whether the writing is conceptual, empirical, creative, fictional, and so on.

Several chapters take their theoretical and conceptual cues from the work of French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, employing notions of desire and assemblage through writing encounters and experiments. Others have a distinctly feminist ethics, drawing on a range of devices to trouble the taken-for-grantedness of the neoliberal and enterprise regimes of the contemporary university. Some chapters provide reflective accounts of researchers' experiences in teaching, research and scholarly activity, while others develop themes of dis/connection, subjective agency and collective activism within the academy.

We believe that each contribution provides a unique take on the notion of how pleasure can be produced within the confines of universities, while also acknowledging the problematic tension of wanting to produce meaningful scholarly work while also being recognised as a scholar within the particular confines of research metrics, productivity measurements and research quality assessments. The irony is not lost on us, that while edited books and book chapters count for very little in the knowledge production game of the university system, the opportunity to produce a book that is interested in the production of pleasure, is in itself a pleasurable act.

Through the contributions in this book, we seek to create opportunities for the strategic refusal of the quantifying, stultifying and stupefying delimiters of what is possible for academic production, and instead to open up spaces for conversation, reflection and thought, in order to think, to be and to do differently – pleasurably. In pursuing this goal, we posit that, far from being reprehensible or self-indulgent, the partaking of pleasure is actually crucial to regenerating the working lives of university academics around the world.

In some ways this book may be therapeutic or recuperative, and it is certainly a counter narrative to the onrush of the enterprise university and the devaluing of its students and academics. Yet ironically the book also counts towards the knowledge

production of academics' profiles and outputs measures. This doubling up of potential outcomes of this volume encapsulates the complexities attending contemporary academic work and the multiplicities of meanings and value(s) ascribed to that work by diverse stakeholders with equally diverse interests. From this perspective, the partaking of pleasure "in the groves of academe" in order to regenerate the working lives of university academics is as controversial as it is crucial.

In particular, this volume shows how researchers are able to rupture the bounds of what is permissible and possible within their daily lives, habits and practices. As such, we pose and address several increasingly significant questions. What are some of the multiple and different ways that we can reclaim pleasure and enhance the durations and intensities of our passions, desires and becomings within the contemporary university? How might these aspirations be realised? What are the spaces for the pleasurable production of research that might be opened up? How could we reconfigure the neoliberal university to be a place of more affect, where desire, laughter and joy join with the work that we seek to undertake and the communities whom we serve? And perhaps, most of all, how might we reclaim pleasure in the contemporary university?

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2. PRODUCING MOMENTS OF PLEASURE WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THE NEOLIBERAL UNIVERSITY

THERE'S A FINE LINE BETWEEN PLEASURE AND PAIN

> Pleasure is in no way something that can be attained only by a detour through suffering; it is something that must be delayed as long as possible because it interrupts the continuous process of positive desire. There is, in fact, a joy that is immanent to desire as though desire were filled by itself and its contemplations, a joy that implies no lack or impossibility and is not measured by pleasure since it is what distributes intensities of pleasure and prevents them from being suffused by anxiety, shame, and guilt. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 155)

In this chapter, I explore the productive possibilities of becomingacademic through the "continuous process of positive desire" that Deleuze and Guattari describe in the above quote. The neoliberal apparatus of the university constructs us as a subject "suffused by anxiety, shame and guilt", as lacking the scores or wins or publications or prizes or grants that will create a successful academic. Yet there is a 'fine line between pleasure and pain'[1] as we all yearn to become success; we appear to relish in the anxiety and overwork; we engage with the inherent contradictions in the technologies of performance and agency (Davies & Petersen, 2005). This is what the performative regime of the neoliberal university does – works within us not on us (Ball, 2012). We relish in the praise and reward system, we panic in the failed state of non-funded grants, we envy those successful, and we delight in the inner glow shining from the google citations on our screens. We are drawn to the clickbait of messages, 'someone just searched for you on google', we boast on Facebook and Twitter of our 'h-indexes' and latest publications, we moan about long hours, time away from families, piles of marking.

How is it then that we can create a space to find joy in our academic careers that is not based on the incessant search to fill the gaps, to plug up the holes? Is it possible to be satisfied, sufficient, satiated, to experience joy "that implies no lack or impossibility"? If, as Deleuze suggests, control operates through "continual monitoring", the challenge is "to create vacuoles of non-communication, circuit breakers so that we can elude control" (Deleuze, 1995, p. 175). To create vacuoles (or little storage bubbles of non-communication), moments when we take up the position of Bartleby – the man who simply says 'I prefer not to' (Savat & Thompson, 2015, p. 280; Tamboukou, 2012, p. 860). In Deleuzeguattarian terms,

S. Riddle et al. (Eds.), Producing Pleasure in the Contemporary University, 13–24.

this is not just a matter of 'deterritorialisation' or a deconstruction of the systems and machines that hold the neoliberal university together. There is a politics involved as Wallin (2012) and Savat and Thompson (2015) remind us, in taking up modes of thought from Deleuze and Guattari to re-think the relations between institutions and subjects, between the social and the individual, between us and the forms of disciplinary power that are enacted within these contemporary societies of control (Deleuze, 1992). With Buchanan (2000, p. 8), I am interested in understanding how Deleuze and Guattari contribute to an "apparatus of social critique".

Bronwyn Davies has been undertaking such a critique of neo-liberal constructions of academic life and the rise of new managerialism techniques of control in universities for some years (see Davies, 2005; Davies & Bansel, 2010; Davies & Petersen, 2005). Over ten years ago, she challenged us to rethink how we constitute ourselves and others within the confines of the neo-liberal university, using a series of questions, unanswerable questions, those that have puzzled her and others as we grapple with the complex ambivalence of becoming academic.

> How might we catch ourselves mouthing the comfortable cliches and platitudes that together we use to shape that same world that we shake our heads at with sorrow and resignation – or that we secretly in our darkest hearts applaud? How might we put to one side our own safety and comfortable certainties and ask the impossible questions that exist outside of the already known, the already asked, the comfortably conservative discursive universe that shores up our certainties and keeps the world a safe place – for us? How are we to resist engaging in the neoliberally induced surveillance of ourselves and each other, surveillance that limits, that holds us neatly packaged within economic and utilitarian discourses? How can we dare to ask, in the face of that discourse and its constraints, the questions that unsettle, the questions that disrupt the certainties and securities, the questions that honour a passionate ideal of the academy where intellectual work is without fear, where it does not know, necessarily, where its questions might lead – passionate work that recognizes no boundaries that might prevent its development and where it also cares passionately about its effects? (Davies, 2005, p. 7)

Hold these questions in your hearts and minds while you read this chapter, think about how you can engage with these ideas, those of collaboration, collegiality, and communication, to produce joy, to engage in a critical political project that creates a space for doing the 'passionate work' that ignites and drives us in our academic lives.

MAPPING THE TERRITORY

Maria Tamboukou (2012) says these are 'dark times' for academics, but the darkness is not only created through the overshadowing of our lives by the audit culture and the performativity regimes created through the practices of the neo-

liberal managers who control our work. It is also a darkness that we seek out, she argues, as we hide in caves and withdraw "from public academic spaces" (p. 860).

> *It is cold outside. A biting westerly wind blows through the suburbs, clouds build and sun bursts through. It is quiet, I can hear a truck two streets away, the cockatoos have stopped their raucous cries for today, I can see the wind in the trees but not hear it.*
>
> *I am comfortable, warm.*
>
> *The ping of incoming mail is intermittent, there are no urgent tasks, I have the day to write, to create, to express my thoughts, ideas and opinions.*
>
> *This is a privileged life.*

Understanding and deconstructing the "matrices of complex practices, values and discourses" (Tamboukou, 2012, p. 860) that form the "Auditland" territory (Murphie, 2014) requires not only recognizing the ambivalent positions of both oppression and compliance, of pleasure and pain, but also the privilege of these positions, especially for those of us in continuing tenured appointments. There is privilege and pleasure in "choosing to work when and where" (Gornall & Salisbury, 2012, p. 143). Indeed, Gornall and Salisbury argue that the "very intense, intensive, and in some ways, extensive kinds of working" (p. 146) are not only pleasurable but also provide "motivation, curiosity and engagement" (p. 145).

Yet acknowledgement of our positions of comfort should not, must not, "forestall resistance" (Davies & Petersen, 2005, p. 93).

> We therefore need urgently to think about how some of the pleasures of academic work (or at least a deep love for the 'myth' of what we thought being an intellectual would be like, but often seems at far remove from it) bind us more tightly into a neoliberal regime with ever-growing costs, not least to ourselves (Gill, 2009, p. 241)

We must come out of our solitary confinement in the dark caves of "academic escapism" (Tamboukou, 2012, p, 861), move away from "reflecting upon, analysing and writing about academic performativity, audit cultures and the panopicisation of the academy" (p. 86), and take some action, even if that action is just channeling Bartleby.

These actions, of activism, of resistance, of seeking out a form of activity that cannot be counted or audited (Murphie, 2012, p. 37), will necessarily take place within and across the territory that has been colonized by the audit society, yet at the same time will require a rethinking of the edges of those territories, moving into the borderlands:

> The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social

> formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 2)

If the Auditland creates an "existential territory of crisis, competition and digitized data" (Savat & Thompson, 2015, p 293), then our brave new land must create collegiality and slow scholarship (Mountz et al, 2015). If the control society brings with it "the language of efficiency, effectiveness, impact and lifelong learning", then we must use a language of failure (Halberstam, 2011; O'Gorman & Werry, 2012), a language that doesn't count. We must refuse to engage in the creation of the climate of crisis - so for example when the new year begins each and every year with a warning about an operational budget crisis that requires us all to tighten our belts, reduce sessional staff hours, increase class sizes – can we take up the challenge not to engage?

The society of control, the auditland territory, produces us as "compliant workers, depoliticized consumers, and passive citizens" (Giroux, 2003, p. 181). Can we instead think about subversion and challenging what is taken for granted as acceptable? Can we be failures, fools and ironists (McWilliam, 2000), can we celebrate "joy as a force, an excess of the type that does not solely originate in the body nor is solely an effect of the body, but both"? (Kern et al., 2014, p. 847)

FOOLISH FAILURES

To celebrate this kind of joy, to experience pleasure that does not interrupt the active processing of desire, to delight in subversion and critique may mean taking up positions that are unknown to us as academics. An exploration of what it might mean to become a 'foolish failure' draws also on the possibilities of laughter and irony, and of engaging in these acts with others, in a sense of collegiality, community, and collaboration that moves beyond that encouraged by neoliberal market forces that insist that collaboration must have outputs, that collegiality can be measured by the number of professors on grant applications, that the organizational shell of a 'school' or 'faculty' can replace a community of scholars.

Celebrating failure is an act of activism, a way to succeed in resisting the "measure and mantra of the corporatizing university" (O'Gorman & Werry, 2012, p. 3).

> Failure's promise lies in its capacity to unravel the certainties of knowledge, competence, representation, normativity and authority. Failure … is the inevitable and critical counterpoint to modernity's empty promises (O'Gorman & Werry, 2012, p. 1).

As well as celebrating failure, and engaging with pleasure and joy, delighting in subversion and critique may also allow us to enact the position of the Fool.

> We recommend the cultivation of foolishness, especially when it is dangerous, as one kind of antidote to the unassailability that neo-liberalism achieves for itself. (Davies & Petersen, 2005, p. 94)

After all, it appears that there has been a long and complicated history between knowledge, the academy and the Fool. As Foucault (1988, p. 25) reminds us, "Erasmus, in his dance of fools, reserves a large place for scholars", and in the original 'ship of fools':

> The first canto of Brant's poem is devoted to books and scholars; and in the engraving which illustrates this passage in the Latin edition of 1497, we see enthroned upon his bristling cathedra of books the Magister who wears behind his doctoral cap a fool's cap sewn with bells. (1988, p. 25)

The trope of the 'wise fool' echoes throughout literary criticism, especially in relation to Shakespeare. The Fool in *King Lear*, but elsewhere as well, is articulate and clever. Like academics, the Fool needs an "acute sense of the semantics and rhetoric of language" (Mullini, 1985, p. 102). Like the Fool, academics can use language that is "rhetorically rich, semantically ambiguous, ontologically disruptive of the order of the fictional world" (Mullini, 1985, p. 104).

Taking up this position then, of the foolish failure, requires an active disruption, an open and public dismantling of the "masters house" (Lorde, 1984), which in itself can be dangerous, dangerous for those engaged in the demolition, but also dangerous for those looking on, the passers-by who may be trapped by the falling timbers.

The foolish failure rejects the position offered within the neoliberal academy of "the individual as a career-seeking entrepreneur" (Cannizzo, 2016, p. 8). After all, it is this discourse that "devours us like a flesh-eating bacterium, producing its own toxic waste – shame: I'm a fraud, I'm useless, I'm nothing. It is (of course) deeply gendered, racialised and classed, connected to biographies that produce very different degrees of 'entitlement' (or not)" (Gill, 2009, p. 240). The successful academic hides failure, is ashamed, is constituted as lacking the right numbers, citations, grants, teaching scores. The foolishfailure in contrast, actively searches for other ways of beingacademic, looks out for "subjugated knowledges", engages in "a refusal of mastery, a critique of the intuitive connections within capitalism between success and profit, and … a counterhegemonic discourse of losing" (Halberstam, 2011, pp. 11–12).

The foolish failure focusses (if paying attention for more than 5 minutes is possible) on subjugated knowledges that Foucault describes as "nonconceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges: naive knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity" (2003, p. 7). These are the small, local, "regional or differential, incapable of unanimity and which derives its power solely from the fact that it is different from all the knowledges that surround it" (2003, p. 8). The language is a 'minor language', "less a product than a process of becoming minor, through which language is deterritorialized immediately social and political issues are engaged, and a collective assemblage of enunciation makes possible the invention of a people to come" (Bogue, 2010, p. 171). A minor literature is political, asubjective, collective, and revolutionary, existing "only in relation to a