

THIS WORK IS STILL IN PROGRESS,

And it always will be.

Gatekeeping Revolutionary Ideas is Counterrevolutionary

Dear reader,

Hello! Thank you for spending some time with me.

First of all, don't skip this disclaimer.

You can think of this piece as an autoethnography. You can also think of it as an open letter.

Take it as you choose.

It doesn't matter what I say it is. It only matters what you make of it.

You may find yourself upset with me as you read this. You may find it echoes your own feelings. You might strongly disagree with me. You might love what I'm saying. It may be a bit of both. Depending on your circumstances, your experience with this piece of work may differ. In all cases, I invite you to lean into your emotions and tear my work apart, push it further, free it from the shackles I may have unknowingly placed it within. As I said before, this work will always be incomplete, and it is not and will never be only my work.

I have not structured this work in a way that is academically conventional. That is intentional.

This work serves as a critique and ultimately is a denouncement of theoretical social science in Western and Westernized universities as it stands.

It would make a mockery of this work to respect academic conventions in writing it.

Through adopting this format, I am attempting to subvert (undermine) the traditional academic writing format used in such fields in many ways:

(1) It undermines the hegemony of academic literature by placing it in the footnotes. You can refer to my footnotes if you would like to know what the literature says about what I am saying. You don't have to if you don't want to.

(2) It undermines the academy's insistence on teaching us to overcite and underthink by placing my voice at the forefront of my work, making my positions transparent. This also is done to focus on the importance of the frightening task of independent thought. It is an effort to abandon overreliance on other people's thoughts (referred to as 'the literature' in academic circles), that ultimately leads to the constant reproduction of thought...and the reproduction of systems that kill independent thought.

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(3) It undermines citation methods that not only restrict room for creativity by forcing thinkers to structure their thoughts in inflexible ways, but also dehumanizes the authors who only get mentioned by last name (eg: making many women's names sound like they are men's names) and are often plugged in devoid of context;

(4) It allows uninterrupted access to the author's thoughts, prioritizes subjectivity and does not pretend to be objective or authoritative.

(6) The writing style undermines the exclusive and obscure writing style of academic work. Rather, it emphasizes an attempt to engage a wide audience (of students, educators, academic staff, prospective students and everyone else who feels that this issue concerns them) instead of primarily and exclusively being in conversation with other academics.

(7) It approaches the reader as a human being who has a stake in what is being said

(8) Instead of bringing academic literature to the forefront of the text, this piece brings music, memes, and other forms of popular culture to the forefront of the text. This is me practicing what I preach: embracing and learning from knowledge regardless of format.

(9) Any works referenced are linked to their accessible files that anyone can download to view for themselves. This means that pirating has taken place. I have no issues stealing from the publishers who steal from me and you everyday. More on this at the very end of this piece.

(10) Anyone who views this piece of work through the public google doc link that allows commenting and editing is welcomed to comment and edit to be in conversation with others and make this work truly a work in progress. All comments and suggested modifications will remain publicly available. Be messy and be harsh if you so wish. If you have received a link to this work, feel free to pass it on to anyone you would like.

Link:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1iKKQMml16EcjJs2YQdLOZO2DUeiURxjkCGDwLcUw_0/edit?usp=sharing

Don't be shocked by my structure, misspelling, slang. Let go of the conventions. Even if just for a moment. Or two. Let's look at the big picture together. Let's reimagine the university together.

I will try my best to always speak in the first person so as to not impose my views on you. I'll speak from my experience. I will address you as I write, but sometimes, in anger I address the university.

Needless to say, this is a very limited effort.

Why am I angry at the university?

I'm angry because the university does not teach me to make a difference¹. I study and have studied social science. So, here I'm talking about the university in the context of the social sciences in Western and westernized universities. Depending on where you went to school and what you studied, your problems with the university may be different. I invite you to empathize with my position, reflect on how you relate to it and then to go further than I did. To problematize the university further, based on your own problems and experiences with it.

I started my university journey at a seemingly exciting time. A revolution was taking place in Egypt where I'm from. It was then that I felt I wanted to be part of the wave of change. It was then that I felt that I could be part of the change. I felt hopeful. I felt I could be useful. With that going on, studying politics at uni felt like a good idea. I had to go to uni. For kids who grew up like me, an Egyptian middle-class expat in Kuwait, going to uni was what you had to do.

You can say that I went into uni with a romanticized idea of what higher education can do for me and what it can help me do for my community. Just like most people who study what I do, I went to classes where I was taught what Western men thought of the world in complex words. The university was showing me a menu of ideas that were cathartic to entertain in class. Anti-racism, decolonization, and democracy were all ideas that I was exposed to at university.

There were the 20-page readings and the long definitions all there to teach me about leftist ideas. I read sometimes and pretended to read other times. Not because I'm lazy, which I am, but because it can honestly get so boring. But, as a student, reading the material was my job. Like any good worker, I pulled myself from the bootstrap, put my head down, put in the work, and got my expensive degrees.

All for nothing it seemed. Beyond the fences of the university, none of my friends, coworkers or family spoke as they did in the readings². Don't get me wrong, everyone often discussed racism,

¹ Scott Aaranson [writes](#) that there is plenty of analysis explaining the absurdity of academia. What is missing, he tells us, is not analysis but *anger*.

² In his piece '[Dilemmas of theoretical progress](#)', James Rule asserts that assessing the progress of social science is necessary in order to ensure that the public continues to fund the endeavors of social scientists. He argues that for that to happen, social scientists must provide "convincing and durable" answers to the big questions pondered by the general public (Rule 1994, p. 245). He follows up by arguing that in order to assure that theoretical revelations are progressive, relevant and helpful the standards of theoretical enterprises must be set by requirements from those who would be considered "theoretical outsiders" (Rule 1994, p. 246). When assessing Rule's claim that the progress of social science must be monitored in order to be honest consumers of public funds parallel to his insinuation that the public must set the requirements of theoretical inquiry the problematic nature of his claims is revealed; this is for many reasons.

First of all, he does not define what he means by 'theoretical outsiders': is it the entirety of the general public? is it the private organisations which fund academic endeavors? If he is indeed referring to the entirety of the general public then Rule is assuming that this is indeed a transparent, uninterrupted, unfiltered, mechanism by which the general public can set requirements that is readily available to social scientists. It is also assuming that the public is well connected with social science. On the other hand, if Rule here is referring to the funding institutions then he enters controversial territory. Outsourcing the standards of theoretical practice to organisations in exchange for funding does not only jeopardise the quality of work but it also surrenders academic freedom and replaces it with the respective organisational agenda. It will not be a social science for the people, it will be a social science for the highest bidder.

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decolonization, and democracy. They sometimes overlapped with ideas I came across in my readings and other times they had their original takes on the issues of our concern. But, much was lost.

The readings lost out on the rich ideas of my peers. The readings mostly engaged with each other, but rarely did they engage with ideas outside the readings. My peers and I lost on the ideas in the readings that can sometimes help support our conversations. Support our reflections and the actions we hoped to take to make life better. Support our praxis. In the disconnect, much is lost.

The university showed me some cool ideas about change and revolution. It did. But it did not show me how to bring these ideas to life. It seemed that ideas lived and died in journals and books. In the university, these ideas only come to life to inspire the student or the (academic) worker to write an article or complete similar assignments (usually written in academic code). Surely, the university told me a little bit about what Marx said about capitalism, but in a world where I have access to the internet, I could've learnt about Marx's ideas in plenty of spaces for free. For example, university professor David Harvey has a YouTube channel called [Reading Marx's Capital with David Harvey](#) where he provides "A series of free open courses consisting of close readings of Marx in video lectures by Professor David Harvey"³.

There are many examples of other good Samaritans who make education free and accessible on the web across all disciplines. The point is, it's possible to learn this stuff online. All I'd need is a connection to the internet. This is not like studying mechanical engineering for example, where it is not just about the learning material but having access to resources that the university lab owns. If I am studying social science at the university level, especially if I'm not in a degree which requires special equipment reserved in labs, what is the edge of the university in this context?

Is the edge access to the bright minds of the professors that the university has in residence? Alright, I'll budge. But, to what end? Just to transfer knowledge from their mind to mine⁴? Like I'm some sort of USB storage device? Or to point me towards a perspective that I might not have considered? To be provocative? I mean, movies are provocative, books are provocative. What's the edge? That's simply not good enough. As students and educators, we should not be complacent and pretend that this is sufficient. I don't think you can say with a good conscience that this is sufficient. How do we make the university an experience further than that which you could simply access for free online? Building that reality would require a breakdown of the hierarchy between educator and student. A breakdown that would allow us to build a new world together as much as we can.

I work for that day where we reclaim the spaces of the university together. Educators and students as equals, as allies. We outnumber the overpaid executives who reap the fruit of our labor and our

³ To allude to the richness of the content, I provide you with the example of his playlist [Reading Marx's Capital Vol I with David Harvey \(2007\)](#) which is comprised of 13 lectures each with a duration north of an hour and a half. For those of you who need it, I'll add that David is a professor at City University of New York and PhD in geography from the University of Cambridge 1961.

⁴ This is what Paolo Freire calls the banking model of education in his wildly popular book called [Pedagogy of the Oppressed](#). He denounces this indoctrinating practice as a dehumanizing process. Instead, he calls on people to exercise education as the practice of freedom. In his proposal, he says education must encourage students and educators to reflect upon their lives and struggles and learn what they need in order to be able to improve their situations and work towards their own humanization.

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families' labor. We pay their salaries, not just 'we' the students but also 'we' the taxpayers. In my world, the edge of the university would be that it is a vibrant space where people come to learn, organize, and mobilize for a freer and more dignified life for all. The university would be a place where anyone can go to be part of something bigger than themselves. The university would welcome everyone and accept them for who they are. It wouldn't try to replace their voice with its preferred languages and behaviors, it would embrace difference. It would be a space where many knowledges can be inspired and created. It would be a space where we find new ways to access our thoughts. It would be where the juices flow freely. Not by coercion. Not by being told how you must produce knowledge. Not by being told what the right way to write and think is. Not by being told that you are not cultured unless you've read this guy and that guy first. It would be a place where everyone's knowledge and knowledge making is respected. It would be a place where knowledge making is necessarily collective. Not collective in the artificial way that group projects or research projects are collective today in the university. Collective as in messy without a blueprint, without treading lightly, without approvals from above, whether the above is a professor, a committee or an administration. A collective that confidently seizes the public the space that is the university.

Social change is collective. That's why knowledge creation about social change that is not collectively conceived is necessarily an attempt at oppression⁵. Bringing down systems and resurrecting new ones has never been accomplished by one person alone, it has always been the product of the collective. If the strategy and thought of revolution is not collectively designed and agreed upon, then it is necessarily imposed.

Here, I don't speak of revolution as a lone wolf event. Rather, I speak of revolution as an everyday practice. Until we have society without undeserved authority, without coercion, without dehumanization. Until we have our dignity back, and until we don't have to either work or starve, then revolution must be a lifestyle and not an event, and certainly not a spectacle⁶.

Needless to say, this idea will be accused of being utopian. It's only utopian because us people who can afford to make alternative choices, reproduce the system rather than try to change it. The mentality being: if it ain't broke why fix it. I don't know about you, but I'm tired of reproducing a system that cripples us for the benefit of a few.

Is the university a place where radical ideas are neutralized and stripped of their power?

⁵ Paolo Freire tells us that social change must happen through dialogue and dialogue must humbly be guided by love for others, trust in others and a belief that social change is possible. Pretending that someone can independently orchestrate social change is delusional and disrespects people's intelligence. So, why are we taught to write papers and publish about social change in ivory tower isolation and eventually live and die in ivory tower isolation as well?

⁶ You can call the need to make lifestyle changes to resist power a 'Foucauldian' view of power. In such an understanding of power, power is not seen to be centered in an individual or entity. It flows through people, events, entities, times, and spaces. It is expressed culturally, symbolically, economically and certainly through discipline and punishment. Therefore, resistance must not only be expressed in terms of struggle on the streets during a protest for example. No, resistance must (and does) go further. So, its not just front-line activism that is necessary. Rather, it is also lifestyle changes that must be adopted to resist power. I give examples of what these changes can be in the context of the university (especially in the last section of this piece). The examples of lifestyle changes that students and educators can adopt in order to resist the power manifested in the university includes but is not limited to: saying no. Saying no to dull assignments and instead suggesting more vibrant and useful alternatives. Like all resistance, resisting the university does not come without risk and the risk can be financial but also people may attempt to assassinate your character. If you choose to engage in resistance, educate yourself on risk and ask yourself what can you afford to lose and act on that basis.

Yes⁷.

The university taught me to write essays explaining the different factors why a revolution failed but it systemically disallows me to co-write a revolutionary strategy. Coming up with strategies to make structural change is something the university does not engage with, at least not meaningfully. Strategizing is not the mode of acceptable knowledge creation in the academy. But if you would like to write an extended definition of an obscure concept, then congratulations you've come to the right place. I'm forced to concern myself with benign questions instead of concerning myself with what can be done to make things better.

Even the idea of group work at university is not embraced. Sure, you can do a group project in some classes if the syllabus allows it. In fact, the university will probably tell you that it encourages group work because teamwork is an important skill sought by companies. So, that type of group work is allowed. However, if you want to work on your university assignment with a friend who isn't in your class, or perhaps a family member with an interest in your work then that kind of group work is not embraced. As a member of the university, you are to work within its confines and only with people who are confined with you (well, unless you went through an elaborate ethics approval process that is now allowing you to cut out lots of things you wanted to do and discuss with people but at least it is allowing you to speak to people on the outside).

The university encourages a very limited and restrictive kind of knowledge production. Therefore, it is no surprise that it does not equip us to make a difference in the world. After all, this is not the kind of knowledge production it concerns itself with. If you want evidence look no further than the assignments in social science courses across the board in all levels of higher education - and ask yourself, what are these courses actually trying to teach these students to do and be like? Take a look at the thousands of journal articles published every month, and ask yourself - what of them does anyone even hear?

To answer my initial question, I am angry because the university forces me to be limited.

1. Limited in who I communicate with

The university only appreciates my communication with a small audience. As a Ph.D. student, I am constantly told that I must publish. If I don't publish and publish a lot, then I simply will be forgotten by the academy. In capitalism, that translates to: if I don't publish, then I won't get hired. Publishing means publishing journal articles. Usually, they are around 20 pages and read by other academics. I am instructed to write journal articles so that I can be in conversation with other academics. It is in this way that I can climb the academic ladder. If I chose to do things differently, I best know that I risk my place here in the academic world. It is not with other academics that I wish to speak.

⁷ It is not secret, the university has taken over radical ideas and remodeled them to be rather dull and alienating, which is blasphemous given that they were born to move people. To demonstrate this [Abraham DeLeon writes in 2008](#) "One does not have to look too far to examine how activists like Rosa Parks, MLK and other radical figures have been domesticated into the current neo-liberal order" (p. 129). He further elaborates, "In the past, Marxism included calls for social change and protest, but unfortunately it appears that institutional acceptance of Marx has domesticated its message, much like what has happened to multicultural education in the academy" (p. 132).

Why am I forced to speak to them? I'm happy to speak to them. I'm even happy to speak to academics often. But, why am I forced to speak to them *exclusively*? Why am I supposed to produce knowledge in spaces where *they* primarily reside? Do academics know more about social struggle than everyone else? (they don't, in my opinion) And if they do then why don't they talk to people outside their bubbles about it so that we can all learn and work towards overcoming our struggles? Why is talking to everyone else demoted by the system?

The university limits communication both ways. It discourages communication from outsiders to the academy (see next section for more) and it discourages communication from the academy to the world beyond the academy. So, even if some of what I learnt is not that disconnected from reality, as in it does a good job of explaining reality, what is the point of it if people cannot access it? Cannot access it because it is written in academic code, cannot access it because it is stored behind a paywall, cannot access it because not everyone has time to read 20 page papers. So, even if the content is well connected to the struggles of real life, by virtue of gatekeeping it becomes disconnected.

Listen, it is simple really. Gatekeeping revolutionary ideas is counter-revolutionary. I read that in a comment on Instagram. I sadly cannot find the post the comment was on, but I will keep searching. It's a concise way of summarizing everything I'm discussing with you. It means if someone is coming up with revolutionary ideas but not working on making these ideas accessible, then they are defeating their own purpose. If we assume that the point of coming up with revolutionary ideas is to inspire and guide change, then making these ideas easily understood and easily accessible for people of different skills, people in different spaces, people with different time commitments would be one of the primary priorities. However, in the academy this is not the case.

Unlike most other walks of life, some academics have the luxury to sit there and think of revolutionary ideas for social change. Most people don't have the time and space to do that because of the financial pressures of our capitalist system. So, if someone's job is to work on research projects that tackle revolutionary ideas, it simply makes no sense not to make these ideas accessible to the public. By accessible, I don't mean just publish open access. By accessible, I mean easy to understand for people of different abilities and from different walks of life. By accessible, I mean easy to understand and easy to access for as many people as the issue affects as possible.

Also, what if I choose not to publish? Why is that academic suicide? I thought the academy was about knowledge production, not about keeping the publishers in business.

Something is awfully twisted here.

2. Limited in how I communicate

Like I just mentioned, as a PhD student I am expected to produce knowledge (research) in written form and usually in a journal article. What made journals the most legitimate form of knowledge communication? Who declared journals king? Why did they do that? Nobody really explains that. It is just another tradition that we must blindly follow.

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What about all the other forms of communication? Why doesn't the university teach me that? And when it does it is a bonus, never the main thing. Why do I have to write properly? Too proper. Alienating proper. Alienating for me and alienating for anyone who is not used to the kind of language we are supposed to engage with. When I talk to my friends, I don't talk proper like that. I use slang, I use memes, I use incomplete spellin, I use videos, I swear sometimes too. I'm silent a lot of the time too. They can speak to me too. I let them speak as much as they want. I help them say what they want to say. Sometimes I cut them off. Sometimes I talk over them. Sometimes we text. Sometimes we text all night. Other times I don't respond to my texts for days. It's messy. Journals are neat. Unnaturally neat. Authoritatively neat. Restrictively neat.

In so many ways journals limit knowledge production. They exclude many forms of creativity. They try to pose as the most knowing entities. PhD students are told that their task is to expand human knowledge about a specific topic. But, what about everyone who expands human knowledge that isn't part of the university and does not encode knowledge in the way the university recognizes, understands and celebrates? The knowledge that the university and the journals hold is not the height of human knowledge, it is only the height of human knowledge within the academy's limiting rules and traditions. The intellectual superiority of the academy is a farce. It would have more credibility had it included other forms of knowledge production.

What knowledge is lost when we exclude nearly all popular forms of communication?

It would be very ill-informed to say that social science academics are more informed about social struggle than non-academics if we never even account for most forms of knowledge production.

Knowledge production that is: colloquial knowledge, unschooled knowledge, high school dropout knowledge, undisciplined knowledge, never read Foucault knowledge, never bothered with citations and APA format knowledge, not a good writer knowledge, spoken knowledge, artistic knowledge, rubbish at English knowledge, oral knowledge, visual knowledge, unwritten knowledge.

The university does not engage in such 'deviance'.

Does the university have no place for knowledge that does not follow its archaic traditions?

Then where do we go to practice this kind of knowledge? How come there is no space for thinking for people who do not wish to think so rigidly.

In many ways, for those of us lucky enough to have the time to go to university, it is the only time in our lives where we have time to ponder important questions. But, if you do not think and produce your thoughts in a very specific way the university punishes you. Assignments are coercive. For students and for faculty.

Universities need to get with the times already. If you (the university) are going to take away my dollars and my labor, get with the times. I'm here to learn and to give back. But, I'll decide how I give back. Don't

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force me to give back through a journal article. I don't believe that is a way to give back. If others believe that it is a good way to give back, I'm not stopping them. But stop forcing us to be knowledge-producing clones of each other. Empower me to make a difference in the ways that I am different, don't waste my time.

Show me how to explain big ideas to my friends. Show me how to make a video breaking down dense ideas. Show me how to go to people where they are. I'm not interested in where academics who write about people like me are. I'm interested in what people like me determine are their struggles. I'm interested in speaking to and reaching people like me. It is only through building these meaningful relationships that we can truly expand knowledge in a productive way rather than an extractive way.

I'm not interested in conducting research to accumulate knowledge, to prove to my committee that I have discovered something new. I'm not interested in writing super rich insights extracted from interviews into a book or journal. I'm not interested in taking from people to give to the publishers and the university. I'm not interested in knowledge as accumulation and knowledge as extraction. I've given enough to the university. My mom and dad have worked late nights to give to the university. I have given my sanity and my health and now my money to the university. I don't spend as much time with my husband because the university takes away time. I owe the university nothing. The fact is, the university owes me, it owes all of us. It is time to *take* from the university. Time to remake the university into an entity that gives.

I'm interested in making things happen with the people these things affect.

♪ Listening tip: listen to this song and think of the girl J. Cole references here as academics who publish papers without making an effort to connect with and speak the language of the communities their work is about ♪

♪ [Intermission: Snow on Tha Bluff - J. Cole](#)

N*gg*s be thinkin' I'm deep, intelligent, fooled by my college degree
 My IQ is average, there's a young lady out there, she way smarter than me
 I scrolled through her timeline in these wild times, and I started to read
She mad at these crackers, she mad at these capitalists, mad at these murder police
She mad at my n*gg*s, she mad at our ignorance, she wear her heart on her sleeve
She mad at the celebrities, lowkey I be thinkin' she talkin' 'bout me
Now I ain't no dummy to think I'm above criticism
So when I see something that's valid, I listen
But shit, it's something about the queen tone that's botherin' me

She strike me as somebody blessed enough to grow up in conscious environment
 With parents that know 'bout the struggle for liberation and in turn they provide her with

A perspective and awareness of the system and unfairness that afflicts 'em
And the clearest understandin' of what we gotta do to get free
And the frustration that fills her words seems to come from the fact that most people don't see
Just 'cause you woke and I'm not, that shit ain't no reason to talk like you better than me
How you gon' lead?

When you attackin' the very same n*gg*s that really do need the shit that you sayin'?

Instead of conveying you holier, come help get us up to speed

Shit, it's a reason it took like two hundred years for our ancestors just to get freed

These shackles be lockin' the mental way more than the physical

I look at freedom like trees, can't grow a forest like overnight

Hit the ghetto and slowly start plantin' your seeds

Fuck is the point of you preaching your message to those that already believe what you believe?

I'm on some "Fuck a retweet, " most people is sheep

You got all the answers but how you gon' reach?

If I could make one more suggestion respectfully

I would say it's more effective to treat people like children

Understandin' the time and love and patience that's needed to grow

This change is inevitable but ain't none of us seen this before

Therefore we just gotta learn everything as we go

I struggle with thoughts on the daily

Feel like a slave that somehow done saved enough coins to buy his way up outta slavery

Thinkin' just maybe, in my pursuit to make life so much better for me and my babies

I done betrayed the very same people that look at me like I'm some kind of a hero

Because of the zeros that's next to the commas

But look here, I promise I'm not who you think

Ran into this n*gg* outside of the store yesterday

He said something that had me like, "Wait"

He was like "Cole, 'preciate what you been doin', my n*gg*, that's real"

But damn, why I feel faker than Snow on Tha Bluff?

Well maybe 'cause deep down I know I ain't doing enough

"If you hate it so much, why are you here?"

If this is the elephant in the room, let's address it. If this question did not cross your mind, then you can skip this section.

Like I said before, I came to the university to try to make a difference. I came to the university as a place of learning and growth. Growing up, that's what I was told universities are for. Obviously, I was naive.

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Just because the university is a certain way, does not mean I either have to accept it as it is or find somewhere else to be. It would be rather bigoted to insinuate that. I would know. I grew up in oil rich Kuwait. As a resident, not a citizen (crucial distinction) I was told many times “if you hate it so much, why are you here”. If I ever dared complain (and believe me there were many reasons to complain like ruthless racism), I was promptly scolded and told to go back to where I came from. People who tell me “why are you here then” when I talk about how problematic universities are, strikingly remind me of racists in Kuwait.

The logic being: if you don't like something, don't try to improve it, just leave. Personally, as much as I can afford I will not bow down to that logic. I will not be silenced. I will be seen. I will speak to power to its face. I will bear the costs of this risk as much as I can afford⁸.

I'll assume good intentions and entertain the logic.

Unlike Kuwait, the university has a big stake in our lives. Kuwait is just a tiny gulf state irrelevant to most people's lives. By contrast, the Western(ized) university populates the Earth. Striving to change the university into an instrument which serves our struggles is an important fight. I can accept that some people in Kuwait think I'm inferior because I happen to have a green passport instead of a blue one. I can take snide remarks. My skin is thicker than their tired microaggressions.

What I cannot accept is a worldwide colonizing system that invites people who are motivated to make social change and transforms them into docile bodies who reproduce the very systems they hoped to change. Baited, I was.

I'm not saying that every person who submits an application to a social science program to a university is a little Martin Luther King and the university magically brainwashes them into becoming a narc. The university wishes it was this powerful. I'm saying that the university attracts people who hope to “change the world” and then it does not help show them the way. In my experience, it has tried to lead me astray. Not that the university knows the way to a better world. It does not have this kind of knowledge.

What I mean is that it inhibits the possibility and potential of change by giving out busy work assignments detached from real world happenings and tells us to complete these lame assignments in ways that are so uninspiring and disempowering.

⁸ [Phil Hedges](#) wrote an article titled ‘Deserting academia: Quitting as infrapolitics’. His article analyses the phenomenon of quit lit. Quit Lit is a genre of writing in which academics and graduate students write confessional blog posts or tweets about why they chose to leave academia. Phil Hedges views Quit Lit to be a form of infrapolitics. Infrapolitics are acts that “improve the position of the actor without challenging the dominant authority”. So, he understands Quit Lit as a condemnation of the academy that does not confront dominant authority. Therefore, he argues that such acts may fall short of improving the academy. For him, it is a form of leaving without a fight. While I don't agree with everything he says, I see the merit of his argument and I believe there is value and also risk in facing power head on. That being said, I completely respect all those who choose to leave the academy's toxicity. It is a sane and brave thing to do. But for those who do not feel they must leave, I present to you another option: stay and fight. That's where I am now, but that may not be where I'll be later on.

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So, I'm here because I think this is an important fight⁹. My work is centered on critiquing the university and searching for alternatives of how we can use the university space, time and resources because I believe that one way to resist is to resist in one's own space. So, although I entered the university space with a completely different project in mind, I find that this project is more worthy of my time than working to be a fake expert about a topic that does not belong to me.

So, to answer the question "why are you here": I am here to conduct myself in a way that productively offends the institution and those that have been institutionalized. Offending is necessary for deconstructing and deconstructing is necessary for rebuilding¹⁰.

I'm not here to be more like the system.

So, if you are asking me "if you are so angry, why are here", I will respond to you and say:

How are you here and not angry?

What would I do differently and what about risk?

Forget what they told you in school, get educated
I ain't sayin' play by the rules, get educated
-Get Educated by Akala

In line with anarchist ethics, this is not a prescription. These are only my thoughts. I impose nothing on you. Feel free to do as you please. Rip my work apart. Push it further. Take more from the university. But please do not submit to the university, as much as you can afford.

Needless to say, standing in the way of capitalism and how a capitalist system needs the university to be is a risky entanglement.

Do it as much as you can afford to do it. I've included several suggestions, each with different degrees of risk, different degrees of denouncement and different volumes of acting against the university. Don't do it as I tell you to do it, do it as you choose to do it. My thoughts are only laid out here to help ignite your fire.

Refuse¹¹ traditions that disrespect the intelligence of non-academics

⁹ [James Bowen tells us](#) that Anarchism begins "with the boring, small-scale, mundane business of making positive, non-alienated relationships with our friends and neighbors and remaining open to new people and ideas". This is found in his piece 'Moving targets: Rethinking anarchist strategies' published in 2018.

¹⁰ Jeff Ferrell, a criminologist, wrote a chapter called "[Against method, against authority...for anarchy](#)" outlining an anarchist critique of methodologies used in the academy. He explains within that chapter how the passion for destruction is itself a creative passion. To highlight how destruction can create new possibilities he writes on page 80: "blowing open the box of orthodox methodology begins a process of intellectual renewal that, by definition, lacks definition".

¹¹ There will be more on the concept of refusal below.

Gatekeeping Revolutionary Ideas is Counterrevolutionary

Insist in creating knowledge in new ways. Don't be dull. Don't be a one trick pony. If you believe in your topic, then be versatile for the cause.

If you choose to write, write in new ways.

Abandon APA or MLA or whatever else system is imposed on you.

Refuse to write obscurely.

Refuse to engage in language that leaves people behind¹².

If you must write, write in a way that includes.

Create something new.

What is a freer way to write? Make your own new structure.

Use the language of the people your work is about. Don't use the academy's language. Reappropriate your voice.

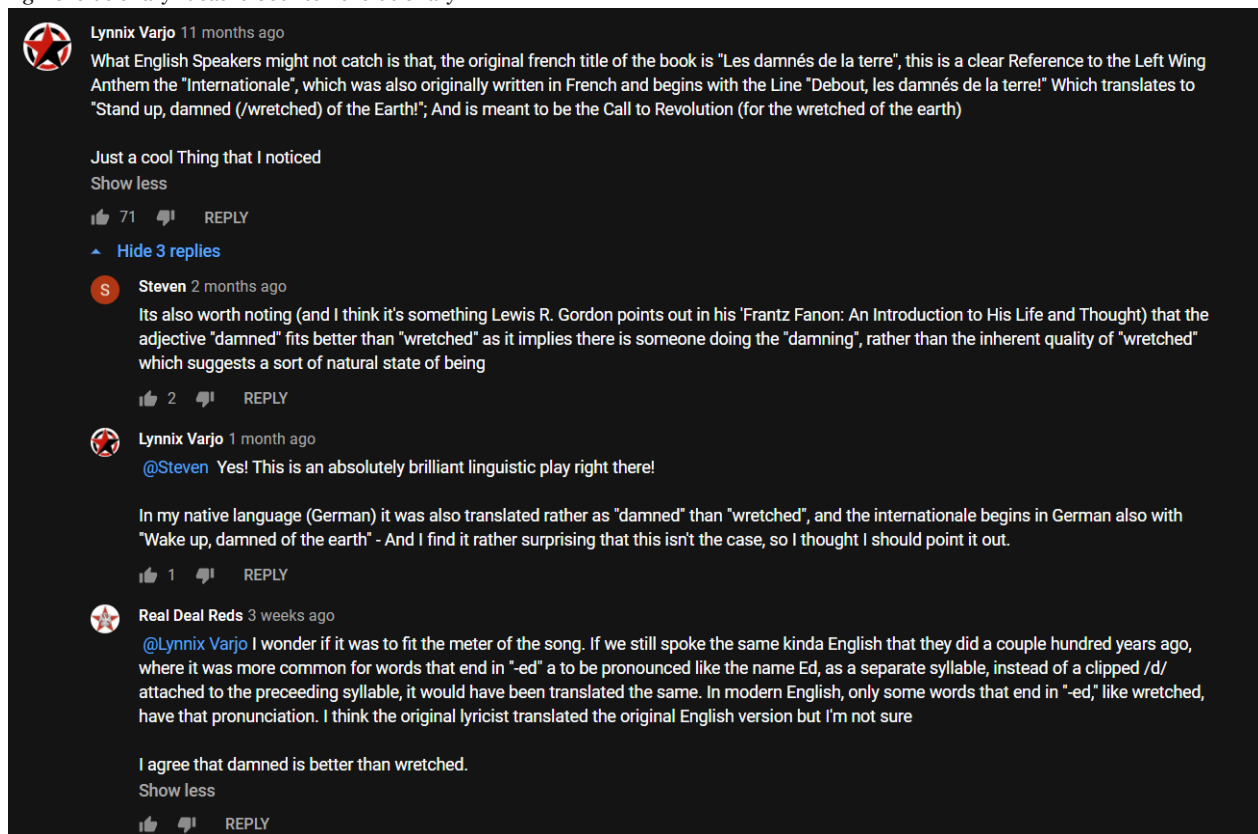
Write in a voice true to yours. Write in a way that would resonate with others.

Don't mimic the academy's voice if it is not the voice you feel most authentic using (if the university has not erased your voice yet, if the university hasn't made you forget what you sounded like).

Don't be a puppet. Ask yourself, who will understand what I write given the way am I writing? Tweak and keep tweaking until your writing includes the people you are writing about. Read the footnote below. Franz Fanon conveys this point so well in his book *The Wretched of the Earth*.

While we are mentioning Franz Fanon, let me leave you with this interesting YouTube comments section exchange:

¹² In a book called [The Wretched of the Earth](#) Franz Fanon writes on page 131: "if we choose to use a language comprehensible only to law and economics graduates it will be easy to prove that the masses need to have their life run for them. But if we speak in plain language, if we are not obsessed with a perverse determination to confuse the issues and exclude the people, then it will be clear that the masses comprehend all the finer points and every artifice. Resorting to technical language means you are determined to treat the masses as uninitiated. Such language is a poor front for the lecturer's intent to deceive the people and leave them on the sidelines. Language's endeavor to confuse is a mask behind which looms an even greater undertaking to dispossess. The intention is to strip the people of their possessions as well as their sovereignty. **You can explain anything to the people provided you really want them to understand. And if you think they can be dispensed with, that on the contrary they would be more of a nuisance to the smooth running of the many private and limited companies whose aim is to push them further into misery, then there is no more to be said.**"



If you have to obey traditions, produce your work in many formats

Go to people where they are. Let me tell you, people are not on the Taylor & Francis website. They are more likely on facebook, in restaurants, on YouTube, in a party, at work, at school. I don't need to tell you where people are. You know where your people are. Communicate with the people your work is about in the way that they would be most receptive to it. If the best way to reach your people is through video, then do that. If it is through forming a meet up and becoming friends, then do that. If it is through music, then do that. Ideally, that's all you would do and you wouldn't waste time writing journal articles that only other academics would read. But, this might just have to be something you do in addition to your work.

Yes, it is more work. Yes you might not know how. But you don't have to do it alone. In fact, it would be best if you don't do it alone. You might even find a way to turn it into a revenue stream (not that that's what it's about, but capitalism is crippling – so if you can do that without harming people, then try your luck). The upside is that relatively this act does not involve as much risk as other things suggested here.

I am compelled here to borrow words from [Anarchy Secession Subsistence Blog post called 'post literacy'](#):

“Historically elite classes kept a great deal of knowledge to themselves, keeping the peasantry ignorant of important facts, which made literacy and books sort of levelling tools, a way to even the playing field. Clearly, in that context, we seem better off with them. But are we really? Aren't there other ways to impart important knowledge? If all the municipal buildings and the banks

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were burned to the ground, if there was no longer records of ownership or debt as everything was freely shared, what sort of information would still be necessary to record and store?

So I am encouraging us to look more closely at literacy, the social order and relationships that created it and the way it forms our thinking, reinforces unhealthy habits, and reproduces oppressive and uniform social orders. I am also speculating that truly free people deep-rooted in habitats would probably not pursue literacy. Without elites that have an interest in keeping certain knowledge for themselves, facts and philosophy would be shared and debated equally through daily activities, not contained in books.”

So, think about the format in which you produce your work. What power relations are implicit in how you produce your work? What do people need to have and how do they need to think and be in order to be able to access and relate to your work? Who thinks your work is valuable? Why do they think that? Who is indifferent about your work? Why do they feel that way? Who is bound to never come across your work? Why is that? Are you ok with that?

Deconstruct what the format you produce your work means. What relationships does it help you build? What relationships is it not useful for? What relationships does it break or ruin? Who does your work connect with? Who does it alienate? Are you happy with your answers to these questions?

Read these questions again while thinking of who your work is about. If your work is about Arab women like me, then think of Arab women as you ponder these questions.

Don't Settle for Academic Evaluation of your Work

Even if you have to get your work evaluated by academics, don't settle for just that. Don't value academic feedback more than non academic feedback. Those who can give you good valuable feedback on your work are those your work is about. They'll be able to recognize the quality of your work. They'll be able to determine if it is a whole load of noise or if it is valuable and insightful. If your work is about people of color, show it to people of color. If your work is about women, show it to women. If your work is about colonialism, show it to those who have paid the price of being colonized. If your work is about a government policy, show your work to people this policy has affected.

It's so twisted that as PhD students we go into our programs with the dissertation as our goal. The central metric of our success as doctoral students is whether or not a few people who are usually not from the communities we are interested in approve of our work or not.

Just because your committee or your professor likes your work doesn't mean it is valuable. Just because they don't like your work doesn't mean it actually sucks. Sometimes, they don't know what they are on about.

Demystify the misplaced (often illegitimate) authority of your professor/committee. Return authority and respect to where it belongs: with the people. If your work is about teenagers, they are the ones who are best placed to determine the quality of your work. The authority lies with them.

Just because academic evaluation mechanisms deny community voice, doesn't mean you should too. Trusting your community is mandatory if your work revolves around anti-oppressive social change¹³. Without prioritizing seeking feedback from the right sources, what are you really doing? Are you being true to your cause if you do not trust the very people the cause affects? Are you behaving in an oppressive way?

If you only seek and value academic feedback on your work, what does this say about your goals? If your goals are purely academic progression for yourself, then fine. If your goals are larger, if your goals are revolutionary, if you seek to make a change, then academic feedback is simply not enough and seeking only academic feedback silences those your work is about.

Interrupt what they tell you university is supposed to be and make it what you need it to be

Try to reimagine why you are here and what you can do. Try to listen to your gut when things don't feel right.

Does your assignment make sense to do? Is it useful?

Interrupt the curriculum, make it relevant.

Interrupt theory, make it coherent¹⁴. If your mum, sister, brother, father, partner or whoever cannot understand the theory you believe in - then believe that it is not their fault.

Theory must be coherent.

The whole point of theory should be to explain the chaos of the world so that we can make sense of it. Explain what's wrong with the world. Explain how we can change it. Explain how we can do our part.

Interrupt anything that is lifeless.

Don't accept monkey business.

¹³ In his prolific book [Pedagogy of the Oppressed](#), Paolo Freire misses no opportunity to highlight that trust in people is non-negotiable. He tells us that trust does not have to be naive but it has to be critically present. He explains that through dialogue trust is built. He writes, "to glorify democracy and to silence the people is a farce" (p. 89). Make sure that the way you seek and value feedback does not silence the very people your work focuses on. He also writes, "it is necessary to trust in the oppressed and in their ability to reason" without which revolutionary change cannot take place.

¹⁴ [In a speech in 1990 anarchist Murray Bookchin](#) tells us that theory must try to make our understanding of the world rational "Which doesn't mean that this reality is rational but that we understand how it came about and where it is going". He adds It is not only important that we develop theories that orient us but "we have to develop a stratum of society that is, at the very least, capable of theorizing, of giving coherence to things, yet which is at the same part of a public sphere or tries to create a public sphere".

***Dare to Think for Yourself and Enough with 5 Page Citations in a 15-page Piece of Work*¹⁵**

The university forces us to write articles. I spoke about that and touched upon some of the reasons why that's not a superior practice. You might find that in order to make your way through your academic journey, you will have to submit to the university and write articles in the obscure way that it demands. So be it. But, one thing you can try to do is to abandon the great thinkers in your field for a minute. Let them go. Even if just for a minute. Think for yourself.

Believe that you can come up with thorough analyses and useful ideas without relying on 'the greats' of academic literature. Try to not let the 'body of literature' be the box that limits you. Think without it, like it thought without you and many times like it thought without the people it is about.

Read academic literature for inspiration, read it when you are stuck, but don't read it to mimic, don't use it in your work just because you have to.

Use it as much as it is necessary to make your point clear to the reader. Be stingy with it and be generous with your thoughts. As long as it is helpful for the reader, use it.

Your work is not incomplete without some 'great' person's ideas.

I'm not saying think alone, I'm saying don't idolize – there's already a lot of that, it is deafening. I'm saying don't be afraid to put your ideas out.

Don't be afraid to cite 5 works instead of 30. Be vulnerable, dive into your mind and bring out your voice untainted as much as you can¹⁶.

***Be offensive, say no, suggest Something Better*¹⁷**

¹⁵ Maybe you'll like it more from [Immanuel Kant](#): "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage. Nonage is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance. This nonage is self-imposed if its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in indecision and lack of courage to use one's own mind without another's guidance. *Dare to know! (Sapere aude.)* "Have the courage to use your own understanding," is therefore the motto of the enlightenment."

¹⁶ "In graduate school the classroom became a place I hated, yet a place where I struggled to claim and maintain the right to be an independent thinker". These are the words of bell hooks in her book [Teaching to Transgress](#) written in 1994 and still true for many today. bell hooks is a well-known activist, feminist and critical theorist. bell hooks is a pen name belonging to Gloria Jean Watkins.

¹⁷ Not following tradition will be viewed with suspicion in the academy. There are many stories that confirm this. The late activist David Graeber ([twitter bio: "I see anarchism as something you do not an identity so don't call me the anarchist anthropologist"](#)) writes the story of his unjust firing from Yale University because of his political positions in a piece called "It wasn't a Tenure Case" written in 2017. He writes on page 5 "In extremely hierarchical environments, being nice is often seen as impertinent or subversive - at least, if one is equally friendly and sympathetic to everyone...It is thus perfectly possible to be too nice to students, and too enthusiastic about sharing ideas". Here we can even see that even just being nice can be seen as non-conformity. Being friendly to everyone equally can be seen as a stray away from tradition that may be punished. bell hooks also writes that non-conformity is equated with lack of capability in *Teaching to Transgress*. If someone is not following the rules, not following the way we do things, then he/she must not know how to do their jobs well - that is the logic. This is how they will try to discredit you. They might tell the world that you don't know any better. This is a risk that you must consider. The obligation of us non-conformist is not to discipline the different, it is to let it be, to nurture it, to add fuel to its fire.

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Carrying on from the theme of believing in yourself as a reliable source for valuable ideas, don't be afraid to design a new system and advocate for it. You are not too small and it doesn't have to be an elaborate affair. It can be as simple as designing a better way to participate in class discussions. Also, you don't have to design anything, suggest ideas off the top of your head and believe in the creativity of your group. Just because you pitch an idea, or recognize a flaw doesn't mean you have to do everything yourself. Lean on the shoulders of your friends, colleagues and believe that they can be your allies.

What makes you feel uneasy about being at university? Start there. Be vocal. If you can afford, cause trouble. But if you cannot afford, you can still be vocal. Find out where the limits are and try to play the space to your favor. Use what you have.

Just because things are a certain way doesn't mean they have to stay that way. Today's traditions were new, and maybe even radical, ideas at one point in time. Ideas that were created by humans. You are human too. The systems that constrain us are human made systems. They are not invincible or divine. They are not untouchable. You are not too small.

Changing very small things in the system, even if it is just getting an assignment cancelled, may be the confirmation you need that the system is changeable. Sometimes I find hope in that big things are possible when I am able to cause movement in small things. So, that's why in the beginning just focus on small things. Ask yourself: What can I actually influence? Where do I already make an impact? Where do I already have a voice?

There are lots of things at uni that can use a fresh voice. You can start with things that affect you personally on a daily basis at uni. Here are some places you can start, but you are more insightful than me about what troubles your experience:

- Assignments
 - How can assignments be challenging in useful ways?
 - How can assignments push you to learn to do things you actually need to learn to do to make the world a better place?
 - How can we stop writing meaningless/arbitrary papers?
 - How can students have deciding power in what they are assigned?
- How students and faculty communicate with each other and form relationships with each other
 - How can you break hierarchies here?
 - How can the power of the professor be demystified?
 - How can faculty become allies to students?
- Feedback
 - How can feedback be more useful?
 - How can student feedback to faculty be more open and more communal?
 - How can feedback be about helping you become a better change maker rather than about gratification or humiliation (aka grades)?
 - How can we abolish grades?
- Classes
 - How can we have different courses?

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- How can students design courses with faculty?
- How can students design courses independently?

Often saying no and suggesting new things is easier to do in groups. Find allies amongst your friends, classmates and teachers. It is a boost of confidence when you are not the only one saying no.

Another thing that may work is social proof. Sometimes you just have to do things yourself outside the parameters of the institution to prove it works. Find environments where you have more control and start a project to prove that your proposition works.

Lots of change making revolves around getting people to buy into the fact that change is possible. So, sometimes you have to bring hope to others or to refute their biases.

When saying no, don't settle for the formal route. Lots of the formal mechanisms of reporting feedback are designed to mute your voice. You are set up for failure by design. One of these examples is using formal course evaluation forms to try and make a change. Lots of those evaluations are ignored or used only for internal politics. They also usually occur at points in time when things are beyond repair for example: at the very end of the course. Don't participate in this monkey business.

Do something surprising. Something that people will actually pay attention to. I can't tell you what it is that you can do for your particular situation. Just be creative. Refuse the tools the system gives you and create your own. It's cool if you set up something that wows others but it's even cooler if you are able to create genuine connections through what you do. In the simplest terms, instead of filling out a course evaluation negatively go speak to your professor and explain why you feel how you feel. Bonus points if you bring suggestions to that conversation. I know, this won't always work. You'll know what the best course of action is for your situation. But, whatever you do, try your best to refuse the system that has refused you¹⁸.

The system neglected me so I neglect the system
But still, I'm fighting I'm determined
 - *Information by Mr Traumatik*

¹⁸ The concept of refusal occupies space in theories and practices aimed at social change. Refusal is explained by Jack Halberstam (also known as Judith Halberstam), a Columbia University professor, in a chapter titled "The Wild Beyond": "we cannot be satisfied with the recognition and acknowledgement generated by the very system that denies a) that anything was ever broken and b) that we deserved to be the broken part; so we refuse to ask for recognition and instead we want to take apart, dismantle, tear down the structure that, right now, limits our ability to find each other, to see beyond it and to access the places that we know lie outside its wall. We cannot say what new structures will replace the ones we live with yet, because once we have torn shit down, we will inevitably see more and see differently and feel a new sense of wanting and being and becoming." This excerpt is on page 6 of a book called [The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten](#). This explanation of refusal can also serve as a justification of why anarchists don't believe in creating blueprints of what a better world must look like. For the same reason, I try not to offer prescriptions in my piece - only ideas that are for you to take, modify, or leave. Using Jack Halberstam's logic, we cannot determine what a better university would look like. What we want now will be different from what we want once the university as we know it is abolished. Once it is abolished, we will see things that we cannot see today, we will see each other in ways that we cannot see today, we will be able to go to places that we cannot go today. We don't know what possibilities and hindrances are waiting for us on the other side. We don't know what lies beyond until we get to that land beyond.

Building non-alienated relationships lies at the heart of social change.

So say no, but in saying no build the genuine relationships that are needed. The relationships that would not have allowed what you are saying no to to exist in the first place.

Go Underground

Used to think my style didn't fit 'til I stopped listening to all these pricks
Lost motivation to spit 'til I stopped listening to all these pricks
Used to care about views and clicks 'til I stopped listening to all these pricks
Bare industry politics 'til I stopped listening to all these pricks
 - *JME, Pricks*

To keep it brief, just like there is underground music production there can be underground knowledge production. There is a lot for us knowledge seekers to learn from underground musicians.

In the verse above, grime¹⁹ MC JME talks about record labels in an appropriately titled song 'pricks'. In many ways, that's all you need to know about record labels. What else is similar to record labels? Universities? Publishing houses? What else takes ownership and creative direction over your work for its own profit? What else tells you your style doesn't fit and brainwashes you into following its prescribed style? I wonder...

2

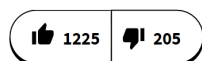


Prick

Generically known as a worthless asshole. But more [precisely](#), a prick is an [incessantly](#) annoying or obnoxious person who escalates their behavior the more they are [ignored](#).

Most [pricks need](#) to [relax](#).

by [Rosebud1776](#) December 26, 2016



Grime artists are typically independent artists. Self employed. Grime music started in pirate radio stations in the UK by the African and Caribbean people there. Grime music culture is defined by its early pirate radio start. Today, grime music is more popular and so are streaming services which have in a way replaced the necessity of pirate radio.

¹⁹ Dan Hancox provides an excellent, involved and historicized account of grime music called [Inner City Pressure: The Story of Grime](#)

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Pirate radio stations are illegal radio stations with secret studio locations. They are subversive. They are not sanctioned by the state. They undermine the state. They scoff at the power hungry state. Therefore, it is unsurprising that anarchist movements use pirate radio to transmit messages. An example of this is Radio Insurgente, the official voice of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation from 2003-2009. It operated from an undisclosed location. The Zapatistas are an anti-capitalist anarchist group of Mexican people at war with their state.

Grime grew out of a rejection of the state of things. Against the record labels. Against executives. Against poverty. Against neglect. Against control. Against the law. Against the mainstream. Pirate radio provided a space for this radiant rebellion. Grime pirate radio studios changed locations regularly to escape the government.

For grime artists, far gone are the days of pirate radio. Today, grime artists have an undeniable influence on british popular culture and language. What remained is the culture. The culture that revolves around working hard to triumph over structural poverty and racism. The lyrics of its icons reflect this culture:

Them man tryna be the livest one
I'm tryna turn my hood to a thriving one
 - *Dun all da hype by Guvna B ft. Melvillous*

Two weeks in the top ten, who called it?
Christmas, I went to war with the corporates
Like, big-up the ones that bought it
 - *Mr. Skeng by Stormzy*

Don't tell me about grinding, who are you telling?
I was doing Grime when shit weren't selling
Had to put in work blud, JME tell 'em
These MCs don't know about fretting
One 'til 3 in the morning, stressing
 - *About Grinding by P Money*

in school
While you was typing up your CV
I was downloading on Windows NT
Bare sample packs for Fruity Loops 3
Ask Mr. Covill about me, I was walking around
With my jacket that said Mic Controller on the back
Best MC in the game, fact...

Anyone of you cocaine snorting label executives
That thinks you can take my integrity for a couple bags
Think twice, make grime and I get paid all nice
In a rave, get a lemonade and ice
I thought by now it was apparent that
These guys cannot develop our talent
I thought by now it was bait that
These guys just try decide man's fate

- Integrity by JME

In his book *Inner City Pressures: The Story of Grime* published in 2018, Dan Haco writes on page 334:

Far from atomising the new stars, **grime's newfound commercial success seemed to have enhanced its collectivism, if anything.** Instead of spinning off into silos of self-indulgence, where they counted their money like cartoon villains, cavorted with celebrities and developed ruinous drug habits, the artists had pulled their peers in closer, almost by way of protection against degeneracy – but also out of habit. The years on the underground, passing the mic in youth clubs and pirate stations, had incubated a collaborative spirit no one wanted to shake off.

We've had it with you politicians
You bloody rich kids never listen
There's no such thing as broken Britain
We're just bloody broke in Britain
What needs fixing is the system
Not shop windows down in Brixton
Riots on the television
You can't put us all in prison!
- ill manors by plan b

I won't spell it out here, but there's something to be made of this. There is something for those of us in the academy in this. We can learn from this underground culture. We can learn to go underground ourselves. How different would we be if no one was policing our knowledge production? What would we do differently? Will we be more motivated? Grime artists have found a way to stay authentic despite mainstream pressure and still make \$\$\$. I'm not here to advocate for \$\$\$, but we need to put food on the table. Unfortunately, food is not free. How can we combine going underground to be authentic and radical in a way that keeps a roof over us? There is something we can learn from those who go underground and are still able to live with dignity.

I'll end with this, if you do nothing, then at least tell a new student about LibGen (Break Copyright Law)

Many PhDs and academics feel compelled to take part in traditional publishing. What is traditional publishing? Well, it is the publishing of work through a publisher who will force you to sign over copyright of your work and charge people for accessing your work without sharing any of the profits with you. If you have to do this, then it is what it is. Capitalism is a game we all have to play one way or another if we want to stay afloat. I get that. This does not have to stop you from doing your part. Upload your manuscript or your book to [Sci-hub](#) or [Libgen](#) or any other shadow library²⁰. A shadow library makes inaccessible content accessible. They break through paywalls and many times too they transcend the bad user interfaces of university library search engines.

In this spirit, all the academic works located behind paywalls referenced in this piece are linked to their pirated copies so that anyone reading this can access all the referenced works. So, thank you libgen and sci hub for that and for always being there for me.

This work has no conclusion, this work is far from concluded. This work is always ongoing.

As you go back to your work. As you reenter the university, through your assignments, the papers you are working on or grants you are applying to - enter as you remember that gatekeeping revolutionary ideas is counter revolutionary.

Simply, if you work on revolutionary ideas. Ideas focused on anti-oppression. Ideas focused on freedom, equity and democracy. Then remember if:

- You are placing your work behind a paywall (if people have to pay \$\$ to access your work)
- You are writing in a way that your relative or non-academic friends won't understand
- You are only writing papers that only other academics read (because of where you publish your papers, how you write you write your papers or because you are not working on spreading your work)
- You are working alone without interacting with your community online/offline and sharing your ideas with them in the way that is most convenient and effective for them

Then you may be participating in gatekeeping those ideas.

What is gatekeeping?

This doesn't require lots of discussion or prose.


²⁰ Shadow libraries like sci-hub and LibGen are great examples of mutual aid. Aleksandra Elbakayan started sci-hub in 2011 by mobilizing students with access to university libraries to provide their credentials, thus enabling access to the content of university libraries to shadow libraries. So if someone goes on sci hub or LibGen to search for an article, the software checks if the articles is on LibGen. If it is not on LibGen, "Sci-Hub searched the major journal databases using the acquired credentials. When the user downloaded a copy, Sci-Hub simultaneously uploaded a copy to LibGen, ensuring that the next request for the document could be met from within the collection." This is explained on the second page of Joe Karaganis' book called [Shadow Libraries: Access to Knowledge in Global Higher Education](#).

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Here is what the Merriam-Webster dictionary says:

gatekeeper noun

 Save Word

gate·keep·er | \ 'gāt-,kē-pər  \

Definition of *gatekeeper*

- 1 : one that tends or guards a gate
- 2 : a person who controls access

More vividly, here is what Urban dictionary offers:

gatekeeper

Someone who has the mindset that 'if you're [not a fan](#)/part of this (famous figure, a trend), you absolutely cannot join. Someone who always make things more complicated, always adds a controversy or an issue to a certain trend.

Gatekeeping

When someone uses a [hobby](#) or interest as a means of [elevating](#) themselves above others to give oneself a sense of being superior transforming their passion or knowledge about a particular subject into an ugly tool of self-inflation.

So let me say this again:

If you think your work engages in revolutionary ideas

AND

The way you are producing your work does not allow people to access, understand and apply your work to their life (gatekeeping)

THEN

Gatekeeping Revolutionary Ideas is Counterrevolutionary

You are doing something that is counter revolutionary. The revolution is collective and inclusive. Most of us need to be on a similar page for it to take place. You are not going to be doing the revolution on your own or with a few of your academic readers. We need mass intellectuality about our revolution.

In short:

GATEKEEPING REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS IS COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY.

If this is what you have been doing so far, tomorrow is another opportunity to do things differently, to do this more inclusively, to do things in a way more true to their core purpose.

It's not easy to do this. It's not easy to learn how to do this because they don't teach us. But if we find each other, we can probably each do a little together.

Thank you for reading this far, I appreciate it.

Ayah