

## **After the Strike?**

### **Part 1: The Transitional Space of the Picket Line**

Jane Rendell

For 14 days in the late winter/early spring of 2018, I spent many hours suspended in a transitional space between the inside and the outside of my place of work. These hours were part of the 2018 University and College Union (UCU) Pension Strike, one of the largest strikes of university academics in recent times, which occurred over a four-week period, with strike days increasing up from two days in the first week, to five by the fourth and final week. We went on strike to protect the pensions of university workers as a defined benefit scheme rather than a defined contribution one.<sup>1</sup>

My designated place to strike was a strip around one metre wide, five metres long, and perhaps four metres high, located in between the glass façade of The Bartlett School of Architecture and edge where the pavement of the east side of the north end of Gordon Street began. This patch of concrete was located opposite the UCL student's union and sandwiched between the Economics department to the north and the Chemistry Department to the south. As we were to discover, this particular stretch offered some shelter in bad weather, and at the start at least, a little bit of freedom, as it was located between the pavement owned by London Borough of Camden, and the Bartlett building whose façade and interior were owned by UCL.

In the days before the start of the strike, I was involved in a lengthy set of emails between the leadership of UCL's branch of UCU, the Dean of the Bartlett Faculty and the School of Architecture Building and Facilities Manager, and my striking colleagues to negotiate exactly where we would strike and how precisely our picket line would become manifest. Those of us who had been on strike before knew the potential tensions of the picket line, the duty of trying to persuade – through argument – those who wished to enter the building to think again and to instead join the strike, but how hard it was to face colleagues who you worked with every day and ask them not to enter the building, and how disappointing it was if they ignored you and walked in anyway. There was the question of whether it was possible to create a way of striking that could oppose and assert without being aggressive and confrontational, and whether the specific position we occupied could help us to achieve that. The importance of how to practice an act of refusal is vital and ties into debates that are taking place now around the post critical, and the search for a form of criticality which goes beyond either an affirmative or a negation.

In a recent interview, Rosi Braidotti has suggested 'that political agency need not be critical in the negative sense of the oppositional and thus may not be aimed solely or primarily at the production of counter-subjectivities. Subjectivity is rather', she argues, 'a process ontology of auto-poiesis or self-styling, which involves complex and continuous negotiations with dominant norms and values and hence also multiple forms of accountability.' She writes: 'Contemporary nomadic practices of subjectivity – both in pedagogy and other areas of thought – work towards a more affirmative approach to critical theory.'<sup>2</sup> And in their work on a post-critical pedagogy, Naomi Hodgson et al, propose that this affirmation does not need to accept, but can take the form of caring and protecting what we love, and in so doing turn towards hope.<sup>3</sup>

The post-critical is used here not to reject or negate criticality but to consider how work that occurs after criticality has been asserted can operate in dialogue with it in order to develop more possibilities. We could think of the post-critical here as a way, not of saying that we come after the critical and that everything critical is over, but rather as an indicator that the critical has arrived, and that everything which occurs after this announcement, is in its midst, marked by it, and so a form of continuation with, or relation to, rather than breakage from, the critical. Feminist theorist Diane Elam observed that Jacques Derrida's understanding of 'undecideability' is not indeterminate but rather a 'determinate oscillation between possibilities', and argues that such a position offers a political potential by refusing binary choices.<sup>4</sup> And in a manner not dissimilar, the art critic Jan Verwoert, by recommending the refusal of options which allow either a no or a yes, opens up other possibilities: 'Maybe the secret of autonomous agency and the good life lies precisely in opening up the space of those other options through a categorical refusal to accept the forceful imposition of any terms, leaving us no choice but to choose between *either* yes or no?'<sup>5</sup>

Through those 14 days I discovered that striking offered both a no and a yes, an act of negation, in this case the rejection of an offer than unacceptable, but also an alternative, in the form of models of education and research, that differed from those of the market, finance, and expansion valued by neo-liberal universities in the UK (and globally). Inherently spatial, I would describe this as a form of 'critical spatial practice', a term I have previously used to define kinds of interdisciplinary practice that offer a critique of the sites into which they intervene, both by problematising the existing situation, but also by offering other possibilities.<sup>6</sup> Along with all those other acts of 'constructive institutional critique'<sup>7</sup> of the university system, my own and those conducted by colleagues and students, this strike helped shift my own spatial practice from a focus on the critical towards the ethical, where the attention is on the creation of more equitable relations.<sup>8</sup>

In 'Self-Writing' Michel Foucault explores how the involvement of writing practices in processes of self-formation gives them an '*ethopoietic* function'.<sup>9</sup> He examines in particular how individuals in Stoicism and Christianity monitored and transformed their relation to themselves and to external truths through written, bodily and meditative practices of self-training that were both ethical and poetic. Critical writing that draws to attention to the relation between the poetic and the ethical, has been described by poet Joan Retallack as 'poethical',<sup>10</sup> and developed more recently by Denise Ferreira Da Silva through her 'black feminist poethics'.<sup>11</sup> So although submitted under my name, as it is my own account and interpretation of this strike, overall the essay is the result of collective action taken with colleagues from across UCU, especially my UCU UCL colleagues from the Bartlett School of Architecture, involved in organising our strike actions – namely Thom Callum, Mollie Claypool, Miranda Critchley, James O'Leary, Barbara Penner, David Roberts and Thandi Loewenson. This essay could then be described as an act of what Donna Haraway calls, drawing on the work of Beth M. Dempster, sympoiesis, or making-with, a process which she writes is 'always partnered all the way down' rather than the self-producing generative system associated with autopoiesis.<sup>12</sup> I have written the body text of this essay, while the texts in italics drawn from the Bartlett School of Architecture UCU newsletter, *Strike Chronicles*, edited by Penner, and website, <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org/> designed and constructed by Roberts, come from a range of authors, and the words and ideas of other published authors appear in quotes and are referenced in footnotes.

# TEACHING IN AND OUT

JANE RENDELL

For a teacher, striking at a university is difficult because of the tension between commitments: to broader social issues and to particular students. I suggested a teach-in, following the US tradition, as place for political debate and transformational pedagogy, in the Bartlett lobby during the UCU strike.

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/pensions>

But a colleague warned me that a teach-in might be perceived as a strike-break, because it involved crossing a picket line: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/student-uss-information>

Yet, I had thought of the teach-in, not as a way of continuing business as usual, but rather as a potential occupation. And certainly NUS and UCU are in support of sit-ins. <http://anticuts.com/tag/uss/> UCU UCL suggested moving the picket line back to the card barriers, so we would be both inside the building and outside the picket line. But when I informed management of this plan, I was told that picket lines must be outside the employer's premises.

So back to binaries: inside or outside. **On strike days we are going to work the picket line into a transitional space with potential for dialogue.** Whichever side of the line you are on, we hope you will come and join us.

In the build-up to the strike it became clear that active strikers would make up only a small minority of the staff body, and that even though the majority of staff at the Bartlett School of Architecture, for example, hold fractional (and so precarious) teaching-fellow posts (adjuncts in US terms), many felt too vulnerable to join the union and to expose themselves as critics of university management, while others, as working design practitioners, held their loyalty to students above issues seen to be relevant only to university academics. It felt important, therefore, from the outset, to create a space where it was possible for those who had chosen not to strike to open up conversations rather than antagonisms with those who were not on strike. Indeed the question of how strikers could engage with non-strikers continued to preoccupy those of us on strike for the full four weeks. I thought that placing ourselves inside the building would offer the opportunity to interrupt work as usual, not by refusing to work, but by setting up alternative pedagogical platforms that might draw others in.

Yet, as I explored possibility of holding our strike inside the Bartlett building, and occupying the place between the glass façade and the barrier, I was drawn deeper into the spatial politics of the ground floor architecture itself ... which was why I wrote the short paragraph which appeared in the first issue of the *Strike Chronicles* and is reproduced above in italics.

Your initial entrance into the Bartlett is not a physically-vetted barrier, not does it require swiping a card, but it does involve pressing a button, and because the front door is a fire escape, it opens not inwards, but outwards, towards you, impeding your path forward, and so initiating what, over time, becomes a ritual of self-examination.<sup>14</sup> If you allow yourself to enter, you find yourself in a lobby, a zone of exhibitions and their launches, coffee breaks, quick lunches, and now via the newly inserted door from the Chemistry auditorium, post evening lecture drinks. But you cannot access the toilets or any of the teaching spaces, workshops, student studios or staff offices from here. To do this, you have to pass your UCL staff or student card across the electronic card barrier, or if you have no card, to present yourself formally to the security guards. So this second boundary comprises both a physical block and a social encounter, that you have no choice but to enter into, where you ask yourself, but are also asked (and then told) if you do or do not have the right to enter the institution of the Bartlett School of Architecture. And it is the status of this lobby space located between these two thresholds – the door and the entry barrier – as a site of self-questioning generated from without and without, and this one of potential for transformation, that I was debating via email the night before the strike began.

Initially I had been keen that we teach-in,<sup>15</sup> right in, beyond the electronic card barrier, in the style of an occupation of the Bartlett,<sup>16</sup> that would mix up those on, and those not-on, strike, and which would also fit with the French style of striking, where rather than withdraw your labour, you continue to do your job, but for free. We would be on strike, this would be recorded, and so we would receive no pay, but we would continue to teach, yet do so differently. But when I proposed this to the UCU UCL leadership, they thought this occupation of the interior of the building might pose problems and suggested that we stay in the lobby between the front door and the electronic card barrier.<sup>17</sup> However, the Dean, having looked into my request that we position ourselves here, said no – ‘It turns out that picket lines have to be outside the employers’ premises, so I am afraid it’s a matter of wrapping up warm.’ At the same time, colleagues of mine in the union, had noted that for a striker to strike inside the building would not be seen as an occupation but as strike-breaking. So we had no option but to stand outside the building, creating a fairly conventional picket line, and taking up the practice of ‘teaching-out’ rather than ‘teaching-in’.

On first day of the strike we gathered a large crowd, the sun was shining, everyone was in a high mood, with positive media attention, and strong student support. The UCU UCL lunch-time meeting on that first day was held in Club 52, a nearby private sports club (more on locations later) and was packed. And in the first afternoon teach-out which I had offered to chair, Sean Wallis, the UCU UCL Vice-President, outlined the reasons for, and context of, the strike, with international students asking questions about the history of UK strikes and the picket. Afterwards, we held an organising meeting, and my colleague Barbara Penner proposed setting up the *Strike Chronicles*, which acted a daily bulletin in paper format to be handed out from the picket line, with specific sections – dispatches, solidarity corner, a short article on a theme of the day, and ‘join us’ section with a listing of current activities – and which she compiled and edited throughout the strike. Colleagues Thom Callum, Miranda Critchley, Thandi Loewenson, and James O’Leary, dealt with social media, gave talks and organised activities. My own role was to come up with a programme of activities for each day of the strike, and to link them into UCU’s agenda, and the events across UCL. David Roberts designed and set up a S-T-R-I-K-E website, which forms a great archive of those 14 days, and a snapshot of a particular moment in the history of political activism in defence of public education, at UK universities in general, and at the Bartlett School of Architecture in particular.<sup>18</sup>

### **Day 2: Friday 23 February – *We Care: We Strike***<sup>19</sup>

I am striking because I feel I have a responsibility to this institution. In the long run, in the run of years, it will be in this institution's best interest to get the best pension scheme possible for its employees. The pension debate is about how you care for people and how you care for the future, by sharing risk. It is about how we are bound in real ways to form societies. Although it may hurt now, if the institution responds in the right way to UCU pressure, it will be lauded for its leadership in the pensions debate. (Dr Lorens Holm, UCU, University of Dundee, 21 February 2018).<sup>20</sup>

The night before the strike began, some UCU members at the Bartlett School of Architecture received a wonderful email of solidarity from our colleague Lorens Hom at the University of Dundee, in which the word ‘care’ appeared, a term that had already made its appearance in many blogs and featured in our own banner for the day: ‘We care: We strike’.<sup>21</sup> Strongly informed by feminist work on the politics and practices of care, many of us wanted this strike to be different, not to simply stand in refusal outside the workplace discouraging others to enter, but to offer some kind of

alternative. This did not only stem from a wish to draw attention to the often-masculine stance of the strike and the picket line, but also to address the tensions that many academics feel when striking, that those who get hit hardest are the students, rather than the managers, and that this was heightened in an era of rising student fees and debt.

Of my own students, around withdrew, after the first day, from any connection to the strike. As part of UCL's expansion east, many were located in studio spaces out at Here East, in a conversion of the communications building at the Olympic Park. In this outpost, there was no picket line, and so they were able to go into the studio each day, taught by a part-time member of staff who was not on strike. However, another group were staunch supporters, and baked biscuits, danced with us in the cold, and wrote letters to the Provost demanding their money back, after we calculated – at the current fee rates for home and overseas students – how much each seminar session they had lost was worth in financial terms. These students were in effect missing four seminars out of eleven, and so over a third of their teaching time on that module. We devoted time in the one formal seminar we had during the strike to discuss the differing views and positions on strike action. I argued that the pedagogical experience of the strike, could be as valuable a learning experience as sitting in the classroom, especially since their MA was focused on situated practice. But although some agreed, others were angry, and there were tears and disappointments expressed about how it felt to be torn between a desire to support us and share our critique of the neoliberal university, but to miss key seminars and learning experiences they had been looking forward to (and paid *a lot* of money for).

So with our first strike slogan, 'We Care: We Strike', we wanted to highlight how those on strike were not teachers who did not care about their students, but teacher-strikers who in defending the defined benefit (DB) pension scheme, over the defined contribution (DC) scheme, were cared about the future of the Higher Education system and all those involved in it. We were striking precisely because we cared about our students and their futures, and defending the pact of solidarity between the generations that the DB scheme offers, against yet another attack on the legacy of the welfare state. As many have explained, in the DB scheme those that are younger pay to benefit those that are older in their retirement, knowing that they too will be supported in their turn by the ones that come after them. Unlike the defined contribution scheme, it offers security in old age, as you know in advance roughly how much you will have to live on in your retirement. Megan Poovey writes:

The employers propose an end to the DB pension scheme and its replacement with a

Defined Contribution (DC) scheme. Under DC, you know what you pay, you just don't know what you will get — all the risk is transferred to individuals — the members of the pension scheme. In DB, you know what you will get and what you will pay — risk is shared between scheme members. [...] Moving everyone to DC will destroy the link between past and future staff, break the important link that ensures the scheme continues to grow with positive cash flows, risks destroying future pensions and undermines past pension accrual by creating the very deficit they seek to avoid.<sup>22</sup>

Highlighting the politics of care was perhaps a reflection of the strong feminist tone of this strike,<sup>23</sup> and, as Sarah Burton and Vikki Turbine have reflected from their strike diaries, it takes emotional work to create collective bonds:

As feminism teaches us, care work is so often not valued, yet it is central to this project of resistance. To move into any sort of hopeful future the misrecognition of the work of care and ethic of kindness must change. Ultimately, what we seek is a re-harnessing of care — removed from neoliberal notions of 'self-care' and individual responsibility or censure, and refocused on cooperation and mutual recognition.<sup>24</sup>

This feminist perspective on the strike ties into important work being done by academics in architecture, for example Claudia Dutson, Catharina Gabrielsson, and Igea Troiani, who are examining specific kinds of labour in the university — 24/7 work, housework, and entrepreneurialism from a feminist perspective.<sup>25</sup>

**Day 3: Mon 26 February — *Site-Writing/Strike-Writing***<sup>26</sup>



## Monday 26 February

### **Strike-Writing & Sign-Making Teach-Out**

*9-12pm: 22 Gordon Street*

Join us to write and read words from strikes and picket lines past, present and future. Bring your favorite quotes and poems and songs to read aloud, and writing implements to pen and tweet your own strike-writing. This will run in parallel with a sign-making session.

### **UCL UCU Demonstration**

*12:30pm: Tavistock Square*

### **Paul Mason & Catherine Hall Teach-Out**

*2pm: The Building Centre, Store Street*

Organised by UCL History.

The third day of the strike was the coldest yet, ‘The Beast from the East’, as the tabloids had named the arctic air mass that was heading to the UK, had turned London’s streets into ice rinks. But it seemed to make us all the more determined to ‘teach-out’. We took the methodology from my site-writing seminars and workshops,<sup>27</sup> which would have been taught indoors, outside. With a few committed ex-MA students (Joanne Preston, Rachel Siobhan Tyler, Leyla Williams and Lili Zarzycki) who arrived super-early – before work in some cases – to set up, we converted the tables we had used for previous exhibitions of their site-writings into an external working space and produced banners and texts for the windows of the Bartlett, while inside other MA (Rafael Guendelman Hales) and PhD (Judit Ferencz and Sevcan Ercan) students made placards for the demonstration later in the week.

I have argued that site-writing is a form of situated criticism, which aims to spatially relate one’s critical attitude to one’s lived experience; it draws on the history of feminism, and in particular on the slogan of second wave feminism - the personal is political.<sup>28</sup> Books appeared on the table like Sara Ahmed’s *Living a Feminist Life*, and Rebecca Solnit’s *Men Explain Things to Me*,<sup>29</sup> and we talked about how working in the university was more than just a job, that it was a way of life, and the role that writing played in that life. We discussed what work the students had gone onto after their MA,

(which was part-time in most cases) and which of them were thinking of returning to do PhDs. And all along I was wondering that if the university was willing to cancel our pensions, then should I really be recommending it as a place for a future career, and if not, then what exactly was I doing here?

**Day 4: Tuesday 27 February – ‘Academia is for life not for business on the window’<sup>30</sup>**

## **Tuesday 27 February**

### **Hedge Schools and other forms of transformative pedagogy**

*9-12pm: 22 Gordon Street*

Join us to talk radical pedagogy, civic education and teaching to transgress!

### **David Graeber Teach-Out**

*1-3pm: UCL UCU, 52 Gower Street*

David is author of *Debt: The First 5000 Years* (2011); *The Democracy Project* (2013); *The Utopia of Rules* (2015); and the eagerly awaited: *Bullshit Jobs, A Theory*.

The previous day, as part of strike-writing, I had put up a slogan we had devised across the glass façade – ‘Academia is for life not for business on the window’. To make a meeting point between those striking on the outside of the building, and those working on the inside, some of the letters faced inwards and others outwards to the street. I knew from conversations that many of my colleagues wanted to strike but felt they could not for various reasons. Some were compelled to continue to teach, partly from a sense of loyalty, but also because of the competitive studio culture of the design units; others were worried about their visa status; some were raising young families and could not afford to lose even a day’s pay; and a more marginal view, was that by assuming that staff could afford to be union members, and that union members could afford to strike, that the union itself occupied a position of privilege. This perspective made me take stock of my own position, and was one of the reasons I decided to dedicate myself to the strike, as so many others did. As a tenured professor, with no children to support, I felt I had a responsibility to care for those on fractional and temporary contracts, who wanted to strike but could not, and so to make the strike as visible and visual as possible.

Inside in the lobby at this time was the annual exhibition of PhD work, both of architectural history and theory, and design practice. Two of my PhD students, who were studying histories and practices of transformative pedagogies as part of their research, talked about their work from the street. Pointing to her work, on display behind the glass, Sol Perez Martinez, an architect from Chile, discussed how the *coup* had halted the work of the radical pedagogue Paulo Friere, and how she had come to the UK to follow up on how his practice had been taken up by civic activists, and especially environment studies centres in the 1970s, which connected grass roots activism to urban design and planning. Tom Keeley spoke about the importance of hedge schools for Irish Catholics for whom education was illegal. And as large snow flakes began to fall, we drew into a tight circle to keep warm, and began to talk more broadly about forms of pedagogy and their relation to politics. I started to consider what might come next for Sol and Tom when their PhDs were completed, as there are so few new full-time posts in our discipline and a scarcity of post-doc positions. What an insane system it is when PhD research funded by the UK government, cannot be developed into published papers, because the researchers who have conducted that work, have to take on so many poorly paid part-time teaching posts, that they have no time to write. With the temperature reaching zero, we moved on to the teach-out with David Graeber on debt and bullshit jobs. In his thesis the bullshit job is one in which the worker performs a task which even they realise is pointless, and many of the testimonies he gathered came from people in academic administrative and managerial positions.<sup>31</sup> And at UCL, the rapid expansion has resulted in the creation of multiple fractional teaching fellowships.

On that day, the UCL students went into occupation outside the Provosts office,<sup>32</sup> continuing a tradition of the occupations of 2010, at the time of the introduction of student fees.<sup>33</sup> Many of the younger academics on this strike had been students in 2010, and were now on some form of precarious part-time non-fixed contract. In her paper on ‘the increasing experience of precariousness among academics’ Rosalind Gill discusses the ‘systematic casualisation’ of the academic workforce in the past twenty years, and writes:

In the UK, data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (2012) reveals that one third of academic staff in universities is employed on short-term, temporary contracts. But this figure excludes more than 82,000 people who are paid by the hour and therefore not counted in HESA’s salary statistics, suggesting that the true extent of casualisation is far greater—and increasing rapidly. [...] According to the University and College Union, higher

education is one of the most casualised sectors of employment in Britain; only the hospitality industry has a greater proportion of temporary workers and ‘casuals’.<sup>34</sup>

She notes that the figures in the US are similar, and in Australia the proportion of staff on short-term contracts rose from 10% to nearly 50% between 1990 and 2008. At the time of the strike, Josh Bowsher, describes how the strike ‘drew renewed attention to the casualisation of workers in the university’:<sup>35</sup>

The combined pressures of expansion and marketisation have contributed to the casualisation of ECAs in different but overlapping ways. Departments faced with tightened budgets are increasingly incentivised to cut costs by employing PhD students and ECAs as hourly paid staff or on fixed-term teaching contracts to cover undergraduate programmes with growing student numbers. UCU figures published in [The Guardian](#) have shown that by 2016 53% of academics in universities were on insecure contracts. Despite their claims to offer superior terms of employment and superior forms of teaching provision, members of the Russell Group of universities have spearheaded these trends. In some Russell Group universities, the percentage of academics doing front-line teaching and employed on ‘atypical’ contracts was around 70%.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The University and College Union (UCU) is a trade union representing 110,000 staff at UK universities. The pensions strike which took place at 64 universities across the UK, and involved 42,000 staff, commenced on 22 February 2018, and at 14 days is the longest-ever strike in UK higher-education history. (USS). It was part of an industrial action against 64 universities, represented by Universities UK (UUK), concerning proposed changes to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS). See for example <https://www.ucu.org.uk/strikesandpensions> and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018\\_UK\\_higher\\_education\\_strike#cite\\_note-:12-5](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_UK_higher_education_strike#cite_note-:12-5) for a start. For more detail see the work in particular of Felicity Callard, Sam Dolan, Jo Grady, Sam Marsh, Mike Otsuka at <https://ussbriefs.com/briefs/>. See in particular Felicity Callard ‘The Drive to Convert to DC: A Short History’ [https://ussbriefs.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/ussbriefs1\\_030418\\_1000.pdf](https://ussbriefs.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/ussbriefs1_030418_1000.pdf) and Jo Grady, ‘The USS Dispute and the Dynamics of Industrial Action’ <https://medium.com/ussbriefs/the-uss-dispute-and-the-dynamics-of-industrial-action-85231f4382a8>.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Interview with Rosi Braidotti’, Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin (eds) *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012), pp. 19-37, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Naomi Hodgson, Joris Vlieghe, Piotr Zamojski (eds), *Manifesto for a Post-Critical Pedagogy* (Punctum Books, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Diane Elam, *Feminism and Deconstruction: Ms. En Abyme* (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> Jan Verwoert, ‘Exhaustion and Exuberance: Ways to Defy the Pressure to Perform’, *What’s Love (or Care, Intimacy, Warmth, Affection) Got to Do with It?* ((e-flux, Inc., Sternberg Press, 2017), pp. 205-246, p. 208.

<sup>6</sup> See Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (London: IB Tauris, 2000) and and Jane Rendell, ‘Critical Spatial Practice as *Parrhesia*’, special issue of *MaHKUscript*, Journal of Fine Art Research. (2016).

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<sup>7</sup> Artist/architect Apolonija Šušteršič has suggested that institutional critique ‘doesn’t produce any constructive resolution, when it doesn’t effect changes in our political and cultural structures’. Her comment was made in conversation with the curator Maria Lind, who has put forward the idea of ‘constructive institutional critique’ to describe the work of Šušteršič and others, which, rather than being ‘based on negativity ... offer[s] a proposal for change, possibly an improvement, or a test of how to do things slightly differently ... based on dialogue between the artist and the institution, rather than an inherent conflict’ (Šušteršič, 1999: 56). See Apolonija Šušteršič, *Moderna Museet Projekt, 4.2-14.3.1999*. (Stockholm: Moderna Museet Projekt, 1999), p. 56.

<sup>8</sup> See for example, Jane Rendell, ‘Giving An Account Of Oneself, Architecturally’, Special Issue of the *Journal of Visual Culture* (2016).

<sup>9</sup> See Michel Foucault, ‘Self Writing’, translated from *Corps écrit* no. 5 (February 1983): pp. 3–23. See <https://foucault.info/documents/foucault.hypomnemata.en/>

<sup>10</sup> Joan Retallack, *The Poethical Wager* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Denise Ferreira Da Silva, ‘Toward a Black Feminist Poethics’, *The Black Scholar*, (2014) 44:2, pp. 81-97.

<sup>12</sup> Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), pp. 33–4.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org/chronicles/2018/2/26/strike-chronicles-issue-one-1>

<sup>14</sup> The design of architecture to encourage self-examination – ‘do I have the right to be here?’ – even when one is negotiating a threshold that can be physically passed through or around rather than a barrier, is something Iain Borden explored in a paper in the late 1990s with regard to the privatisation of Broadgate just to the east of the city of London. See Iain Borden, ‘Thick Edge: Architectural Boundaries in the Postmodern Metropolis’, in Iain Borden and Jane Rendell (eds.) *InterSections: Architectural History and Critical Theory*, (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 221-46.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.ucu.org.uk/pensions>

<sup>16</sup> <http://anticuts.com/tag/uss/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.ucu.org.uk/student-uss-information>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org/chronicles/2018/2/26/strike-chronicles-issue-one-1>

<sup>20</sup> Text extracted from an email sent from Lorens Holm to the author, with the note ‘Please pass the message on as you see fit, a bottle of solidarity, launched to the world’.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org/chronicles/2018/2/26/strike-chronicles-issue-one-1>

<sup>22</sup> Megan Povey, ‘Defending Pensions: A Fight for all our Futures’, #USSbriefs37, (25 July 2018). [https://ussbriefs.files.wordpress.com/2018/07/ussbriefs37\\_25072018\\_1900.pdf](https://ussbriefs.files.wordpress.com/2018/07/ussbriefs37_25072018_1900.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> See for example, Sarah Burton and Vikki Turbine, ‘Solidarity in the Neoliberal University? Acts of Kindness and the Ethics of Care during the UCU Pensions Dispute’, (31 March 2018). See <https://discoversociety.org/2018/03/31/solidarity-in-the-neoliberal-university-acts-of-kindness-and-the-ethics-of-care-during-the-ucu-pensions-dispute/>

<sup>24</sup> See for example, Burton and Turbine, ‘Solidarity in the Neoliberal University?’

<sup>25</sup> See for example, Igea Troiani ‘Academic Capitalism in Architecture Schools: A feminist critique of employability, 24/7 work, and entrepreneurship’, Catharina Gabrielsson, ‘The Critical Potential of Housework’, and Claudia Dutson, ‘The Entrepreneurial Self’, in Helene Frichot, Catharina Gabrielsson and Helen Runting (eds), *Architecture and Feminisms: Ecologies, Economies, Technologies* (London: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org/chronicles/2018/2/26/strike-chronicles-issue-two>

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<sup>27</sup> Jane Rendell, *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism* (London: IB Tauris, 2011).

<sup>28</sup> This phrase has been attributed to a paper by Carol Hanisch, originally titled, 'Some Thoughts in Response to Dottie's Thoughts on a Women's Liberation Movement,' (February 1969) which deals with 'therapy v. politics' and discusses the role of personal experiences in 'therapy' or consciousness-raising groups as part of the Women's Liberation Movement. This paper was published in *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation* (1970) edited by Shulamuth Firestone and Anne Koedt, and Hanisch states that the title 'The Personal is Political' was given to the paper by the editors. See <http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html>.

<sup>29</sup> See for example, Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017) and Rebecca Solnit, *Men Explain Things to Me: and other essays* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014) and Rebecca Solnit, *The Mother of all Questions* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017). See also Les Back, *Academic Diary: or Why Higher Education Still Matters* (Goldsmiths Press, 2016) for critical dissection of the academy through a diary of one calendar year, and his excellent bibliography of novels, plays and films on academic life.

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.s-t-r-i-k-e.org/chronicles/2018/2/27/strike-chronicles-issue-three>

<sup>31</sup> David Graeber, *Bullshit Jobs*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018).

<sup>32</sup> <https://thetab.com/uk/london/2018/02/27/ucl-strike-occupiers-stop-the-provost-from-getting-into-his-office-31457>

<sup>33</sup> Andrew McGettigan's *The Great University Gamble: Money, Markets, and the Future of Higher Education* (London: Pluto Press, 2013) remains one of the best analyses of the potential impact of student fees on the higher education sector in the UK.

<sup>34</sup> See for example, Rosalind Gill, 'Academics, Cultural Workers and Critical Labour Studies', *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 7 (1), (2014), pp. 12-30 and 'Don't get comfortable: the rise of the precarious academy' THES.

<sup>35</sup> Josh Bowsher, 'Precarity in the Neoliberal University: Some Notes on the Plight of Early Career Academics', #USSbriefs31, (9 July 2018).

<sup>36</sup> Bowsher, 'Precarity in the Neoliberal University'. See also Aditya Chakraborty and Sally Weale, Universities accused of 'importing Sports Direct model' for lecturers' pay, *The Guardian*, (16 November 2016); and two sets of HESA data analysed by UCU, from April 2016, here [https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/7995/Precarious-work-in-higher-education-a-snapshot-of-insecure-contracts-and-institutional-attitudes-Apr-16/pdf/ucu\\_precariouscontract\\_hereport\\_apr16.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/7995/Precarious-work-in-higher-education-a-snapshot-of-insecure-contracts-and-institutional-attitudes-Apr-16/pdf/ucu_precariouscontract_hereport_apr16.pdf) and November 2016 here [https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8384/Precarious-work-in-higher-education-November-2016-update/pdf/ucu\\_precariouscontracts\\_hereport\\_nov16\\_.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8384/Precarious-work-in-higher-education-November-2016-update/pdf/ucu_precariouscontracts_hereport_nov16_.pdf). See also a collation of these contracts by The Academic Precariat, an organisation focusing on ECA struggles, here [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1\\_UV6Lzz8JXMLpdk5UniNlx3Rb4bJ-gjbb8WxTZhrpE/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_UV6Lzz8JXMLpdk5UniNlx3Rb4bJ-gjbb8WxTZhrpE/edit)