A Third University Is Possible

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Patch. Oysters made “plantable” by farming technologies detoxify the Hudson and so become too poisonous to eat, but because of them, the frogs will return. Wind-powered strandbeests—originally devised to restore Dutch beaches—now roam almost autonomous, almost free. Toxic and explosive and wind-willed machine animals, you, scyborg, might read about and feel some odd sense of recognition.

Figure out how technologies operate. Use a wrench. Technologies can be disrupted and reorganized—at least for a machine cycle. Rather than thinking of ourselves as just subjects of those technologies, think about how we are the drones, the explosives, the toxified, the operative parts of those technologies—and ideally, how we might operate on ourselves and other technologies and turn these gears into decolonizing operations.

If this sounds easy and obvious, then my writing has failed you. Listen: you will need to remember this when you are accused of destruction. Attach a pacemaker to the heart of those machines you hate; make it pump for your decolonizing enterprise; let it tick its own countdown. Ask how, and how otherwise, of the colonizing machines. Even when they are dangerous.


LAND ACCUMULATION as institutional capital is likely the defining trait of a competitive, modern-day research university. Land is not just an early feature in the establishment of universities. Land is a motor in the financing of universities, enabling many of them to grow despite economic crises. In my own university context during the subprime loan bust of 2008, California campuses expanded facilities construction even while classes were closed, staff furloughed, enrollments frozen, and tuition and fees hiked. One common joke is that “UC” means “Under Construction” rather than “University of California”; similar satirical acronyms exist throughout the research university world. The irony of continued property expansion and revenue generation while enrollments are capped and tuition balloon has characterized the twenty-first-century university. Land is the keystone of the university, yet land is least likely to be discussed in any critical treatment of it.

Universities do not exist in some abstract academic place. They are built on land, and especially in the North American con-

1. See also Paula Chakravarty and Denise Ferreira da Silva, eds., “Race, Empire, and the Crisis of the Subprime,” special issue, American Quarterly 64, no. 3 (2012).
text, upon occupied Indigenous lands. From where I write, the California public university system is a land-grant institution. This means that stolen land was (and is) the literal capital used to buy and build one of the largest university systems in the world; the tripartite of California community colleges, California state universities, and the University of California system constitute the largest such public institution in the world (and, arguably, the largest public institution of any sort).

Land-grant institutions were legally born in 1862, when Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Act into law. The passage of the Morrill Act is often narrated as a quiet, civilian accomplishment during the U.S. Civil War. Nonetheless, it was truly intimate to war and to the production of a Yankee North American empire. In 1862, seven Southern states seceded from the Union and thus removed from Congress the dissenting votes that had previously blocked the Morrill Act from becoming law. The act gave federal public lands to (Union) states, allotting thirty thousand acres of recently appropriated Indigenous lands for each senator and representative to stake out. States were encouraged to sell these “land grants” to raise money for new public universities that would research and educate American settlers in agriculture, science, and mechanical arts. Land is turned into capital for constructing universities for the principal goal of growing industry:

That all moneys derived from the sale of the lands aforesaid by the States to which the lands are appropriated... the moneys so invested shall constitute a perpetual fund, the capital of which shall remain forever undiminished, ... and the interest of which shall be inviolably appropriated, by each State which may take and claim the benefit of this act, to the endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college. (Morrill Act, section 4, para. 7)

2. The Morrill Act is still in effect. I use present tense to attend to the contemporary nature of settler colonialism, to insist that our analytics do not refer to settler colonialism as a “past” event.

Land as capital and not as campuses is an innovation of the land-grant university. That is, states are able to trade, develop, and sell land to fund the construction of public universities. Land as capital incentivized land speculation. For example, New York State acquired its Morrill Act lands in 160-acre denominations, or “scrip,” which could be traded privately, even for lands in other states. Most notably, Ezra Cornell, cofounder of Cornell University and of the Western Union Company, traded 532,000 acres of scrip in New York to acquire timber-rich lands in Wisconsin. The “Western Lands,” as they were appropriately dubbed, fueled Cornell University from 1865 until the last scrip was finally liquidated in 1933. Therefore land-grant universities are built not only on land but also from land.

Morrill Act universities are also charged with the research and development of land, particularly for agribusiness. Thus the university system, especially in the westward-expanding empire of the United States, is intimately underwritten as a project of settler colonialism—the seizing of Native land, the conversion of land into capital, the further domestication of “wilderness” into productive agricultural estates, and the research mandate to procure profitable plants from around the world to colonize North American soil. The public university, with its charge to underwrite industry and agribusiness, literally changed the landscape of the Americas:

The leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, ... in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes. (Morrill Act, section 4, para. 1)

The prioritization of settler colonial technologies—agricultural and mechanical engineering, not to mention military tactics—

3. Devan, “Realities of Traditional Knowledge and Patents in India”; Hirwade, “Protecting Traditional Knowledge Digitally”; Chouhan, “Protection of Traditional Knowledge in India by Patent.”
reflected how land-grant universities were commissioned as part of the empire-self-making project of the United States.

The year 1862 also saw the passage of the Homestead Act, which allowed for settlers to apply directly for landownership. Between 1862 and 1934, the federal government granted 1.6 million homesteads, distributing more than 270 million acres—10 percent of all land in the United States—into private (settler) ownership. Homesteading was only officially discontinued in 1976 in the mainland United States and in 1986 in Alaska. The year 1862 also saw the establishment of the Department of Agriculture, and one can see the alchemy of capitalism at work: accumulation of land, conversion of land into capital, conversion of capital into institutions, conversion of land into agribusiness.

In my own University of California context, the state legislature established an Agricultural, Mining, and Mechanical Arts College in 1866, the same year of the Three Knolls Massacre, where settlers killed forty Yahi, including the father of “Ishii, the last Yahi.” Also that year, the College Homestead Association purchased 160 acres of Ohlone land in hopes of selling new homesteads to settlers to fund the private College of California. Those lands, along with the Agricultural, Mining, and Mechanical Arts College, would become present-day UC Berkeley. Ironically, “Ishii” became a well-known spectacle for Berkeley anthropologists. After his death, his body was autopsied at the University of California medical school. His body was cremated at a cemetery in Colma, while his brain was shipped to and stored at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C.—until his remains were finally repatriated back to the Redding Rancheria and Pit River tribe in 2000. Such stories of land appropriations built upon Indigenous vanishing directly haunt the histories of all the UC campuses, whose birth dates march right through the twentieth century: UCLA (1927), UC Santa Barbara (1965), UC Davis (1959), UC Riverside (1958), UC San Diego (1960), UC San Francisco (1964), UC Santa Cruz (1965), UC Irvine (1965), and UC Merced (2005). There is nothing ancient about this history.

On its 2012 sesquicentennial, the Morrill Act was heavily commemorated throughout the U.S. university system, but perhaps the single organization with the most reason to cheer was the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU), “a research, policy, and advocacy organization representing 219 public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and related organizations.” On January 4, 2014, the APLU Executive Committee issued a statement to “strongly oppose the boycott of Israeli academic institutions supported by certain U.S. scholarly organizations,” in direct response to the Association for Asian American Studies’s (AAAS) April 2013 and the American Studies Association’s (ASA) December 2013 resolutions to support the call for boycotts, divestments, and sanctions (BDS) by Palestinian civil society—although neither the scholarly organizations nor Palestine nor the exact boycott is mentioned in the statement.

BDS is built around three demands, specifically, “1. Ending Israel’s occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall [built around the West Bank and Gaza]; 2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; 3. And respecting ... the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.” According to Palestinian American scholar J. I. Albahr, BDS “is designed to intervene on


the specific settler colonial practices of Israel" by exerting international pressure on Israeli institutions.\textsuperscript{7}

Shirking the actual words in BDS is the APLU’s refusal to engage public debate—the very cornerstone of free speech. The APLU’s statement nonspecifically refers to “this boycott” as detrimental to equally nonspecific “critical projects that advance humanity, develop new technologies, and improve health and well-being across the globe.”\textsuperscript{9} Some of the discourses deployed by the APLU and other academic voices quick to condemn BDS were that “boycotts are bad” because “free speech is good.” Ironically, the very inefficacy of Palestine reflects a national policy of boycotting open dialogue about Palestine.

U.S. foreign policy already looks like a boycott of Palestine. The United States has boycotted the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) assembly since November 2011, when Palestine was allowed membership into UNESCO. The United States was by far the largest funder of UNESCO; by withholding dues of $80 million a year—22 percent of UNESCO’s overall budget—it sent UNESCO into budgetary crisis.\textsuperscript{8} Unlike the AAAS and ASA resolutions, this boycott—the boycott of Palestine—literally defunds critical projects that “improve health and well-being across the globe.” This boycott is not submitted for vote or discussion but operates at the level of default policy—a policy that includes refusals even to name Palestine, similar to the APLU statement, which would not even name BDS. Unlike the AAAS and ASA resolutions, the APLU’s “boycott of the boycott” was quickly drafted and signed by six people.\textsuperscript{10} It did not solicit votes, feedback, or discussion from its member campuses, which, by the APLU’s own claim, “enroll more than 3.8 million undergraduates and 1.2 million graduate students, award over 1 million degrees, employ nearly 1 million faculty and staff, and conduct more than $37 billion in university-based research.”\textsuperscript{11} The APLU’s action perfectly captures how the settler colonial university’s investments do not just stem from land seizures of a settler past but are active investments in the very future of settler colonialism.

This chapter cannot deconstruct the complex American desires surrounding Israel and Palestine. However, relevant to this discussion are the similar yet divergent trajectories of the APLU and ASA as university formations—and thus as technological formations that can be repurposed toward decolonizing goals. The APLU was founded in 1887 as a direct consequence of the Morrill Act. The ASA was founded in 1951 as a project of Cold War cultural politics through financial support from the U.S. government—which also endowed multiple professorships in European universities, particularly in Germany and Britain. The dominant origin story of American studies is that it was established as a tool of U.S. jingoism and imperialist apology.\textsuperscript{12} From a deterministic view of technology as recapitulating ideology, one might not expect a resolution to support the BDS to emerge from the ASA. That the ASA became a lightning rod for BDS politics was perhaps some-

\textsuperscript{7} J. L. Alhokri, “Hands Clasped behind Her Back: Palestinian Waiting on Theories of Change,” in Tuck and Yang, Youth Resistance Research and Theories of Change, 169.

\textsuperscript{8} “APLU Statement in Opposition to Boycott of Israeli Academic Institutions.”


\textsuperscript{10} The debates and discussions in the ASA spanned at least seven years, and in an election that attracted 1,252 voters, the largest number of participants in the organization’s history, 66.05 percent of voters endorsed the resolution, whereas 33.95 percent of voters voted no and 3.43 percent abstained. The resolution was a response to the ASA National Council’s announcement on December 4 that it supported the academic boycott and, in an unprecedented action to ensure a democratic process, asked its membership for their approval.

\textsuperscript{11} “About APLU.”

thing never predicted by the Cold War machinery that created it. However, from its inception, American studies arguably has had a decolonial tooth in its gear of empire.  

The politics of land-grant institutions directs us to think about the work of school beyond curriculum and pedagogy, beyond knowledge production. Universities are land-grabbing, land-transmogrifying, land-capitalizing machines. Universities are giant machines attached to other machines: war machines, media machines, governmental and nongovernmental policy machines. Therefore the terms of the struggle in the university are also over this machinery—deactivating its colonizing operations and activating its contingent decolonizing possibilities.

A decolonizing university is not just about decolonizing the "representational" work of knowledge production that we associate with universities, nor about "decolonizing" the treatment of currently enrolled students in its courses of study. It is about the steam and pistons, the waterworks, the groundworks, the investments, the emplacements, the institutional–governmental–capitalist rhizomatics of the university. What can we do with this hulking mass of ruins, conduit, fibroids, workhouses, and research facilities built on Indigenous land? What would it take for universities to rematriate land? What would it take for universities to clean water? What would it mean for universities to counteract war making? What would it mean to hotwire the university for decolonizing work? To these machines of decolonial desire, the desire for a third university, this book now turns.

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A Third University Exists within the First

In this chapter, I propose a frame for the university in terms of first, second, third, (and fourth) worlds. To do so, I draw from a range of political-intellectual analyses, perhaps the most contemporary of which are the four forms of civil society as analyzed by the project of México Profundo.  

Subcomandante Marcos of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation described the layers of Mexican civil society as Penthouse Mexico, Middle Mexico, Lower Mexico, and Basement Mexico. In the Zapatistas' critique, Basement Mexico is not only a site of dispossession but also a deep well of Indigenous cosmology, wisdom, and sovereignty, un México profundo. This is the "fourth," autonomous form of civil society. In this book, I use fourth world university as a placeholder for the places of epistemology that are autonomous from the university. In this sense, "fourth worlding" wisdoms are sover-
eign. Yet they offer decolonial strategies to be carried out within the other three civil societies, even when those strategies are wrapped within the dominant project of statecraft and transnational capital accumulation. We might think of the first and second world universities as the penthouse and middle universities. Inside these universities exists the third world university.

In this regard, I am also drawing from third world feminist conceptualizations that position the “third world” not merely as a site of domination by the Global North over the Global South but also as a crucible of transformative politics and pedagogy.

Following other thinkers, I recognize the problematic uses of third world. On one hand, it was a signifier for different revolutionary nationalisms in the twentieth century: Juan Perón’s “third way” in Argentina and the Cuban Revolution were two such nationalisms that aspired to challenge Cold War binaries that revolved around the competing empires of the United States and the USSR. On the other hand, the third world is a warrant for nongovernmental organizations to operate as self-stylized humanitarian ventures and also for-profit corporations to dress up as charities. My choice to use third world is meant to be problematic. Any decolonizing proj-

ect of the third world university should be a problematized one, in much the same way as revolutionary nationalisms and international aid should be problematized.

Most directly, a third world university references the organizing by the Third World Liberation Front in the late 1960s and early 1970s to found a Third World College. These events reached an apex in the 1968–69 San Francisco State Strike; at 167 days, it was the longest student strike in U.S. history.

However, I find that the most precise analogy for a third world university, both materially and symbolically, is offered by Third Cinema. Glen M. Mimura explains:

First Cinema, in this framework, is the cinema of the studio systems—Hollywood preeminently, but also Bollywood and any other capitalistic film industry that, regardless of its formal and thematic diversity, is characterized by an ultimate commitment to corporate profits and mass entertainment. Second Cinema, comprising independent or “art” cinema, may indeed offer meaningful challenges to studio system productions; however, its defining pursuit of questions of art and aesthetics displaces the possibility of sustained, radical critique, and thereby remains circumscribed “within the system.” In contrast, Third Cinema defines itself fundamentally as a political project—as a democratic, participatory, socialist cinema that seeks to challenge and provoke the collective consciousness of its viewers toward the revolutionary transformation of society.

To be sure, no mode of cinema is completely distinct, autonomous; each mode appropriates or contains within itself elements of the other two… To paraphrase an oft-quoted line by Trinh Minh-ha, there is a Third Cinema in every First and Second Cinema, and vice versa.

6. Glen M. Mimura, Ghostlife of Third Cinema: Asian American Film and Video (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 30. Mimura lists notable filmmaker collectives that explicitly aligned themselves with Third Cinema: Grupo Cine Liberación; Black Arts movement in London (Sankofa and the Black Audio Film and Video Collective); Amber Films in Newcastle, England; Appalshop in Appalachia, Whitesburg, Kentucky; Third World Newsreel in New York City; Visual Communications in Los Angeles, California. All six were founded in the late 1960s. Ibid., 33.
A Third University is Possible

Materially, both cinema and the university require a high concentration of capital. Each industry requires a willing civil society of moviegoers and university-goers, physical theaters and physical campuses, digital videos and digital learning platforms. Whereas cinema's investments are mostly liquid capital, the university's investments are land and debt. Cinema's horizon of consumption is the total population of visually abled people. Likewise, the university, though historically elitist, has expanded its horizons toward the total debt-enabled population—to be discussed shortly. Pedagogically, cinema and university perform complementary roles in the production of the symbolic order. Cinema is a key industry in the production of "commonsense knowledge," as compared to the university's production of legitimated knowledge. Whereas cinema accumulates images for a visual grammar book, the university accumulates scholarship for an epistemological grammar book.

Through this analogy of Third Cinema, we can describe the university as an amalgam of first, second, and third world formations. Substituting "university" for "cinema" and rephrasing Mimura's description of cinema, we derive a reasonable definition for third university:

The first world university is the academic-industrial complex: "research-ones" preeminently, but also commercial universities and any other corporate academic enterprise that, regardless of its formal and thematic diversity, is characterized by an ultimate commitment to brand expansion and accumulation of patent, publication, and prestige. The second world university, comprising independent or "liberal arts" colleges, may indeed offer meaningful challenges to the academic-industrial complex, and could be said to be a democratic and participatory academy that seeks to challenge and provoke the critical consciousness of its students toward self-actualization. However, its defining pursuit of questions of art, humanities, and a libertarian mode of critical thinking displaces the possibility of sustained, radical critique and thereby remains circumscribed "within the ivory tower." In contrast, the third world university defines itself fundamentally as a decolonial project—as an interdisciplinary, transnational, yet vocational university that equips its students with skills toward the applied practice of decolonization.

A Third University Exists within the First

To be sure, no mode of university is completely distinct, autonomous; each mode appropriates or contains within itself elements of the other two. There is a third university in every first and second university, and vice versa.

The first world university accumulates through dispossession. The second world university "liberates" through liberalism. The third world university breaks faith from its own machinery by inspiring the academic automaton with a fourth world soul.

The First University Accumulates

The first world university charges fees and grants degrees. This university is a machine of accumulation and expansion, increasingly carried out by neoliberal mechanisms that tie the production of knowledge to grant RFPs and revenue-generating enterprises. In the United States, it includes the R-1s that typically boast PhD programs and D-1 sports teams. Its big moneymakers are STEM degrees, MBAs, and MDs; extension programs; online classrooms; international student fees; and distance degrees. First world universities keep count of their Nobel laureates and count on large research grants from the Departments of Energy, Agriculture, Defense, and, increasingly, Homeland Security.

While I was writing this to you, Janet Napolitano, the former U.S. secretary of Homeland Security, assumed her new post as the twelfth president of the University of California system, the first woman to occupy the office. The revolving door between institutions of policing, bordering, surveillance, incarceration, illegaiization, militarization, and schooling is not new. Indeed, in San Diego, where I am based, Alan Bersin was superintendent of public schools from 1998 to 2005, after three years of running U.S.-Mexican border law enforcement for Attorney General Janet Reno.

7. In terms of license/degree programs for profit, vocational and commercial universities represent a type of market share in the first world university.
under President Clinton. After his stint governing schools, Bersin governed the border (again) in 2009, this time for the Obama administration, working as “border czar” under Janet Napolitano, then Homeland Security secretary, now UC president. However, it would be a misguided comparison to describe the bodies of faculty and students as analogous to the bodies of detainees and deportees and migrants and suspects. It is not analogous power but technologies of power that circulate in these imperial triangles, for example, debt financing, neoliberal market policies, information systems, managing noncitizen populations, and development. If we consider triangular connections between war abroad and refugee management within, antiblackness and the maintenance of black fungibility and accumulation, and militarization and Indigenous erasure throughout empire, then we can understand why the governors of war and the governors of schools can have similar résumés, without pretending that the governed suffer through identical conditions.

Of particular importance to the first world university are technologies of accumulation through colonial contract: the procuring of state resources in order to govern, expand, or research and develop. In this respect, a former director of any federal department is eminently qualified to be a university president. The new world university also accumulates through debt, that is, through the entire business of debt production and management: loaning, borrowing, repaying, defaulting. This ability to turn anyone into a debtor is what fuels the first university toward inclusion. The desires of people—especially Global South people—for meaningful education gets attached by a chain-drive into the desire of debt. We become educated by becoming indebted.

As Jean Anyon noted, one in every nine young people living in poverty in the United States has a college degree, and nearly half are attending or have attended college. In high-poverty areas, there are not enough jobs to match college degrees. There are not enough jobs for high school grads. There are not enough jobs. As educational researchers have pointed out, “schools matter, but they’re not all that matters.” The rhetoric of college-for-all has redirected public attention away from resolving issues of poverty and toward speculating on test scores. On average, a white person without a college degree has more wealth than a Black or Latino person with a college degree; this phenomenon is not well understood and has yet to be carefully studied, but mainstream pundits have already decided that the racial “wealth gap” is curable through higher education. Without functional wealth, or what Thomas Shapiro calls “transformative assets” used to offset the opportunity costs of college tuition and underemployment as a student, higher education is obtained at a very poor exchange rate.

After mortgages, student loans are the largest form of debt now in the United States. Indeed, families are mortgaging their homes (homeownership being the material definition of “middle class” for children to attend college (the college degree being the symbolic definition of “middle class”). This is a bitter irony of dispossession through debt, whereby college-sending families lose the materiality of the middle class to obtain middle-class status.

Moreover, underrepresented minority students disproportionately enter community-oriented professions where unemployment is high and wages are low. Georgetown University’s Center and a New Social Movement, Critical Social Thought (New York: Routledge, 2005).


8. Jean Anyon, Radical Possibilities: Public Policy, Urban Education,
on Education and the Workforce reports that the majors with the lowest earnings include social work, human services and community organizations, early childhood education, and counseling psychology, just below visual performing arts, studio arts, and drama and theater arts.

The university system has expanded under the premise that workers, and the families of students, will take on debt. With accountability regimes like No Child Left Behind and Race for the Top and the neoliberal positioning of education as a panacea for all social ills, the change we see entering the twenty-first century is that the expanding academic–industrial complex has its cross hairs on the total youth population as its biopolitical target. Thus the implication of the worker as consumer, or, more accurately, the debtor as consumer of the university, likens it to the cinema’s horizon of the total seeing population as its audience.

However, the first world university’s most expensive desire is for a global empire of satellite campuses or “outpost universities”:

Ardently pursued by university presidents as strategic and legacy plans, the race to be the global university has become an “educational gold rush.” This is tellingly mapped out by the geography of its expansion. Countries such as China, India, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates are targeted as feasible sites because of their oil wealth as well as industrial and population growth.

Eng-Beng Lim analyzes this trend through such examples as King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), a new graduate university in Saudi Arabia with an instant US$10 billion endowment and that has partnered with Stanford, UT Austin,

and UC Berkeley. According to the New York Times, without the “post-9/11 visa problems of traveling to America,”

at Education City in Doha, Qatar’s capital, they can study medicine at Weill Medical College of Cornell University, international affairs at Georgetown, computer science and business at Carnegie Mellon, fine arts at Virginia Commonwealth, engineering at Texas A&M, and soon, journalism at Northwestern.

Lim dubs places like Education City “the return of the colonial metropole.” But, in analyzing the likes of NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts Asia in Singapore, Lim points out that the colonial metropole is not simply a science and technology magnet; arts and humanities departments have also looked toward the global university to escape budgetary decline through capitalist expansion. This leads us to the second world university.

The Second University Critiques
The second world university, like Second Cinema, is marked by its investments in critical theory, that is, the diverse work of the Frankfurt School in critiquing media and capitalist systems in the “West” that emerged out of World War II. Two threads of critical theory run through academia in the arts and humanities, on one hand, and the social sciences, on the other. Literary critical theory focuses on the deconstruction of texts for their underlying meanings, whereas social theory focuses on domination within social systems, usually from a neo-Marxist frame. At least ideologically, the second world university is committed to the transformation of society through critique, through a deconstruction of systems of

power, and in this way offers fundamental analyses for any third world university curriculum. Yet its hidden curriculum reflects the material conditions of higher education—fees, degrees, expertise, and the presumed emancipatory possibilities of the mind—and reinscribes academic accumulation.

Usually, when traditionalists speak with nostalgia for the idealized university of old, the library counter in the sky where Kant and Hegel and Freire study together, this is the second world university. We are familiar with it; in the United States, it often houses the Marxist scholars, the ethnic studies formations, women’s studies, gender studies, and American studies. To borrow some rhetoric from Gayatri Spivak, it is the house of the hegemonic radical, the postcolonial ghetto neighborhood within the university metropolis.

One of the tautological traps of the second world university is mistaking its personalized pedagogy of self-actualization for decolonial transformation. When people say “another university is possible,” they are more precisely saying that “a second university is possible,” and they are often imagining second world utopias, where the professor ceases to profess, where hierarchies disappear, where all personal knowledges are special, and, in other words, none are. Their assumption is that people will “naturally” produce freedom, and freedom’s doppelganger is critical consciousness. They are rarely talking about a university that rematriculates land, that disciplines scholar-warriors rather than “liberating” its students, that repurposes the industrial machinery, that supports insurrectionary nationalisms as problematic antidotes to imperialist nationalism, that acts upon financial systems rather than just critiquing them, that helps in the accumulation of third world power rather than simply disavowing first world power, that is a school-to-community pipeline, not a community-to-school pipeline. In short, “another university is possible,” so far, hasn’t made possible a third world university.

The second world university announces itself through nostalgia. Sara Ahmed describes this as “an academic world [that] can be idealised in being mourned as a lost object; a world where dons get to decide things; a world imagined as democracy, as untroubled by the whims and wishes of generations to come.”

This nostalgia can be futuristic, indeed, the dons are imagining themselves a permanent future in a white academic pantheon. This is similar to settler futurity, which is always nostalgic for its own current power, fearful that it may come to pass.

The second world university is a pedagogical utopia. Its horizons are still total in that its end goal is a utopia that everyone should and can attend. This liberal expansion rests materially on the continued accumulation of fees, debt, and land by its big baby turned big baby daddy, the first world university. Nonetheless, second world critique does inform third world work. As Denise da Silva has often said, “we cannot stay in the work of critique, but we must go through critique to get to the work.” Through critique, and the dirty work that follows it, we might find some machinery useful for a third world.

A Third University Strategies

The third world university defines itself against the first and second but is probably made up of their scrap material. Its aim is decolonization, but its attempts at decolonization can range broadly from nationalistic bids for membership into the family of nations to transnational forms of cooperation to local movements for autonomy to Indigenous sovereignty; these are particularistic strategies of anticolonial and decolonial projects that are not necessarily aligned with one another. By necessity, the third world university

17. The first world is the “big baby” of the second world university. See the previous chapter on the Morrill Act and land-grant universities as engineering schools born out of more classical universities. The first world university was the baby and is now the sugar daddy.
teaches first world curricula: medicine where hospitals are needed for sovereign bodies; engineering where wastewater systems are needed for sovereign lands; legal studies where the law is a principal site of decolonial struggle; agricultural science where seeds are being patented, modified, and sterilized; food studies where the land mass-produces net export crops but there is a food shortage; enterprise where capital is needed for sovereign economies. It teaches a second world critique, because only through critique can the colonial code be cracked. Like Third Cinema, the third world university "does not simply incorporate or quote these sources, but actively reinvents them through their appropriations...to synthesize these disparate sources into not only a coherent discourse but a far-reaching, transformative radical project."

It is part of the machinery of the university, a part that works by breaking down and producing counters to the first and second machineries. As a strategic reassembly of first world parts, it is not a decolonized university but a decolonizing one. But it still produces. It probably still charges fees and grants degrees.

What does the third world university feel like? You might find this part unsatisfying. I refuse to offer a utopic description for a strategic decolonizing machine (for utopias, go to the second world). I hope you make this same refusal. However, I am sure that many readers are involved in university projects with decolonial desires to implement change pragmatically, readers who have appropriated university resources to synthesize a transformative, radical project. These formations may be personal, even solitary; they may be small working groups of like-minded university workers, research centers, degree programs, departments, even colleges. Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi in Aotearoa might be the clearest example of a decolonizing university formation. If we consider the Cuban Latin American School of Medicine as a university from which decolonizing work sometimes emerges—as it has trained more than twenty-five thousand physicians from eighty-four countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, North America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania to return to their home communities where doctors and medical care are scarce—then some third world university formations can operate at the scale of state apparatuses. However, besides literal "third world" formations like Escuela Latinoamericana de Medicina (ELAM), and explicitly decolonizing universities like Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi, the third world university also appears contemporaneously within first world universities.

As an insightful example, Ta-Nehisi Coates describes Howard University and the Mecca as imbricating and coinciding institutions:

I was admitted to Howard University, but formed and shaped by The Mecca. These institutions are related but not the same. Howard University is an institution of higher education, concerned with the LSAT, magna cum laude, and Phi Beta Kappa. The Mecca is a machine, crafted to capture and concentrate the dark energy of all African peoples and inject it directly into the student body.

Coates goes on to root the power of the machine Mecca in the reassembly of Howard University's transhistorical networks of Black, governmental, literary, revolutionary power and the power of place:

The Mecca derives its power from the heritage of Howard University, which in Jim Crow days enjoyed a near-monopoly on black talent. And whereas most other historically black schools were scattered like forts in the great wilderness of the old Confederacy, Howard was in Washington, D.C.—Chocolate City—and thus in proximity

to bother federal power and black power. The result was an alumni and professorate that spanned genre and generation—Charles Drew, Amiri Baraka, Thurgood Marshall, Ossie Davis, Doug Wilder, David Dinkins, Lucille Clifton, Tosi Morrison, Kwame Ture. The history, the location, the alumni combined to create The Mecca.2

This remarkable list of Howard University notables represents a fairly divergent constellation of ideologies; David Dinkins, former mayor of New York City, and Kwame Ture of the All-African Peoples Revolutionary Party provide one example of a stark contrast. Yet in the machine of the Mecca, their individual and collective Blackness comes to mean something different in assemblage with one another. As an historically Black college or university (HBCU), Howard University is already an alternative university universe. The Mecca produces yet a third reality, and it does so by reassembling Howard’s histories of power, race, and place.

To call these efforts a third university is not to say that they are in political solidarity with one another but rather to call their decolonial possibilities into existence. More precisely, we call forth a contingent collaboration across all these efforts—a transnational, multcampus, multiscalar self-awareness. It is an AI emerging. The analytic work here is to consider how the third world university emerges out of the first, in our respective locations. The political work is to assemble our efforts with a decolonizing spirit and an explicit commitment to decolonization that can be the basis of transnational collaborations and transhistorical endurance.

To Assemble a Decolonizing-Works, We Can Learn from Black Film-Works

Making movies is an apt metaphor for making movement in and through the university. Moviemaking takes place at multiple scales, from individual works of single movies to assembling “works” in another sense of “ironworks” and “waterworks.” Film-works are the places, premises, and machinery needed to make movies: from small studios to film industries. It is a good way to envision assembling the works of a decolonizing university.

Zeinabu Davis’s insightful documentary film Spirits of Rebellion reveals the scales and scopes of Black filmmaking works by tracing the contours of what some have termed the LA Rebellion—Black radical filmmakers like Julie Dash, Charles Burnett, Larry Clarke, Haile Gerima, Barbara McCullough, Jamaa Fanaka, Ben Caldwell, Billy Woodberry, Shirikiana Aina, and O. Funmilayo Makarun whose work created a shared legacy of study at the UCLA Film School from the 1960s to the 1980s. Davis herself is part of this genealogy, and her own work marks a continuation, a memory, and an evolution of this legacy as well as the larger tradition of Black film. Spirits of Rebellion covers the nuances of their filmic stories and the art of creating Black representational power out of a Hollywood overdetermined form.

What stuck with me through the stories in Davis’s documentary were the coincidental linkages between filmmakers, the collaborations necessary for making a film, the materiality of communication technologies, the copyright somersaults in using images and sound, the funding not just to make films but to have them shown, the legal and capital juggernaut of a Hollywood machine that Black filmmakers have to subvert. And all of the filmmakers in Davis’s documentary speak to the space-making work of Teshome Gabriel, UCLA professor and scholar of Third Cinema. His efforts were instrumental in composing a third world film factory.

Films are not just texts. Films are enterprises. Certainly the products of filmmaking are cinematic texts that can be “read” just like any other literary work—for their signifying meaning, for their impact on existing systems of representation, for the ways that communities and audiences take up the text. However, films are enterprises, requiring money, machines, casts and crews, networks of distribution, and critical audiences who discuss the films.

Donald Glover, speaking about his 2016 FX network show *Atlanta*, described how he organized an all-Black writers’ room, all ATLien’s, all without Hollywood-esque writers’ rooms experiences:

I did it in my house where I was recording music and also doing the show. We called it the Factory. And we worked out of the Factory.22

For Glover to do the representational work of a show whose “thesis... was to make people feel black,” he also had to assemble a Black enterprise of Black people and Black bricks and mortar.22 His house as cinematic factory fostered the organic intimacy he envisioned for his show.

**Film movements are multiscalar endeavors.** One might think about how making an independent short film is one scale. Making a Black film industry is another scale. Consider what the necessary collaborations are for making

- a single film,
- a body of work,
- a film production studio,
- a Black film industry,
- a distribution network for theatrical releases, or
- a Black film movement.

Assembling a decolonizing university is also a multiscalar endeavor. We might ask what the necessary collaborations are for making

- a single project with a decolonizing aspect,
- a body of decolonizing works,
- a decolonizing production studio,
- a decolonizing industry,
- a network of decolonizing organisms, or
- a decolonizing university movement.

**Black film is Black assemblage in flight.**

It is a living thing, Black cinema. It is a living thing that has endured. It has survived under duress since the beginning of the last century with no help, with no tools, with no focus, with no attention, with no water, with no sunlight. And still, the images have been made by people long before us. So I do think there are beautiful things that are happening in the space, because there has always been.23

The very existence of the preceding quote by filmmaker Ava DuVernay is itself an aperture into the living thing of Black cinema, into its transhistorical timelines and multiscalar assemblages. In this instance, DuVernay is speaking to *Another Round*, a podcast hosted by Heben Nigatu and Tracy Clayton, the Black female creators, hosts, and writers of the show.24 They are interviewing DuVernay about her forthcoming projects: *13th*, a Netflix documentary on the advent of modern slavery through mass incarceration as generated by the Thirteenth Amendment, and *Queen Sugar*, a dramatic series about a Louisiana family, to be broadcast on the Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN). With a Black podcast audience surrounding her, the Oscar-nominated Hollywood film *Selma* be-

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25. Adding still more gears, Nigatu and Clayton came up from new media spaces such as BlackTwitter and blogs such as *MadameNoir* and *TheRoot* (founded by Henry Louis Gates Jr.). *Another Round* lives on BuzzFeed.com, one of the single most influential media shapers on the Internet (and thus in mass culture), a site that explicitly functions without a core demographic but through lateral and multiple networks.
hind her, a digital streaming Netflix documentary ahead of her, and a serial drama to be broadcast on a television channel owned by one of the wealthiest Black women of all time, DuVernay is in this moment a rider and a rewriter of Black cinematic assemblage in motion.26

Black assemblage involves the modding of technologies raked together by the witch's broom. YouTube, podcasts, blogs, Twitter feeds, digital streaming services, crowdfunding campaigns, are new technologies commandeered by a collaboration of organisms already-readied by producing bodies of works sometimes within first world systems. These collaborations meant that Pharrell's YouTube channel could host Awkward Black Girl, that Oprah would televise DuVernay, that podcasts and Twitter hashtags might become Black.

The witch's flight might fashion landing pads out of First Cinema, yet it is always poised to fly away from them. She can "walk into meetings and talk with my studio partners now with a sense of freedom," DuVernay says, because she can always fly away.27 Her ever-ready refusal of First Cinema is a stance route in self-determination: "It's because I always know I can make something on two dollars and a paperclip. Always. Always."28

Filmmaking is collaborative but not democratic. Most films, even independent ones, require a crew of makers, seek investments by producers, need actors. Films are made collectively, yet generally hierarchically (not usually "democratically"), by a gang of folks who unevenly control the film through their invested cash, their supply and operation of video or film equipment, the coordination of schedules, their scriptwriting and their improvisation. Maybe there is a single director. Maybe creative decisions are born more collaboratively. One ought to be a little agnostic about the value of democracy if one wants to make a film.

When building a decolonizing machine out of colonizing scraps, we ought to ask, what are the types of organizational structures to get it done? What organizational structures do we think we are supposed to have? Why do we think that way?

Universities can certainly be called hierarchical, but such a critique is an incomplete analysis. An evolved colonizing machine, like any code, is not simply hierarchical. If it were, it would not be efficient—there are multiple flows of commands, some hierarchical, some lateral, some "organic" in the sense of emergence.

One ought to be a little agnostic about democracy when inside a colonizing machine. And alternatives to democracy exist. We might think of various Indigenous forms of governance such as elderships or matrilineal land stewardship. We might think about hip-hop governance, or even revolutionary organizations, as a form of relation-based organizing.

A Black film movement is ideologically diverse. What is in common for a Black film movement, I want to say, is a love for

26. The year 2016 is a year that has seen the "Blackening" of mainstream media—from late-night talk show hosts Larry Wilmore (now canceled) and Noah Trevor to Marvel superhero Luke Cage on Netflix to successful comedy serials Blackish (ABC), Atlanta (FX), and Insecure (HBO) with Issa Rae—mainstream productions with almost no white cast members. Prior to her HBO deal, Rae got attention as creator, writer, actor, and producer of the YouTube series Awkward Black Girl, which went viral enough for a second season premier on record producer Pharrell's YouTube channel iAmOTHER. For the surreal dark comedy Atlanta, Donald Glover, who acted in Community and wrote for NBC's 30 Rock and also raps as Childish Gambino, similarly absorbed all roles—executive producer, writer, director, executive music producer, and star.

27. DuVernay herself has risen to fame from her 2016 Oscar-nominated film Selma, the first film directed by a Black woman to be nominated for an Academy Award—although DuVernay herself was not nominated, during a year that spawned the much-discussed viral hashtag "OscarsSoWhite" created by Black Twitter activist, writer, and former lawyer April Reign.

28. Clayston and Nigatu, "Two Dollars and a Paperclip."
Black life and for Blackness. This love functions like gravity; it is everywhere, operating on all things. But it manifests differently in interactions big and small—planetarily in scale or intimate. It is not always your friend, and it can lead to plummets, but isn’t flying just a falling heart with wings? It is the witch’s flight, not linear genealogy, that connects decolonizing work. An effective decolonizing university assemblage must be ideologically diverse; it must have different and differing parts that work. A decolonizing university has only to share that love for Black life, for Indigenous worldlings, for their futures.

Axioms about the Third University

I list below axioms for third university actualities. If we consider that a decolonizing university exists already amid the colonial, and that it takes many formations at multiple scales—from the personal to the institutional to the national—then we can start to ascertain the premises for its existence. Axioms should be flexible enough to build multiple formations and to accommodate contradictions, while clear enough to catch the decolonial desires that inspirit these formations. I call them axioms not so much because they are self-evident or irrefutable. Rather, they are axioms in the second sense of the word: propositions upon which a structure, in this case, a decolonizing university, can be built.

1. It already exists. It is assembling. It assembles within the first and second universities.
2. Its mission is decolonization.
3. It is strategic. Its possibilities are made in the first world university.
4. It is timely, and yet its usefulness constantly expires.
5. It is vocational, in the way of the first world university.

6. It is unromantic. And it is not worthy of your romance.
7. It is problematic. In all likelihood, it charges fees and grants degrees.
8. It is not the fourth world.
9. It is anti-utopian. Its pedagogical practices may be disciplining and disciplinary. A third world university is less interested in decolonizing the university and more in operating as a decolonizing university.
10. It is a machine that produces machines. It assembles students into scyborgs. It assembles decolonizing machines out of scrap parts from colonial technology. It makes itself out of assemblages of the first and second world universities. To the degree that it accomplishes these assemblages, it is effective.

28. “The work of wings / was always freedom, fastening / one heart to every falling thing,” Li-Young Lee, “One Heart”