Taking Care in Academia: The Critical Thinker, Ethics and Cuts

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This article raises philosophical and political questions we can ask about how we care for each other in a pernicious academic environment. The article draws upon a personal account of job loss in order to foreground a more theoretical and political discussion of care within an academic context. It is concerned also with ways in which Gender Studies in particular, and critical thinkers in the broader liberal arts context, are supported. Beyond relying on the assertion of market rationale, it may not always be clear how the axing of liberal arts programmes takes place in ethics-related ways. Thus the article addresses care parameters within which the critical practices of scholars takes place.

Keywords: Care, Ethics, Ghetto, Gender Studies, Academia

Whilst there are general assertions about a global crisis in liberal arts education, there are specific legislative, concrete and ideological grounds on which to build a well-reasoned argument that a crisis does indeed exist. This article does not make that argument; it has been and is still being made, as this and the previous issue of GJSS attest (for other examples see Welch 2002, Perloff 2004, Davies 2005, Felski 2008, Quinn 2003, Dean et al. 2009, Nussbaum 2010). However, this article is located within two related positions that rest consciously upon the crisis argument. One is defensive – the article argues for the disciplinary home/s in which gender studies sits (and by exten-

sion related studies). The other is not content to defend and justify the humanities and social sciences – apart from parrying the criticisms of liberal arts education, this second position adds to the groundswell of dissent that strikes unequivocally at a neoliberalist, higher education environment. In this article, that environment is considered specifically in terms of care practices.

In the lived reality of our academic "world/s" there are familial, collegial, mentored, and implicit or explicit kinship structures amongst and between us. This is a theme covered in the recent GLQ special issue called *Queer Bonds*, which I will come to later. The analysis below begins with a personal narrative

about job loss that I expose for two reasons – one, it is symptomatic of the anti liberal arts context. Two, and more importantly in this article, my personal narrative serves as the empirical, and political backdrop for a theoretical analysis of care. Mine is not a special story, it is one of many that should nonetheless be heard in the spirit of reflexive evaluation.

"Being Cut" and the Context of Care Ethics

I have recently returned the UK after being in Australia for the last eighteen years. My most recent position was acting chair of a gender and cultural studies programme at a university in Australia. That programme itself emerged out of the reshaping and extending of what had previously been called Women's Studies. In 2006 the conversion of Women's Studies to Gender Studies ensued and it was hybridised with Cultural Studies to form Gender and Cultural Studies (known as GCS). The history of GCS, and its antecedent Women's Studies, is complex and not yet written. This narrative scratches the barest of historical marks in that regard but, at least tangentially, it preserves the memory of more than one academic casualty.

Towards the end of 2010, GCS was discontinued. The managerial rationale for this programme closure was expressed in friendly and sympathetic, yet dry industrial terms. My

job loss was "managed" through the discourse of economic rationalism and university restructuring – it was explained through market rationale. But this explanation is partial, and thus insufficient, if heuristic evaluations are to be made.

Generally speaking, and given that universities are populated by human beings with diverse subjectivities, department closures cannot only happen as a result of rational, politically-neutral, market imperatives. The demise of critical, rhetorically creative, and interdisciplinary programmes like GCS may be impacted by such phenomena as political and gendered power relations, a stressed workforce, political ideology and management style. Factors such as higher workloads, increased bureaucracy, devolved corporate managerialism, and more competition, may have negative impacts on, for example, staff morale or ethics of care in academia. In the context of a liberal arts crisis, the study of "women" and "gender" and "culture" for example, may be considered outmoded, not valuable, or unnecessary in a market-driven, neo-liberal climate. This article considers why and how some study areas, such as Gender Studies, might come to be understood as not fitting market rationale.

Again speaking generally, if the specialised study (at once imaginative and rigorous) of women, men, and power, gender diversity, bodies and identities, epistemologies,

and philosophies of everyday life (amongst other study areas) becomes an "ideological misfit" in an institution such as a university, it follows that support becomes compromised. In the current political and economic climate, managerial support for the future of such study is predictably narrow as a consequence of policy, but academic support (collegial and interdepartmental), may also be bare or weakened. This is relevant in terms of how we might understand care practices in academia and how collegial care for example might be at risk of subtle erosion.

Many of my former colleagues have given me concrete reasons to believe in, and attest to, the existence of "care" as a traditional university value. This article suggests that the current crisis climate has insidious effects on care practices and that the possible manifestations of these effects need critique. It is not an easy critique to make because the existing crisis critique reifies market ideologies. An ethics of care, which is relevant to human care practices and lived human experience within the university, may be obscured by this reification.

I turn then, to the explanatory notion of "slippage": the slippage between traditional university values and what I call funding-cut-logic. What I mean by traditional values (for the purposes of this article) are practices of care for the scholar-academic within the liberal arts con-

text. They are informed by my own experiences: more than a decade of receiving and giving care (within the teaching and research environments of Women's Studies, Gender Studies, Cultural Studies, Trans Studies, Philosophy and Queer Theory), and engaging with written scholarship which has analysed and debated care in relation to scholars within the university system. Examples of these traditional care practices are: mentorship, critical feedback and review, flexible pedagogy, democratic management, and academic manoeuvrability. I discuss these as forms of care later on. In terms of what might be considered romantic or overly optimistic traditional university values, see Currie, Thiele and Harris (2002) who discuss a range of university values across historical critical perspectives.

As Currie et al. also point out, conflicts exist in 'managed' universities due to the tensions between 'money and truth', and 'entrepreneurship and scholarship' (ibid., 30). Put simply, university funders influence academic integrity and manoeuvrability and in this way traditional university care practices may be compromised. Adding complexity to this equation is the notion that a market-derived explanation for an impact on care is incomplete or superficial. Thus this article questions how and whether a care critique might extend the current crisis critique. A loss of any programme in

a university is enacted by people, not policies. Management directives too, are made by people, and the consequences are felt in lived human terms. In relation to care, the notions of loss and support should be considered. Later in the article I discuss loss; in this section I focus on value as a form of support.

We can ask how a sense of value for a dedicated gender studies programme might change, or be influenced. Lafferty and Fleming state that 'market-derived models of organisation result in the devaluing of activities that do not directly generate revenue' (2000, 265). This aspect of revenue-linked de-valuing could be considered as over-inflated. The fiscal logical is clear, but it is also dominant and partial. The liberal arts crisis is dominated by critiques of late-capitalism, market forces, neo-liberalism, consumer-driven corporatisation etc. I do not question whether these critiques are valuable. I question whether their dominance obscures other subtle reasons that might exist in relation to academic care practices and small programme closure.

Let us consider the notion of slippage between the reasonability of funding cut logic, the un-reasonability of that logic, and the attenuation or strengthening of care practices. How and why funding-cut-logic is considered reasonable, to the extent, for example, that care for liberal arts programmes and critical thinkers is undervalued, can be viewed through theories of influence or power. This short article draws upon some of those theories here, as suggested heuristics for more extended analyses of care. It could be said that in the context of collegial support (for gender studies as an example), "a reality" determines or governs people's actions and their sense-making processes. In a Foucauldian vein, that reality can be understood as a diffuse power production that normalises the overriding funding-cut-logic; it is a putatively sense-making logic. Obvious consequences of this are cuts due to funding. Also, but less obviously, care practices in academia are influenced by perceived realities.

Because slippages between market-logic and ethics-driven-logic are complex and can be considered insidious, the notion of what Foucault called 'governmentality' (1991) is one way to understand how influence, care practices and power relations interplay. As Foucault scholars will appreciate, there are many forms of power that Foucault theorised, and the term "governmentality" is broad. However, the concept of governmentality particularly suits the analysis of care in the context of a "power-infused academia". Read in one way, governmentality illuminates 'the way in which the conduct of individuals or groups might be directed' (Foucault 1982, 219).

As Foucault also said, 'basically power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking

of one to the other than a question of government. ... To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others' (ibid., 221 emphasis added). It is the way this structuring takes place that is relevant here. If not through a direct, linear, managed hierarchy, how else might we consider the field of action to be laid out for university actors? To my mind, governmentality is one relevant consideration, and psychoanalytic, philosophical, social, and education theories provide others. This article has not set out to analyse power, but excellent Foucauldian analyses of power within an academic context exist, see for example Broadhead and Howard (1998) and Butin (2001).

Recent nudge theory is also relevant to the idea of subtle government, which nudges (influences) people's behaviour and choices. Thaler and Sustein (2008) have introduced the term 'choice architecture' to describe a technique of governing people. In Thaler and Sustein's conceptual framework, a 'choice architect' may be a university manager who is 'responsible for organizing the context in which people make decisions' (2008, 3). This theoretical line is preceded by earlier experimental psychological theories such as Milgram's, on obedience (1974), and Asch's on conformativity (1951), which demonstrated the propensity people have to be led, and to defer to authority. In a psychoanalytic framework, the

lack of collegial support for a vulnerable program can be demonstrated as a sign of perverse pleasure. Power and sadism may be exerted in the workplace through the urge to actively assist in a programme's downfall. A pleasure spectrum for example, could contain the quietly complicit observer, the gossip, and the overt aggressor who may display blatant incivility and disrespect towards the "dying" program or its staff members. As Chancer states in her chapter on sadomasochism and the workplace:

How could the huge numbers of hours most people spend labouring in offices … not deeply affect feelings toward self and others, both at the work site and after leaving it? … That capitalism as a social system operates on sadomasochistic principles … seems less than far-fetched when some of capitalism's fundamental premises are unearthed, even superficially. For wage earners, the vast majority of those under its aegis, capitalism has inextricably tied work to survival (Chancer 1992, 93-94).

As I show, there are multiple ways of critically viewing the ways in which collegial support exists, or might be eroded. There are still other viewpoints: Porath and Erez have conducted collaborative studies into workplace incivility and bad behaviour (2011), Lafferty and Fleming (2000) analyse gendered manage-

ment structure, and Marginson (1993) examines the managed behaviour of academics in his analysis of markets in education. In *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (which is an exemplary defence, as well as a "strike for" liberal arts education), Nussbaum critiques a lack of compassion (which we can read as an element of the ethics of care). Nussbaum says, 'we may also withhold compassion for other bad reasons; for example, we might wrongly blame the suffering person for her misfortune' (2010, 38). Here, the blame is on an individual, and much like Chancer's view, it relates to workplace and social dysfunction. In a moment I will extend this notion of misplaced blame towards the misfortune of Women's Studies and Gender Studies.

In questioning the ethics of care within academia, I am not suggesting that dominant market forces should be simplistically or impractically considered. As Chancer says, 'work is tied to survival' (1992, 94), so it is understandable and desirable that people protect themselves and their careers. I am questioning the responsibility to think critically about the ways that ethics, traditional university values, funding-cut-logic and self-interest are balanced or coexist.

My return to the UK now includes the firsthand, transnational experience of impoverished support for the humanities. In the first few weeks of my arrival, three particu-

lar news items in the media struck my attention. I discuss them here for two reasons: one they are concrete indicators that shed light on what I call institutional "un-care" and two, they complexify the backdrop of potentially obscurantist neoliberal economics.

BCC radio aired a programme that discussed the demise of Women's Studies. The impact of the UK government's announcements on student fee increases, and its lack of funding for the humanities and social sciences, pervaded the media. One recent example stated that, 'Oxford University's governing body backed a motion condemning the government's higher education policy by 283 votes to five. History professor Robert Gildea said the changes to university funding were 'reckless, incoherent and incompetent'' (Coughlan 2011). In the House of Commons, seeking to substantiate the case for the government's decision to cut funding to the humanities and social sciences, the Rt. Hon. Dennis MacShane MP attacked the course material of Professor Anne Phillips, a well-known feminist academic who works at the Gender Institute at the London School of Economics. MacShane stated:

My Hon. friend mentioned the London School of Economics. Is she aware of its feminist political theory course, taught by Professor Anne Phillips? In week 8 of the course, students study prostitution. The briefing says: "If we

consider it legitimate for women to hire themselves out as low-paid and often badly treated cleaners, why is it not also legitimate for them to hire themselves out as prostitutes?" If a professor at the London School of Economics cannot make the distinction between a cleaning woman and a prostituted woman, we are filling the minds of our young students with the most poisonous drivel (Parliament UK, 2011).

This explicit and extreme example of un-care produced an outcry that has exposed these anti-feminist, anti-intellectual, anti-gender studies views as symptomatic of the crisis in liberal arts higher education. This outcry is part of what I earlier referred to as a groundswell of dissent. Below I extend this critique of anti-liberal arts discourse in relation to another, more intellectual, media example.

Ghett(o)ver it! Gender Studies and Feminism Have Value

In terms of the concrete structural reality of marketised university systems and right-leaning government policies, there are two important issues I want to raise concerning the disciplinarity of Gender Studies. One is the notion of value: that a study area like Gender Studies is, or is not, valuable. And the second is the common reason that putatively causes this undervaluing: ghettoisation.

Ghettoisation is often touted as the cause for the demise of specialist programmes and study areas (for examples see McRobbie 1990 and Murphy 2001). The logic being that if the mainstream radar cannot pick something up, that thing will not have any potency. In other words, if Gender Studies or Women's Studies, for example, exist outside mainstream disciplines, as disciplinary fringe-dwellers, they will not be seen or supported and therefore they will not flourish. This deployment of the ghettoisation argument is facile (I give an example in a moment), and when it is used to discriminate against Gender Studies say, therein lies its political cleverness. It is an argument that on the face of it sounds reasonable. Thus I understand "ghettoisation" (as it is used by detractors of programmes like gender studies) as a complex term.

The ghetto-blame-argument is used skilfully, but easily, by detractors of programmes such as Gender Studies to explain away (or attempt to dismantle) the mode in which these study areas operate. This blame-argument is effective and strategic; it manoeuvres and subjugates Gender Studies. As an example of facile deployment of the term ghetto, I refer to a recent discussion on Women's Hour (a longstanding BBC Radio programme that focuses on women's issues) that discussed the decline of Women's Studies.

The radio programme followed a typical format: one presenter, and two invited experts: in this case, Dr Steve Davies, (Institute of Economic Affairs), and Professor Mary Evans (Gender Institute, London School of Economics). The programme segment was short, thus the analysis was informed and to the point but not extended. If there were listeners willing to understand, or be convinced that Women's Studies is valuable, there was a limited forum to act within. At the outset, Evans was asked to explain why Women's Studies was in decline. Evans was thus faced with explaining the reason for, or perception of, demise. To be concise, I focus here only on the ghettoisation argument, which was not challenged.

On the radio programme, historical and disciplinary distinctions were made between Women's Studies and Gender Studies but they were also conflated. As a result of this conflation, both "labels" for these interdisciplinary study areas were absorbed into the ghetto-blame-argument. Crucially, when making effective critical arguments in a short radio interview, one or two key phrases or words will stand out for the listeners. In this Women's Hour programme the word ghettoisation was used in such a way.

Davies said that ghettoisation was the reason why Women's Studies had, and Gender Studies would, fail.

The points of Davies' ghettoisation argument can be summarised as follows:

- 'Turning Women's Studies into a distinct separate subject, was a mistake in the longer run, because it led to ghettoisation.
- People think, oh those kind of issues are the things people do in the Women's Studies department, and everyone else gets on with the traditional way they've always done things in the main discipline.
- Its true you have these specialised departments but the danger is that the kind of work they are doing is seen to be something that's hived off in a special unit.
- Employers do not rate degrees with the word "studies" in the title. Which might be wrong but is a fact of life.
- The kind of thing to do is bring the Women's Studies or Gender Studies perspective to bear in the main academic disciplines.
- Women's Studies /Gender Studies should be done through the mainstream curriculum. I hope that that is happening, but I fear that we are reverting to just considering ourselves with men with power' (2011).

I do not argue against the likelihood that not being noticed (academically speaking) is gloomily fate-

ful. But I do argue that ghettoisation itself is not to blame. My response to the ghetto-blame-argument is to say that rather than the ghetto being seen as the reason for small programme decline, it is the lifeblood of it. Rather than think of ghettoisation in negative terms, it can be understood in positive terms. A ghetto is a very powerful place; it is a nucleus of energy. The problem is not that ghettoisation has occurred (it may be a necessary feature of marginalised existence); it is that the noise from the ghetto has become strategically weak.

If Gender Studies, for example, is siphoned off into the mainstream disciplinary areas, into small, broken-up pieces – a module here, a module there – the focus and drive and power of Gender Studies as an interdisciplinary field in its own right will be effaced. To assume that it won't, rests on the argument that Gender Studies departments would be gone, and in their wake the study of a multiply gendered and sexed world would be taken into account (developed and specialised) in mainstream disciplines. This has not been done well in the past, which is why Women's Studies as a distinct study area emerged so forcefully. When Davies says it was a mistake to turn Women's Studies into a distinct separate subject, this is to ignore the very reasons why it was and still is "distinctly" needed. MacShane's groundless comments in the UK Parliament for example,

not only support this need for distinct study programs like Women's or Gender Studies (they betray a great ignorance and wilful inattention to critical insight), but they highlight the lack of knowledge about, and care for, such realities as (and I list just a few as they are numerous):

poverty
hunger
globalisation
war
violence
homophobia
transphobia
racial hatred
patterns of labour
human rights
domestic work
sex work
sexuality and the media
migration
family structures
selfhood
corporeality
oppressive power relations
environmental degradation
consumerism
domestic abuse
care ethics

– *which are all gendered, contemporaneous and relevant to the future.* Why a university should not dedicate itself to the specialised study of such important gendered issues might be thought of as confounding – were the context of marketised education not so influential.

Davies seemed supportive of Women's Studies to the extent of acknowledging that women make up half the population and should not be ignored in such mainstream disciplines as History. To suggest that the entire Women's Studies and Gender Studies intellectual corpus (amassed over decades) can be replicated within, and titrated into other traditional disciplines as a politico-managerial "cure", is in my view a perverse form of care. This ghetto-blame-argument frames Women's Studies and Gender Studies as disease-like and certainly does not convey a strong sense of their value.

Davies' fear that 'we are reverting to just considering ourselves with men with power' (2011), is telling. Small specialist areas like Women's Studies are viewed as threats, not only to the marketised university but also to traditional androcentric or misogynistic disciplinary and management styles (Davies is actually fearful at the prospect of men and power being the focus of specialised analysis). Used in a facile way, the ghettoisation-blame-argument can influence academics and managers alike especially in the funding cut climate, where care practices in academia interplay within the structured reality of a governed university.

I suggest that Gender Studies, as one example, must continue to beat its drums. The "noise" (however articulated) needs to be heard at many levels of the academy and in the wider community. This un-silenced voice can speak to middle and senior management such that they don't say, 'oh that's a ghetto, we don't really know what goes on in there', but to encourage them to say, 'oh yes that's the Gender Studies ghetto, a specialised area, and I know how to articulate and promote what they do. And I know that they do great work!'

A Vice Chancellor, who supports and recommends their gender department because they actually know what goes on in it, might be considered a novel idea. However, I suggest that it is not just the job of those outside the ghetto to look in, and find out what is going on. It is also the job of the ghetto-dwellers to speak out. I am not saying that ghetto-dwellers are unaware of this, many are crucially aware of energy-draining and tactical survivalist politics. I suggest that closures of departments and job losses within this contingent existence may be avoidable, especially when care practices are consistent, self-reflexive and politically conscious.

Arguments against the ghetto-blame standpoint should, in my view, stand up for the very strong character of a studies program: not to apologise for it, not to keep it quiet, and not to let it be absorbed into other mainstream subject areas. However, by standing up for gender studies programmes and departments I am not suggesting that the study of gender should not be ac-

cessed across the disciplines. On the contrary, many if not most university courses across disciplines would benefit from the study of gender – if human life is important, and human life is gendered, it follows that *gender is important.*

Gender studies programmes and institutes can demonstrate their expertise and specialist knowledges by being available to academics in seemingly disparate areas or mainstream disciplines, who wish for advice and feedback on their own teaching of gender-inclusive topics. Gender Studies departments can and should be resources for others. Given such spreading of urbane responsibility though, there is a risk of gender studies becoming institutionally diasporic. This is another reason to retain and promote distinct gender departments and their valuable work. Gender Studies needs a home (not a dispersal cure), such that it can strengthen its specialist outputs, its teaching, its research and, its powerful presence in the academy. The study of gender in singular, module-based forms, is not what I argue against. I argue that these forms of study should not (as a matter of remedial policy) replace whole departments, programmes, research centres and institutes.

The mystery of the ghetto is the thing that must be effaced, not the study that goes on in it. A Gender Studies ghetto cannot afford to become mysterious in its marginality. The ghettoisation argument (as I have presented it here) falls two ways; only one of which incorporates the notion of a thriving, innovative academic "home". In this next section I steer towards more philosophical questions of care.

Forms of Caring

A human rights discourse in the academic context brings us closer to a theoretical analysis of care; it is extended by the term 'democratic collegiality' which Currie, et al. cast as a fourth traditional university value alongside 'professional autonomy and integrity', 'critical dissent' and 'academic freedom' (2002, 29). In this section I focus on forms of care (that we extend to other scholars directly, as individuals, and indirectly as we support, for example, distinct study areas that are under threat).

Scholars contribute to the moments of success of other scholars (however they are calibrated, whether formal or not). Scholars' successes are built on the backs of others. Each scholar begins as a student, a student who "takes" from those teachers who "give". Each teacher was once a student who, by virtue of pedagogy, gives back. Each scholar who uses the texts of another is being cared for; is being "given" the benefit of another's hard labour. Each written word is informed by the words of another. Even being cognisant of this, is a form of care; it affects behaviour and outlook, such as the support for

critical scholarship.

Conscientious peer reviewing also supports critical scholarship. It is one example of a highly regarded care practice in academia, and is one of the mainstays of academic care for the scholar. Formal, as well as informal peer reviewing are forms of care practice that are grist to the scholar's mill. However, forms of care that are precious and treasured, as I paint them here, are not just the inherent effects of remarkably generous collegiality. To "care for" requires energy and conscious awareness, and just like university management practices, care practices are implicated in political and biased or influenced environments. Ethics of care can be configured in terms of strategic connectivity.

One example of a care practice that relates to programme closure within what I have called a pernicious academic environment *and* that speaks to the huge energy expense involved in survivalist care, is the 2010 campaign to save the Philosophy Department at Middlesex University. In particular, Dr Stanford's transparent response to the Vice-Chancellor of Middlesex University is an example of how survivalist practices can be openly disseminated and potentially utilised in other similar campaigns. (See http://savemdxphil.com/2010/06/02/stella-sandford-response-to-vice-chancellor-driscolls-update-1-june/) Here then, is a care practice of sharing. As I say, it is on the backs of

others that we are connected (for example as individual writers), but it is through our institutions that we are connected structurally.

In terms of publication, teaching, and research, there needs to be a network of support structures that we climb (through, in and about, slipping, falling, making firm footholds and generally navigating), until we retire or stop for whatever reason. It would be a shame to lose scholars for the reason that they are not cared for. We rely on these support structures being available to us through the institutionalised world of academia, but it is a human world, and those structures should not be somehow separated from care.

Other examples of care (in this institutional context) are derived from broader critiques of university management in the current crisis climate. McInnis (1998, 1999, 2000) writes about work roles and working conditions of academics, Davis (1996) analyses funding and its effects on academic rights and freedoms, Madden (1999) exposes the psychological effects of directive leadership on academics, Shore and Roberts (1993) analyse the effects of quality audits on intellectual freedom, and Altorf (2011, n.p.) 'aims to create a philosophical response to the dominant image of the university as a business'. These examples are forms of care (for the threatened critical thinker, or endangered scholar) because they illuminate and expose techniques of

un-care which can have devastating effects on (to name some): creativity, confidence, output, collegiality, motivation, feelings of safety, cognition, morale, working conditions, pro-activity and general well-being. Besides drawing attention to the groundswell of work that critiques the current and broad liberal arts crisis climate, it is Butler's recent comments in *Queer Bonds* (2011) that I use to raise some final points about a contemporary, crisis-relevant ethics of care in academia.

It is the destructive aspect to un-care that illuminates the greater need for care. In the context of a precarious academic life we can lose things that connect us, things that are our bonds. We could say that Gender Studies programmes are destructible and losable. A concept that is logical to employ when we speak of things being destroyed or lost, is grief. When Gender Studies departments (for example) are closed down, there is something to grieve – there is a loss to experience and account for.

It is here that Butler's work on grievable life has parallels with academic life. The liberal arts crisis is termed, "a crisis" because of the threat to life – the life of a particular kind of education and scholarship. The neoliberal age, and market-driven uncaring policies, produce fatalities, which is why commentators like Lafferty and Fleming have called for 'a counter-rhetoric to economic rationalism and its ideological

siblings in the field of management' (2000, 265). It is why Nussbaum speaks of the 'silent crisis' through which 'values precious for the future of democracy are in danger of getting lost' (2010, 1-6). Her warning is already grief-ful.

Butler's short text, *Remarks on Queer Bonds* in GLQ is a transcription of her closing comments for the Queer Bonds Conference in 2009 in Berkeley. Much of what Butler says there is drawn from her book *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (2010), and she demonstrates that the analysis of grievable life can be lifted into the thematic arena of *scholarly* bonding, kinship and care.

Although there are many ways to understand what it means to be "bonded", there are three ontological points from Butler's remarks in *Queer Bonds* that I (briefly) discuss here in relation to how we can understand care. These points relate to bodies, risk, and precariousness, and I begin with the first two.

In relation to liberal-arts-crisis-risk, we can make analogies between human corporeality and Gender Studies departments. Butler makes the point that there are political formations of the generalised condition of precariousness but also unavoidable or accidental possibilities that we cannot control (2011, 382-383). In the sense of risks to university "homes" (like ghettos), it is the political formation of precariousness that is controllable (at least

we can politically participate in it). Unlike a fleshy body, which can be struck down unexpectedly with appendicitis for instance, the Gender Studies "body" (home/ department) cannot suddenly and "out of the blue" become incapacitated. The risks to Gender Studies' survival come about through non-accidental risk-agents over time (legislative, ideological and politico-ethical). Yet, there is a more complex understanding of risk to be had. One way of understanding care in a time of crisis is to understand the ways in which we are bound up in precariousness *and with each other.* This implication of ourselves with one another is where Butler brings her remarks away from the political towards the theoretical.

In relation to the physical bodies of human beings, Butler says that bodies 'depend on what is outside themselves' to be sustained but that in a general situation of precariousness there are risks to which we 'give ourselves over' (ibid., 382). Giving ourselves over to a time of crisis, or giving oneself over to the moment one is experiencing career-wise (for example early career-ness), are forms of bonding in this Butlerian sense.

But bodies are always at risk. Butler makes this clear and it is an obvious point that she complexifies in terms of being, '[B]odies come into being and cease to be … they are subject to incursions and illnesses that jeopardize the possibil-

ity of persisting at all' (2011, 382). The risky body of the critical thinker is as risk-compromised as any body, but it has specific, located, political risks as part of its being to also consider. Thus, as Butler says, 'understanding the condition of precariousness as something that binds us' (ibid., 384) is relevant to being critical thinkers; we are oriented by conditionality, to give ourselves over to each other.

Butler makes a quick reference to Merleau-Ponty's concept of intertwining, as a way of reflecting on embodied life. She says '[T]he body never fully belongs to itself' and that our chances of survival are dependent on 'ecstatic existence in sociality' (ibid., 384). This way of thinking about our bonded-ness – that we respond to other bodies through transcendent perception (hence ecstatic) – allows us to notice what our sensuous (intersubjective, living bodies) come up against.

Butler uses the notion of 'coming up against' (ibid., 384), because of course, bodies necessarily come up against other bodies in multilayered social fields. The way I transpose this "coming up against", to the academic context, is to remark that the non-sensuous "other" (corporatisation and rational business), is another facet of our bonded experience which sensitises us to risk and also the need for care. These are simplified inroads into chiasmic ontology, which of necessity, I only preface here. Crucially however, it

is the de-sensitisation to care, as it is influenced by the non-sensuous "neoliberal other", that a phenomenology of care can elucidate.

In sum, "being" in a precarious situation, and critiquing its risks, is an ontological feature of the critical thinker's life. We are implicated in each other's lives not just because of the risk-bond and the effects of vulnerability or survival, but also because techniques of care bind us in a material and political sense.

The forms of care that this article has highlighted, allow us to question and aim to alter the dominant image of an at-risk-scholar, or the marketised university. Taking care of the humanities and social sciences scholar – the critical thinker – is not an easy task, and it falls to carers. The gender of carers is not irrelevant, nor are their positions within the hierarchical, authoritative, market-managed university. I would not say that the task of caring falls equally among scholars, because responsibility for care is ethics and experience-based, and certainly the ideals of care must be critically contextualised in terms of power and activism.

This article has argued that policy-driven decisions are not made in a social vacuum; they are made in managed workplaces, which are social spaces. It follows that there are social persuasions and influences. These involve both politics and the ethics of care. The article has also shown that taking care of the critical thinker through scholarly kinship, which if embraced in a time of crisis, will hopefully provide emerging scholars (at least) with a reason to remain in academia.

Through questioning what can be learned from the losses and impending losses of Gender Studies departments, this article has validated a political question: For whom is the loss of Gender Studies ungrievable and why? The article has formulated a pro-ghetto argument, and brought attention to the many forms of care that apply to the protection of Gender Studies as one example. It is how Gender Studies is rationalised, when it is alive and thriving as much as it is when it is in a precarious position, or indeed, when it has been grievously cut, that we all as a bonded cohort must be concerned.

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