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# Writing, Righting, and Rioting: #FeesMustFall and Student Protests in Post-Apartheid South Africa

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# Writing, Righting, and Rioting:

#FeesMustFall and Student Protests in Post-Apartheid South Africa

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If the university does not take seriously and rigorously its role as a guardian of wider civic freedoms, as interrogator of more and more complex ethical problems, as servant and preserver of deeper democratic practices, then some other regime or ménage of regimes will do it for us, in spite of us, without us. – Toni Morrison, “How Can Values Be Taught in This University?”

## **Introduction: The “Negative” Moment**

In a lecture at the beginning of the student protests that South African universities experienced from 2015 to 2017, the philosopher and public intellectual Achille Mbembe described post-apartheid South African society as having “fully entered what looks like a negative moment” (Mbembe 2015). In this statement and in the rest of his lecture, Mbembe links the student protests to broader social conditions. By doing this, he makes an argument that the students also made: the university is essential to society because education is essential to the struggle for a democratic future. The students protesting and making this claim in South Africa are the so called *born-frees*, a generation that has come of age in the years of liberation, in a society fought and won on the basis of egalitarian, non-sexist, non-racial ideals for a radically just future. Yet the majority of the country has not felt the postliberation benefits that they were promised. Outside of the few elite, most South Africans are still waiting for the basic human rights promised to them in the world’s most progressive constitution: land, housing, jobs, health care, education. In 2015, higher education became the flashpoint of these broader societal grievances. A single protest over tuition fees in October became a national student movement that lasted two years. The demands of the protests during 2015 were twofold. The primary demand was to end tuition fee increases. This goal was soon followed by the demand to end the outsourcing of university workers. In the following year as the movement expanded, so did its goals. Under the banner of #FeesMustFall in 2016, the most common rallying cry for the movement became “free, decolonial, quality higher education.” The most important part of this

rally cry was the movement's emphasis on "decolonial education." Aiming this demand at both the university and the broader society, students aimed to unearth the structures of colonialism and apartheid that still pervaded their personal and civic lives. It has been said that there is still a "fog of racism" around modern American society. The students of #FeesMustFall sought to push through the fog that had accumulated and engulfed the institutions around them. And if the misty, almost invisible fog surrounding these institutions is ideology, then the critique and subversion of these institutions, of ideology, is utopia (Sargent 123). Like all utopian projects, the students of #FeesMustFall began their project with a negation of the actual that led them to an exploration of the possible.

Mbembe's "negative moment" is not a bad or undesirable condition, but the sum force of two negative forces in conflict. In Mbembe's own words, this negative moment is one created by the collision of "new, emerging antagonisms with old, unresolved ones." He compares this moment in South Africa to the experiences of other African postcolonial societies in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s. And though the #FeesMustFall students' reappropriation of the word "decolonize" goes far beyond the political process of decolonization that brought independence to most African states from 1945 to 1970, this parallel is important to note. In 1948, while many African colonial societies were on the eve of independence, South Africa was only embarking on a new racist manifestation of political and economic oppression in the form of apartheid. Thus, as Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni pointed out, while other African postcolonial societies were defining the aspirations of the African university and African intellectuals in the 1960s, South African universities were beginning a long period of intense anti-apartheid struggles (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2017). Because of the urgency of the anti-apartheid struggle, the critical history of the essentially colonial universities in South Africa was years away from becoming the focus of South African

intellectuals. The residual Eurocentricity of South African universities today is also reinforced by the long-standing fantasy of South Africa as the outpost of Europe on the African continent. White settlement in South Africa started in 1652, more than 200 years before the Berlin Conference and the Scramble for Africa. Because of this, South Africa received its first two European universities long before other African countries – the University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University. The colonial universities in South Africa were for most of the 19 and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries whites-only institutions, and as Ndolovu-Gatsheni writes, “the sites of the coloniality of knowledge, cultural imperialism, and purveyors of Eurocentric knowledge” (2017). Although the first “African” university in South Africa was established in 1916, and followed by a few others, these were missionary universities and thoroughly shaped by the goals of European colonialism. These universities were not African universities in the precolonial traditions such as those of the Afro-Arabic, Nile Valley, or Timbuktu universities of northern Africa. Later, during apartheid, the goals of oppression through education only intensified during apartheid under the Bantu Education system, which was deliberately designed to prepare 90 percent of the country for cheap and powerless labor. The long shadow of these racist, colonial structures in society and at the university are the “old, unresolved antagonisms” that Mbembe refers to. As professor of Education at UCT Crain Soudien says, “all of the 23 South African universities are products of colonialism and apartheid; their staffing profiles, student bodies, curricula, and assessment practices bear the traces of their racialized histories” (166). By adopting the banner of decolonization, the students of #FeesMustFall inserted themselves into the decolonial discourse that emerged in many African countries beginning in the 1950s and continued through the 1970s as many newly independent African states began the journey of imagining a postcolonial society.

If Mbembe's old antagonisms are embodied by alienation that black students now feel at South African universities, these are closely related to the new antagonisms created by the dissonance that many of the born-free generation feels in broader society. The dissonance of the born-free generation is the gap that they feel widening between the egalitarian, non-sexist, and non-racist society promised to democratic South Africa and the reality of their lived experience. It is worth listing some macro social indicators to contextualize the gap the majority of South Africans feel that has been created in the last 25 years between what was supposed to happen, and what has happened. 53 percent of South Africa still lives in poverty, yet only 1 percent of whites are poor (Statistics SA, 2015). This is largely due to the fact that whites still make 5 times more than Black Africans, and the fact that on average 38 percent of whites have a degree past matric while only 9 percent of Black Africans do (Statistics SA, 2016). It is true that a small and elite group of Black Africans have made it to the top of the social ladder, but while white males represent 6.7 percent of South Africa's economically active population, they still hold 52 percent of board positions, 76.2 percent of CEOs positions, and 75.7 percent of CFOs positions (Netshitenzhe 115). The consequences of these numbers are further compounded by the intensity of the social inequality they represent. South Africa is arguably the world's most unequal country, which means that the 53 percent that live in poverty live in extreme poverty while the 1 percent of South Africa that holds 70 percent of the wealth live in gated mansions distant from masses of post-apartheid society (Statistics SA, 2015). In society and at university, these students see and experience themselves, the wide gap between the liberation ideals and post-liberation reality. Precisely because of their position as the first generation of South African born free, they are asking what freedom has so far achieved.

The collision of Mbembe's new and old antagonisms are precisely what made the #FeesMustFall protests about much more than tuition fees. These protests were the outburst of a generation that finds itself at a critical juncture in the history of South Africa. Nonetheless, one of the most common criticisms of #FeesMustFall – one that is almost always used to attack youth or student unrest regardless of context – is that these are whiny, ungrateful, and reckless young people (Giroux 164). Surprisingly this attack has come from both the right and left in South Africa. While the more conservative critique of the protest contends that the students are reckless and destroying the prestigious university system, the left-oriented critique is that the students are too privileged and not seriously concerned about the masses of poor in South Africa city. Writing on the pitfalls and lack of clarity in the #FeesMustFall movement, Professor of Psychology at UCT Wahbie Long describes the students as “trapped in a self-referential form of protest, an unmistakable narcissism has set in – I can think of no other term – as self-styled radicals reveal a decidedly un-radical preoccupation with their own bourgeois destinies” (22). For Long, #FeesMustFall was not truly concerned with the material and socio-economic injustices of all of South African society. He argues that the students were too focused on their own bourgeois issues at university instead of a taking more systematic approach like fighting to improve conditions at elementary schools. It would seem that although Long is himself a professor, his argument has lost the connection between the university and society. I will argue that the #FeesMustFall students have recognized that “the power of the existing dominant order does not merely reside in the economic or in material relations of power, but also in the realm of ideas and culture” (Giroux 51). A narrow material analysis of the movement misses this point entirely. If Long and other critics truly and deeply engaged with the student's voices, they would make the connection between the student's emphasis on social justice and the ideas of public intellectuals



like Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, or Achille Mbembe. For these authors believe that, as Fanon writes, “one cannot divorce the combat for culture from the people’s struggle for liberation” (168 *Wretched*). In this paper, I aim to engage with the voices and the ideas of students as directly possible. I will do this by attempting to follow their thoughts through the authors the students have mentioned themselves in their writing, or have cited as inspiration, quoted in speeches, or studied in activist groups during the years of protest. In this way, I will highlight the theory and experience of #FeesMustFall, and not the material aspects. The student writing I will be analyzing in tandem with these authors comes from a magazine called *Publica[c]tion*, in an issue published shortly after the #FeesMustFall movement ended. The goal of this issue was to gather essays, poems, and art of students from all 23 South African universities, and with minimal editorial guidance, ask the students to write about the movement and what it meant for them. These writings emphasize the importance of archiving and documenting the protests, while at the same time challenging modes of knowledge production and encouraging reflection. As the introduction page to the magazine says, the magazine is a “reflection, a kaleidoscope of our country, through the eyes of those who live its reality.” The topics students wrote about are varied, but all meet at the intersection of education and social responsibility. The students emphasis on the ideas of decolonial, anti-capitalist, feminist, or queer authors reflects the importance they find in creating a public pedagogy and critical cultural apparatus. They are demanding that the university not be detached from society but that it move closer, and demonstrate its value in cultivating the knowledge, social consciousness, and skills to create a more just democracy. The struggle of these students to connect the role of the university to larger society mirrors the basic struggle of democracy – to connect personal experiences to

civic issues. The #FeesMustFall students have linked the dissonance they feel in society to the decolonization of their universities.

## **Section 1: Decolonization**

The most common tagline of #FeesMustFall among students has been the call for “free, decolonial, and quality education” (IFAA 28). Over time, the word “decolonial” in this phrase became the most important because of both its gravity and its breadth. Signs at protests read “Decolonize Wits” and students at assemblies discussed decolonizing knowledge production. Meanwhile, Mbembe, perhaps the most important public intellectual in South Africa, gave the lecture I have quoted above in which he asserted that universities in South Africa “must undergo a process of decolonization both of knowledge and of the university as an institution” (Mbembe 2015). On the other hand, critics have called the repeated demand for decolonization an “empty signifier,” arguing that even if it frames the current debates about education in South Africa, it points to no actual object or agreed upon meeting (Long 20). Those who see the lack of clarity as the downfall of the decolonization movement have even argued that the use of decolonization as a metaphor is dangerous to its own cause, distracting the debate from the material injustice of postcolonial society to a focus on critical consciousness that is also a convenient “move to innocence” made by those benefiting from the material legacy of colonization (Tuck and Yang 19). Some even question why the word “decolonize” is being revitalized at this moment in South Africa at all. South Africa became fully independent from British colonialism in 1961. However it had already began instituting the violent, racialized oppression of the majority of the population by 1948 that would continue until the early 1990s. Thus, the reemergence of the call of decolonization goes far beyond the anticolonial political process that brought independence to most African states between 1945 and 1970.

When the students of #FeesMustFall use the word decolonize, they are not demanding an end to colonialism, but an end to coloniality. Coloniality is a phenomena first defined by Latin American scholars Walter D. Mignolo and Nelson Maldonado-Torres. It is not colonialism, which was an obvious and structured form of political and economic relations. Coloniality is less obvious because it is subjective and describes the areas where colonialism changed human relations even after the formal structures were removed. Coloniality outlives colonialism in the way it shaped a world of authority, knowledge, self-worth, sexuality – in other words, the areas of lived experience. It is reinforced and “alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience” (Maldonado-Torres 243). Coloniality is the systems and consequences of colonialism that did not collapse with the dismantling of direct colonial administration. In fact, some have argued that perhaps the most powerful myth of the twentieth century was the end of colonial administrated corresponded to the decolonization of the world (Grosfoguel 219). As the famous Kenyan scholar Ngugi wa Thiong'o writes, if the slave is freed, but still sees his place in the universe as that of a slave, then it matters little what changed politically (Ngugi 1993). Coloniality was indeed introduced in the political and economic aspects of colonialism, but is maintained by the psychological and cultural apparatus of imperialism. Through media, trade, and other technologies of globalization, the Global South is forced to see themselves through the dominant values of commercial Americanized culture. The call to decolonize survives colonialism because although colonialism has reached its bureaucratic end, the structures of coloniality are as pervasive and powerful as they are so often invisible. In the following section I will analyze three different essays from students that present three different approaches to decolonizing knowledge production at South African universities.

The first focuses on epistemology, the second on language, and the third on self-definition.

Through these lenses and the order which I present them, I hope to show the way the epistemology becomes language, which in turn becomes self-definition.

## **Epistemology**

The essay “On the Search of a Widened Epistemology” by Tumi Mogorsi of the Tshwane University of Technology outlines tripartite process of both reevaluating European epistemology and rehabilitating African epistemology at universities in South Africa. The first step for Mogorsi is recognizing the need for a counter-discourse to a South African academia still “preoccupied by western thought processes and its apparatus of learning and doing” (Mogorsi 51). The problem Mogorsi writes of includes not only the uber-prioritization of western and European thought, but “the invisibility of African Episteme [sic] by means of not misrecognition but abjection (made invisible, disgusting)” (51). The invisibility of an African episteme at South African universities begins with different type of invisibility in European epistemology. If African systems of knowledge are made invisible in their complete absence, European epistemology is made invisible in its complete, totalizing presence. Because the assumptions of European epistemology are implicit in all areas of study and the way these studies are undertaken, European epistemology has become unseeable. It is understood as universal. Furthermore, a European canon is one that “attributes truth only to the Western way of knowledge production” and “disregards other epistemic traditions” (Mbembe 2015). By using plural the word *episteme* for South African systems of knowledge against the singular form of *epistemology* for the canonical, European system of knowledge, Mogorsi is emphasizing the difference between these two ways of knowing. With its roots in the Enlightenment, the European canon (like the word Enlightenment itself) infers that its followers reached the

superlative and final way of knowing. This is the epistemic tradition synonymous with Descartes's line "I think therefore I am," a division between the world and the one who studies it to find objective truths. The epistemic assumption many universities make, as descendants and imitators of this thought, is that the questions posed by Plato or Kant are the true questions of philosophy. This then follows that ways Aristotle or Hegel undertook a study of these questions are the truly valid ways of understanding and engaging with such questions. The claim the Enlightenment made to a "universalistic, neutral, and objective" point of view has forced European epistemology to become rigid and totalitarian (Grosfoguel 213). It assumes itself as the only way of knowing and therefore must exclude any other ways of approaching knowledge and the way humans collect and use different forms of knowledge.

As an epistemology that begins with the premise that it is universal and objective, the European canon ignores the relations of power that knowledge production creates and maintains. This perspective disregards what Fanon calls *the body politics of knowledge* or the idea that "we always speak from a particular location in the power structures" (Grosfoguel 213, Fanon 1967). The question is not however, of whether African and European episteme are mutually exclusive, but only of which is the center from which South African universities base themselves upon. Mogorsi writes that both the foregrounding of western and European epistemology coupled with the erasure of African episteme locates Black South African students and their cultures as "otherness and all its way of being" (51). What Mogorsi recommends though is not a total replacement of European epistemology with African epistemology, but what Ngugi has coined as "moving the centre." By moving the center Ngugi means that African students and intellectuals must move the center of their world away from Europe. This is not to say that European authors and epistemology will then be erased from syllabi at African universities, but that African

episteme, as well as the experience, culture, and knowledge of different African traditions, will be the center from which Africans assess European epistemology. In his essay, Mogorsi refers to this as *Re-cognition* or “refiguring thinking processes that are bias in the principles of the Eurocentric position or way of doing things” (51). Re-cognition is the process of revisiting and reinterpreting both African and European episteme. This begins by acknowledging that Africa had traditions of knowledge and forms of socialization long before its encounter with West in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and extends all the way to the questions that face postcolonial societies in Africa today.

The difficult task of reevaluating the European canon and rehabilitating African episteme is followed by what Mogorsi calls “widening the perceptual spectrum.” Mogorsi’s “widened epistemology” is very similar to what Ngugi refers to as a “pluralism of centres” (51). These names for it are only slightly different, and what both Mogorsi and Ngugi are referring to is an opening of the academy to dialogues with epistemic traditions outside the European canon. With African episteme as the center of knowledge for South African universities, Mogorsi argues that they can begin looking outwards again, accepting a cross-pollination of knowledge and positionality. Doing away with European epistemology as the absolute, unconditional standard of learning, South African universities will be open to epistemic diversity (Mbembe 2015). Epistemic diversity will not prioritize Plato and Aristotle as the foundations of philosophy with a few limited courses in area studies on philosophy in precolonial Africa. Epistemic diversity will find as much value in reading *Mahabharata* as it does Goethe, and in doing so will “emphasize the literatureness of literature and not the Englishness of literature” (Ngugi 1993). A widened epistemic framework may find its way into the sciences by, for example, approaching environmental studies from Native American indigenous perspectives of the world as a system

and not under the Christian, European perspective of the world as a separate object that humans must subdue and populate. However, these epistemic changes are most pertinent to the humanities and social sciences where language, history, and identity are essential to what questions are asked and how these questions are approached. For Ngugi, pluriversalism understands all positions in the world as “equally legitimate locations of the human imagination” and all languages as “legitimate vehicles of the imagination” (9). Epistemological decolonization is not essentialism, nativism, or ghettoization, but a move from understanding European epistemology as universal. It is this totalitarian and universalizing worldview that justified the economic and political oppression of colonialism. Pluriversalism is therefore also an undoing of the asymmetrical power structures that have posited the Global North as creators and teachers to the rest of the world.

## **Language**

As Ngugi says, if the bullet was the means of physical subjugation then language was the means of spiritual subjugation (Ngugi 1986). In his essay “Language and Memory,” Bongani Meleni from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University takes up this claim and other of Ngugi’s ideas on the intersection of colonialism, memory, and language. Meleni’s essay begins with the sentence, “I wish to talk about the plight of my Language isiXhosa in relation to memory in the context of the present emerging process of our time” (45). By “present emerging process,” Meleni is referring to the call for decolonization of South African universities that the students of #FeesMustFall have made. Meleni, like the political activist and educationist Neville Alexander, believes that the language is still a central question for the “new South Africa” (Alexander 112). This much should be obvious in a country with 11 official languages. What is not obvious is the role African languages should have in this future with regards to English or

Afrikaans. As English ascended to its role of lingua franca in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, so too did English become the mediator of all other languages in South Africa. While the South African government praises multilingualism, English is implicitly understood as the most practical and effective language for public life, especially in politics and education. Yet, as Mbembe quips, “monolingualism rhymes with colonialism” (Mbembe 2015). This line of thought is repeated throughout Meleni’s essay as he explores how the revoking of one’s language is the “annihilation” of one’s culture, identity, and memory. Meleni expounds on the idea that colonialism would not have been possible without the linguistic oppression that accompanied it. Economic and political subjugation required mental subjugation, and it was the linguistic oppression that allowed colonial powers to remove peoples’ history and agency in order to, as Meleni writes, “plant their memory in the African geographical landscape.” Thus, with talks of rainbowism in a postcolonial, post-apartheid society and with talks of decolonizing curricula at universities, Meleni asks if these conversations “would be genuine with most memory erased or distorted especially among blacks” (45).

However, it is not only the erasure of memory that concerns Meleni about language policy and education in South Africa. He quotes Ngugi to the effect that “without memory you cannot relate with one another, with our bodies even in our own minds” (45). If the erasure of memory and identity were the effects of language policy during colonialism, the prevailing effect of language policy in post-apartheid South Africa is disembodiment. For many students English is a second or third language, and they arrive at South African universities to study a degree in which the language of instruction is completely in English. But even before reaching university, students experience the separation of their mother tongues and English in elementary school and matric. Writing about Kenyan education in the 1980s, this is a phenomenon that Ngugi also



described. According to him, when the language a child speaks at home or with family and friends is not equated with the language of knowledge or education, learning becomes a cerebral activity and not an emotional activity (Ngugi 1986). The knowledge of school and books is dislocated from the language of everyday life. The linguistic distance between school and home then leads to the systematic disempowerment of cultural self-esteem and self-confidence (Alexander 96). This disempowerment is due to the fact that a child quickly realizes that his or her own language and culture are inferior to English and the European canon that are the pedestal of learning at school. The final and possibly most important damage this can cause is when the connection between knowledge and society is lost. Language policy, class, and power are inherently enmeshed. One can only imagine the consequences of scientists, intellectuals, and politicians speaking to the public in a language that the public doesn't identify as their own.

Ngugi's solution to this problem is similar to his approach on epistemology. Again, he recommends not a complete removal of English, but rather a rehabilitation of African languages and stronger questioning of the uses of English in African countries. According to him, language is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture, and African countries should approach language policy with this in mind. In this vein, he brings up the case of Germany or Sweden, where English plays a crucial role in education and global communication. However, English is not the carrier of German or Swedish culture because German and Swedish are still the intellectual and political languages of the country. Unlike Germany or Sweden though, South Africa has 11 languages instead of one, and Ngugi's solution to the language problem becomes more complicated in the South African context. As Neville Alexander points out with language policy recommendations, one must also be careful not to prescribe a cure worse than symptoms. Still, Meleni's point holds true that if students and society aim to reconnect to their culture and

identity, “African language and African literature is a starting point” (45). And a starting point is indeed what Ngugi describes. According to Ngugi, if African languages are seen as “the centre” of knowledge and learning, or “legitimate vehicles of the imagination,” these languages can then be developed and enriched with the language of western authors such as Dickens, Marx, or Brecht (Ngugi 1986). African languages must first be prioritized as a starting point before they can appropriate the world and be appropriated by the world. Or, as Meleni says, “the self-definition of your existence must begin with the language you speak and understand from your family and the community.”

### **Self-Definition**

In “Letter to the Academy,” Julie Nxadi of the University of the Western Cape describes the alienation that is caused when the disembodiment of African epistemology and language challenges one’s self-definition (4). Nxadi’s essay is piercing critique of life at South African universities in a pastiche of Franz Kafka’s “A Report to an Academy,” and Fanon’s *Black Skin White Masks*. In Kafka’s story, an ape is giving a talk to “an academy” on how he was taken from a West African jungle, delivered to Europe in a cage, and in this cage learned to act like a human by studying the crew of the ship on which he was being delivered. The story of Kafka’s ape is one of self-definition; of shedding one’s memory, experiences, and identity to be “free,” like the humans on the ship. However, “A Report to an Academy” is as ambiguous as all of Kafka’s stories are. By the end of the ape’s speech, the reader realizes that she must question what freedom really is if it only arises under conditions of captivity. In Nxadi’s “Letter to the Academy,” the story of the ape is transformed into one of rat writing to the academy of squirrels who preside over the squirrel university that she attends. Although the story is Kafkian on the surface, the deeper implications are clearly Fanonian. Nxadi’s protagonist is first and foremost “a

rat that went to squirrel school,” a school situated on “the highest branch of a sturdy oak tree that had taken centuries to grow and a rat’s mere attendance connotated advancement.” This rat in squirrel’s skin is Fanon’s black skin in a white mask. Fanon’s theory of the white mask begins just like Nxadi’s story begins: with “a rat that went to squirrel school.” Or as Fanon writes, “not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man” (Fanon 1952). The concept of negation is the point of departure for Fanon’s ideas on self-definition and self-discovery. For the students of #FeesMustFall, the negation of African epistemology and language leads to a negation of oneself, of only seeing oneself as the opposite of white. Fanon has described this as an “epidermal racial schemata” defined by “the image of one’s body as negating.” The first lesson that Nxadi’s rat learns is Fanon’s negation, that the colonized comes into the world eager to be at its center, to be a subject, but soon realizes that she is only an object (89).

Next, Nxadi’s rat learns all the traditional squirrel skills that the recently renamed “Squirrel Institution of Rodent Advancement” requires of her. Every day Nxadi’s rat climbs up the tree like a squirrel and does her best to learn “how to be the most successful squirrel, Lessons on squirrel diction, tree top politics, and cuteness 101” (4). She is developing what W.E.B. Du Bois called double-consciousness. From the negation of self arises this stage of mimicry. Fanon’s white mask is the metaphor presented by Nxadi. Like her rat, Nxadi has assimilated into the colonizer’s institutions of education, media, communication, language, or politics (Dea 20). Yet is not long until Nxadi’s rat learns her most important lesson, that “there was not, and would not ever be such a thing as an excellent rat, only an almost squirrel.” This sentence embodies what Fanon referred to as the inferiority complex of the colonized, and is perhaps the most important aspect of Fanon’s studies on the psychological dimensions of colonialism. For Nxadi,

it is true that South African universities have long been open to black students, and that both the staffing and student bodies are on their way to meeting “the standards of transformation.” Like the rat of her story, the name of Nxadi’s university has changed, a reference to the fact that the University of the Western Cape was once a “bush” college. Still, “its teachings remained the same,” and so did Nxadi’s experience. This too mirrors Fanon’s claim that the problem of colonization is not just the intersection of historical and objective conditions, but also “man’s attitude toward these conditions” (64). More precisely, Fanon is referring to the importance of subjectivity in race and self-definition. When Fanon says in *Black Skin White Masks*, that he would not want to be objective and would indeed find it impossible to be objective, this can mean first that racism was not objective in any way to begin with, and second that the experience of racism is always lived experience, always subjective. Nxadi’s story mimics Fanon’s binary of theory and experience. The first is the theoretical, which draws inspiration from Fanon and his philosophy of psychology in colonial societies. The second is experiential, represented by Nxadi’s lived experience as Black student in the newly transformed but still dominantly white and colonial universities of South Africa.

As Nxadi closes her essay, she tells the academy for whom she was writing, “You have found a way to co-opt even my rebellion. You dismiss my voice and self-awareness as mere testimonies to your good teaching, and I am no more than a doll that learned to speak” (4). Just as the history, culture, and curriculum of her squirrel university emptied her of her own identity, so too did the academy in the end by co-opting her revolt against that same history, culture, and curriculum. Nxadi’s indictment of white institutions appropriating the revolt of black South Africans rings very similar to Steve Biko’s critique of white liberals who attempt to involve themselves in black movements. What Biko criticizes is that instead of following and listening to

the demands of blacks, white liberals end up pushing out black voices by asserting their own importance and their own will to lead. Biko is perhaps the final thread that weaves Kafka, Fanon, and Nxadi all together. Before she tells the story of the rat that went to squirrel school, Julie begins the essay by addressing the academy to tell them why she has reviewed the academy's application and decided that it has "failed the meet the requirements for a common good" (4). These two themes, self-definition and the link between the university and society, are the reasons that Biko became such an important inspiration to the #FeesMustFall movement. Biko's Black Consciousness Movement was a project of undoing the inferiority complex designed by 300 years of not only material impoverishment, but spiritual and psychological impoverishment. In Biko's own words, Black Consciousness "seeks to demonstrate the lie that black is an aberration from the 'normal' which is white" and "seeks to infuse the black community with a new-found pride in themselves, their efforts, their value systems, their culture, their religion, and their outlook to life" (Biko 49). Black Consciousness was a movement that started with SASO (South African Student Organization), but was always intended for the masses. SASO and BCM were a moment when education and engagement with consciousness were part of the political struggle and fight for freedom (Naidoo 114). In this sense, Biko embodied the intellectual worker that Fanon theorized in *Wretched of the Earth* and Ngugi later wrote about in *Decolonising the Mind*. This is an intellectual who demands a link between education and civic life, and who demands a university committed that is committed to the society around it. It is under the pressures of these demands that Nxadi tells South African universities that they are neither common enough or good enough to be called a "common good" in her "Letter to the Academy." Nxadi's indictment of the South African university expresses the key experience that has lead the #FeesMustFall students to call for a decolonization of South African higher education. And in tandem with

Meleni's essay on epistemology and Bongani's essay on language, these writings map the way that epistemology leads to language, which leads to self-definition. Reading these student writings along with the authors they cite should be the starting point of engaging with the #FeesMustFall movement's project of decolonization.

## **Section 2: Dissonance**

If the old, unresolved antagonisms that Mbembe describes can be encompassed in the word decolonization, the new, emerging antagonisms can be encompassed in the word dissonance. Both words are essential to the way students described the movement in relation to both the university and society. In their words, there is an intense feeling of dissonance for Black students at white, colonial universities. In a country that is 90 percent African, universities are spaces now occupied by Black South Africans, but the institutions and structures themselves have not escaped their essential white, colonial character. In the book *As by Fire*, a collection of interviews with the vice-chancellors of South African universities, many of these university leaders repeat that this dissonance, both at the university and in society, created "a perfect storm" for unrest. On one level black students are entering historically white institutions in high numbers, but "at another level, in existential terms, that promise [of freedom] is denied to them in who's teaching them, what they're seeing in the cultural symbols they are located in, and all those kinds of things. And in a sense they think 1994 did not deliver on that on that promise in existential terms" (Jansen 82). The feeling of discord that born-frees experience at universities in South Africa is also parallel to the dissonance they feel in post-apartheid society at large. These students grew up learning about the liberation struggle and ideals, but have reached adulthood only to realize that so many of these ideals have not been attained. The successful struggle to dismantle apartheid did lead the country, and indeed the whole world, to believe that

a rapid and effective transformation of South African society would soon become reality. The reality of the born-frees post-apartheid South Africa does not align with this fantasy. The problem is not that the ideals of post-liberation South Africa were not imagined, but that they were, and in not coming to fruition have created cognitive dissonance for a generation that grew up believing that their future would be the future inscribed the Freedom Charter. In this section I will explore three different levels of dissonance that the students of #FeesMustFall experience in post-apartheid society. Many of these apply not just to students, but to the born-free generation at large. The first instance of dissonance is the generational gap between the born-free generation and the anti-apartheid struggle generation before them. This gap is closely linked to the born-free generation's increasing criticism of the ANC and the way the ANC represents the anti-apartheid generation for them. After analyzing an essay on this generational gap, I will discuss an essay on intersectionality. Identity politics became essential part of the #FeesMustFall movement, but identity politics also presents another level of dissonance for the born-free generation. The authors student's cite are mostly American, and the very structure of apartheid, with 90 percent of the country both black and impoverished, made it first and foremost a class-struggle. Finally I will discuss neoliberal globalization and the way this too leads back to a critique of the generations before the born-frees. These three topics all intersect in the ways they demonstrate the dissonance the students of #FeesMustFall feel in the South Africa they expect and the one they experience.

### **ANC and the Generational Gap**

Leigh-Ann Naidoo's essay titled, "Hallucinations," reflects on the generational gap in post-apartheid society (49). This essay is both a map of dissonance, of not recognizing what is, and of hallucination, of imagining what could be. The essay begins on the subject of dissonance

as Naidoo explores the gap between the born-free generation and the anti-apartheid generation before them. A widening frustration with this gap is an essential experience of the born-free generation and common rhetoric for the students of #FeesMustFall. Naidoo writes that the time that post-apartheid South Africa exists in is “disjointed” and “plagued by a generational fault line that scrambles historicity” (49). The recent popularity of a book called *Memoirs of a Born Free* by Malika Wa Azania both explains and exhibits this generation gap as well. *Memoirs of Born Free* is written as a letter to the ANC from Malika’s perspective. Just as Naidoo’s essay begins by addressing the anti-apartheid generation, so does *Memoirs of a Born Free* as Malika explains she wanted to write a letter of gratitude to the ANC for their role in the liberation struggle, but could only write a letter of things “that had nothing to do with gratitude” – that is, of a life that does not compare to the ANC’s liberation ideals (3). Like much of born-free generation, the ANC’s post-liberation promises have ran out of steam for Malika. Malika repeats this throughout her book as she reflects on the economic hardships she felt growing up in the township, the racism and classism she felt at former Model-C schools, and the alienation she felt at Stellenbosch University. This is the dissonance that Naidoo writes of, it is the disillusionment of the masses who grew up idolizing Nelson Mandela, and truly believing that the new South Africa their parents spoke of was on its way.

The moment this generation was born into was a time of euphoria, of both triumph and reconciliation, justice and mercy. The world hailed South Africa as an exceptional country, and its citizens believed it. As Malika writes, “[a]t school we learned four things: religion, math, reading, and Mandela” (30). But the first two decades after apartheid brought an array of disappointments. While many youth grew up with the challenges that Malika describes, many grew up with challenges of far worse poverty and marginalization. Around them, this generation



saw the “palpable signs of social breakdown” become more and more visible (Alexander 40). The wealth gap remained almost the same as during apartheid, the value of the Rand decreased, the South African economy struggled. While the economy struggled, so did the ANC government in funding the housing, education, and healthcare it promised. As South Africa reached the end of an immense AIDS crisis, one that the government actively denied, a glimmer of hope came with the World Cup. Yet post-World Cup South Africa was followed by the Marikana massacre, more service delivery protests, and the reelection of now former President Jacob Zuma, who was facing numerous corruption charges shortly after facing rape charges. This amounted to what some commentators have called these “the end of South African exceptionalism” (Magaziner and Jacobs). The unfulfilled promises and the dissonance these unfulfilled promises have created began to turn from disappointment to anger for the born-free generation. Yet for the anti-apartheid generation, the milestones Malika writes of and that #FeesMustFall students speak about – making it out of the township to integrated schools and then to university – are the fruits of prolonged violence and extremely grave sacrifices for democracy. As Naidoo points out, the anti-apartheid generation is quick to say that this is no longer a time of revolution, that there is now democracy and political freedom, with both laws and institutions to protect the new democracy. Yet the students of #FeesMustFall would respond in words similar to Malika’s, “I may not have been born during times of constitutionalized apartheid, but I still remain a product of an epoch of systematic, individualized, and institutionalized apartheid” (7).

Institutionalized apartheid, or institutionalized violence as it was often called during #FeesMustFall, became the flashpoint for this generational divide. The word flashpoint here is literal, as Naidoo implies: when the anti-apartheid generation dismisses and belittles the student

movement's claims, "then pain becomes anger, anger becomes rage, even fire." movement's claims "pain becomes anger, anger becomes rage, even fire" (49). When the #FeesMustFall protests became violent, with petrol-bombs burning and damaging university facilities, defenders of these actions claimed that the open violence of the protests only matched the hidden violence of racist institutions. At this moment, the student movement's appropriation of Fanon became more controversial. Students cited lines from the *Wretched of the Earth* like "Decolonisation is always a violent phenomenon," or "The colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence" (Jansen 79). With escalating violence, the management of the universities began calling in private security. But as former UCT Vice-Chancellor Max Price observes in the book *As by Fire*, the presence of private security on public campuses quickly blurred the line between university management and the state in the eyes of the students (Jansen 87). Although many vice-chancellors were anti-apartheid era intellectuals or activists with respected struggle credentials, students began to see them as "fatalistic," and "anesthetized to the possibility of another kind of society, another kind of future" (49). The students saw themselves as continuing a struggle for political, social, and economic freedom, while many of the anti-apartheid activists saw these goals as having been already, even if only partially, achieved. As the vice-chancellors observe again and again in Jansen's book, the schism between the promise of freedom and actual experience of freedom, coupled with growing inequality and alienation, became what Jansen calls "perfect storm." For many students, the anti-apartheid generation was the ANC and if the ANC was the government, and university management worked with the government, then the enemy was all one-in-the-same. From euphoria to disillusionment, and anger to violence, the first 20 years after apartheid pushed the two generations in different directions. When university management involved private security, the generational gap became impassable. For many

students, the anti-apartheid generation was the ANC and if the ANC was the government, and university management worked with the government, then the enemy was all one-in-the-same. For Naidoo, the first step to overcoming this generational gap “is to kill the fallacies of the present: to disavow, no to annihilate, the fantasy of the rainbow, the non-racial, the Commission (from the Truth and Reconciliation, to Marikana, and Heher ...), even of liberation” (49).

### **Intersectionality and Identity Politics**

Later in the essay I mention in the paragraph above, Naidoo writes that the three pillars of the #FeesMustFall movement were Black Consciousness, Pan Africanism, and intersectionality. Throughout the collections of essays in *Public[a]ction*, intersectionality and identity politics were themes that many students write about. The emergence of identity politics within #FeesMustFall can be understood as the result of another form of dissonance in post-apartheid society. This dissonance has been created by the ideal of non-racialism and rainbowism and the reality of still very racialized society. In both the theory and practice of the movement, identity politics became a decisive factor. As Kopano Ratele from the University of the Western Cape reflects in his essay “When the poor are black, the blacks are women – and the women are queer,” identity politics became especially crucial as patriarchal masculinity with men involved in the #FeesMustFall began to damage and split the movement among its members (55). Ratele begins his essay by saying that in March 2015 he was approached to meet and speak with male members of #FeesMustFall after reports of sexual harassment within the movement surfaced. His goal was facilitate dialogue on intersectionality, and “to scrutinize their feelings and thoughts to realise life-enhancing solidarity with black women and other black genders to strengthen the fight against unjust orders” (55). But as he describes throughout the essay, he was met with disappointment by the men’s response and the response to the #FeesMustFall movement on a

whole in incorporating intersectional thought and practice. Both Naidoo and Ratele cite African American legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw's writing on intersectionality as the essential background for their engagement with intersectionality. One of Crenshaw's central claims, that narratives of race center on the experience of black men, is exactly the problem that Ratele ran into with the men of #FeesMustFall (Crenshaw 376). This is at least partially due to the fact that identity politics is a newer political language in South Africa than it is in the United States. Indeed, many of the authors that the students cite, authors such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, Audre Lorde, or bell hooks, come from and write about American identity politics. In South Africa, the narrative of struggle has been a narrative of class and race struggle. As one can glean from the most famous struggle leaders, from Mandela to Biko to Desmond Tutu to Walter Sisulu to Robert Sobukwe, the narrative of the struggle was the narrative of black men. As a society that has absorbed violent patriarchy from both colonialism and traditional cultures, Ratele writes that South Africa must still overcome "colonial, economically unjust, racist, patriarchal, and homophobic domination." Looming around talks of violent masculinity in South Africa is also the epidemic of sexual violence that has led the country to a rate of rape that is one of the highest in the world (Statistics SA, 2016). As Ratele and many other students write in *Publica[c]tion*, class-based rhetoric and demands in the #FeesMustFall movement threatened to marginalize the voices of women, queer students, and transgender persons within the movement. Many male Fallists took the stance that one student recently took in essay for the website *Africa is Country*, that identity politics distracts from the more important class struggle, and capitalism "is perfectly competent at sweeping up identity politics for its survival" (Shoki).

The identity politics of #FeesMustFall may be all the more important in the way they differ from Crenshaw's formulation of intersectionality. As another student writes in

*Public[a]ction*, the intersectionality of #FeesMustFall was not an “intersectionality is” but rather a “intersectionality as” (Mupotsa 54). Crenshaw’s problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference but, that it “frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences” (357). She highlights the way that women of color are both subordinated by black men and white, middle class women, yet simultaneously marginalized in feminist and anti-racist movements. This definition of intersectionality is not one that connects the struggles of different identities, but connects the struggles of a single group with multiple identities. Ratele’s definition begins with this understanding of intersectionality, but broadens to connect the oppression of multiple groups with multiple identities. In this way it is not “intersectionality is women of color,” but intersectionality as women of color. Referencing the title of his essay, Ratele says “To say the poor are black, the blacks are women, the women are queer, is of course to indicate that oppressions feed of each other” (55). Ratele’s definition of intersectionality is closer to Audre Lorde’s definition. It highlights an intersectionality of interconnectedness and entanglement, of the power of humans in communicating and learning from their different experiences. This is to say that poor black men must relate their struggle to queer black men, and to queer black women, because as Ratele says, “what is needed is to educate one another towards a recognition of all social and economic oppressions are structurally founded” (56).

Although the idea “intersectionality as” may at first seem to still be a continuation of American identity politics, there is actually something essentially South African about a practice of “intersectionality as.” Intersectionality in this sense is a community that both recognizes and emphasizes its differences, and may be close to what Biko understood as a “joint-culture.” The idea of a new joint-culture in South Africa is what Xolela Mangcu believes should encourage a shift from non-racialism to multi-racialism (12). The post-liberation ideals of non-racialism and

non-sexism may have been well meaning, but they are concepts that can only be realized much farther into the future than one could imagine. For post-apartheid South African in 2019, race, gender, and sexual identities are still critical markers of one's experience of power and subjective relations. As Xolela emphasizes, this is not to say that multi-racism supposes the idea of biological race, but that a person's experience of race and identity in South Africa is still an imperative for creating a community that relates and understands the power structures within it. As Lorde says, "community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist" (12). Although non-racialism and non-sexism were ideals to create a society wherein these forms oppression wouldn't exist, the reality is that they do and will for many years. Racism, sexism, and homophobia cannot be dismissed by asserting that the ideals of non-racialism or non-sexism as if in twenty-odd years these goals have already been achieved. Instead of the goal to erase the idea of differences in identity, the concept of "intersectionality as" could create a way in which the richness of South Africa's sexual, gender, economic, political, linguistic and racial identities are identified and emphasized in the way which they are entangled (Grosfoguel 219). As Ratele writes, then "struggles against injustice therefore cannot but embrace intersectionality" (56).

### **Neoliberal Globalization**

Hibist Kassa begins her essay "A Reflection on the Student-Worker Alliance" by establishing right away the link between the #FeesMustFall movement and neoliberalism in South Africa (18). She describes the movement as coming in "direct confrontation with a post-apartheid regime and neoliberal education system, which still retained a colonial character." In drawing a connection between the post-apartheid government, neoliberalism, and education, she is making a leap that many students who are a part of the movement have made. This leap begins

with the larger critique of the born-free generation against the ANC and its collaboration with Euro-American powers during the economic and political transition. The transition to a democratic government in South Africa coincided with the roaring 90s of Euro-American capitalism. The 90s were the moment of American triumphalism, of the success and consolidation of wealth in the neoliberal system, and “the end of history” for any other economic or political system. The ANC on the other hand was a party that had a long relation to the South African Communist Party, and a Freedom Charter that outlined economic and political equality founded upon the redistribution of wealth and land. In short, Mandela and the ANC faced a global consensus on neoliberalism that contested their original, radical visions for the new South Africa (IFAA 28). As the anti-apartheid activist Neville Alexander says, “we were, and are, enjoined to be ‘like them,’ like the entrepreneurial, individualistic whiz-kids of the neo-liberal epoch” (Alexander 49). The “them” of this sentence is of course the Global North. The United States plays an especially crucial role with its racial history of segregation and ties it to the history of apartheid. Leading the neoliberal epoch, the United States extended its cultural and economic influence onto the goals of South Africa. The countries of the Global North have a legacy of wealth largely accrued from colonialism, slavery, and the exploitation of the laboring poor across the world. Thus the irony is that South Africa was joining a game that it had already played the price for. The critique that Kassa and other born-frees make, is that wealth of colonial and apartheid capitalism had already flowed out of South Africa and into the countries that now were offering *aid* and *development*.

The domination of neoliberal ideology did not take long to spread to the university system in South Africa because its universities were already designed to mimic European and American universities. As Kassa defines it in her essay, neoliberal education is a “market driven

education which assumes education is a commodity instead of a public good” (18). This model can also be traced back to the United States, where it is especially visible in the privatization and securitization of college campuses. Campuses now look like shopping malls, outfitted with all the amenities of resorts – from huge gyms to extravagant buildings and technology to decadent food options. Along with the multi-million dollar college sports complex, these extra-curriculars now occupy the center of the American “college experience” – along with massive amounts of debt and massive amounts of binge-drinking. American educationalist and academic Henry Giroux describes this process concisely: students are treated like customers, and educated to be consumers (36). The neoliberal market has shaped the university to serve itself. Yet the market is not just an abstract force: it is the small, exorbitantly rich groups of alumni and board members who continue to privately fund universities as public spending decreases. One look at the business school of any American university will quickly demonstrate the fact that alumni money is flowing there and not to English or Sociology. Meanwhile, the rest of the world must keep up with these American universities and the American organizations that consistently rank American universities as the best in the world.

As Mbembe contends, the American model of neoliberal higher education is now being reproduced “almost everywhere thanks to commercial internationalism” (Mbembe 2015). As the South African economy followed the Washington consensus with the GEAR economic program and its emphasis on deregulation, privatization, and the lifting of international trade barriers, so too did the South African university in following the American higher education model.

According to Jansen, and many other vice-chancellors in *As by Fire*, the main driver of the crisis in South African higher education is the declining state subsidies to universities (Jansen 28). For example Adam Habib, vice-chancellor of the University of Witswatersrand (Wits), explains that



he during apartheid Wits had 70 percent of its expenses covered by the government. By 2014 this was down to 30 or 35 percent, and Habib says vice-chancellors were warning the government for years that this would lead to a crisis (Jansen 29). With these declining subsidies, tuition fees and student debts increased. For the students pursuing higher education in South Africa, their debt has rose 31 percent from 2010-2015 alone, while government subsidies to universities in the same time was cut by 10 percent (IFAA 29). Meanwhile, unemployment in the last quarter of 2018 rose to 30 percent, also one of the highest in the world, with youth unemployment at a whopping 38 percent (Statistics SA, 2018). There is no question to why then, half of South African youth ages 18-24 reported that they did not pursue education past matric because they would not have had the money to pay fees (Statistics SA, 2019). This is what has lead students to say that the “socio-economic conditions that sparked the student protests – fee increases, student debt, labour outsourcing and racial inequality – can all be traced to neoliberal ideology” (IFAA 29). Neoliberal ideology is not just evident in the management universities however, but also the academic program. Business, science, and technology programs have become attractive to students with increasingly bleak employment options, who at the same time see programs like Black Economic Empowerment creating a small black elite in South Africa. Professors are overworked and underpaid, exploited in a small and highly competitive academic labor market. At the South African corporate university can be described in the words of American educationalist Henry Giroux: “the faculty are entrepreneurs, students are customers, and education is a mode of training” (87). The students initial impulse to connect their struggle with plight of outsourced workers was the seed of a larger resistance to neoliberalism and globalization in South Africa. In closing her essay, Kassa compares this to Amilcar Cabral’s wager to the petty bourgeois to commit class suicide. There is of course intense debate of

whether #FeesMustFall can be understood as something as revolutionary as class suicide. Nonetheless, her claim that the movement brought about the politicization of previously apathetic students during the #FeesMustFall is not. Kassa says that “students who either previously not been in active politics or had not operated outside mainstream political parties would redefine themselves and create a space for alternative forms of politics to flourish” (18). The rejection of neoliberalism and the status quo by students in the #FeesMustFall movement marks an important moment for the South African university. At the core of her argument against neoliberal education, Kassa is asserting that the university should be challenging its students to relate their experience to broader society, question power, and imagine a more equal society. In Kassa’s essay, as well as the essays before hers on the generational gap and identity politics, one can see that the students have of #FeesMustFall have linked the decolonization of their universities to the dissonance they feel in broader society.

### **Closing: Utopia and the Pluriversity**

In closing, I’d like to return the Mbembe’s concept of the “negative moment” and compare this with Naidoo’s claim that the students of #FeesMustFall are “not so much mad as they are time-travelers” (49). The born-free generation of South Africa finds itself somewhere in the frightening gap between traumatic history and utopian future. The gap that has been created is the gap of a system that seemed closed and was then cracked open. This rupture is what creates the space for imagination, both personal and collective. This space is perhaps what is lacking in the imagination of Euro-American students, who live in societies where any imagination for an alternative system has been removed by the consensus that the current world-system is all-encompassing and so incomprehensible that, as Frederic Jameson famously declared, it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism (Tally 14). But it

is not just capitalism or the current neoliberal order that the students of #FeesMustFall are re-imagining. From the variety of essays above one can see that their project extends to the economic, but challenges the social, epistemic, linguistic, sexual, and many more aspects of the status quo. These students are seizing a moment that connects them to the protests that began in Paris in 1968 and spread across the world, and to the more recent student protests in Chile from 2011-2013. Like the born-frees, these generations of students fell into a moment where history broke open. The '68 students were the first generation of students after World War II and decolonization. The Chilean students were the first generation born after the end of the Pinochet regime. It would seem to be no coincidence, then, that the #FeesMustFall students are the first generation born after apartheid. There is “no end of history” when you are born into history. These generations could not see the status quo as natural, inevitable, immortal, or inalterable. They are time-travelers who must negotiate the past and simultaneously imagine a future. They exist in Mbembe’s negative moment, in the collision of old antagonisms with new antagonisms, or what Naidoo calls the students “project of historical dissonance” (49).

During the #FeesMustFall protests time stood still. The violence and chaos caused by the clash of private security, more volatile protesters, and media flooding to campuses caused many universities to shut down for periods of around a month. In her “Hallucinations” essay, Naidoo describes what happened during a three-week shutdown in which students occupied the UCT Bremner Administration building. Whether the students knew it or not, the Bremner Administration building was also occupied by students in the spring of 1968 who were protesting the firing of black scholar and social anthropologist Archie Mafeje. This time the students were not protesting the actions of apartheid, but the institutions these actions created. Thus the students renamed the Bremner Administration building to Azania House. Here these students

laid out ideas that may serve as an example of what Mbembe refers to as pluriversity. He describes this as a university that “is not merely the extension throughout the world of a Eurocentric model presumed to be universal and now being reproduced almost everywhere thanks to commercial internationalism” (Mbembe 2015). Instead, a pluriversity should radically refound its ways of thinking and embrace “a horizontal strategy of openness to dialogue among different epistemic traditions” (Mbembe 2015). At the Azania House, students renamed statues, artworks, and buildings that still bore the names of colonial and apartheid figures. They reflected on ways to include the black service staff at universities as apart of the community, and to protect their working rights from outsourcing. Students called for a lecture series of black staff only, they designed new syllabi and readings lists, and they discussed the future of admissions at South African universities. Students worked to discuss the ways in which power was silencing or alienating specific groups in a given discussion. They held readings of and conversations about many of the authors I have cited in this paper. In these discussions, they experimented with alternative class room models, ones where power moved horizontally, and the voices of marginalized groups were not only seen as pedagogically valuable, but systematically empowered. If this sounds utopian, that is because it should. The students of #FeesMustFall have in part continued the challenge of one of Paris 1968’s most famous slogans: “Be Realistic, Demand the Impossible.” This is not to say that any movement is not without its own serious faults, and there were many within #FeesMustFall. Every idea of utopia is without its own serious defects. #FeesMustFall became one the most intense, polarizing, and often violent protests in South Africa since the end of apartheid. The line between destruction and construction is thin, just as thin as the line between utopia and dystopia. But these students are time-travelers, they have revived utopia of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and brought it back to the present.

They saw the fall of the Soviet Bloc and the Berlin Wall, and saw the shortfalls of the post-liberation South Africa. They saw the collapse of utopia as a place. Perhaps their utopia is not a place, but a tool. Utopia as a tool is a critique of a system. It is not a place on a map or time that stands still. It is a continued commitment to the radical ideals that the born-free generation grew up hearing that South Africa had been founded on. Utopia is a map like the ones students in the Azania House designed for the future, like Mbembe's pluriversity. And a map is never perfect, but it always gives direction to go. This is what I believe Naidoo means as she closes her essay with this sentence: "May we live in a time of difficulty, of critical immanence, and always, always towards justice."

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