



## Crawling from the wreckage

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### **The future of critique in the business school is the future of the business school**

This Special Issue emerged from an *ephemera* workshop questioning how critique continues to have a role in contemporary business schools. Hosted by the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia, in February 2020 and organized by Peter Fleming and Alison Pullen, the workshop brought together interdisciplinary academics, some working in business schools, to ask whether and how critique would enable ‘us’ to crawl out of the wreckage caused by neoliberalism and the increased marketisation of universities and business schools. Only a month before the event, a series of severe bushfires raged across New South Wales, spread by strong winds and heat. The bushfires were large in scale and devastating in consequence. Nature reserves, forests and the homes of people and animals went up in flames, leaving long stretches of ashes as reminders of nature’s might. These fires came in the wake of floods that left rural communities decimated, and a mere few weeks after the fires were extinguished, heavy rain pummeled the state again. River banks burst, roads flooded, dams and bridges collapsed, and more homes were destroyed. Soon after, the Covid-19 virus struck, proliferating around the globe. Sickness and chaos reigned, healthcare systems came under extreme pressure, and societies had to shut down. The vulnerability of humans and non-humans became felt as we started living in ‘pandemic times’.

As we write this editorial, we find ourselves in so-called post-pandemic times, although the pandemic continues to infect and affect populations around the world. Although the media and politicians have abandoned reporting about the pandemic, Covid-19 lingers, even for the privileged with resources like healthcare. Neither have universities been immune. Institutions cannot return to ‘the old normal’, and neither can society at large. Before the pandemic we lived in times that normalized ongoing crises (Berlant, 2011) – climate changes, unstable financial markets, extreme structural inequalities, poverty, and war. The pandemic has exacerbated these crises and inequalities, with each species and body affected differently by the intensifying ‘new normal’ (Bapuji, Patel, Ertug and Allen, 2020; Butler, 2020; Plotnikof and Utoft, 2022). Although commentators have been claiming ‘business as usual’, we are less confident about this possibility. We are confident, however, that we need to keep questioning the macro- and micro-dynamics of crisis, precarity, and risk while simultaneously developing new ways of thinking, sharing, caring, working, organizing, and collaborating through the politics of everyday (work)life.

The contributors to this Special Issue developed their papers during challenging circumstances, and, as we put the finishing touches on this editorial, we are again witnessing extreme conditions imposed by climate change, warfare, and economic struggles, all of which are affecting populations. We are constantly reminded that our daily practices cannot be separated from the ever-transforming life conditions arising from (intended and unintended) human interactions with a more-than-human world (Haraway, 2016; Whatmore, 2006). Thus, when we explore the wreckage of the business school and the role of critique in knowledge, research, and teaching in this Special Issue, we understand the business school as entangled with the more-than-human world (Nyberg, Wright and Bowden, 2022). This includes its inseparability with a variety of agencies and materialities, such as climate systems, climate change, and biodiversity loss, not to mention new technology, algorithms and artificial intelligence, and economic markets. Moreover, the business school has a part in the rising inequality and precarity unevenly distributed across the global North and South (Özkazanç-Pan and Pullen, 2020).

This issue creates a space for diverse conversations about the role of critique. The contributions explore the wreckage of the business school and discuss possibilities for crawling out of the rubble in different ways. This could be seen as a difficult task, given that during this issue's production, one editor was forced to apply for her [own] job, and three others were threatened with redundancy. However, rather than staying with the wreckage and the despair and pain it causes those involved in such contexts, we insist, like many *ephemera* contributions before us (e.g. Böhm, Jones and Land, 2001; Böhm and Spoelstra, 2004) on finding hope through discussing, contouring, and sensing how we might reimagine the role of critique in the business school differently.

In what follows we first consider what it means to work in the wreckage, as we term it. Recognizing that business schools are diverse and that even within the same organization contradictory interests, forces, and agencies exist, we use the term 'wreckage' to investigate how neoliberal reforms, market-orientation, performance regimes, and increased precarity have transformed the business school. We then consider how it may be possible to crawl from the wreckage by hopeful practices of rethinking and creating new forms of critique. Finally, we present the contributions to the Special Issue.

### **Working in the wreckage**

The Special Issue builds on critical scholarship that has exposed the contested spaces of the business school (Beverungen, Dunne and Sørensen, 2008; Bristow, Robinson and Ratle, 2017; Butler and Spoelstra, 2020; Butler, Delaney and Śliwa, 2017; Dunne, Harney, Parker and Tinker, 2008; Jones et al., 2020; Parker, 2018; Robinson, Ratle and Bristow, 2017). Scholars have illuminated the oppressive forces of increasingly precarious forms of employment, new types of managerialism, and unequal and discriminatory systems with racializing, gendering and social class effects (e.g., Ashcraft, 2017; Acker, Wagner and Mayuzumi, 2008; Contu, 2020; Śliwa, 2021). Such research has documented the wave of painful transformations that has turned business school academia into a veritable edu-factory (Hoofd, 2010). From this work we know much about the inimical effects of performance metrics, the consolidation of top-down management hierarchies, an obsession with

publication outputs, the institutional encouragement of a pathological careerism, and an administrative fixation on recruiting increasing numbers of fee-paying students (Parker, 2018; Sellar, 2015). The ‘measured university’ (Peseta, Barrie and McLean, 2019) is a reality that academics, from early career scholars to full professors, embody time and again to satisfy university demands.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic began, large-scale university restructuring and centralization, including compulsory redundancies, have swept through the education sectors. The corporatization of the university, if it was ever veiled, is now on full display. The crisis provided a pretext for consolidating the managerialization of corporate business schools, with a heightened emphasis on customers and performance metrics, even as the fiscal legitimacy for doing so was questionable. Mass (and often grossly mismanaged) redundancy programmes saw competitive individualism take centre stage, breaking down common values and collegiality, threatening autonomy and freedom of speech, and moving closer to centralized autocracy, all of which intensified work pressure and cultures of fear in the name of the ever more ‘greedy university’ (Plotnikof and Utoft, 2022; Pullen, 2023; Smyth, 2017). If the business school was in trouble before 2020, today’s situation might better be termed a scholastic catastrophe, as the nature and purpose of education becomes questioned, and the quality of academics’ working lives continues to be eroded. Yet, as Kavanagh (this issue) suggests, the solution may not be to abandon or demolish the business school entirely (albeit that could count as an act of self-sabotage), but instead to discursively and institutionally relocate it beyond the neoliberal political imagination.

Whilst the neoliberal hold on the business school reduces it to its capitalist function, many of this Special Issue’s contributions largely concern the business school’s entanglement with broader societal and ecological processes. From such perspectives, business education and career paths become much more than markets, organizational designs, employment relations, and classic forms of leadership. Regardless of whether this is acknowledged in classes and programme designs, all business education and work practices are inextricably intertwined with present and future livelihoods. With complicated global webs of unevenly distributed power

relations, collaborative dependencies and supply chains involving both human and many other kinds of agencies, the effects of these webs – and our critical engagement with them – cannot be limited to local, regional, or national human-centred concerns. As Nyberg and De Cock (this issue) contend, climate change is a gargantuan disruption that cannot and should not be domesticated by the customary business school language of risks and the concerns of new capital, opportunities, and markets. Instead, such momentous change calls for a radical decentering of the human as ‘The Rational Man’ in control of his [sic] destiny. Cator (this issue) also argues for the importance of acknowledging the role of business in the commonly shared world, stressing the embeddedness of organizations in natural environments. Tahiri (this issue) further offers a way of creatively reimagining ourselves in this monstrous mess by methodologically developing equally monstrous practices to understand and intervene in the neoliberal business school.

Another concern explored in this Special Issue is how to find spaces for critique within such webs of power. A key tension of working in the wreckage is the relationship between critical thinking and the performance demands coupled to journal ranking systems. Many scholars have analysed and critiqued the devastating effects of such academic performance regimes as journal ranking systems (Bristow, 2021; Steinþórsdóttir, Heijstra and Einarsdóttir, 2017; Svensson, Spoelstra, Pedersen and Schreven, 2010; Turner, Boswell, Harre, Sturm, Locke and da Souza Correa, 2017). Ironically, however, ranking systems have sometimes served to enable academic freedom, including critique. In a metrics-fixated work environment, the actual content of a research article came second to the empty, quantitative score it obtained in the latest journal rankings or impact factors. Even critical scholarship about the business school itself passed under the radar for this reason. University management may have cared little about the substance of an article as long as it generated the biggest numbers in the higher education metrics – a tacit agreement that most academics, including critical management scholars, accepted.

Still, plenty of reasons to remain critical of such quality measurements could and can be found. As scholars have elucidated, dominant quality ideals are ridden with masculine, competitive signifiers (Ashcraft, 2017; Bell and King,

2010; Cunliffe, 2022; Thomas and Davies, 2005). Despite years of critical and even feminist theorizing, such standards endure and demand that we adhere to them, discipline ourselves by them and prove our literacy in them. What is more, rankings privilege American management journals, whose imperialism further marginalizes critical research already on the margins of the canon.

This raises questions about hypocrisy. If the modern American-style business school (as most are today) has been a conspicuous emblem for the commercializing of higher education, then is the fact that critical management scholars work there not somehow hypocritical? Can we both be employed by the beast and question it as well as the institutional forces for which it officially stands? Answering this question requires historical mediation, because as Kavanagh (this issue) notes, the socio-political evolution of the business school model shapes the very knowledge we have of ourselves as a profession. The use of ranking systems to shelter critical thinking may be based on the idea that autonomous subjects can separate themselves from and remain unchanged by the particular ways their everyday practices tie them to the systems Kavanagh critiques.

As such, using ranking systems and performance regimes to legitimize critical thinking may be a risky endeavour, as only with difficulty can one fully know precisely how our academic subjectivity is shaped by and struggles through such systems and logics. On the other hand, however, none of the contributions in this Special Issue adhere to a purist idea that critique should be practised from spaces unpolluted by the systems the critique targets. Quite the contrary, the Special Issue explores critique as situated in the midst of relationships between critique and objects of critique, thus embodying and negotiating them. Across the contributions, critique is conceived as multiple and diverse practices that must necessarily live in many forms and take many different shapes (e.g., Cator, this issue; Manzoli et al., this issue; Motta and Allen, this issue; Raffnsøe et al., this issue; Tahiri, this issue; see also, Abdellatif et al., 2021; Ahonen et al., 2020; Amrouche et al., 2018).

The relation between ranking systems and the possibilities of critical thinking may, however, be transforming. More recently, the administrative apparatchik has begun scrutinizing and policing the content of scholarship.

For example, the 2020 business school redundancies at Leicester University homed in on academics working in the fields of political economy and critical management studies. The criticality of their research – irrespective of whether it was being published in ‘elite’ journals or not – is what management sought to weed out. Commentators also took due note of the many academics in these fields active in the union. The union threatened to strike over the dispute, and thousands of academics around the world signed letters of support, as did critical journals (including *ephemera*), which called for a halt to the layoffs. Nevertheless, employers prevailed, resistance dissipated, and an explicit engagement in critical scholarship at Leicester University effectively became a dismissible offence.

Right until the business school started systematically firing critical scholars, we thought that research practices of critique, as a mode of academic freedom, could assure some aura of dignity to (working for) the business school. Yet, persistent metrification combined with an arbitrary authority that seeks to determine the content of our research calls for a renewed overhaul of critique. Simply writing yet another critical journal article or book is no longer enough. But what can we do? A tension has long existed between written critical scholarship and other forms of business school critical practices, specifically those concerned with real-life work conditions. Although our academic freedom legitimizes our written critiques, critiquing in our practical work has always been challenging, its being complexly ingrained in conservative academic hierarchies and the managerialist praise of competitiveness that leads colleagues simultaneously work with and against each other. Yet, as long as we are all each other’s supervisors, heads, conference discussants, and double-blinded peer reviewers, we can become more concerned with how academic freedom (including to be critical) can be further integrated into and protected by our practical work. This includes rethinking how we all participate in performing critique, even in the administrative work of organizing meetings, conferences, teaching, and other departmental tasks, as well as when we reproduce or challenge dominant rules of excellence, quality systems, and ways of commenting on each other’s work in order to develop new insight.

## Crawling from the wreckage

Coming to terms with the wreckage provides a platform from which to consider and build alternatives. If working in the present-day business school entails experiences of losing certain ideals, safety, and possibilities of teaching critical thinking (Manzoli, et al., this issue), Judith Butler's work on mourning and loss could be helpful here. In *Precarious life* (2004), Butler offers the experience of loss as a potentially transformational reminder of our primary dependency and vulnerability. Butler (2004: 22) is concerned with different kinds of loss – of a person, a community, a national fantasy. Elsewhere, Butler (2003: 467) discusses the loss of culture, and the loss of loss itself. They contend that loss is registered and experienced as a particular kind of undoing. The experience of loss, Butler argues, is also an experience of losing oneself, of experiencing that 'we are not the masters of ourselves' (Butler, 2004: 21).

As the contribution from Manzoli et al. (this issue) demonstrates, experiences of loss, as painful as they may be, can also constitute scenes in which new forms of understanding and agency emerge. Loss reminds us that we are larger than our own deliberate plans, our own projects, our own knowing and choosing (Butler, 2004: 21). Loss, 'challenge[s] the very notion of ourselves as autonomous and in control' (2004: 23) and is a disorienting experience. However, and of importance here, in loss, 'something about who we are is revealed, something that delineates the ties we have to others, that shows us that these ties constitute what we are, ties or bonds that compose us' (Butler, 2004: 22). In other words, what was lost was not merely an externality but also part of what constituted 'me'. Loss, then, is not necessarily the loss of a person, but rather, perhaps, also the loss of an ideal, of particular pasts or a promised future. Loss undoes the way in which we make sense of ourselves and the world (Dumm and Butler, 2008: 99), thereby reminding us of our interdependence. Therefore, loss can reduce us to passivity but may also become a resource for alternative ways of performing subjectivities. For us, loss can be a profound and political experience that confronts us with our incapacity to simply keep going with our own working lives, because, when a university can no longer function as a home for critical thinking, we lose a part of ourselves.



As this issue's contributions demonstrate, from the experience of loss and through the loss of our ties to each other, we can begin to crawl from the wreckage of the business school. Crawling will be a way of bearing, rather than denying, the irresolvable ambivalence of the subject invariably both acted on and acting. Crawling from the wreckage thus involves seeing ourselves as responsible agents capable of working towards change, against a tide of forces that threaten imagination and resistance.

As we write this, we allow the work already being done to crawl from the wreckage to give us hope. Some, for example, have highlighted the traps of conservative, patriarchal forces that make the emergence of other forms of critique challenging, yet all the more important (Bell, Meriläinen, Taylor and Tienari, 2020; Pullen, Harding and Phillips, 2017). Such studies not only critique the existing order of the day, but also embody more feminist and affirmative engagements with potential future avenues, hinting at a rich array of modes that such endeavours could call forth. For example, one could reformulate the rules of excellence for theorizing and evaluating research (Ashcraft, 2017; Cunliffe, 2022); invent different modes of expression and writing, thus creating and disseminating new vocabularies and insights (Gilmore, Harding, Helin and Pullen, 2019; Pullen, 2018); explore ways of making critique productive as a collective research strategy, thereby interacting with (and changing) the world (Ahonen et al., 2019; Amrouche et al., 2018; Houpalainen, 2020); and trouble business school academia with anti-racist and decolonial forms of critique (Barros and Alcadipani, 2022; Bell, Meyerson, Nkomo, Scully, 2003; Fotaki and Prasad, 2015; Mott and Cockayne, 2017).

Moved by these efforts and the contributions of this Special Issue, we sense a deep need for critique to 'denormalize' the 'new normal' of toxic business school academia, as an act of connectivity as we become ever more individualized, 'competitivized', and metricized. Indeed, critique remains a productive power for connecting hopes, dreams, voices, and enactments within, across, and beyond the business school. It may also rescue us and itself from detached abstractions (or critique for the sake of critique), thereby helping us to embody critical work with regard to the worlds we endure and enact. In other words, we need critique to (re)formulate a politics and ethics

of care (de la Bellacasa, 2011), by which to reinvent what business school scholarship can look like, read like, feel like, teach like, collaborate like, and perform like, without the limiting, suffocating hands of a present-day performance-centred neoliberal regime. This is exactly what this issue's contributions help us further explore. As the roundtable conversation by Raffnsøe et al. (this issue) unfolds, critique can have multifaceted forms and approaches and become voiced in different vocabularies that draw in and upon different notions of critique and critical thought — from deconstructive to affirmative. We thus become able to appreciate how the future of critique is not written in the past, and how many possible futures can emerge from within or between different traditions of critical thought (Raffnsøe et al., this issue) from within or outside of the business school. How we create critical insights and contestations by side-stepping, creatively circumventing, or moving beyond the pressures and forces that threaten and diminish critical thinking remains open, and the answers may give way to new kinds of questions, vocabularies, sensitivities, and practices.

### **Contributions of the Special Issue**

In various formats and an array of voices, this issue's contributions explore the labour and event of critique itself.

First, Sara Motta and Matt Allen take us on a journey into the uncharted territory of decolonizing critique 'in, through and against the business school'. To this end, they present 'a year-long process of dialogos de saberes (dialogue of knowledges)' in which embodiment, relationality, and collaboration feature strongly in their work processes. The openness of the dialogue and writing demonstrates their deep respect for listening to and caring for the other in the decolonial project. From this emergent dialogos de saberes, they convey an affirmative critique, decentring western knowledge as they journey through 'the possibilities (and impossibilities) of nurturing a kind of affirmative critique which we feel has a place and relevance both within and beyond the Business School as metaphor, materiality, and relationality'. Instead of staying with critique that highlights 'specific violent exclusion, elisions, and epistemic injustices coconstitutive of the

modern/colonial (neoliberalized) University’, their affirmative alternative ‘nurture[s] the continued existence/re-existencias of other(ed) ways of being and knowing’. Interweaving different forms of writing, Motta and Allen remind us of the ‘(im)possibilities of inhabiting particular business schools with modern/colonial (neoliberalized) Universities from our different places/positionalities’ and how we can be and become ‘otherwise’ to thereby critique otherwise.

‘Can I say what I think?’ and ‘Can I allow others to say what they think?’ These are two of the difficult questions Manzoli, Garcia, and de Lima generously invite us to explore through their own classroom experiences, as well as students’ and professors’, at a business school in Brazil. Through a collaborative autoethnography, they seek to understand what might be lost when we edit ourselves or our students out of fear or to avoid further polarization. From these conversations and reflections emerges a new understanding of authenticity and empathy. In a western context, the authors write, authenticity is seen as one’s relation to oneself, whereas empathy is one’s relation to others. Their study experiences point to a relational authenticity, whereby a sense of fidelity to one’s own values and ideals is not shaped by firm conviction but rather grows from a recognition of others’ vulnerability and contingencies. This mutual relation between authenticity and empathy becomes a mode of resistance that may, as in Motta and Allen’s contribution (this issue), pave a way for dialogue and multiple positions and perceptions to develop in the business school.

According to Cator (this issue), our primary escape route from the wreckage of the neoliberal business school lies in placing it within the dire context of the Anthropocene and ongoing eco-catastrophe. Planet Earth has no plan B for halting the unprecedented devastation manifesting in biodiversity loss, deforestation, carbon emissions, and water scarcity. Yet, like most large corporations in the post-industrial West, business schools pay little more than lip service to the problem. Consequently, business schools need to redirect the considerable power they currently wield, targeting the climate emergency more intently and rephrasing the agenda required to address it. To bring home the urgency of taking this action, Cator draws on Hannah Arendt’s critique of economic rationality and the myopic anti-ecological mindset

associated with it – a critique especially applicable in today’s era of ingrained neoliberal governmentality. Cator proposes that cross- and interdisciplinary initiatives might be a first step in liberating ourselves from the strictures of economic ideology by which our profession has been diminished to a mere prop of the ‘edu factory’. Thinking with and through other disciplines as a means of envisaging new organizational models will thrust a new and pressing ecological mandate on the business school.

Responding to Parker’s (2018) provocative statement that the business school ought to be shut down, Kavanagh (this issue) contends that it should be *relocated* instead, specifically within the immediate university/community in which it exists. As far as most faculty are concerned, the mandate to internationalize at any cost has played a role in wrecking contemporary business schools. Like corporations expanding into new overseas markets, the business school has become a multinational enterprise with offices dotted around the world, and, as seen in the globalization of capital and finance more generally, this expansion carries with it a litany of dysfunctions. Most saliently, however, it has tightened the grip of economic reason around these schools’ culture, both at home and abroad. For Kavanagh, business schools need to de-internationalize, and, as Cator (this issue, see below) also suggests, such a move would also entail reintegrating the business school within the university itself, especially within disciplines such as law, classics and English. This re-location will precipitate what Kavanagh calls a radical *reimagining* of the curriculum. Problematically, the wreckage never speaks of the wreckage in its own classes and lectures. As such, the business school itself – warts and all – ought to be reflectively reinstated into teaching and learning, thereby enabling students to be more self-aware as well as teaching faculty themselves to better appreciate the academic means of production so reliant on their labour, and, perhaps, to discern better methods for reappropriating those means.

Echoing the concerns of Cator (this issue), Nyberg and De Cock (this issue) warn against the business school’s current attempts to domesticate climate changes and thereby maintain the traditional ideology of the human being as the centre of agency and control. They argue that this assertion of control avoids the unsettling aspects of climate change that challenge the

anthropocentrism in organizational and management scholarship and business schools more broadly. Using the Derridian trope of the monster, Nyberg and De Cock discuss how today's severe transformations give rise to a nostalgic yearning for certainty and truth-tellers, and how one can see the present political waves of populism and the return of 'Sovereigns' in this light. To counter these dangerous impulses for human control, Nyberg and De Cock argue that affirmative critique offers a practice that can challenge existing hierarchies and affirm new voices and experiences. Affirmative critique, they argue, concerns challenging something considered natural and present, and thus opening up a world (or worlds) of multiple agencies and experiences.

In a thought-provoking roundtable, Sverre Raffnsøe, Dorte Staunæs, and Mads Bank (this issue) invite us to further explore the possibility of affirmative critique. Against the backdrop of a PhD programme entitled 'Critique beyond criticism', the three authors carefully discuss the nature and importance of affirmative critique, as well as consider various critical thought traditions of possible relevance as new avenues eventually become reformulated and explored beyond the business school. During their discussion, Raffnsøe, Staunæs, and Bank, offer detailed insights into some historical aspects, significant qualities, and useful distinctions of critique as a theoretical concept and scholarly praxis, reflexively and creatively illustrating these insights with examples from their own and others' work. In moving critique beyond criticism, they not only revisit critical continental philosophical traditions but also unfold how critical feminist, queer, and American Black studies might guide the way to another future for critical scholarship in and outside of the business school. Questioning the different modes, temporalities, and orientations of critique on which we have focused our attention, this piece instils new hope that critique will continue to matter, after all.

The Special Issue concludes with two notes by authors searching for radically different forms of critique by engaging with skills and techniques from artistic practices. Kate Burt discusses creative methods of producing narrative fictions. Thinking between and across her two professional practices of writing children's books and studying organization, Burt reflects on the limits of traditional methods in capturing the complexity and messiness of

subjective experiences of work, organizing, and management. The note joins a growing chorus of resistance to the ‘scientific’ norms of organizational writing and attempts to use fiction or organizational storytelling to grapple with questions of organization and management. In creative and playful ways, Burt transforms feelings of insecurity into a source of resistance against dominating methods. Ultimately, she develops critical, narrative-based methods as a powerful form of scholarly communication apt for exploring topics seemingly out of traditional methods’ reach.

Tahiri (this issue) discusses monstrosity as a means of subversion and survival and as a way of rewiring intellectual critique. To survive and live meaningfully within the horror that is the neoliberal university, she argues, one can turn to becoming monstrous oneself as a powerful and explosive alternative to polite, apologetic forms of critique. Such new practices of critique might include ‘inflammatory writing’ or ‘critique with a bite’, both of which dare to attack and undermine the powerful assumptions and ideologies of established orders. Accompanied by powerful, disturbing, and yet beautiful images from everyday life in a business school, this note suggests that its readers take inspiration from practices and techniques used in art and activism, deploying them to develop more playful, anarchistic, and forceful forms of critique.

Collectively, the contributions in this Special Issue begin to show us how to crawl from the wreckage of the contemporary corporate business school – in effect, by seeing the wreckage for what it is.

The Special Issue also includes three book reviews. First, Mathias Hein Jessen studies critical theory of the corporate form, reviewing *The corporation, law and capitalism* (Baars, 2019) and *The corporation: A critical, multi-disciplinary handbook*, edited by Baars and Spicer (2017). The particular contributions he analyses examine how contemporary legal frameworks (such as international criminal law) and corporate accountability further legitimize corporations, thus amplifying their economic and political power.

In the second review, Gabriel Migheli traces the spectres of spectres of Marx. In his ghostly encounter with Derrida, Migheli reads the *Specters of Marx* (2006) in pandemic times. He explores how the notion of auto-immunity

resonates today as a possibility lying latent at the heart of democracy, and wonders about Derrida's legacy – asking whether deconstruction remains *undeconstructible*.

Touching on Derrida and the May 1968 discussion about the end of 'community' as a concept, in the third and last review, Prem Sylvester discusses Stephen Best's (2018) *None like us*, which stresses the impossibility of organizing Black communities through the Black studies archive. He combs through Best's critique of community-thinking across this archive constructed to conserve enslavement as a supposed basis for solidarity. Eschewing this construction, Sylvester joins with Best and other scholars in exploring the archive *as a work of art*, studying its surfaces and layers, and seeking possibilities for freedom from the constraints of forging collective Black identities. Sylvester remains wary of how fragile these possibilities may be and acknowledges the limits of archive-based remembrance.

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