

Campus Friction:

A Short Ethnographic Engagement with Protest as Performance in York University's
Vari Hall

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This project is has been an exercise of being in the right place at the right time. The fall/winter academic session of 2008-2009 has been a time of turbulence at York University. It has been highlighted by a major strike by contract faculty and a highly confrontational protest between three student clubs, which in response resulted in sanctions being placed against each club and the creation of a *University Taskforce on Student Life, Learning and Community*. It is in this context that the idea for this project incubated and emerged. But as I sit writing this in a downtown Toronto Public Library, hundreds of Canadians of Tamil decent and their allies, including a recently arrested York student and friend, are protesting to the Canadian public, the international scene—to *anyone* who will listen—as they try to materialize a political intervention through the blockade of major highways in the Toronto social milieu of general inaction and apathy. As Tamil protesters move from embassies to major highways, the significance of this research is only becoming clearer. In this time of turbulence, it seems increasing pertinent that I share what I have learned.

Scanning the university's student paper *Excalibur*, I searched for a topic worth ethnographic investigation as the final project of my undergraduate career. I found a series of articles on a recent protest that occurred during the controversial Israeli Apartheid week and the responses it elicited from the University's current president, administration, and students. As I was to learn later in my literature review for the initial project proposal, Vari Hall has been a prime location of protest on York's campus since its inauguration in 1992. Panoptically gazing into Vari Hall's rotunda from the balcony across from our second floor classroom, I was amazed by the constant movement of people, banners, and issues that circulated through the visually bare yet living canvas of a

space. It has a roaring liveliness that is contained; like the echoes, between the building's round stone and wooden walls. Yet like a sound box, it sends reverberations like shockwaves from its nucleus, which transfers energy that ripples out through the University's campus to the electron-cloud-like community that circulates the margins of its frame.

Theory is to Method as Design is to Use

“Theory, when used as a mode of interpretation, *is* a method, yet it can be distinguished from method (and indeed takes a back seat to method) when a set of *concrete actions* grounded by a specific scene are required to complete a task” (Madison, 2005:14).

If the context of political turbulence on York's campus is the foundation of this investigation, then theory is the mortar to the bricks of this project. In part, this study can be viewed as a follow-up to the ethnographic investigation conducted by Critchlow (formerly Rodman), et al on Vari Hall as a contested space a decade before. In this collaborative piece, Rodman, her 1997 winter term Space and Place class, and Vari Hall project architect Teramura have constructed a comprehensive account of how “tensions between different visions of the urban, commuter university have been, and continue to be, expressed in the design and use of academic space” (Rodman, 1998:47). Built spaces, in their use and design, are imbued with symbolic content that tell much about the values, conflicts, and relations of power within York University's community (Ibid:47). Ten years later, many of these visions of Vari Hall have actualized into a mythical vernacular in which incoming students come to know the space, as well as York University. While previous tensions about departmental allocations of space and offices have faded into the backdrop, increased tensions over the “appropriate” appropriation of “public” space by differing student groups and concerns over “privatization” of campus space have come to dominate the present.

Vari Hall was originally envisioned to act as a symbolic landmark and legible entry point for the campus (Ibid:50) as York conjured an architectural and institutional history by what Hobsbawm calls *invented tradition*, “through which an institution seeks to legitimize itself by recourse to an imagined past” (quoted in Ibid:50). This recourse was aimed at rectifying problems created by the early campus’ collegial layout, that by the late 1990’s resulted in a dispersed and disorganized campus design, island-like isolation from the surrounding community and major transit hubs, and a shortage of class and office space (Ibid:51). Additionally, Rodman suggests that landmarks are devices of place-making in which institutional values are communicated through their visual impact (Ibid:53). Originally imagined as a generic space, she found that during the design process, Vari Hall’s space was personalized. Through its allocation, a blueprint of academic hierarchy and priorities could be read (Ibid:55). It was envisioned that Vari Hall would embody more than an institution history that York had yet to build. It would also foster a sense of institutional community (Ibid:67), although this project was later deemed a failure in terms of generic office spaces and “departmental hearths” as places for casual interaction between staff and graduate students (Ibid:56). Instead of facilitating community, the new facility amplified a sense of enclosure and polarization within the faculty (Ibid:58).

Left out of the design process all together, students have claimed the generic space that was designed, by architects Moriyama and Teshima, intentionally for their informal use (Ibid:61). Consequently, the rotunda has become a theatre of student activity (Ibid:62) and continues to be, catering to panoptic gazing from the balconies (Ibid:61)

and public displays of subversion and protest directed towards the University's administration and the Provincial Government (Ibid:66). Even to the present day,

“it is a formal, ceremonial space and yet, as we shall show, it is not the symbolic property of the university administration. It is a place from which students and faculty can “shout up,” as one student told [Rodman et al.], to the University President and others in authority on the top floor of an adjacent office block” (Ibid:48).

In the context of recent protests, the creation of an investigative taskforce may signal that the administration can hear the shouting, but whether they are listening has yet to be determined.

When viewing Vari Hall as a theatre of student life, protests can be investigated in terms of performance as political intervention. Conquergood's triad of mimesis, poiesis, and kinesis provides a multidimensional framework for evaluating protest and subversion. Mimesis suggests performance acts as a mirror of experience, like a framed simulation, as a micro-view of a larger phenomenon (Madison, 2005:169). Mimesis allows the ethnographer to explore the connections between local performances of political action with those that occur on at the global level, offering possibilities for examining how information moves across geographies. Poiesis refers to the deeper levels of meaning and consequences of political performances (Madison, 2005:197). Poiesis suggests performances “do something”, that they “denote and connote something beyond [their] appearance” (Madison, 2005:170), and is thus concerned with the symbolic content of political performances. Kinesis suggests that reflection on meaning has the potential to enact change, subvert authority, and transgress boundaries (Madison, 2005:170-171). In this sense, kinesis is attentive to the effects and consequences of protest as political performance, both intentional and unintentional. This concept of kinesis is complemented by Anna Tsing's metaphor of *friction*, which suggests

“heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power” (Tsing, 2005:5). Tracing friction enables ethnography to trace global connections from local experiences and how people unite despite their differences (Tsing, 2005:6). Friction emphasizes the creation of possibility that arises from collaboration, tension, and difference, especially when politics of difference and opinion are minimized to create the appearance of unified homogeneity, such as within political groups.

Methods as Concrete Actions and the Questions Under Investigation

This investigation was conducted at York University during the winter term of 2008-2009. A series of four spontaneous interviews were conducted on York University’s Keele Campus between the last week of April and first week of May. I originally proposed to take an inductive, deep “hanging-out” approach” in order to immerse myself in the fieldwork experience and participate in the dynamic public canvassing that occurs in Vari Hall, with which I had some success. I had also originally planned to start my investigation by interviewing members of the three sanctioned student clubs I had read about in Excalibur, but I never received a response from any of those groups to my requests for interviews. Minimal amounts of participation-observation were used in this study, mostly from the upper balconies of the rotunda while scoping out potential interviews and introducing myself to possible informants before formally requesting an interview.

My approach was also influenced by Anna Tsing’s post-performance ethnography *Friction*, in which Tsing explores universalizing of claims, creation of gaps, and collaboration in environmental movements in the Meratus Mountain region of South Kalimantan, Indonesia. She suggests that “claims of the universal give grip to universal

aspirations” (Tsing, 2005:1), and “to turn to universals is to identify knowledge that moves—mobile and mobilizing—across localities and cultures (Ibid:7). Attention to gaps illuminates the creative work of people as they categorize and organize the world into discrete categories. Gaps “develop in the seams of universal projects; they are found where universals have not been successful in setting all the terms... whenever we want to trace the limits of hegemony, we need to look for gaps” (Ibid:202). Collaboration is a site in which the construction and deconstruction of universals can be observed. Collaborations “draw groups into common projects at the same time as they allow them to maintain separate agendas” (Ibid:246). The separate stakes, understandings, and agendas of agents in collaborations are a source of friction that leads to new possibilities, and is thus a source of innovation. With Tsing in mind, I set out to conduct discussion-like group interviews, through which collaborations, frictions, universal claims, and awareness’ of gaps could be explored.

Of the four interviews, the initial was conducted in Vanier field, outside of the college closest to Vari Hall where I met a group of students on my way to an office where I volunteer on a weekly basis. Canvassing students as they passed by their table on the pros and cons of Nuclear power, I was struck by the location their display. The second and third interviews I conducted followed a week later. Both being conducted in the Student Center, north-east of Vari Hall, one was conducted outside of a student office by the organization’s executive’s request, since their organization is strictly nonpolitical, and one inside of another office where I felt incredibly welcome and my project was well received. The final interview was conducted in the week that followed, conducted right in the centre of Vari Hall where with the encouragement of our course director, Professor

Critchlow, I sat and meditated with the members of a student group and painted with tempera paints in resistance to protests of the “angry shouting type”. Aside from one these interviews, which was conducted in a more traditional one-on-one fashion, all were conducted with groups encountered in the field in the moment and in public. This approach was very successful in getting fellow students involved in my research and seemed enjoyable for my informants, as well as myself. Two additional interviews were requested but did not materialize due to time constraints and the scope of this assignment at the undergraduate level. Armed with knowledge that the personal is political, I have purposely concealed any markers of identity that I feel might put any of the informants in a situation where, while under an eye of scrutiny or disapproval, they might be questioned or unwontedly forced to defend what they were courageous enough to share here.

With theory as method and a consciousness of the political unrest that loomed over York’s campus following the recent CUPE strike and Israeli Apartheid Protest, I set out to explore *whether political protests have a place on campus, why or why not? Where or where not?* I asked questions about Vari Hall as a space: *Was campus space experienced as public, private, both or neither? Who were the target audiences of protests that occurred on campus versus at the Provincial Parliament? And did people feel as if protesting coincided with design intentions of Vari Hall?* I asked *whether connections existed between protest that occurred on campus and movements occurring off campus at a local and global scale?* I asked about the *symbolic content in political protests on campus and the appropriation of space for political purpose*. Lastly, I asked about *the effectiveness of campus protests in promoting awareness and change? and whether campus protests had unintended consequences?* The resulting recordings ranged

from 15 to 45 minutes in length of passionate discussions and personal disclosure. From the perspective of the ethnographer, these interviews were highly productive and extremely pleasurable. I am incredibly thankful to my informants for being so open, forthcoming, and in the right places at the right times, for without them this project would have never come together.

Letting the Data Speak for Itself: Findings

The results of my fieldwork are presented in this section and divided into four categories: results on space, on mimesis, connection between the local and global; on poiesis, symbolic content; and kinesis, effects and consequences. This organization reflects my theoretical orientation and the general course of my interviews in which the information has been presented to me. Choosing how to best represent the wealth of information that was collected in only four short interviews has been a constant challenge. In the spirit of collaboration, I have tried to include elements of the raw dialogue and let my informants do the speaking to you, the reader. As the editor and channel through which this information passes, I have tried to leave the content of their responses in their most original and unmediated form. I feel that in doing this, I am granting my informants more agency than could be afforded in a summation of their responses. By including their voices and letting their words speak for themselves, this piece stays more collaborative and speaks volumes.

On Space: Choosing the Right Place at the Right Time at the Right Price

When asked whether York University's campus was an appropriate place for a political protest, informants responded overwhelming that campus was, in fact, a place for political action and an important part of their university experience.

"Personally, I think they do. Universities are spaces where you get an education, gain practical experience and try to make change because you have time to be more radical, compared more so to when you are older..."

"I think so because right now were at the stage, especially in a university where you are trying to extend your roots as a person, and not just academically, but through your different experiences."

"I think protesting on campus is a great way to get attention because it's sort of like, although I don't think of it this way, the world kind of sees the universities as, you know, the academia of the world. So we have a voice and it is in our power to use that in a good way. I guess I think Vari Hall is very effective, it is like the center point of campus and it brings a lot of attention because it's a new building, and it's a rotunda, it's kinda pretty and it has good acoustics. There is a certain appeal to this building."

But students also responded overwhelmingly that some places are much better than others and when protesters are choosing a location, distinctions must be made.

"[Appropriate spaces are] places with lots of people but not near classrooms. I'd say that those spaces would be like Vari Hall or the commons. Anywhere very visible, highly populated, although I am not really for people being really loud near classrooms."

"Yes, I think so, I think like in here in this office, it can get pretty political in here sometimes and I feel like that's great because it is one of its main purposes, you know what I mean, for us to talk about issues. And Vari Hall is an open space, and open spaces like Vari Hall, or that grass area, the commons, or the student centre. But not where there are classrooms and different kinds of clubs, like certain clubs are just there for cultural respect [or as nonpolitical spaces specifically for respecting cultural expression]. But I know I get pissed off if I'm in class and someone barges in and starts talking about political things and I'm trying to learn about something, you know what I mean? I'm going to be really pissed. But it's my decision to walk though Vari Hall or not and you have the right to use that space and make it what you want, you know what I mean? That's your right because it is a public area but in terms of classrooms and taking the politics there, I don't agree with that at all."

"I don't think people have the right to specifically protests wherever they feel like it. Yes, people have the right to free expression but I think that the people paying for classes have the right to go to class and not have people yelling in the background. They perceive their right to protest specifically here, I don't see why they can't go... there (points to commons) you know? Just demonstrate right outside of Vari Hall, by the door where everyone will still come by and see them, or you know, in the mall where there are no classes and there's still lots of people. It seems like they like this space because there's lots of people to get their attention but it doesn't seem like it has to be right here."

It was obvious from the discussions with my informants that Vari Hall has an appeal for protest due to its centralized location and constant pedestrian traffic. In this sense, the

design goals of Vari Hall being a symbolic landmark as a legible entry mark and hub of campus social activity has been actualized. But one could also argue that differing design intentions are in conflict when the incorporation of classrooms and offices in this space structure the informal ways in which “generic” space becomes used and made un-generic. The most notable result that emerged from my questions on the ways in which these informants experienced campus space as public and private, which will be further contextualized in my conclusions.

“I think that this university is more or less public but sometimes you cannot distinguish. But I do think this university is going towards the private, trying to become more private. York University can’t really be private because it is not only a university, it is a community where the mall, York Lanes, is not just for York Students, you see people that live around the area, there are people that live around this campus, they have houses there. So, I think they are trying to move to more of a private institution however.”

“Um, I think it is hard to say. I think that as a student paying thousands of dollars in tuition and getting what the university calls an education, I have some rights to use the space if I’m not vandalizing it, not causing harm to others or disrupting classes. I think the issue with the Israeli-Palestine protests was they were disrupting classes.”

“I do feel that there are places like Vari Hall and here and what-not [for protesting but] it shouldn’t be brought into certain classrooms. People have the *right* to an education, right? That’s what they are paying for, so. You don’t have the right to bust into a class, and start talking about that stuff. You are wasting their valuable class time when they could be asking questions and what not.”

What informants were beginning to tell me was that campus space was not easily defined as public or private. The University was described as both a public institution of education and a corporate entity through its fees-for-service orientation when exchanging classes for tuition. Both descriptions were interpreted by my informants as granting them access and most importantly *the right* to use campus space for private and public means. As the public, the university is seen as being created for them in addition to the fact that they directly pay to use its facilities. For this same reason, the disruption of classes is impermissible since it violates their right to attend classes and disrupts the delivery of services by the University, which students have already been paid for.

On Mimesis: Connecting the Local to the Global

When asked about whether they thought protests on campus were connected to events happening on the international scene, many informants expressed that they were indeed connected and saw those connections as important contributions to their education and university experience.

“I know that since I came to York University, my eyes have been opened by through a lot of things by just walking through and seeing people talk about, you know, the Palestinian things that are going on and even other topics. And the hard part, like I feel like on a normal day you can walk somewhere and learn so much, more than I would than just sitting in a classroom and taking a look at class, it is much more interactive and easier...”

“I think it is a great learning experience because you learn about everything. I love the, a great example was Apartheid, we get to really see both sides, like last week was the Rwandan genocide, and this week they have the Armenian genocide. It is very important to have social/political views and I think it does cultivate you as a person.”

In this respect, the education received at York University is multi-dimensional, having a global consciousness beyond the local context of York and facilitated by the interests and values of others who share the space and use it for their own means. In this sense, Vari Hall has become a inter-“departmental hearth” where students are able to bounce ideas off of each other, and the walls, in casual and formal interactions, thus fostering an institutional community.

On Poiesis: Symbolic Content and Vari Hall as Metaphor

In Rodman et al.’s original study, Vari Hall is described as both a theatre of student activity and a Foucaultian style prison for surveillance and panoptic gazing. The metaphor of Vari Hall as a theatre has been especially helpful in applying Conquergood’s triad of performance as political intervention. In my interviews, informants provided their own metaphors for how they experience York University’s campus, their experiences of being in Vari Hall, and of the uses of Vari Hall by others. When speaking about the connection between campus protests and the global arena, one informant said,

“I guess when you are protesting governments like on the other side of the world, and the only people you are really getting to are like the other university students and I kinda call universities, York in particular, a “*glass bubble*”, here like in the middle of nowhere and away from where all the action is, I can see when it is a useful situation, like if you want to do a protest that will get *students* more active, then it good to have it on campus, but if you want *actual* change, go off campus, or wherever it is most appropriate.”

In describing York’s campus as a glass bubble in the middle of nowhere and away from the action, this student makes a clear reference to one of the persistent challenges of York’s campus design, its isolation from the local Jane and Finch community and transit hubs, although this critique is not universal. Isolation is seen as limiting the scope of action and audience that your movement can appeal to. This view can be contrasted by the contribution of another, who describes the experience of being in the middle of a protest,

“It was actually the first or second time that we did student sanctuary and the Tamil Student’s Association, I think it was, was also having a protest of the angry, shouting type and I think people have the right to, um you know, voice their opinions about injustices in the world but I don’t know if angry shouting is the way to go about it necessarily. There is definitely injustice in the world and definitely things should be done about it and it’s so important to take action but this is kind of an alternative way to think about how people react. So basically, we came to meditate and we had no idea that that event was going to be happening at the same time, the Tamil Student’s Association protest, and we’re sitting here in the middle of Vari Hall and there’s youth cheerleaders on one side of Vari Hall and these people shouting through speakerphones on the other side and we’re just kind of like the *eye of the storm* sitting there meditating in the middle of all the noise.”

In their meditative calmness, this student describes the event as a highly social experience in the middle of all the action. From an isolated bubble to a churning sky of activity, the two metaphors of theatre and panoptic gazing-site, dominant during the investigation by Rodman et al, are still present as seen in the response by another student,

“When you first come [on a campus tour], they tell you to scream, and you do and you hear yourself echo off the walls. So obviously, it was built for something. For you to be able to speak publicly without having to set up speakers and all that, you know, or a stage. It is very similar to how the Greek archetype their theaters, with the whole *amphitheatre* thing, you know that whole circular, with the *balconies so people can look over*, it’s sort of constructed after that, so it gives the illusion that it can be a public arena ‘cause it amasses that, you have to think that this is obviously a place created for students to be involved.”

As will be shown, these metaphors are intimately tied to the following section on kinesis and my informant's perceptions of the effectiveness of promoting awareness and enacting change.

On Kinesis: Promoting Awareness and Creating Change

In my interviews, the informants all expressed to varying degrees that protests on campus were effective in promoting awareness but were limited in their capacity to create change. As two students put it,

"It is great for promoting awareness because it is very obvious, flashy, way of doing things but it is not really good at making change. Like, after the protest is done, people leave and go back to their daily lives and it goes back to the status quo, things don't really change."

"Um, not change but awareness definitely. Um, I find that every time there is a protest that I get more interested in what is actually happening. So I'll actually research something or look it up. I guess in a way it promotes change because you get more people interested. Those two are not mutually exclusive but they do go hand in hand. Some kind of change is happening... it's something. Where are you going to start if you are not protesting?"

Other students with whom I spoke also felt that campus protests had a limited capacity for change but were more critical of why and how campus protests lose their momentum.

The following excerpt was left in its original dialogue format from my field notes. The two different speakers are marked by the pseudonyms A and B.

A) I think that right now, that we all have a voice, we all have a place to speak out.

B) That is the illusion that it has, that we all have a voice.

A) It's that control thing. If you make people feel like they can speak, they will speak, but if you don't listen to what they're saying, they won't be able to act, right? So, if you give people the means so that they feel like they can say *this* and do *that*, they're going to feel like they've accomplished something when really, in the end, what has happened? What has changed? Even with the vandalism and the graffiti on the door, that was a big thing! There were rallies... but really, what got accomplished? What got accomplished? There were protests and at the same time, what did the university do? The President came after the fact to say "Oh, I'm sorry" because he knew where they [the protesters] would be, he knew cameras were there, the news cameras were there to capture him coming in... capture what he had to say... and after he left they were bored and that was it. And so I feel like, we have a voice but what does it *do*?

B) You know what, that voice is an amazing thing but the university is very strategic. They will let you have Vari Hall. You can book the space and talk, yell, and scream all night if you want. However, they want you to feel as if York University is an institution where you can talk, you can yell, you can voice your opinion, *but they are never there to back you up!* So if you're fighting amongst each other, like when you are fighting between two people, you never see who caused what. And they are very smart that way, even in presenting the school to new students by saying "Vari Hall is a great place to protest, you can learn new things..." it makes you say, "Wow! This school is so progressive! They care about me!" But they don't give a shit! "Give me your tuition and goodbye!"

A) You can stand and scream all you want.

B) Until graduation!

A) But in the end, what's really going to *happen*? Minor changes?

For these students, the round walls of Vari Hall acts like a containment building over a nuclear reactor, limiting how many politically-radio-active isotopes can enter the atmosphere and radiate their energy in the surrounding countryside. Less dramatically put, informants saw a lack of administrative and institutional collaboration with students, which put boundaries upon the scale of impact and clout of student-based movements in creating dramatic change. I would not say that student movements have an explicit lack of ideological support from the faculty or administration. However, how far a movement can travel up the nine stories of the adjacent Ross building, where campus policy is made and the University's administration sits perched on the top floor is constrained. Not all students shared the perception that the impact of their actions is constrained but a hierarchical disjuncture between students and the faculty and administration was marked,

"A couple times when we were going to set up, another member from the club was like "are you sure? Right in the middle? Maybe we should do it off to the side where we won't be in people's way" and I said "no, people walk through here everyday apathetically, we need to get in their way, we need to make them stop and question and we're not trying to be hostile, rude or in people's faces. That's why we are just sitting quietly meditating yet making such a big impact at the same time... We did call it [the event] Student Sanctuary, not that other members of the student community couldn't join us but it tends to be

students who are willing to come and sit down to hang with us. I have yet to see a professor or a staff-member from the university start painting with us. Sometimes they walk by and yeah... I've never seen a prof come and take their shoes off and sit with us, so it is pretty much directed towards the students. Yeah, because the students were the ones, I felt, were most affected by the protest since it was something at the student level."

With all this said, maybe it is this the right kind of friction? The kind in which the disjunction between the ability to promote awareness and create change, the tensions between the administration on the ninth floor and students in the arena below, and the gaps between public uses and private rights that will illuminate new possibilities and new collaborative forms through which change can be materialized? Maybe it's the right place at the right time?

Conclusions and their Limits

I began to see from my interviews that in between the ability to promote awareness and create change, between the students and the administration, and between the public and private, there were gaps; disconnects and disruptions in the smooth operations of the University as "business as usual". When speaking about the University as private, private was being used as a heteronym. First, it alludes to constructions of university space as restricted to a relative few, hidden, and withdrawn, or simply as not public. But concerns over the corporate interests of the University and the claims to rights granted by virtue of payment meant that private was being used to describe a market orientation, opposite to viewing the university only as a public institution of the welfare state. This corporatized view of the University, combined with the perception that bureaucracy stifles the agency to create real or lasting non-minor changes, calls to mind another metaphor used contemporarily to describe the exclusion of women and other visible minorities from the boardrooms of the corporate elite. Informants described a "glass ceiling" effect where social movements stopped before reaching the administration

and their exclusion from collaboration in the design of policy hindered their ability to apply what they are learning in their classes. Informants overwhelmingly described protest, and the issues they politicize, as supplemental to their education in a practical way. But without institutional support, putting their education into practice created the illusion of agency and was seen as a device of social control and governmentality. Protests, when addressing issues on the other side of the world were still directed to York University's students and "shouting up" to the administration for new forms of collaboration in addressing social injustice. In this sense, the creation of the of *Taskforce on Student Life, Learning and Community*, composed of seven faculty as administrative members and seven student members in conscious of this disconnect and actively works to close some of these gaps by providing students with opportunities where their agency is more than symbolic. At the same time, the University's complete control over the creation of the Taskforce, the selection of its members, and drafting its mandate reproduces the same relations of control and centralization of power, which continues to produce friction that may or may not actualize change.

This project does not attempt to generalize the opinions expressed by these informants to the entirety of York's community. With increased time and scope, this project could be more detailed and better document the complexity between understandings of University space as public, private, and corporatized. While evaluating my data, I realized that if anything, this project would have benefited from more attention to York's ecology and attention to the Canadian climate. Many students expressed that protests could be just as effective outside on the grassy commons but I never assessed whether students would feel the same way when asked in the dead of winter, when the

commons are covered with a thick blanket of snow and the ambient temperature is between -5 to -30°C below. Since the majority of the academic session occurs during the Canadian winter and early spring, this could have been a major factor in selecting Vari Hall as a location for protest since it is heated and indoors. Although this limitation does not completely negate the findings above, from the prospective of the anthropology of ecology, this could make for an interesting project.

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First and foremost, I am indebted to Professor Critchlow whose steady guidance, persistent fairness, constant patience, and warm encouragement has made this project possible. It is my hope that this project has done right to you. If I have learned anything this year, it is that all actions have unintended consequences, often hitting far closer to home than ever imagined. Aside from unintended consequences, actions can lead to new possibilities. In trying to make rights from wrongs and “using my powers for good”, I hope this work is something we can both be proud of. This has weighed heavy on my heart and has been my motivation. As a result, I have learned a lot and I have put my heart into this work. Thank you.

Secondly, thank you to my informants. Your willingness to share and trust means a lot to me. Without you, there would be no project. I hope that I have conveyed what you have said with utmost fairness and accuracy; I truly believe that we are making a difference. Change is a process and love is a place. This experience has forever changed me.

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York University, to the power of 50.

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