

“Headlining an ongoing revolt: UCSD public relations files, 1979”

During our visit to the UCSD Special Collections, I explored a box filled with pages from an index kept by the Public Relations/Communications department from the years of 1979-1983. Each of five or so manila folders contained several pages, around 50 to 100 I would surmise, on which was kept a running tab of mentions of UCSD in the national and local news. Notifications of public events in art, music, and dance; notable encounters with faculty, notice of nomination for prizes; administrative decisions and campus group activities: these are just some of the things that whoever compiled these documents deemed worthy of retrospective consideration. How did they go about collecting these citations, I asked myself? Whoever holds an equivalent post today would need only to set up a handful of Google alerts to complete the task. Almost four decades ago, however, I suspect that much more patient scouring was required. Did keeping abreast of public concerns mean having a heaping stack of print journalism arrive on the doorstep everyday? I concentrated my efforts on perusing the listings from 1979.

I was especially interested in mentions of the Third College naming dispute, which figured at the heart of student activism on the campus in the late 60s. Having read Roderick Ferguson's account of the struggle over the naming of the college in his 2012 book *The Reorder of Things*, I was surprised to learn that these deliberations were still going on a decade later. Ferguson takes up a movement of black and chicano students at UCSD who, “in 1969...proposed to the university administration that the new 'third' college should be named Lumumba-Zapata College after the 'assassinated Congolese revolutionary leader Patrice Lumumba and the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata.' They proposed this Lumumba-Zapata College as 'a place where [their] peoples could acquire the knowledge and skills [they] needed in order to more effectively wage [their] liberation struggles.'” (43) Students advocated for a curriculum that prioritized what they took to be the pressing issues of their time. “Among the subject areas were Revolutions; White Studies; Analysis of Economic Systems, including 'the crucial roles played by colonialism, imperialism, slavery and genocide' in the development of Western capitalism; and Science and Technology courses, excluding 'the theoretical inanities taught at Revelle College as well as the military research conducted at Scripps.’” The proposal was not well received by university higher-ups. In fact, it was squarely rejected, although perhaps not entirely out of animus. “The student activists and the administration were 'two trains moving at different speeds,' says [Edward J. Spriggs], a student at the time. When it came down to it, the “paradigm” that “we’re running the institution—not you” would have to be upheld. (Tiersten)

The persistence of the naming dispute years later raises some interesting questions. If the dispute in fact went on for more than a decade, what shape did it take some years from the epicenter of armed building occupations and outright revolt? Was the resurgence of interest spurred by likeminded student groups? Administrative nostalgia? Was it more or less crucial to campus life and antagonisms, or important just the same, as it was before? Both Ferguson and George Mariscal, who spends time in his book, *Brown-eyed Children of the Sun: Lessons from the Chicano Movement, 1965-1975*, chronicling on campus events at UCSD, leave their stories off in the mid-seventies. UCSD Chancellor William McGill during the tumult of 68-69 ends his memoir, *The Year of the Monkey: Revolt on Campus 1968- 69*, far sooner, although the 1983 review of the book in the *New Indicator* gives us other cause for doubting the usefulness of his evidence. In the February 15th-23rd edition of this student-run publication at UCSD, Jon Bekken admits that he is “startled” by McGill's “rank hypocrisy and contempt for facts.” (1) What was going on on campus at this time? And whose interpretation ought we to trust?

These concerns hinge upon how one reads the '68 dispute. "UCSD tries again to choose name for 3rd college, Patrice Lumumba, perennial favorite, still in running" reads a headline on April 9th, 1979 in the *San Diego Transcript*, the city's newspaper of record, and mainstay daily for the business community. Just a few weeks later, on May 11th, the *LA Times* published a story on the matter. "Third college will vote again on name, choices narrowed to 2 in continuing UCSD controversy." It would seem that the contention unleashed when faculty proposed a name that would in no way bridge, if it didn't in fact exacerbate, the tensions between administration and minority student population was still very much alive in '79. And yet, Ferguson is at pains to bring out the way in which the middle-class learned from, but was also instructively disrupted, by the radicalism of the movement (208). The take-away is, in part at least, that good liberals were "implicated" in the conservative backlash to 60s counterculture insofar as the push to incorporate "minority difference" into the university nourished the "management of the international" dynamics of capitalism. By turning social movements into academic disciplines, power finds a way to "read the archive" of radical actions and values in service of the "articulation of difference consistent with [its] guidance rather than antagonistic to it." (28) In short, the emergence of the interdisciplinary departments of Ethnic Studies, Chicano Studies, African American Studies, and Women's Studies pacified the movements' aims; their incorporation into the university sublimated their more radical energies. Or is it that capital and state learn how to make this happen in posteriority?

Ferguson's argument balances on a thin rail of dialectical progression. He mentions the contortion of radical ideals while indicating how they nevertheless precipitated certain achievements of "new forms of access, critique, and community" (74). To whatever extent he is right to argue that the Lumumba-Zapata college proposal incident brought about "a new strategic situation...that would attempt to turn the critiques of the student movements into the hegemonic maneuvers of American institutions" (67) in part to quell the radical maneuverings of the students involved, he is also quick to celebrate the potency of the fervor amidst which the controversy arose. This helps us to keep the search for recognition and legitimacy, the shortcomings of this incident of UCSD radicalism - but also of student movements at Cornell, CUNY, Berkeley, and others, that irrupted at this time - in our sights. However, it insinuates as well that there is no need to ask questions about the naturalization of legitimacy of the name of the college as a site of struggle, and how academic discourse may play a role therewith. In part Ferguson doesn't have to take up this concern, since doing so would surely lead his investigation into the thickets of the very academic power/knowledge scheme that tries its best to wholly know the radically-other, even if only by never ceasing to note that what is other can never truly be known. He is attentive to how a certain sociological accounting for "race" and "gender" themselves figures into the reproduction of state power and the territorialization-machine of capital. It is as if the legibility of the "institutionalization" of the study of "minority difference" were itself preordained for the genealogist's selection. However, in so carefully tracking the foibles of power he almost precludes the possibility that the epistemic stabilization ushered in by "absorption" of the movement's "gestures and routines" by archival power (27) needed to negotiate with itself - already question-begging insofar as the referent of selfhood would appear to be power personified - over the status of what had been accomplished. Presumably the fact that the struggle could be reduced to a quibble over the symbolic capital conferred by a name would only be the icing on this poisoned cake.

It is true that the ongoing dispute gives some credence to this reading. What started out as the most potently sign of "betrayal" of good faith discussions between student demands and university leadership (Tiersten) seems, by '79, to have evolved into the most managed version of rebellion. "Still no name for third college," the La Jolla Light proclaims now in late June of 1979. Nevertheless, we are told, "Calmness [is] returning to UCSD." The "UCSD campus [is] calm as dispute simmers," reports the *San Diego Union* on June 5th, 1979. The university "...plans a full report to regents on UCSD row," declares the *LA Times* two days later. A decade later, this is what remains of the struggle - at least in

the dominant sources of news. Everything is okay; everything is calm: to my ear these sound not like the words of one who has managed by way of knowledge so much as the very sort of fodder that uncertain, anxious readers scan in order to ensure that they are reading things right. “Calmness” is not so much a state of being that the newspaper reader knows as it is a chance to declare allegiances; a ready-made relatability that doesn't have to cost anything so long as it's only the daily news. Ferguson doesn't pay much attention to this specific point, his interest being instead the significance of epistemic change and how academic discourse affects the strategies available to state and capital in the face of widescale unrest, but also the exhaustion of Taylorist configurations of the social. (59-67)

In this way, his reading sidesteps the condensation of activist energy in the name, “Lumumba-Zapata” that continues to this day. Campus protest in the lead up to the November 2016 election took place under the auspices of the “Lumumba-Zapata Collective.” Then, on inauguration day, “[h]undreds of UCSD students, faculty members, and staff demanded the University’s denunciation of the Trump presidency during a walk-out strike and public rally on Jan. 20. Organized by the Lumumba Zapata Collective (LZC), a coalition of UCSD faculty, staff, and students, participants attempted to block parking lots and traffic to disrupt the normal flow of the university.” Without any individual signing their name, the LZC's website champions the very legacy that Ferguson reworks. “Our name connects our current organizing efforts to the legacies of Black and Brown student radicalism that fought for Lumumba Zapata College, eventually renamed Thurgood Marshall College,” they write. The controversy surrounding this name is being redeployed as well – differently, to be sure, but with its own distinctive inquiry into what was put at stake, and to what extent it has stuck, in the epistemic revolution of global capitalism of which the late 60s campus revolt played part. In an op-ed letter to the UCSD *Triton* on Black Student Union chair, Refilwe Gqajela, expressed her concern over the constitution of the collective, as well as its putative claim to what the collective itself calls the “genealogy” of the 1968 struggle. “It would have been nice to meet the group whose name has been co-opted from the long history of not just Black student but Latinx/Chicanx student struggles and labor. A name stemming from the coalition building of communities who aligned their issues and in an effort of solidarity worked collaboratively towards the betterment and representation of their communities.” If this back and forth about rightful claims of radical history is all that there is, then Ferguson's assessment of capitalism's adaptation would appear to be correct.

However, it is not insignificant that the newspapers in 1979 were at pains to depict a calm university, where a full report would be made about periods of unrest, and the chancellor McElroy, who had been censured in a “No confidence” vote by faculty in June 1979, would continue on - “McElroy gets chance to solve problems” declares the *San Diego Union*. All of these make us wonder if Ferguson's attentions to hegemony's absorption of difference don't leave out an investigation into the theories of anxiety that make newsworthy the very mention of the absence of turmoil? What sort of anxiety might further study of the index and other recordings of the afterlives of the upheaval of the 60s reveal about the ease with which mention of the academy is mixed up with power/knowledge? Perhaps even the Foucauldian framing of Ferguson's own investigation might be worthy of interrogation on this account. Moreover, what does it say that the capitalist's or the statesman's ephemeral fears, the fleeting moments of terror that strike the hearts of those who see in the momentum of the status quo not liberation so much as the predictability of a hierarchy – what does it say that a landscape of headlines solicits a reckoning of intuitions about the concepts of both calmness and complete account?

“People don't read the morning newspaper...” writes Tom Wolfe in *The Painted Word* in a paraphrase of Marshall McLuhan, “they slip into it like a warm bath.” They are “submerged, weightless, suspended in the tepid depths,” often in a “state of perfect sensory deprivation.” (1) Wolfe took this to be the case when he was writing in 1975, and it most likely remained so a few years later, in 1979. Does it remain the case today? We might think that no longer does anyone need the sort of

index that surfaces in the UCSD special collections in order to get a sense of what's going on in their world. Even so, these listings give a chance to open up questions about the morphology, or the presumption of morphology by way of the thematization of the institution, of epistemic transformation. My interest is not in how the newspapers express the fears of the dominant class, nor, perhaps in a parallel way, what the invocation of difference does for Ferguson's argument, so much as how gathering up these headlines elicits differential interpretations of a situation by destabilizing what is at stake in attempts to give discursive coordinates to "the situation" as such. By way of this index, we get a sense for how these newspapers figured into the symbolic economy of capitalism's advance as the inscription of an aneconomical dimension of the reading of the student movements. If this reading is to afford the sort of economical operation that concerns Ferguson, much less some features of what he boldly calls the "American political economy," then what are we to make of the aneconomical signaling of "calmness" - *but perhaps also the name of the college itself* - that solicits a fantasy of being fully submerged in a discursive regime, an episteme, a felicitous meeting of concepts with intuitions?

In its broadest frame, Ferguson's book is focused on how the human sciences carve up the tasks of understanding "man" in service of the economization of administrative regulation's accommodations for agency. The "interdisciplines" that arise out of the radical social movements of the 60s, are, in his argument, ways that things outside of man can be understood to be "internal" insofar as they provide "observations" about man's consciousness or his unconscious - differences are there to "confirm an underlying theoretical pattern formulated according to the protocols of european thought." (47) My curiosity about the appearance of "calm" in the decade after the seminal period in which this "theoretical pattern" was presumably so categorically confirmed that it underwrote the insatiable promiscuity of the developments of consumer capitalism that have arguable permitted the market - in "our neoliberal times" - to infiltrate the deepest recesses of any subject whatsoever, is the way in which this appearance belies the completeness of such protocols. Any mention of institutional calm whatsoever may incite a reading practice that can confirm or deny that there is, at any moment, a theoretical pattern to be mined, marshaled, to serve as infrastructure, a way to be "submerged, weightless, suspended in the tepid depths" of the social - so deep, we might think that national print capitalism itself might offer, as it does to Benedict Anderson, as an answer to the question of why people are willing to die for their country, even when all that remains of it are sound bites and slogans, headlines and names.

Williston Chase PhD candidate

Comparative literature, UC Irvine

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