

A Move toward “Academic Citizenship”¹: Reading Emotion in the Narrative Structures of Part-Time Faculty

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According to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), “44.5 percent of all faculty are part-time, and non-tenure track positions of all types account for more than 60 percent of all faculty appointments in American higher education.” The “ADE (Association of Departments of English) Statement on the Use of Part-Time and Full-Time Faculty” suggests “the conditions under which most adjunct teachers are employed define them as non-professionals.” Often hired as last-minute replacements on semester-to-semester contracts, part-time faculty are typically paid a fraction of what full-time faculty earn for teaching the same number of credits, and only a small percentage are eligible for benefits such as health insurance and retirement savings. Though the conditions under which they labor may relegate them to “non-professional” status in the workplace, many are, in fact, highly credentialed and experienced in their fields of expertise. According to the CCCC’s “Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing,” “nearly one-third of the English faculty at four-year colleges and universities work on part-time and/or temporary appointments. Almost universally, they are teachers of writing.” Though statistics vary by institution, there is no question that part-time and non-tenure-track faculty are largely responsible for teaching the majority of required developmental and first-year writing courses across the nation.

Those who administer writing programs, then, frequently find themselves largely dependent on a pool of contingent labor to staff writing courses and in the position of “tacitly being asked to participate in the exploitation of a marginalized teaching staff” (Hansen 24). As Eileen E. Schell notes in “Part-Time/Adjunct Issues: Working Toward Change,” many writing program administrators (WPAs) have long been at the forefront of addressing workplace concerns voiced by contingent faculty: working through profes-

sional organizations to create policy statements, conducting studies related to working conditions, and advocating for union representation and workplace equity (183-85). WPAs, many of whom are themselves in the process of earning tenure, often have limited power with which to advocate on behalf of part-time faculty and must do this work in addition to their myriad other responsibilities: attending to the needs and concerns of students, faculty, and administrators across the university; advocating for programmatic support and change as needed; providing leadership; and hiring, training, and supervising large numbers of part-time faculty and graduate teaching assistants.

In her article, Schell provides a helpful overview and critique of change strategies that have been used to address workplace concerns for part-time faculty and argues for “four elements part-time and non-tenure-track faculty need in order to teach successfully: compensation, contracts [and professional support], conditions that enable quality teaching, and coalition building” (196). While each of these elements is critical to effecting significant change and dependent, in part, on the method or strategies used to address specific changes, for the purposes of this article, I want to focus specifically on her call for “professional support” for part-time and non-tenure-track faculty. What does, or should, such professional support and/or development look like? What kinds of support and development can and should be offered? And, how can WPAs, who have so many responsibilities on their plates, best provide much-needed training and support to the many part-timers who comprise their staff and whose range of experience and level of expertise is so varied?

In many programs, part-time writing instructors are frequently expected, if not required, to participate in ongoing professional training that is intended to serve at least two key functions: first, regular meetings can provide the kind of support new teachers often crave, in terms of sharing ideas about curricula and other pedagogical matters; second, staff meetings can help WPAs ensure at least some measure of programmatic consistency in terms of curricula, pedagogy, and philosophies of teaching writing. While most WPAs intend professional development sessions as forums for learning, growth, and support, this article examines how such opportunities can backfire if the way the program is structured and implemented does not take into consideration 1) the emotional impact of long-standing exploitation on those part-time and non-tenure-track faculty who comprise the program and attend the meetings, and 2) the wide range of expertise and experience of individual teachers in the program and how such teachers might best work together.

In her article, "More than a Feeling: Disappointment and WPA Work," Laura Micciche examines the factors that contribute to the "climate of disappointment that characterizes English studies generally and composition studies—particularly writing program administration (WPA)—specifically" (432). Some of these factors include inequitable working conditions (particularly but not solely for part-time faculty), scant employment opportunities after years of specialized study, questions about the status of composition as a legitimate academic field, and the need to constantly defend the intellectual value of the work done by writing program administrators. In her study, Micciche analyzes two WPA work narratives that focus on "disappointment as a central affective component of the job" (435). She convincingly argues that emotion always shapes work lives, and that WPAs have to wage battle against the kind of "disappointed hope" and "destructive disaffection" that can debilitate a program and its inhabitants—students, faculty, and administrators. Though her primary focus throughout the article is on the affective components of WPA work (and all that entails), my intention here is to explore the "structures of feeling" that Bill, a part-time faculty member with a PhD in composition and rhetoric, describes as he enters what Micciche calls the "climate of disappointment" in a writing program, bringing his own version of "disappointed hope" and "destructive disaffection." Bill's narrative, despite its limited perspective and bitter tone, makes visible the complex set of relations operating in and through the writing program in which he worked. My analysis of his narrative not only questions what WPAs and part-time faculty might do differently in similar situations but also considers how intricately interwoven are the configurations of academic workplaces, the layers of emotions workers bring into those work spaces, and the structures of the very stories we tell about lives within these spaces.

MAKING SENSE OF THE WORKPLACE: BILL'S NARRATIVE OF FRUSTRATION

In *Narrating the Organization: Dramas of Institutional Identity*, Barbara Czarniawska "show[s] that narrative knowledge constitutes the core of organizational knowledge, that it is an important way of making sense of what is going on in the everyday life of organizations [. . .]" (167). Her argument that narrative—the telling of stories—constitutes and constructs the everyday world of the workplace supports my belief that, despite problems of subjectivity and the potential for unreliable narrators, much can be learned from listening to workers' stories about their lives in the workplace. I liken Bill's narrative to what John Van Maanen calls an "impressionist tale," in which "events are roughly recounted in the order in which they are said to have occurred [. . .]" (103). Van Maanen argues that in "impressionist tales,"

the “correctness” or truth of the story is not what finally matters. In my analysis of Bill’s narrative, what matters most is his perception of how conflicts evolved, erupted, and functioned within the structure of the writing program because this perception is what drove his understanding of, responses to, and accounts of the situation he describes.

I first interviewed Bill (referred to me by a colleague) several years ago when I was researching a project on how faculty perceived and experienced power relations in their programs and departments. Rather than cull a narrative through a set of interview questions that I would pose to him, Bill requested to write his own narrative, using my set of questions as a jumping off point. According to Bill, the narrative he wrote was produced quickly, with little attempt on his part to fully represent and reflect upon the many complexities involved, both in terms of how he described the writing program in which he worked and his feelings and perceptions regarding his own status within that writing program. Throughout, his voice resonates with anger and cynicism even though he never once directly articulates the role these (and other) emotions play in his account of the workplace. Indeed, through his rather one-sided and curmudgeonly portrayal of events and other players, we find in Bill’s account and critique (excerpts follow) of the professional training required of part-time faculty at the institution described important questions for consideration. For instance, how does one foster and maintain equity within a program staffed by a range of faculty whose status in the university varies from graduate students to part-time faculty to full-time, tenured faculty? How does one maintain programmatic accountability in terms of curricula and pedagogy and still support and encourage academic freedom and creativity amongst instructors who have widely divergent levels of education, training, and experience?

The following excerpt is taken from Bill’s narrative description of his experience as a part-time faculty member in a writing program from which he ultimately resigned; publicly, he cited inadequate pay as the reason for his resignation, yet in his narrative he strongly suggests that, among other factors, inequitable working conditions within the writing program played a major role in his decision.

In the “well-intentioned” form of faculty development, workshops/discussion groups—required of all adjuncts and TA’s but not tenure-track faculty—[were] set up to keep everyone “in line” with Writing Program values. These groups [. . .] met for an hour or so once a week. Mentors were picked from people whom 1) had been around for awhile and 2) were in with the administration. When I asked on my first day in the group whether the groups served a surveillance function, I was told by

my mentor that they did not, but [I] got the non-verbal message from several of my colleagues that that was not the whole story. Come to find out that the majority of people stuck in the groups—many of whom, like me, had many years of teaching experience to their credit—despised the groups, which were supposed to give everyone a chance to share their expertise, experience, and materials but in fact just dragged underpaid, overworked people into the office once a week. Because these workshop groups gave the administrators something to manage on a regular, predictable basis, criticism of their form and function was not [. . .] taken lightly.

To put it bluntly, the administrators [. . .] kept the underpaid and overworked adjunct faculty virtually hopping with gratuitous demands and requirements which, since someone had to facilitate all programmatic activities, assured their own longevity. Since the arrangements kept them from having to do much of the dirty work, the full-time tenure-track faculty seemed willing to look the other way; this arrangement also had the consequence of cutting full-time faculty off from part-time faculty, but that's another matter—another way in which power was organized in the writing program.

After several weeks of suspending my disbelief and trying to make the best of my group [. . .] I wrote a long letter to the administrators questioning the value of the "mandatory" groups on several practical and theoretical grounds. In this letter, I was careful to admit that the problem might be my own but that I had several reasons to suspect otherwise. This letter was initially greeted with a curt, "thank you for sharing" note. When I pressed my mentor about the letter's reception, she said she would talk to the administrators and get back to me.

When she did get back to me, she told me it basically came down to this [question]: "What do you want?" [She was] implying, I think, that I could at that juncture have opted out of the workshop group, an unthinkable move, really, since it would have set me in opposition not only to my supervisors but to my peers and co-workers as well. I responded to this blunt question by saying that I simply thought there should be an open dialogue about the workshop group structure and that, as long as such a dialogue was underway, I would remain a team player.

But, I had made waves. When summer teaching assignments were handed out, I was denied on the grounds that my application was “late” (arriving by e-mail at 6:00 AM on the morning after the 5:00 PM deadline). Upon learning that my office mate [whose application was also late] was assigned summer teaching, I resigned my position in the Writing Program, citing insufficient pay for the time and energy required of the job, but word was quickly leaked back to the powers-that-be that my resignation was an intentional response to being punished for speaking up. When the tenure-track faculty finally got wind of my resignation there was, or so I understand, a confrontation between concerned faculty and the administrator responsible for handling summer teaching. But this confrontation was too little too late. With little or no room for critical dialogue, I could see no reason to re-enmesh myself in such a moribund social/intellectual environment. I suffered considerable economic hardship as a result of my stand and abrupt, non-negotiable resignation, the very same hardship that prevents many others from speaking with their feet, too.²

NOTIONS OF AUTONOMY AND EXPERTISE IN THE WRITING PROGRAM

If, as Czarniawska suggests, it is possible to make sense of an organization by listening to workers’ stories, what then, are we, as WPAs, to make of Bill’s story, with his cynical and biting critique? What can we learn if we listen carefully to the perspective he brings to the table, even if we find his voice somewhat off-putting—angry, arrogant, and bitter? From the beginning of the narrative, Bill’s sarcasm is marked by the quotations with which he encloses his descriptor—“well-intentioned”—of the professional development meetings required of part-time faculty and teaching assistants (TAs). His very first sentence reveals layers of skepticism on his part: first, about the real intentions of the meetings; second, about the flaws inherent in a hierarchical structure that mimics the tiered system the university sets up between full- and part-time faculty; and third, about the uses of such a structure to maintain particular programmatic “values.” His distrust is made clear, when, at his first group meeting, he reportedly asks “whether the groups served a surveillance function.” His word choice—“surveillance”—strongly echoes Foucault’s description of Bentham’s Panopticon, a trope not likely lost on his audience. Why did Bill, on his very first day in the group, choose to frame his question in this manner, using words that were likely to put the powers-that-be on the defensive? While I cannot be entirely sure why he made the

choices he describes, it seems safe to suggest that he is operating in the realm of what Micciche calls the "context of disappointment" within the academy, and that the bitterness and cynicism with which he tells this story evolves, at least in part, out of an emotional response to the exploitation he has felt as a part-time faculty member whose level of expertise and experience has not been acknowledged in a manner he finds satisfactory.

In *The System of Professions*, Andrew Abbot maintains that early sociological definitions suggest that professions are comprised of experts who 1) apply specialized knowledge, 2) are trained and credentialed, and 3) operate in accordance with certain rules (4). Eliot Friedson, in *Professional Powers*, adds to these three conditions a fourth: he argues that autonomy is also a key element of professional work and that those who consider themselves experts believe in the value of their work and formulate work ethics based on specific notions of "how work should be performed and of what work is interesting and worthy of their training" (170). One of Bill's unstated critiques, it seems to me, is about what he perceived to be a lack of autonomy in the workplace; in other words, he chafed at not being allowed to have a voice in how the workshop groups were structured and in assessing the efficacy of those required group meetings. Given his credentials—a PhD in Composition and Rhetoric—it is not surprising that, despite his part-time status, he might have expected to be treated as a professional, worthy of some of the autonomy and agency that supposedly comes with credentialing and expertise. Yet, it is, at least to some degree, his part-time status that impedes his autonomy in the writing program; as he sees it, he is unfairly lumped in with all part-timers, regardless of credentials and experience, and required to attend meetings that he does not deem worthy of his time. For Bill, the mandatory group meetings undermined the sort of autonomy he felt entitled to in the workplace; at the very least, he wanted some voice in determining what kinds of support he needed and when that support would be most useful to him.

From the point of view of a WPA, however, a writing program that relies on large numbers of part-time and non-tenure track faculty must provide some means of maintaining and ensuring consistency across the many writing sections taught. Given their accountability to others (students, faculty they supervise, colleagues, and other administrators), it is nearly impossible to grant full autonomy to part-time teachers working within the program, even for those who have been around for many years or who have credentials and experience in the field. While professional development meetings certainly serve to immerse new part-time faculty in the goals, philosophies, and pedagogies of the program, they can also, as Bill suggested, serve as a kind of "surveillance" tool, allowing WPAs (or others who facilitate these

meetings) to gain insights about what individual teachers are actually doing in the classroom. The problem, of course, is that despite a WPA's best intentions, such insights about consistency and pedagogy are sometimes gained at the expense of instructors who feel alienated by the process. The obvious question is about how to strike a balance, or perhaps more accurately, how to make sense of the relationship between the consistency a WPA strives for in a writing program and the level of autonomy granted to part-time and non-tenure track faculty who teach in these programs. Rather than set up a dichotomy that implies that programmatic consistency is reliant on the withdrawal of autonomy from part-time and non-tenure track faculty, it seems more fruitful to consider ways that the granting of autonomy throughout a program might ultimately contribute to its overall success.

In Bill's case, I want to suggest he might have become more of a "team player" if he had been given more options. For instance, if the administrators had responded more positively to his request for an "open dialogue," would he have opted to become a part of the team? Would he, for instance, have felt differently about attending the meetings if he had been given a choice about which meetings were more relevant to him? Would he have been more open to active participation if he had been given some voice in group membership and mentoring possibilities? Would he have responded in a more constructive manner if he had been made to feel (somehow) that his expertise was respected within the program? If funding had been available for professional support such as conferences and workshops, would Bill have been interested in participating? While these questions are speculative, I contend that they offer a sound place from which to start exploring how WPAs, despite bureaucratic limitations, might begin to assess and attend to issues of inequity and "disappointed hope" amongst the many writing instructors we employ. In my view, autonomy and agency for part-time and non-tenure track faculty are key to the long-term success of writing programs. Indeed, these two factors—autonomy and agency—contribute more to the quality of one's teaching than most professional development meetings because without them, one's sense of self as a teacher can be severely undermined. And, when that occurs, the "disappointed hope" that Bill exudes throughout his narrative is likely to become an insidious but powerful force working against the best intentions of even the best programs.

MANAGERIAL CONTROL AND THE ACCRUAL OF CAPITAL IN A WRITING PROGRAM

If we believe what Bill tells us about his first staff meeting—his question about "surveillance," his suspicions about the (c)overt function of the workshop meetings—then, it seems clear that he entered this particular part-time

faculty position as a writing instructor bearing the kind of "disappointed hope" Micciche describes. Nowhere in Bill's narrative do we get a sense that he ever believed in the efficacy of the staff development program offered. Throughout, his tone is one of derision, scorn, and disdain for those in power, particularly the administrators and mentors, who, in his view, simply "dragged the underpaid, overworked people into the office once a week" and "kept the adjuncts virtually hopping with gratuitous demands and requirements which [. . .] assured their own longevity." Part of Bill's resistance to participating in the meetings seems to stem from his belief that they served no meaningful purpose; indeed, from his perspective, the underlying yet unspoken function of the staff development program was simply to provide job security for a class of workers—mentors and administrators—whose positions granted them a small degree of power and status within the hierarchy of the writing program. In a sense, Bill played out his role in this scenario as if the script had been written for him in advance: he embodies the role of the embittered, under-employed, highly credentialed faculty member who is incensed at how his part-time status restricts his autonomy, agency, and sense of worth within the workplace. In my view, Bill's narrative (and others like his) offers yet another means by which WPAs can begin to learn from the scripts written by faculty in their own programs and to resist the worst effects of the proscribed roles we all find ourselves playing from time to time.

In Bill's view, the administrators and mentors rendered themselves invaluable by setting themselves up as gatekeepers who could effectively monitor and control the large numbers of part-time and non-tenure track faculty. Organizational theorist Gareth Morgan has argued that "by monitoring and controlling boundary transactions, people build up considerable power" in the workplace (167). For Bill, the gatekeeping mechanisms set up by the administrators served not only to reign in the part-timers but also to segregate them from the full-time faculty; in effect, if Morgan is correct, this kind of boundary-control, or segregation, among workers within a hierarchical system is one means of allowing some, but not others, to consolidate power.

Bill viewed the required weekly staff meetings, then, as an organizational tool that served, whether intentionally or not, to further separate the primary labor force (full-time faculty) from the secondary labor force (part-time faculty) through the use of middle management (administrators and mentors and their specific practices). With staff development required for TAs and part-time faculty but optional for full-time faculty, Bill's view of the program is that it simply sustained the notion that workplace autonomy be reserved only for those experts employed on a full-time basis. Regard-

less of whether or not Bill's perceptions about this particular program are accurate, his point about the impact of inequities and segregation amongst academic laborers inherent in these kinds of tiered systems is a valuable one. Given the "disappointed hope" with which many part-time faculty enter yet another part-time position, what might WPAs do to create the kind of open dialogue Bill requests? How might WPAs grant more autonomy in systems for which they are increasingly accountable for "outcomes"? How can WPAs change the scripts within particular scenarios? These are the questions I believe we need to be asking ourselves as WPAs, yet they are based on an assumption that WPAs will be operating from within (rather than without) the system in order to effect change.

Marc Bousquet poses a different set of questions (based on the assumption that change from within is near-impossible) in his article "Composition as Management Science: Toward a University without a WPA." Working within a Marxist framework of analysis, Bousquet suggests that the WPA is simply a low-level administrator, a "non-commissioned officer" whose "special task is to creatively theorize and enact procedures to the disadvantage of other workers" (498). Given their complicity with the academic institutions whose rewards they, too, seek, Bousquet suggests that the "heroic" WPA who sympathizes with the composition labor force and works toward building more full-time but non-tenure track lines within her/his program will never effect meaningful change at any level because s/he is simply too invested in the game as it has been defined by upper-level administrators. A large part of the problem, in his view, is that WPAs are unwilling to cede managerial control over the faculty, curricula, and pedagogy of their programs in part because that area of control might just be the ticket to further their own rewards within the system; further, he implies that the construction of the identity of the WPA is so closely linked to notions of control that it is simply not possible to disengage the two. Thus, he ultimately argues for ridding the university of WPA positions and practicing "social-movement unionism," large-scale change that would, in theory, transform the system and those within it. In his view,

the consciousness of "class" [inherent within social-movement unionism] would invoke an identity of interests based not on workplace disciplines [. . .] but on the common experience of selling one's labor in order to live and on the desire—widespread in the academy, but also common in many sectors of service work—to be "productive" for society rather than capital. (517)

Pierre Bourdieu's work is useful in understanding the complexity of the problem Bousquet so clearly identifies: how complicity with the system undermines real transformation. Bourdieu argues that fields (his term for all professions) are best understood as "structured space[s] of social forces and struggles" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 242-43). In his view, the field is like a living organism, constantly emerging and re-emerging out of the struggles that occur among inhabitants of that field. He depicts the field as a game which follows certain rules, most of which are not explicitly defined, and suggests that "players agree, by the mere fact of playing, and not by way of a 'contract,' that the game is worth playing, that it is 'worth the candle,' and this *collusion* is the very basis of their competition" (98). Struggles, and thus fields, emerge out of consensus among players about the value of playing the game. As the game changes, players draw on various "trump cards, master cards whose force varies depending on the game [. . .]" (98). Players in the game are dependent on both how much (volume) and what kind of (structure) capital is held at any given moment and how that capital might evolve over time. Although Bourdieu believes that players in the field conform to the unwritten rules and that they frequently reproduce the status quo of the game, he, unlike Bousquet, also believes that players can and do use their accumulated capital to transform the rules of the game and that over time, different kinds of capital can come to be valued. In his view, inhabitants of the field "have a propensity to orient themselves actively either toward the preservation of the distribution of capital or toward the subversion of the distribution" (108-9). When players attempt to subvert the distribution of capital, to disrupt the status quo, a space for change becomes possible.

Bill, despite the "disappointed disaffection" with which he enters the job described above, has invested himself in playing the game (for him, it is "worth the candle") even if he is not happy about all the various (written and unwritten) rules by which he has to play. Though a player in the game—one whose accumulated capital is quite limited by virtue of his position—he is critical of the ways he believes administrators and mentors use their accumulated social, cultural, and symbolic capital to consolidate their power (i.e., through increased managerial and bureaucratic control). In Bourdieuan terms, the administrators and mentors might be seen primarily as preservationists, attempting to maintain and reproduce the very little power they had accumulated within the bureaucratic system. While Bill might view himself as an outsider to that system, his stated willingness to play the game (up to a point) and to "remain a team player" if certain conditions were met might mark him, too, as a kind of quasi-preservationist, or at least as someone willing to accept a somewhat ambiguous role in maintaining the game. Bousquet, I believe, would view Bill—at least prior to his resignation—as yet one

more worker in the composition labor market who strives to get ahead in a system that is set up to segregate workers into preservationists of the very system that devalues them and their labor.

What, then, does Bill's resignation from the program really signify? Is it a move on his part to subvert the distribution of capital within this particular program, to call attention to the kinds of inequities workers suffer? To some degree, his decision to leave had the potential to render a once-familiar scene (for the WPAs, administrators, and mentors) unfamiliar: a taken-for-granted workplace structure in need of re-vision. In this regard, Bill's resignation might be read, in Bourdieuan terms, as a subversion narrative, the story of a part-time faculty member whose protest has the potential to subvert the distribution of capital within the system. On the other hand, according to the narrative, he attributes his resignation to "insufficient pay for the time and energy required of the job," making no mention of the key complaint articulated throughout his narrative: the inequitable and ineffective structure of the system. In my view, the omission of what seems to be his key complaint effectively enables the preservation of the very system he renounces because he fails to publicly cite the real shortcomings of the programmatic structure, as revealed in his narrative. Even so, and regardless of how one reads and responds to Bill's narrative, I contend that much can be learned from paying close attention to the nuanced concerns that drive Bill's story and its telling.

CONCLUSION

It is, of course, much simpler to criticize solutions that we do not believe will work than to come up with viable alternatives for change. While I lay no claim to large-scale solutions to the abuses of part-time labor in the academy, I contend that close readings of narratives like Bill's can help forge a path toward what Eileen E. Schell calls "academic citizenship," or the "responsibility to be informed [. . .] about academic labor issues" (119). Schell argues that becoming consciously aware of existing problems in our field—be it issues of part-time labor or the impact of (formal, informal, and/or emotional) structures on professional lives—is a first step toward fighting "the exploitation of part-time and nontenure-line faculty [through . . .] coalition-building and considered action" (*Gypsy Academics* 117). We cannot act on behalf of others or ourselves if we are not conscious of the complex range of issues facing our field, and in my view, workplace narratives like the one presented here offer a means of making sense of the nuances of workaday life for those whose primary labor occurs within writing programs. For WPAs, such

narratives can serve as a reminder of "what it's like to be managed" (Frank, cited in Bousquet, "Tenured Bosses" 231) and thus as a jump-start for the kind of coalition-building that we can help foster in writing programs.

A critic like Bousquet, however, might argue that such coalition-building from within an oppressive system will only reproduce oppression, that it is anathema to the kind of change desired. What would happen if we were to follow his suggestion to rid composition of the "bosses," the WPAs who have complicity with the system despite their best efforts to improve conditions for composition laborers? Would "*abolish*[ing] the WPA as part of a more general abolition of the scene of managed labor in the academy" (Bousquet, "Composition" 519) create the possibility for substantial change in the inequities of academic labor on the whole? While I do not believe Bousquet is suggesting that a simple solution exists—rid the university of WPAs and unfair academic labor practices will disappear—I find his political idealism and naivete about change in the academy somewhat troublesome. His critique of the role the WPA plays in preserving the status quo may come very close to the mark, yet his suggestion that composition simply re-tool itself on the model of "collegiality and self-governance that obtains elsewhere in the academy" ("Composition" 519) seems to offer little more than a schema for enabling composition to become "one of the gang" (Bousquet, "Composition" 502) of other academic disciplines.

In my view, modeling the governance structure of composition on that of other academic disciplines, none of which is necessarily known for its collegiality and fair labor practices, will do little to bring about real transformation for part-time faculty laboring in the academic workplace, and more specifically, in writing programs. Likewise, I contend that ridding the academy of WPAs will ultimately weaken the position from which those who strive for change can negotiate with upper-level administration. I agree with Keith Gilyard that

whenever we participate in the dominant discourse, no matter how liberally we may tweak it, we help to maintain it. Therefore, we are complicit in whatever that discourse accomplishes with respect to the unjust distribution of goods and services. Yet, not to engage in the dominant discourse may diminish some very real material possibilities for ordinary people struggling to do better. Obviously these are possibilities we should not oppose even if individual successes help to reify wider inequity. (268)

In other words, if WPAs simply opt out of the game, as per Bousquet's suggestion, then a more vulnerable position is created not only for WPAs themselves but for all those who work within writing programs: first, as Gilyard

suggests, we may limit the “material possibilities” for the many who work within our programs, and second, we reduce the potential for much-needed dialogue with university administrators about our concerns. Granted, such dialogue does not always manufacture desired results, but to render ourselves out of the game is, in my view, to vastly diminish the potential for any real re-distribution of capital or other substantive change.

If we trust Czarniawska’s suggestion that workplace narratives offer a means of making sense of organizational life, then it is useful to consider what, specifically, we might learn about our own workplaces and practices from a reading of Bill’s narrative. Through reading Bill’s narrative, I became particularly aware of how notions of expertise can play themselves out not only through the ways in which WPAs structure professional development in their programs but also in how WPAs encourage and/or discourage autonomy and agency among part-time and non-tenure-track faculty. Much can be gained, in my view, by the granting of autonomy and agency to the many part-time faculty on whose labor we so clearly rely. In Bill’s narrative account (whether we accept it as “truth” or not), for instance, instructors in the writing program might have valued professional development as an opportunity had they been offered more voice in the structure of the program itself (i.e., some leeway in deciding which meetings to attend and with whom they wanted to work). Likewise, given statistics on the low pay of part-time faculty, compensation for their time might have made a difference. In other words, an acknowledgement of their expertise and experience, in the form of agency, autonomy, and compensation could have offered a space for the re-distribution of capital. While Bill’s narrative is clearly a subjective and biased account, I believe that, although we have to understand the nuances of local circumstances, “inhabitants” of writing programs—administrators and all tiers of faculty—stand to benefit from a careful and honest examination of how notions of expertise get played out in the very structures of the programs that constitute our work lives.

The conscious act of examining narratives like Bill’s ensures, on some level, that WPAs never lose sight of the kind of “disappointed hope” and “destructive disaffection” Micciche so compellingly argues can be crippling not only to individuals (faculty and WPAs) within programs but to programs themselves. Like most organizations, writing programs might be viewed as a kind of Bourdieuan game where “players” are always maneuvering to either accumulate or redistribute the limited capital available. In this manner, those of us who play the game always find ourselves up against organizational and social structures that we do not so much choose as find ourselves living within; thus, the formations inherent in our work lives become deeply embedded in the plot, structure, and tone of the workplace

narratives we both live and speak. Bill's narrative is structured not only by his own identity as a player in the game and the identities of others who figure into the story but also by the web of social formations in which he finds himself tangled—to name but a few, the narrative history of composition into which he has been professionalized, the narrative of part-time labor abuses within the academy, and the narrative of disappointment as lived by the many well-credentialed faculty in composition whose expertise goes unrecognized. For Bill, opting out of the scenario he describes—refusing to play the game—is not a real possibility. The narrative, in a sense, and his next move as a player in the game has, to some extent, already been scripted for him, given the “context of disappointment” within the academy: as an underemployed but experienced PhD in composition, he will likely remain on the job market while simultaneously moving on to another program where local circumstances may differ but plot and narrative structures remain virtually the same.

If narratives like Bill's are a dime a dozen, what, then, is to be gained from reading them with such a careful eye? In my view, such narratives offer valuable opportunities for WPAs to become more informed about not only the economic issues affecting faculty in the field of composition but also about the emotional impact of long-standing exploitation on many of the part-time faculty working in writing programs. As Bousquet argues in “Tenured Bosses and Disposable Teachers,” it is not adequate to simply acknowledge complicity in an abusive system (233). Some complicity is simply a given whenever one is employed in an organization, yet as we work to hear the narratives of the inhabitants of writing programs we administer, we can carefully examine the ways that exploitation insinuates itself in aspects of our program that we may be able to control, in places where we may be able to negotiate some measure of change, some re-distribution of volume and structure of capital. Likewise, as Schell suggests, there are at least four possible actions that professional organizations and concerned administrators might consider:

converting nontenure-line positions to tenure-line ones (the conversionist solution), reforming and transforming the working conditions of existing nontenure-line faculty (the reformist solution), organizing unions and building coalitions among various professional organizations (the unionist/collectivist solution), and abolishing the required first-year writing course to reduce the overreliance on and exploitation of contingent faculty (the abolitionist solution). (*Gypsy Academics* 90-91)

Each of these proposed solutions has its own set of limitations, of course, and Schell argues that no one of these will sufficiently address the multifarious issues that are inextricably linked to the over-reliance on part-time labor in writing programs. Yet, with these in mind, and with a new attention to how emotion structures the narrative accounts of individual faculty and the cumulative accounts of life in the programs we administer, we can, in my view, gradually move toward the kind of “academic citizenship” that Schell suggests can lead to “considered action.”

NOTES

¹ This term is used by Eileen E. Schell in *Gypsy Academics and Mother-Teachers*.

² Excerpted from a longer narrative written in response to specific interview questions.

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