

RCI 3: Accountability: Negotiating Personal, Pedagogical, and Institutional Responsibilities

Submitted by Pauline Wakeham

Participants:

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Summary:

Our Research Cell explored the concept of "accountability" with regard to the task of negotiating the personal, pedagogical, and institutional responsibilities that faculty, sessional instructors, and graduate students negotiate in different and yet inter-related ways. Leslie Monkman argued that university workers need to actively re-think the ways that the category of "Canadian Literature" is circumscribed by course design, candidacy reading lists, and job positions. Leslie also focused attention on the dissolution of 2-tier hiring policies in 2003 and the ramifications for the hiring of Canadian graduate students. Joanne Saul attempted to recuperate the concept of "fieldwork" as a potential model for

practicing accountability and collaboration within and beyond the university. Recognizing the fraught traces of anthropology's fetishization of the native informant at stake in the concept of "fieldwork," Joanne argued that such traces can provoke us to vigilantly keep at the forefront "questions about agency, authority, and engagement, about place and placement" and "about the academic as 'expert'" that are crucial to thinking about interactions within the classroom and beyond. Aparna Mishra Tarc prompted us to return to the concept of reading and to consider it as an institutional practice that can be a tool of social oppression as well as one of social change. From this perspective, Aparna argued that accountability might be fostered through a re-reading of what it means to be human and what it means to be a human labourer within the institution. Finally, Rita Wong echoed Daniel Coleman's call for re-distributing resources within institutions and to transform dominant institutions by considering alternative models that are managing to effect social change.

In grappling with how to effect such forms of social change within the university and beyond, problematics surrounding the idea of work-time surfaced repeatedly. How do university workers and graduate students change the institution when the institution disciplines them through forms of temporal management? Where do students and teachers find time to do committee work, to work within the community, to challenge curricula and hiring policies when we are disciplined by a structure of temporality, a principle of work-time, that is measured by dominant discourses of knowledge production and research productivity? How might we disrupt such temporalities of academic labour?

Attempting to translate these questions into concrete recommendations, our cell formulated the following key points:

1. In order to effect institutional change, we need to first gain a clearer understanding of how academic institutions operate. To do so, we need to

recognize that institutional knowledge—that is, knowledge about how institutions work at departmental, faculty, university, and national levels—is an important body of knowledge that cannot be left to forms of tacit or informal modes of sharing and dissemination. Rather, it is the responsibility of university workers and learners to make access to this knowledge less opaque and to develop some formal systems for disseminating and reviewing it. It was suggested that information and critiques of the machinations of academic institutions and their administrative systems should be taught to graduate students in courses or seminars and that other forms of mentoring might be developed.

2. With regard to accountability in hiring practices and the professionalization and training of graduate students, it was recommended that academic workers demand greater transparency of the hiring practices of English departments across Canada and to collect statistics on the hiring of Canadian graduate students as well as the ways that graduate programs prepare their students for future participation as faculty members.
3. With regard to the problems surrounding work-time and its constraints for academic labourers who want to effect institutional change by working on university committees and/or within the community, it was recommended that faculty members create "service dossiers" modelled on the teaching dossier concept in order to record and recognize important forms of labour that are often rendered invisible in the systems of institutional recognition. [Note that an emphasis upon "research" is reinscribed in the rubric of the "research cell" itself.]
4. To foster more collaboration and dialogue between teachers, graduate students, and others, it was recommended that this conference's website might establish a digital archive of course syllabi and pedagogical practices for teachers to consult.

Recommendations / Key Points:

- knowing about how institutions work; how do we acquire that knowledge and how do we transmit it to our students (both graduate and undergraduate); how do we acquire institutional knowledge in order to make change?
- recognize that institutional knowledge is a body of knowledge that should be integrated into the institutional structure
- tacit knowledge needs to become implicated knowledge
- how should this be implemented?: formalize this as a course for graduate students, mentoring
- gather information/stats about hiring in the wake of the abolishment of the 2-tier policy; gain access to short-lists for hiring
- gather information on how does each department prepare its students for the job market?
- a conference website where people could send course outlines, pedagogical strategies, etc.; some kind of digital archive of these materials
- opening up the classroom to the public; making it a more public space
- strategies for valuing teaching and other forms of academic service
- re-define the concept of service; effecting change at the university level
- create dossiers that record service work; circulate a message to people in decision-making positions that this is very important; circulates information about what people are actually doing
- in Australia, the concept of service is subdivided into university service and community service
- collaboration in the form of information sharing; compiling data

Detailed Notes:

Leslie Monkman:

- 3 concepts: the university, the discipline, the sub-discipline

- ascendancy of the sciences at the expense of the humanities
- the university of excellence is a product of the ascendancy of the sciences
- theory wars are now being played out at the level of structure in the university
- cultural studies has emerged as a potential alternative model, but hasn't achieved institutional clout within the university
- wants to resist easy chronological models regarding the rise and fall of CanLit
- areas for discussion: (1.) the disciplinary containment of Canadian writing within our courses, programs, job categories, candidacy exam reading lists, departmental categories; (2.) the disconnect in praxis between Anglo-American theoretical dismissals of the nation-state as category and a post 9-11 academic nationalism in the U.S. and Europe (response to R. Cavell's argument regarding Canadian literature as an "artificial" rather than a "lived" literature); (3.) the evidence that less Canadian writing is being taught in Canadian secondary schools than was the case 20 years ago (we don't talk about the institution within the classroom enough; we could help to educate future teachers, etc.); (4.) the impact of the elimination of 2-tier advertising for academic appointments in Canada in 2003 (a call to engage at the local level).
- Christl Verduyn noted that hiring outside of Canada is not just happening at the faculty level but also for high-ranking administrative positions.
- **The link to concerns regarding citizenship: citizenship and hiring practices. International graduate students in Canadian universities also aren't getting hired in Canada.**

Joanne Saul:

- recuperating the concept of "fieldwork" for CanLit studies

- starting this project with a study of the writer-as-critic and the multiple subject positions they inhabits as writers, critics, teachers, academics, activists (NeWest Press series, Fred Wah, Daphne Marlatt)
- Daphne Marlatt's feminist poetics and their relation to broader cultural concerns
- a sense of community-building throughout Kamboureli's writer-as-critic series; conversations going on between texts; a kind of intertextual and cross-textual dialogue
- how do those of us who are not writer-critics get involved in "research sites" (a concept of collaborative space theorized by Pauline Butling)? How can we develop such collaborative networks?
- a call to re-define the boundaries of the classroom to include or interact with other cultural spaces; and also to open up the classroom to the public
- **Christl Verduyn raised the problem of time and how it disciplines us to not communicate**
- **Donna Pennee raised the term "fieldwork's" association with the idea of the "native informant"; we need to think about who we bring into the classroom and how we do it as well as the risks and possibilities associated with it.**
- **Donna Pennee also noted the desire for university workers to feel "authentic"; there's something missing from peoples' work lives right now. We need to consider the materiality of the job and the materiality of all the apparatuses we bring in to make our jobs better.**
- **Christl Verduyn pointed out the damage that the emphasis on research has done to pedagogy and committee work. We have a personal accountability to tip that balance back to where it should have been. Donna Pennee argues that we have a personal responsibility to use terms other than "teaching release" or**

"teaching relief" due to the connotations and assumptions bound up in them.

- **Leslie Monkman noted that the President of the MLA calls for a broadening of the concept of "service."**
- **Temporality and the disciplining of institutional subjects; no time; how do we make time/find time?**
- **Aruna Srivastava said the terminology of "research cells" neglects the idea of pedagogy.**

Aparna:

- wants to draw attention to the work of affect; begins the paper by a reference to her own learning-to-read process and how she learned to read through her mother's sorrow
- philosophy, poetry, pedagogy: structures of thinking, feeling, and teaching
- wants to theorize reading and literacy as an institutional practice and as an institution in itself
- reading as a many-stranded textile; as a site for educational inquiry; as a practice of pedagogy, agency, colonization, oppression, social change, and justice
- how we read and our methodology surrounding it is as important as what we read
- reference to Peggy Kamuf's "The Ends of Reading"
- the work of literary studies should be how to teach us how to read the world differently
- reading is an experimental form of action that can lead to sustained acting in the world
- a proposal to re-name English departments according to the rubric of "literary studies"

- Aparna contends that the rubric of "literary studies" shifts focus away from studying literary texts according to "periods" (i.e. "Renaissance" or "Victorian") or "areas" (i.e. "Canadian" or "American") and towards an approach that interrogates its own methodology.
- the mere inclusion of literatures of difference is not enough; need to interrupt educational mandates and to forge a literal re-reading of what it means to be human
- need to re-think the practice of literacy
- we need to re-read our institutions according to a different order of being, a different recognition and understanding of what it means to be human
- **Donna Pennee said you can't just add something to change the structure; we need to re-think Canadian Literature as an institution before we create another institution**
- **Aruna Srivastava talked about how the teacher feels the need to be liked; why do we try to contain conflict within the classroom? Why does being a good teacher mean containing conflict and producing a kind of closure and coverage in the classroom?**
- **Donna Pennee introduced the idea of classroom mediation rather than classroom management.**

Rita:

- echoes Daniel Coleman's call to re-distribute resources within academic institutions and beyond
- "Define Indian" conference at Emily Carr; looks at misidentifications of Aboriginal and South Asian peoples
- "Interdisciplinary Forms": a new course at Emily Carr College that is open to the public and that allows students from different disciplines to dialogue and interact

- if the classroom is open to the public, there is less fear of the native informant being brought in; the space becomes multi-layered
- the classroom needs to be re-occupied and re-deployed by those it attempts to assimilate
- the Intra-Nation project: 1st event was a conference at Emily Carr
- the concept of nations within nations can create new spaces of change
- labour and the equity committee: considering both students and faculty
- How does one argue for much needed ESL programs and services to be systemically integrated into the institution without feeding racist assumptions regarding non-native English speakers and/or reinstating oppressive standards?
- What kinds of arguments can be made that the practice of charging international students two and a half times the tuition of Canadian citizens is inequitable?
- **Julia Emberley drew attention to Rita Wong's intent to look at alternative institutional formations that are working more effectively.**