Academic zombies

A failure of resistance or a means of survival?

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Successive waves of neoliberal reforms to higher education have taken their toll on the academy. This paper uses the zombie metaphor to discuss the causes and consequences of organisational change on Australian academics as a background to exploring zombiefication as a form of passive resistance and survival. The paper uses the literature and empirical research to chronicle the disintegration of the academic workforce and with it, the idea of a university as a social institution. The paper concludes with the author's reflection of her own desire to be emancipated from zombiedom.

Universities are increasingly populated by the undead: a listless population of academics, managers, administrators, and students, all shuffling to the beat of the corporatist drum.... In this bleak landscape the source of the zombie contagion lurks in the form of bland, mechanical speech .... peppered with affectless references to citation indices, ERA rankings, ARC applications, FoR codes, AUQA reviews, and the like. ...Many zombies appear incapable of responding meaningfully to the tyranny of performance indicators, shifting promotion criteria, escalating workload demands and endless audits, evaluations and reviews. Try as they may to resist, zombies merely acquiesce to the corporatist line (Gora & Whelan, 2003).

Zombies are the living dead, the undead. The term is figuratively applied to describe a 'hypnotised person bereft of consciousness and self-awareness, yet ambulant and able to respond to surrounding stimuli' (Wikipedia). This paper was inspired by a forthcoming book edited by Andrew Whelan, Chris Moore and Ruth Walker, 'Zombies in the Academy: Living Death in Higher Education', the title of which struck accord with my own research and observation. Applying the zombie metaphor to academics and their response to change seems most apt given our apparent helplessness in the face of overwhelming change. However, the real question is why have we allowed this to happen and what are we doing about it. Thus the aim of the paper is to explore adaptation and resistance to zombiedom. The paper proceeds with an overview of

academic resistance to change before reviewing the main sources of zombiefication: governance; audit; workload; workforce; and an acquiescent leadership. Forms of adaptation and resistance are then examined and exemplified with research results. The final section explores future options for dealing with the next wave of reform and concludes zombiedom as a form of resistance to change may be the only but not the optimal option.

Academic resistance and change

Academics, more than other professional groups, could be expected to reflect on their situation, take a view, and take action if necessary (Trowler, 1998). There is no dearth of complaints about what is happening in higher education (Lorenz, 2012; Parker, 2012; Parker & Guthrie, 2010), however, over the past one and a half decades research and commentary suggests that academic resistance is weak, generally relying on individual withdrawal rather than organised action (Anderson, 2008; Parker & Jary, 1995; Willmott, 1995). Among the first to consider the academic response to winds of neoliberal change, Willmott (1995, p. 1002) notes that the erosion of wages, conditions and discretion only managed to generate 'simmering resentment and individual withdrawal from unmonitored responsibilities rather than organised resistance'. The reasons for this are not always clear. Parker and Jary (1995) explain it in

terms of academics gaining a greater sense of worth from their students and peers than from management while Willmott (1995) links lack of organised resistance to academics considering themselves 'professional' and 'above' industrial action that in any case is 'rarely disruptive'. Lack of academic resistance is further accorded to ignorance of what is happening, academics being 'ill equipped to interpret the significance of change' let alone resist government funding and 'the management of higher education' (Willmott, 1995, p. 1023). Individual withdrawal is most often in the 'invisible' but 'highly meaningful and valued activities such as close and continuous staff-student interaction' (Willmott, 1995, p. 1013) as well as the 'service' areas of academic work.

More recently, in a study of resistance among Australian academics, Anderson (2008) finds that individual withdrawal is the most common form of resistance and also an effective means of protecting values and identity. Respondents in Anderson's research were angered by managerial discourse and practices but generally refused to engage with them, preferring to complain to trusted colleagues, or refusing or avoiding participation in managerial directives. At best, academics would minimise their involvement, complying with the letter, but not the spirit, of particular requirements.

Student evaluation processes and performance appraisals were frequently mentioned as examples of minimal compliance. Subversive participation in performance appraisals often involved the cooperation of supervisors who themselves saw the process as a 'joke' (Benmore, cited in Anderson, 2008). On the few occasions that Anderson's participants publicly voiced their complaints to senior academic managers, their experience was one of feeling 'dismissed and erased and reminded of their disempowerment' (Anderson, 2008, p. 259). Anderson concludes that the resistance, although individual, is sufficient to prevent managerialism from becoming embedded because it is framed by an understanding of academic culture and values that attempt 'to limit the process of colonisation implicit in the managerial project' (Anderson, 2008, p. 267). In other words, zombiefication is a form of both resistance and survival. Others, however, are not so optimistic believing that long term exposure to the worst of managerialism and measurement ultimately ends with compliance or exit. The following section reviews the worst of 'managerialism and measurement', the sources of zombiefication.

Sources of zombiefication

Over the past three decades, Australian higher education has experienced four major waves of change and is now undergoing a fifth. The four waves of government induced policy and funding reform included massification during the 1980s, marketisation in the early 1990s, corporatisation in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and a fourth wave from 2003 to 2007 marked by increased managerialism, greater efficiencies, compliance, quality and research measurements (Ryan, Guthrie & Neumann, 2008). We are now into a new wave of change, marked by an uncapped student system, a powerful watchdog, TEQSA, and a second generation of Excellence in Research Australia (ERA), all accompanied by even more external and internal measurement, surveillance and control over universities and their academic workforce. Each successive wave has brought with it increased political and economic steering through what Habermas (1984) refers to as the mechanisms of 'bureaucratisation' and 'monetarisation', managerialism and money.

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The success of these mechanisms in 'reforming' higher education is seen in the current 'crisis of authoritarianism' (Giroux 2006), a crisis engendering fear so that fear becomes a form of paralysis, of zombiedom. Just as the government applies 'bureaucratisation' and 'monetarisation' to steer institutions, so in turn institutional managers apply the same mechanisms to control their institutions (Marginson & Considine, 2000). Five major causes of zombiefication arising from the internal application of these mechanisms are identified, in cause-effect order, as: governance; audit and surveillance; workload, workforce; and the acquiescence of academic leadership.

Governance

The long held concept of 'shared governance' has been undermined by former colleagues, now managers and executives, who have replaced taking the advice of academic bodies with a preference to treat the academic voice with lip service, a necessary inconvenience (Aronowitz, 2006). The appointment rather than election of academic 'leaders' combined with their Key Perfor-

mance Indicators and bonuses, have stifled the collective voice of academics and reduced them to workers instructed from above (Aronowitz, 2006; Pritchard & Willmott, 1997). This is a downward spiralling process whereby the more compliance academics demonstrate with these disempowering processes, the stronger the power imbalance between academics and managers, and the less interested managers become in empowering faculty (Aronowitz, 2006). 'A lot of top managers enjoy cruelty. There's no doubt that we are in a period in which you are a hero if you are cruel' (Schartz & Kelly, 2005, p. 109). Of course not all our managers are cruel; some are benevolent dictators, themselves the victims of orders from above. But if academics fail to cooperate voluntarily, then managers resort to more authoritarian measures to gain compliance. Reports of bullying and harassment are increasing within the academy, their spread being linked to the rise of managerialism, increased financial pressures and the increasing numbers of academics at the bottom of the power ladder: the casuals, the probationers, the post-doctoral and the contract academics (Cox & Goodman, 2005; Thornton, 2004; Lewis, 1999). Although such victimisation is the beginning of fear, the onset of zombiefication, the real arsenal in colonising the academy are the accountability measures supplied to university managers by successive governments.

Audit and surveillance

It is in the changing rules and the measurement regimes that we are most zombiefied, infected by measurement madness, the audit culture, surveillance. The expression, 'evidence-based', usually reserved for scientific and research endeavours, has been thrown back at academics in the guise of accountability requirements (Shahjahan, 2011). The effect of the contagion is widespread as it reduces 'students to test scores, future slots in the labour market .... and teachers to technicians and supervisors in the education assembly line... [it] is fundamentally about the negation of human agency, despite the good intentions of individuals at all levels' (Lipman cited in Shahjahan, 2011, p. 196). The discourse that defines evidence-based accountability, words such as impact, learning outcomes, teaching evaluations, is 'ultimately shaped by material relations of power that are colonising' in their effect as they strive to 'control and tame education .....to meet neoliberal ends' (Shahjahan, 2011, p. 197). Students and academics are rushed through these standardising processes in a way that leaves little time for 'reflection, authenticity, and healing' (Shahjahan 2011, p. 197). The consequences of academic work being subjected to

'routine diagnosis, classification and treatment decisions' are sinister and Orwellian (McWilliam, 2004, p. 156) or even 'occult' (Wood, 2010), they are deadening, zombifying. Consequences of surveillance by audit are cited as a major cause of stress among academics. Indeed, academics are increasingly viewed as a highly stressed population whose work and identity are being disfigured by the 'unwillingness or inability of managers to protect [them] from the chill winds' of decreased funding and increased audit (McWilliam, 2004, p. 161). As the tidiness of the audit imperative triumphs over the messiness of academic life, we become more and more undead. Nor is it possible to hide. To sit outside the performance culture is to cease to be recognised or valued (McWilliam, 2004), to be further deadened by exclusion. In addition to being deadly weapons, audit and surveillance increase the time and pressures on academic work.

Workloads

Under the burden of increased student numbers and diversity, supervision of contingent academics and pressures to research while all the time being measured and ranked, academic workloads have become unmanageable. Metaphors of dying from workload underline the zombie status: 'swamped', 'drowning', 'head above water', 'buried' (Jacobs, 2004). Burgeoning academic workloads are crossing the line from being simply 'productivity' increases to becoming occupational health and safety risks (Hull, 2006; McWilliam, 2004). Increasingly the appeal of control over time is being outweighed by the lack of control over workload and decision making. New technologies have the effect of intensifying work but not reducing it (Jacobs 2004). A fundamental change in the nature of academic work has been large increases in the proportion of time spent of administration (Tight, 2010).

The growth in expenditure on administration and administrators has been noted in Australia (Dobson, 2009; 2010) and throughout the world, a growth that Tight (2010, p. 214) views as indicative of 'the decreasing trust in academics'. The 'administrative bloat' phenomenon is a direct consequence of neoliberalist demands that institutions be entrepreneurial, market-orientated, cost-effective and most of all, accountable (Hogan, 2011). Paradoxically, the greater presence of administrators has burdened rather than freed academics from administration as their work becomes increasingly 'unbundled' (Macfarlane, 2011a), a process whereby academic work is taken apart and given to others. In particular decision-making powers to do with curriculum, entry standards, and student advice are surrendered to professional administrators

(Hogan, 2011). Without understanding what is happening and in an attempt to manage our workloads, we inadvertently begin to develop and dispute among ourselves 'fair' and 'transparent' workload allocation models, instruments that allow work to be further scrutinised, measured, and controlled (Hull, 2006). Does our active collusion in undermining our own interests indicate the depth of zombiefication to which we have sunk, or is it simply a symptom of a stressed and shrinking workforce?

Workforce

Just as workload and work life have changed, so too has our workforce. The two waves of reform since the 1990s were particularly harsh on the composition of the academic workforce. Not only are we growing old because we haven't been replaced for a generation and a half (Hugo & Morris, 2010; Hugo, 2008), but we have become casualised, contingent, insecure, invisible. It is estimated that for every full-time academic, there are almost two casual or sessionally employed academics (May, 2011) and further, that 50 per cent of all teaching is carried out by this army of contingently employed academics (Percy & Beaumont, 2008).

What does this mean? Firstly, the workload of permanently employed academics has increased, 'the exploitation of part-timers is linked to the excessive demands on full-timers' (Jacobs, 2004, p. 15). Second, full-time academics have been cushioned from the more unpleasant effects of change by an 'underclass' of contingent academics. The expansion of this underclass 'has offered tenured academics short term relief from the degradation of their work' (Willmott, 1995, p. 1003). Additionally, career paths have been blocked. Despite the long queue of contingently and precariously employed academics such as qualified sessionals, higher degree and post-doctoral students, banging on the door to gain entry into zombieland, the door remains resolutely bolted (Edwards, Bexley & Richardson, 2011; Coates & Goedegebuure, 2010).

Why they wish to enter this half world is a curious matter, open only to conjecture, not evidence: perhaps as an escape from insecurity? Perhaps passion for a potential promise of free thought? We really don't know. We do know, however, that for those with a foot in the door, the post docs and probationers, there is pain. The hurdles to entry are continually revised upwards, a doctoral qualification is no longer sufficient, publications in the 'right' journals are becoming mandatory, the door keeps squeezing closed. For those of us already in zombieland, our careers our being divided by mysterious means into teaching or research, thus increasing the burden for both functions on

a shrinking permanent workforce. Despite these dramatic changes in the nature of the academic workforce, our institutional leaders remain silent. There are no succession plans to replace the elderly nor new entry points for the young (Larkin & Neumann, 2011; Neumann & Larkin, 2011). Many of those waiting to enter academe are the same age as those about to exit (Ryan, Bhattacharyya & McNeil, 2011). However, within this squeeze on entry and progression, the proportion of the professoriate, our academic leaders, not managers, has grown (May, 2011). But what has it done to resist?

Acquiescent academic leadership

The idea of a university and the values it incorporates are crumbling. The idea that a university should be a place 'in which nothing is beyond question, not even the current and determined figure of democracy' (Derrida, 2001, p. 253) means the university should be a site of resistance and challenge in which the academic's role is 'not to consolidate authority, but understand, interpret, and question it' (Giroux, 2006, p. 75). This happens privately among academics but our voices rarely go beyond the hallowed halls of academe. Why is this? In a self-reflection on the failure of the professoriate to lead the movement against malevolent change, Barney (2010, p. 382) asks what might it take 'to rescue the institution from its final instrumentalisation under the auspice of technological neoliberalism and to instead orient it toward…the humanistic ideal'. His answer lies in the necessity of political intervention in the form of active resistance led by the professoriate, but he then goes on to explain why this will never happen. First, the very nature of politics is a deterrent. Engagement in politics is 'exceptional, disruptive, antagonistic, risky and dangerous …. it is not joyful, festive, or fun; it is work, onerous, dangerous work' (p. 383). Second, the professoriate enjoys the university, including the suffering and pain necessarily endured as a consequence of being part of the university.

> There is nothing that an academic enjoys more than their suffering: careerist students who can't read and can't write and can't think; colleagues who are lazy and insufferable; granting agencies that are biased against our work; incompetent, corrupt, bean counting administrators; governments run by philistines. We enjoy them all. We could not live without them. Our suffering is what distinguishes us (Barney, 2010, p. 384).

Political action and resistance would not only disrupt this enjoyment but threaten an obsession with personal security defined by the 'reliability of our conventional identities, relationships, responsibilities, and rewards' (p. 385). The third and final barrier to professorial resistance

is the fear of insecurity that leads the professoriate to become 'pragmatic calculators who weigh the potential costs of resistance and action against its uncertain benefits and decide the risks are too great to bear next to the certainty of an anaemic, but at least stable, present' (p. 386). Barney concludes that, in view of these three obstacles and in order to assuage guilt, professors' customary response is to 'retreat into the consolation of thought ..... a retreat into enlightenment' (p. 386). In doing so, they provide a role model for individual withdrawal, zombiedom, as the means to survival within the academy. A kinder view of the professoriate is presented by Macfarlane (2011b) as he depicts the professoriate as the victim of disempowerment by mechanisms of bureaucratisation and monetarisation, processes that undermine their ability and opportunity to lead.

Adaptation and resistance

When academic culture is weakened and shared beliefs are seriously threatened, 'the result can be destructive conflicts between faculties, loss of personal morale and personal alienation' (Dill, 1982, p. 304). Like politics, most of us want to avoid such consequences and so we can be persuaded to accept new organisational values and identities if we understand them as perpetuating what had previously given meaning and a 'sense of distinctiveness to [our] working environment (and so feed into [our] sense of identity)' (Henkel, 2005, p. 159). This process is explained by Bleiklie (2005, p. 200) as a process of 'sedimentation' whereby 'new ideals are layered on top of existing ones' in a form of organic growth that absorbs new values without shedding the old. He argues that institutional and individual autonomy previously sustained each other so that institutional autonomy was necessary to 'allow the maturation and promotion of values. Institutional autonomy is not found in specific administrative arrangements, but in how the institution functions to protect its values. In the past, the focus was internal and the collegial body was the means of functioning, including negotiating conflicts between individual and institutional autonomy. Once the institution begins to serve the needs of external stakeholders such as government and industry, both institutional and individual autonomy are circumscribed by the needs of others and value shifts occur.

Current imperatives to commodify teaching, to commercialise research had no part in the traditional academic value set but are now a part of our daily discourse. Because new values are not clearly articulated, the change cannot be said to have been radical, rather

is has occurred through a process of sedimentation, the speed of which affects various groups within the university differently.

Evidence for Bleiklie's concept of sedimentation as a response to change is found in De Zilwa's (2007) study of the impact of academic unit culture on adaptive change to external and internal pressures in Australia. De Zilwa found different academic units adapted in different ways and to different extents to external pressure. However, those units most pro-active in their adaptation, the professional, multidisciplinary and heterogeneous units, had changed their modes of operation and developed new markets in teaching and research. Although these units displayed cultures encouraging of 'intellectual fervour, innovation, flexibility [and] risk-taking' (De Zilwa, 2007, p. 571), they were also most aligned to the university goals with natural markets for the development of research and teaching. On the other hand, academic units least able to adapt were those with strongly homogeneous organisational cultures but lacking in their managers' 'zeal for marketisation and entrepreneurialism' (p. 571) and were completely reliant on student fees. Both types of units were conscious of conflicts arising from the university's drive for revenue and the unit's desire to maintain quality and standards in addition to the general lack of trust between university managers and academic units. Results from De Zilwa's study suggest that those in the interdisciplinary units and the professional fields found adaptation easier than those in the more traditional discipline-based units who were more likely to ignore or resist change. But for how long will this distinction continue as the mania for market and money is overlaid with more recent imperatives to publish?

My own research reflects the findings of De Zilwa, at least in the pre-2003 environment. But I also found that adaptation could not be sustained following the fourth and most brutal wave of reform. I interviewed 21 academics about their lives and values in three graduate schools of business in 2002/2003 and the same individuals again in 2008 in the wake of the fourth wave of reform. For ethical reasons, the three schools were combined into the one school, under the pseudonym, the Australian Graduate School of Business (AGSB). The results for the two periods were stunningly different. I used storytelling based on the average participant's story to present the results in a way that would touch a nerve with readers (Ryan, 2010). The story opens with senior lecturer, Bill, the average participant, living a busy but contented life within a strong collegial but entrepreneurial school whose success is a direct result of earlier changes to the higher education system.

His view of life responds well to De Zilva's adaptive academic units, he was riding the crest of an entrepreneurial wave, enjoying the excitement and inclusion of breaking new barriers in interdisciplinarity (Ryan & Neumann, 2011) and entrepreneurialism (Ryan & Guthrie, 2009). In the subsequent five to six years, Associate Professor Bill, as he had become, is increasingly unhappy and detached as his institution's managerialism increasingly affects his everyday life and identity. While marketisation and corporatisation initially allowed Bill to live an exciting academic life, the fourth wave of change, managerialism and micro-management, signalled the end to excitement, instead challenging his values and identity. The following extract from the story of Bill in 2008 demonstrates his decline into zombiedom.

> On the subject of academic managers, Bill no longer believes that the AGSB culture is stronger than the deans that pass through it. In recent years there has been a high turnover of deans, some were on the side of the University and trying to bring the AGSB under control while others fought against University control. Either way, the University management won out, with or without the help of the deans. The AGSB culture was forced to change as so many of its academics abandoned ship, including the deans who had fought to maintain its autonomy. Collegiality and entrepreneurialism no longer come to mind when Bill describes the new culture. He now uses words like alienated, disengaged, and transactional. Although still valuing the freedom over what and how he teaches and researches and uses his time, Bill has lost his feeling of ownership and belonging toward to the AGSB, withdrawing into his own work and world. The obsession with making money and measuring publications has undermined his understanding of 'quality' in teaching and research and intensified his cynicism of official versions of 'quality'. The departure of colleagues along with changes to governance structures altered the School's culture to the point where Bill feels like a factory employee rather than an academic colleague. The passion for his School has turned to indifference. Despite his continual search for a new position outside the AGSB, Bill is held back from ever following through with an application. In the back of his mind rings the comment of former colleagues that it's not very different elsewhere, it's just that the pain of change came earlier in other places so it is easier to get on with life (Ryan 2010, p. 11).

As can be seen from this extract, exit was a common strategy for dealing with unwanted change, followed by individual withdrawal. Of the original 21 academics in my study, only four remained in the same school in 2011, albeit in larger, merged business schools. Initially, adaptation suited this multidisciplinary professional school but eventually the level of sedimentation reached a limit, a limit no longer tolerable without resort to becoming undead, zombiefied. But once undead, where do we go to from here?

Options for dealing with future change

Right now we stand on the brink of a new wave of reform. We can expect more students, more diverse students, more competition, more audits, more performance based funding, more ERA, more pathways, more private providers, more work, more unbundling of our work. But can we expect more academics? More casually employed academics, yes indeed; otherwise the new reforms are silent on the academic workforce. So what are our options? adapting? awakening? leaving? or withdrawing further in zombiedom? Possibilities of adaptation or conversion to the current round of change are offered in the form of development, either individual self-development and/or the development of agile leadership. Since the mid-1990s, the commencement of our steepest decent into zombiedom, our institutions have offered us the salvation of self-development courses and workshops, opportunities to adapt to change better. We are given workshopping opportunities to learn how to teach, to present, to write, to count, to supervise, to research, to resolve conflicts, to manage our time, our stress, our health, and finally, to even apply for promotion (McWilliam, 2004). Given it takes an average of ten years to prepare for an academic career (Coates & Goedegebuure, 2010), these workshops present as somewhat redundant or simply therapeutic (McWilliam, 2004). In any case, we have little time to indulge in these 'adaptation' exercises.

Agile leadership and organisation is an alternative to facilitate adaptation. Indeed for some, the resurrection of the zombie will come through 'agile' leadership and organisation, leaders who are not only flexible but go a step further to be dynamic and proactive in the face of ever changing landscapes (Billot & Codling, 2011). The term 'agility', once reserved for the manufacturing sector has found its way into education. Rules, regulations, traditions and hierarchies are an anathema to the 'agile' company that is instead 'robust, resilient, responsive, flexible, innovative, and adaptable' (Gillies, 2011, p. 210). Ironically, corporatisation of higher education has had the effect of turning universities into machine bureaucracies, factories, Fordist production lines, the very antithesis of the supposedly 'agile' organisation (Parker & Jary, 1995; Pritchard & Willmott, 1997). Structural obstacles aside, the rhetoric of 'agile leadership' relies on a workforce whose agility comes from fear, insecurity and an absence of ethos (Gillies, 2011). Hence, rather than be resurrected by 'agility',

academics risk being further deadened by it, but then again, perhaps this is the plan. More optimistically, the discourse of agility is simply a means of 'fabricating and representing, of constructing that which it wishes to see' (Gillies, 2010, p. 211), an illusion. Its false promise as a form of adaptation is too transparent, even for a fearful academic.

Our second option for dealing with the future is to 'voice' our frustrations, to resist collectively, to go beyond whinging among ourselves in the corridors and conferences, and speak out to broader and more powerful audiences. Aside from the odd industrial dispute over wages, we have generally avoided this form of resistance, however there are some small signs of change. The economists are beginning to stir, finally realising that having contributed to the current state of higher education; they have used the wrong model and rectification is required. They are at last turning their theories to the failures of higher education and more importantly they are gaining the attention of the public media (Bennett, 2011). The media is important, especially if the public is sympathetic. During the previous two decades of severe change, most of us believed what the politicians told us, there were no votes in higher education, nothing to be gained by investing in rather than controlling the system (Aronowitz, 2006; Willmott, 1995). That may have changed. A recent survey of the Australian public shows concern about what it perceives as a deterioration of an important social institution, higher education (NTEU, 2011). Such concern provides an important audience for our voice, if we can use it. Collective action through industrial disputation over pay claims has rarely met with public sympathy; however, the public might feel better disposed if industrial action were centred on our health, on issues of occupational health and safety arising from workload (Trounson, 2011) and issues around ensuring a sustainable higher education system. Unhealthy zombies are not good for business, so governments and university managements might just be open to hearing about cures. Overall, the possibilities of the 'voice' option being exercised on any large scale are slim but as Gora and Whelan (2010) point out, 'pockets of resistance' will continue: 'the most curious aspect of this zombie plague is not its devastating effects on those who stagger through the intellectual rubble but the pockets of resistance that it fails to quash'.

The exit option, leaving the academy, is an interesting one. On one hand, escapes from zombieland are difficult except through retirement (Dany, Louvet & Valette, 2011). On the other hand, there are more exits than there are entries into the permanent academic workforce (Hugo,

2005) which would tend to indicate a diminishing future for the profession, an unwillingness to replenish the workforce with anything else but contingent labour. This in turn begs the question of whether the younger generation of academics is an accepting product of the new system or able to recognise and resist its failures. Archer (2008a; 2008b), in a rich but limited study, finds young academics to be fully aware of and resistant to the deleterious effects of managerialism on their behaviour and health. Unfortunately their resistance takes the same form as their older colleagues, withdrawal. Despite this knowledge, large scale surveys inexplicably suggest tens of thousands of higher degree students and contingent academics (Edwards *et al.*, 2010; Junor, 2004), want to enter the profession on a permanent basis. Hence, for each exit, the long queue of contingent academics provides but another opportunity for further casualising the profession. As an option for dealing with change, exit is simply a form of individual escape, a form that exacerbates rather than addresses the underlying issues.

Thus we are left with the fourth, final, and ongoing option, ever greater individual withdrawal into zombiedom. But just how effective is this strategy? Gora and Whelan, (2010) see zombiefication as a possible means of survival, but not necessarily change: 'occasionally it is necessary .....to pass as undead to survive. Paradoxically, it is the unthinking intellectual rigor mortis of the present bureaucratic plague that enables some to survive the worst aspects of zombification'. More scholarly support for this possibility comes from our peer reviewed literature. Concluding a paper on the impacts of emerging knowledge regimes, Bleiklie (2005, p. 209) observes that 'academic capitalism has had a stronger impact on ideology and discourse than on the way in which universities are operated'. Similarly, Krucken's (2003) investigation of change among German universities found the general pace of university reform was well behind the political rhetoric and 'best practice' case studies. Krucken argues that the 'idea of a university was an 'organisational myth' divorced from the reality of organisational life. Despite the idea not being a reality, it is a vision that lies at the heart of every academic and university, providing 'meaning through reference to a commonly shared identity' and creating boundaries against external influences (Krucken, 2003, p. 327).

This notion is echoed in the words of a respondent from my own research: 'my values about the worth of what academics do for the community have not diminished but my behaviour has'. As comforting as this might seem, there is always the danger that values must ulti-

mately align with behaviour. Indeed, Davies and Petersen (2005) argue that it is not possible to do without being, that a failure to resist actively is a symptom of having been attacked by the neoliberal plague. The plague forestalls resistance 'by persuading each individual academic to treat the effects of neoliberalism as personal successes, responsibilities and failings rather than as a form of institutional practice in need of critique and transformation' (Davies & Petersen, 2005, p.77).

Conclusion

Personally, I am not convinced that withdrawal works well as a successful means of resistance over the long term, especially if it simply allows us to survive as zombies rather than escape the plague. How long can one tolerate the cognitive dissonance from behaving in one way while thinking in another? Like the participants in my research, I yearn for action, in Habermasian terms, for 'emancipation', for a way out of zombiedom.

I've been around long enough not to respect authority dressed up in titles and positions, I know there are academics at all levels who command authority through integrity and belief in a better system. I am in my 50s and experience all those feelings of frustration captured so well in the work of Larkin and Neumann (2011). I don't want to give up that desire for resistance, for a different form of academic life, for questioning accepted truths, for finding a humanitarian not utilitarian end to the academy. I don't just want to turn up at symposiums and conferences and publish for the enjoyment of like-minded masochistic academics. I want to be involved in challenge and change. Whenever I feel myself shuffling to the zombie beat, I take heart from the words of another of my research respondents: 'although we've been crushed, I think there is still a kernel of desire to return'.

So, perhaps zombiedom can be construed as an effective form of resistance, a form that goes beyond survival to protecting and hopefully nourishing that kernel of desire for future emancipation. But the questions remain as to whether we can we survive by simply sheltering away, waiting for the neoliberal storm to pass? And, even if we do, will we have the memory, the energy, the identity left to reactivate the academy as we would like it?

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