

FORUM

NEWSLETTER OF THE NON-TENURE-TRACK FACULTY SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

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CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION

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From the Editor: Action!

In their report to the CCCC Executive Committee in March 1998, the Ad-Hoc Committee on the Working Conditions of Part-Time and Adjunct Faculty wrote the following:

For more than a decade, CCCC and NCTE have published guidelines and statements and passed resolutions addressing the problematic status and working conditions of part-time and non-tenure-track English faculty.... We believe these statements and efforts have been important to the NCTE/CCCC membership.... We believe, however, that such statements mean little unless our organization acts upon the proposed recommendations in an organized fashion.... Therefore, ...we propose that the CCCC sponsor a Task Force on Working Conditions.

At the 1998 CCCC Business Meeting in Chicago, the membership in attendance unanimously passed a resolution to establish a Task Force on Improving the Working Conditions of Part-Time/Adjunct Faculty. I'm pleased to report that the task force has formed and begun its work to prepare a press kit for the CCCC/NCTE membership, the purpose of which is to provide information and media resources that can be used to facilitate dissemination of local and national news on the use of adjunct faculty as well as strategies for improving working conditions. This first task is scheduled to be completed in the 1998-99 year, and other efforts will follow as time allows to finally produce concrete, observable, and measurable results.

Just as the profession has turned a corner, so too have we: non-tenure-track faculty contributors to this issue have largely abandoned the unproductive, "commiseration" texts which previously filled *Forum's* pages for those which promote coalition-building and activism, and which report successful actions to improve the working conditions of typically disenfranchised writing faculty. As editor, it is my privilege to make these

About Forum

Forum is published twice a year by the Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Special Interest Group (NTT SIG) of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. As editor, I welcome you to submit news items, book reviews, editorials and/or articles related to non-tenure-track faculty in college English or composition courses. Submissions for the fall issue should be received no later than April 15; for the winter issue, the deadline is August 15. Note: Submissions will not be returned.

You may submit your work electronically, via e-mail or an e-mail attachment, or through U.S. mail. For e-mail submissions, address your work to rjkirby@mailbox.syr.edu and put the words "Forum article" somewhere in your subject line. If you choose U.S. mail, please send two hard copies as well as a diskette copy (Macintosh format preferred) of your submission(s) to

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For both e-mail and U.S. mail submissions, include the following information in a cover note:

- your name
- your title(s)
- your institution(s)
- home address and phone number
- institutional address(es) and phone number(s)
- if applicable, venue(s) where submission was published or presented previously

For additional guidelines or information about *Forum*, contact Roberta Kirby-Werner at one of the addresses provided above or at (315) 443-1213.

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accounts available to you. Though the dose of good news is small, it's a potent one.

—Roberta Kirby-Werner
Syracuse University
March 1999

**LOOKING AHEAD TO CCCC:
Building Coalitions Special
Interest Group, 3/25/99, 6:45–7:45 P.M.
(Focus: Non-Tenure-Track Faculty
in the Profession)**

**Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Special
Interest Group, 3/26/99, 6:00–7:00 P.M.**

**Bringing Our Theory Home:
Addressing Inequality through
Dialogue**

Anne Whitney

In her one-act play "Trifles," Susan Glaspell explores the concept of epistemology. After a murder, the small town sheriff and his cronies, with "awful important things on their minds," as one female character says, unwittingly overlook the very clues that would point them to the murderer because those clues lie in the world of the women folk and their so-called "trifles." Yet, without access to that information, the men cannot solve the crime.

Glaspell's play illustrates the theory which, for many of us, underlies our teaching: that is, standpoint theory—the idea that knowledge is maximized when it reflects perspectives and discourses from a range of locations. We realize that *how* we teach is as important as *what* we teach because structures themselves com-

municate who owns the knowledge and the uses to which it will be put. Thus, our classrooms are sites of difference where we use language to construct knowledge that takes into account social situatedness. Talking through differences such as race, gender, or religion is a challenge, but it is the *only way* to ensure that our knowledge is useful and authentic to individuals.

Further, individuals benefit because they need to know themselves as *contributors* to a group process of meaning making. In so doing they find a role and place for themselves. Unfortunately, however, when people are excluded from group membership, unable to shape the group, they cannot own the group meanings or know themselves as contributors to it. Finally the group cannot address their experience because it has not heard it. Both the group and the individual lose.

Dialogue is the antidote to the limitations of a single discourse, the only means to understand, appreciate, and renew the dynamic between the individual and the group. I'm convinced that any system needs it, not only to be viable, but also to be smarter, more able to respond. For various reasons, however, dialogue often does not occur. In my own setting, I have become much more aware of the barriers that stand in the way of dialogue between adjuncts and other faculty. Today I want to look briefly at three such barriers: invisibility, silencing, and difference.

As an adjunct I am not seen. Visibility is conferred by the institution. Since the institution does not recognize me, neither can the people in it. I quickly realized, when I got my Ph.D. and became an adjunct, that my invisibility was not personal—my former mentors were busy, and structural links did not encourage other tenure-track people to work with me. I wasn't so much outcast as overlooked, but also outdated and outgrown: When you grow up you are supposed to leave home, and I didn't, for family reasons. New Ph.D.s are still encouraged to leave by tenure-track faculty even though the simple fact that there are not as many tenure-track jobs as Ph.D.s means most have nowhere to go.

To cite one disturbing particular—a “trifle,” if you will—which illustrates invisibility: A recent department meeting found us arranged in a circle around the perimeter of a large classroom. The last remaining empty student desk in the center of the room was picked up ten minutes into the meeting by a senior faculty member who proceeded to place it squarely in front of me, even though several of us gestured that we would happily squeeze him into the circle. I was surprised when he turned to the person on my right, a graduate student who had just received tenure-track status and, addressing her by name, asked, “Tanya, you don't mind if I sit in front of you, do you?” She looked at him curiously, since he wasn't even in front of her, and I just looked...but all I could see was his back!

We are not only invisible within the department where our colleagues often do not know our names, but in a real, concrete way to students. Our courses are taught by “staff.” Even when I have my teaching assignment well in advance, my name does not appear in the course listings.

Invisibility is ensured when technically we are not hired; so when we are let go, we're not fired. I've come to call us "the disappeared." It's not uncommon to find out an adjunct disappeared three months ago, and we didn't realize it. Our heavy teaching loads also tend to keep us in the classroom or the office, but not with our peers, while lack of representation on committees ensures institutional invisibility into the future. Even the department handbook scarcely makes reference to us. Further, in lumping us with teaching assistants into the category of "junior staff," we are not seen as professionals and full-fledged faculty. Perhaps it is time to rewrite the texts that define us so that they map the territory more accurately.

Silencing, another barrier, often occurs through assumptions made about us. For example, tenure-track faculty may assume we want a tenure-track job or that we would have one if we deserved it. They may not see that some of us actively choose to be adjuncts, that it can be a valid life choice. Some assume we are the ones responsible for grade inflation, not recognizing the reality that the profession as a whole has a very different attitude toward grading than in the past.

The AAUP even contributes to false assumptions with statements like this: "Failure to extend to all faculty professional commitments compromises quality." I for one do not feel the quality of my teaching is compromised by my status, nor is my commitment to my students any less. This is not to say that teachers do not benefit from support (in fact, that's my subtext), but *my* response to external structures is my own; for some individuals, having tenure might compromise the quality of their teaching.

Assumptions voiced *about* us seem to be the voice that we are not entitled to. They stand *for* us with all the oversimplification and inaccuracy that only a stereotype can portray. And they silence us with their suggested meanings: *If you were good you would have a real job; you couldn't be committed to this one; you teach the way you do and give high grades just to get good evaluations.* Most faculty would try hard not to stereotype and silence more visible minorities, but such awareness does not seem to operate here.

Finally, nothing quite explains why hardly anyone asks *us* what we think. They seem to already know! This amazes me, given that we ourselves are constantly trying to articulate it. With changing economic and institutional contexts, departmental policy and standards vary from year to year, and the silencing and invisibility factors also contribute to the difficulty of fully recognizing just what it means to be an adjunct.

So, here's another trifle related to silencing. At another department meeting, I arrived early and chatted casually with colleagues as they filtered in. I soon noticed that everyone else had come with some papers. Had I somehow missed the handout? Then it hit me. Everyone else in the room was tenure-track. Later a grad student showed up with no handout either. I was stunned as I realized it didn't seem as simple as just asking for a copy. I felt embarrassed, unwelcome, and then, yes, angry. Here's my very rhetorical question: *How do you enter the conversation without the text?*

Trifles are just that—small, seemingly petty incidents. Yet they become relevant when they become part of a pattern, one that reflects a general lack of understanding. The cumulative effect of many such trifles (and every adjunct can call up quite a list) is marginalization. Eventually most people will be demoralized through the myriad small incidents of exclusion and silencing that devalue their contributions.

Silencing occurs because departments are not structured like good classrooms. Granted, they serve different purposes, but it might be possible to address invisibility and silencing similarly. In our classrooms, many venues provide outlets for student expression and dialogue, yet dialogue does not happen automatically. Even when I've done as much as I know how to do, some students may still feel silenced.

As an adjunct, I now recognize that I must speak out despite temptations to keep silent: Who wants to hear herself being different from colleagues she likes and respects, sounding trivial, or angry? We don't want to make other people feel uncomfortable, so we feel uncomfortable instead. Maybe our jobs are at risk, or maybe we just don't want to get involved. Still, as adjuncts we can only begin the conversation, not sustain it. Ultimately, those with more institutional power must create the environment that encourages dialogue. In the classroom, that may be me...but what's the point of having theories about difference and dialogue if they don't apply elsewhere?

Which brings me to my third barrier—difference—perhaps the most challenging of all. *And here's a more literary trifle.* I recently read a story by Toby Fulwiler in a collection of teacher narratives, an interesting piece broken into three segments, each of which provided a different narrative lens into his classroom. His main purpose, I think, was to show the reader how what you see depends on where you look. But here's what I saw: In the final segment he portrayed his own fallibility, in the *mea culpa* tone currently in vogue, admitting to being poorly organized. His assignments were unclear, he didn't quite follow his syllabus, and he didn't even learn all his students' names. I'm thinking, *Give me a break! This guy really is guilty!* I was reading out of *my* social location.

If we were all treated equally, I could simply accept that people contribute each in their own ways, which I know to be true. But from where I sit, I can't afford to look at it like that. As an adjunct, my continuing to teach depends on the quality of my teaching. Toby Fulwiler's really doesn't, at least not nearly so much. And that's a deep difference. (Of course teaching quality is terribly difficult to pin down as we know....)

Just as I read and think out of my location, so do you. If you are tenure-track, then we may not think the same. For instance, I do not see tenure and the academic freedom tied to it as sacred—some teachers seem to. Job security, benefits, and money validate people's work, but why must they be attached to an exclusive club membership? And if indeed we all are protected by freedom of speech, why must a license for greater

freedom of expression accompany that membership? Obviously the license is not absolutely necessary or so many of us would not be teaching without it.

Recent events on my own campus and elsewhere do indeed call tenure into question—as does the silencing of questions about it. My very located opinion is that the current exploitation of non-tenure-track faculty requires the tenure system to be in place. Tenure-track people can teach less (and make more) because we teach more (and make less). In the past, most college English teachers were protected by tenure. That is no longer true, nor does it appear to be a future possibility.

Wouldn't we be better prepared for whatever lies ahead if we invested our creativity in a more egalitarian system that preserves the best of the old without its abuses? We are here to do the work we love, but we cannot get on with it until we can talk through our differences. We need faith in our theory that inviting more people to the table and including more voices in the conversation is the best way to build the knowledge we must have for the future. When we sit down to a conversation in which every member is empowered to participate, I have no doubt common ground and a vision will emerge out of the very differences that separate us now.

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Anne Whitney is an Adjunct at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. This paper was presented at the half-day workshop entitled "Improving the Status of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty in Composition: Issues and Proposals" at the Conference on College Composition and Communication held in Chicago on April 4, 1998.

Same Struggle, Same Fight, Students and Faculty Must Unite

Elana Peled

Not much marks November 6, 1996, as a memorable teaching day for me. A little more than a year later, I do not remember the lessons I presented that day, nor even the classes I taught. I do not remember which colleagues I spoke with in the hallways, nor which students appeared at my office for conferences. With three weeks remain-

ing until the end of the semester, I can today speculate that I was exhausted at the end of that day, as I usually am after a full day of teaching. It's possible I even felt overwhelmed, since that seems to be a usual feeling for me at the end of a semester.

There are, however, some things I do remember about that day, things that so shake the core of my professional stability that perhaps it is a blessing they are not tightly wound round memories of teaching, lest they shatter the stability of the classroom atmosphere which I work so carefully to maintain. One of those memories is a thought that came to me just before I left my office that day, for I remember contemplating a visit to my mailbox in the faculty work room and then shaking off that notion, deciding that whatever might lay in that box could certainly wait until Monday. How I wish that last thought had been wrong.

At home, the blinking red light of the answering machine alerted me that someone had called. Ellen's voice bellowed strong and stable across the room: "Elana, did you get Elise's memo? Call me." A pause, and then, more subdued, shaking even, perhaps on the verge of tears, she added, "I am so sick of this. Why do they treat us this way? What is going on? Do you know?" And then, more quietly, defeated almost, "Call me."

I don't remember dialing Ellen's phone number or even much about our conversation as she explained the content of the memo she had received from Elise Earthman, the coordinator of the composition program at San Francisco State University, where both Ellen and I had taught freshman composition for three-and-a-half years. I'd like to imagine I felt tremendous sadness as Ellen told me she would not be returning to teach in the spring due to cutbacks in the department. I'd like to imagine that I knew just what to tell my friend to ease her pain. Honestly, what I remember most about that conversation is the fear that rose up in my belly, the fear that I too had received a similar letter that day in my mailbox. I hung up the phone, wondering if I could endure waiting the entire weekend to find out. Less than a minute after I ended my conversation with Ellen, the phone rang. It was Elise, calling to say she was sorry, calling to say that like Ellen and thirteen other of my colleagues, I too would not be returning to SFSU to teach that spring. The devastation I felt was immense.

In the days following this announcement, a group of part-time, full-time, tenured, and non-tenured faculty; administrators; staff; and students—many many students—all sprang to action to reverse the events that led to "the scheduling crisis" of 1996. Elise set up two meetings to inform us about why the cutbacks were occurring; she took it upon herself to find out as much information about the cutbacks as she could. Certainly, her efforts helped us to feel we weren't being entirely abandoned by our colleagues, many of whom had at one time been our professors and mentors. But the information she shared, rather than easing our pain and frustration, only fueled our anger, for the University cited budget cuts as the reason for taking our jobs. As a result of the supposed budgetary crisis, Elise told us, "a very large number of tenure-track and tenured

faculty across the department have been moved out of upper-division or graduate courses into composition and ESL courses. Besides the cancellation of our upper-division and graduate courses, a number of us have had assigned time canceled or reduced (though of course the work itself remains to be done...), and some tenured faculty and full-time lecturers are teaching two and even three comp courses, along with the rest of their teaching schedule and other responsibilities."

The news that faculty trained in other areas of specialization were being given our classes because they were either tenured or tenure-track did not sit well with us—those of us who were not being hired back all hold master's degrees in either English Composition or ESL, and we see ourselves as trained professionals who have chosen the teaching of lower-division English courses as our profession—so we decided to attend a previously scheduled English Department meeting and to "take over" so the fact that fourteen people were losing their livelihoods became the central issue. Someone alerted the student newspaper, and a reporter sat quietly at the back of the room listening to the chair of the English Department implore the lecturers to "get real jobs" so that we could all avoid these painful situations in the future.

These actions culminated in a demonstration and protest march during the final week of classes. Hundreds of students and faculty, carrying banners and chanting slogans, joined together to march across campus to the administration building to present petitions signed by more than 2,300 individuals to our university's vice-president of academic affairs. Remarkably, by the time the march took place, every one of the fourteen lecturers who had been told they would not be coming back in the spring had already had their course assignments reinstated. Of course, the university administration won't acknowledge this, but we believe that had we not worked together to raise our voices in protest, this rapid turn of events could not have occurred. Thus, the actions taken by one outraged campus community may prove instructive for us all.

At the English Department meeting we attended, we discovered the tremendous power of our union, the California Faculty Association. Many of the professionals who received notice that they were not being hired back for the spring semester had already been given full-year appointments that fall, and the union representatives at the meeting let us know they intended to file grievances with the university on our behalf. Of course, we're not sure if the union would have won—the university insists that those appointments are contingent on there being a need for us, and the administration viewed this as a debatable point. Fortunately, we never had to find this out, yet we can't help but wonder if the university, knowing that a grievance was about to be filed by the union, wasn't in some way influenced by this knowledge.

This is just one of the reasons why membership in an organized union is so important for university faculty. Our union reps are the people who knew we needed to get organized fast. They are the ones who stood up at the end of the English Department

meeting and asked those of us who wished to fight the situation to stay. And in those moments following the official department meeting, we organized ourselves into committees—one to contact the local media, one to circulate a petition, one to plan a demonstration, one to investigate the allocation of funding, another to pursue legal action. We made lists, exchanged phone numbers, set up future meeting dates. Because we did not sit idly by and let our jobs go, because we were organized and we took action, we were able to reverse the crisis we were facing.

But helping us to organize our protest actions was not all that the union did. Our very persistent union representatives also began to aggressively research the university's methods of allocating funds and learned that "mistakes had been made," that in fact money was available where none was said to exist. On our own we might not have found out this information about the budget, or perhaps not in time for something to change. Our union officials not only know what questions we are allowed to ask and what answers we have the legal right to expect, but they also know which channels to pursue to obtain those answers. And, perhaps because of their legal expertise, they are able to make sure we get those answers in a timely manner.

This experience has proven to us that if you draw support from the right places, you can make a change. One of those right places is a union. But another right place is our students. I can't stress enough how important student support was during the scheduling crisis. Our students played a critical role in the effort we made to regain our jobs, for many reasons. Students know that our courses provide them with essential skills, skills they are unlikely to acquire elsewhere. They appreciate our dedication, our small classes, and the kind of individualized attention we give them. Beyond that, many of our students see our struggle as similar to their own. They know that acquiring strong literacy skills is essential for their future success, and they are not about to let an overbearing administration, whom they often perceive as cold and uncaring, to stand in their way. They are important allies who we should draw into our struggle, for as our experience demonstrates, they are more than willing to participate. In fact, at SFSU, our students were among those who both signed and circulated petitions on our behalf.

When I think back to the willingness of my students to help out in a time of crisis, I realize more fully the value of the work I do. Certainly, if students are willing to fight for quality faculty, then faculty should be willing to do so as well. Perhaps it will only be by working together that we will be able to combat the many deplorable practices currently occurring in higher education.

Elana R. Peled, Larsen Fellow at Harvard University Graduate School of Education, previously taught composition and reading as a part-time instructor at San Francisco State University, Skyline College in San Bruno, CA, and Foothill College in Los Altos, CA. A version of this paper was presented at the Conference on College Composition and Communication in Chicago on April 3, 1998.

The Professionalization of Composition

Diana Hines

In the fall of 1996—a week or two before Thanksgiving—14 composition lecturers at San Francisco State University were told that they wouldn't be receiving classes in the spring. Even though we had all come up through State's excellent composition program, secured full-year contracts and first-rate teaching evaluations, our department chair admonished us to "get real jobs." As we pleaded our case at an English Department meeting, the tenured faculty looked on us with mixed pity and wonder, as one might look on victims of a trailer park tornado. I could imagine them saying, "Why, after all, did you choose to live in trailer parks? Don't you know they're the first to go in a storm?"

We often locate the genesis of our poor working conditions in the open admissions movement of the 1970s. As record numbers of nontraditional students flooded our traditional English classrooms, the story goes, the university was hard put to supply both adequate numbers of classes and fair terms of employment. While open admissions certainly paved the way for the excessive use of part-timers, we can trace our problems even further back than that. In fact, Robert Connors, whose genealogy of composition I'll refer to below, traces these problems back to the 1880s after the first Harvard entrance exam revealed that few of its entering freshmen could pass a standard test of correctness. Responding to these results, and to the general perception among Harvard's elite that linguistic standards in this country had sunk well below those in Britain, President Eliot resolved to exclude from college any freshmen who had not completed a writing course involving extensive hours in writing "labs." The focus of rhetorical training, then, shifted from oral discourse, which had been the backbone of the classical education for hundreds of years, to written discourse. And as teachers were charged with reading and responding to hundreds of themes that poured in weekly, and spending many hours in student-teacher conferences, their workload mushroomed. This increased workload diminished the status of composition so that scholars who were more concerned with establishing themselves in distinguished careers pursued oral rhetoric, rather than written composition.

The separation between oral rhetoric and written composition has everything to do with the status of composition in English departments today. When composition split from rhetoric, it also split from rhetoric's more prestigious roots in philology and literary history. Instead of focusing on classical languages and philosophy as rhetoric did, composition focused on the writing of the burgeoning middle class, whom administrators perceived as more practical in spirit than the sons of the upper class that had traditionally filled college classrooms. Composition teachers provided basic

skills for these new students to succeed in a growing economy, their primary concerns being clarity and correctness. So when we hear talk today that we're doing remedial work, "the least professional teaching the least able," we can be sure we're still reeling from the split between written and oral discourse, between what English departments came to see as the scientific statement vs. the poetic statement, the logical statement vs. the mythical statement. James Berlin says that others characterized the split as the impoverished rhetorical statement vs. the privileged poetic statement, two separate and unequal groups.

This characterization certainly coincides with the two-tiered system that we now have in many English departments, housing what Connors calls "a privileged literature faculty enjoying benefits that the composition underclass lacks." But this characterization doesn't accurately describe the work that trained composition teachers actually do. The fact is that teachers who are conversant with the intellectual tradition of composition, knowledgeable about the research, and experienced in using current methods in the classroom know something that untrained writing teachers don't. We know that every time we write assignments that warrant critical argument or aesthetic judgment, every time we instruct students in heuristics or awareness of the audience-writer-text relationship, we draw on principles from classical rhetoric. When we instruct first-time freshmen on how to parse an argument, compare multiple perspectives, or apply a theoretical model, we draw on research in cognitive and social psychology. When we bring our students together in groups for research, peer editing, and critical inquiry, we draw on sociological and linguistic theory.

Despite how these lessons transcend the skills and drills methods people have associated with writing classrooms for much of this century, they have not transformed our status. Many campuses still staff their writing classes primarily with literature M.A.s with no composition training, as if a degree in English intrinsically qualifies one to teach writing. Still other campuses staff their writing classes with graduate students who are given fifteen minutes of advice and nudged into service. In contrast, composition professionals have been rigorously trained to teach writing. We have, as Martin Nystrand suggests, a professional discipline concerned with the reader-writer-text relationship and the teaching of both "formal and rhetorical considerations."

As teachers of writing, we need to be knowledgeable about our field. The first thing composition lecturers need to realize is the prospect of entering the field on the low end of a rigid hierarchy. Second, we need to educate administrators and literature faculty about what we actually do, convince them we're much more than the department of subject and verb. To gain the respect of the full faculty, though, many composition departments will need to reconsider the formalistic approach they take to writing instruction. And finally, we need to understand the recent history of the institutions and economic trends that affect our working conditions. Knowing where we come from allows us to confront the present—and to redefine ourselves for the future.

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Middle-Aged and Part-Time: Composing a Hyphenated Life in the Profession

Mary Alm

Accepting Victor Villanueva’s invitation to bring our “ideas, historias y cuentos” to the 1998 convention of CCCC, four female colleagues joined me to add our stories to the collection begun by Theresa Enos in her 1996 book, *Gender Roles and Faculty Lives in Rhetoric and Composition*. As the only non-tenure-track member of that roundtable, I bring my story to *Forum*.

Stories do the work of telling on both conscious and unconscious levels, speaking to our spirits as well as to our minds. As Barbara DuBois says, our stories are “the early work of observation, naming and description that prepares the ground for theory-making” (109). In this spirit, I risk revealing my story for the potential truths it holds about me, our profession, and the world of academia.

My story begins in a registrar’s office—where my work is appreciated and the registrar very clearly has “plans” for me. While working there, I made a religious retreat on “Women and Work” and came home understanding that one’s work becomes one’s vocation through one’s attitude. I tried to change my attitude toward my current work, but I couldn’t *imagine* the registrar’s life as my vocation. To achieve the fulfillment of vocation, therefore, I would have to change my work.

I wanted to stay attached to higher education, but administrative work kept me on the sidelines of the real action, namely the learning encounter between students and knowledge. To become an active player in that encounter, I would have to re-tool; my master’s degree in adult education wouldn’t put me in a classroom.

Well, actually, it would and did...into the graduate classroom, as a student once again. In the fall of 1990, I began Ph.D. studies in Composition and Rhetoric at the University of South Carolina, just a few months short of my 42nd birthday. I spent

four years becoming a member of a profession, acquiring a “specialized knowledge” through long and intensive academic preparation.

The experience changed me; I was re-made. In one respect, it was like military boot camp—the ego I arrived with was attacked and subdued, and I received a new identity as one called to teach writing. From another perspective, though, I became more truly my own Self. By answering the call, I was becoming who I was meant to be all along. When I left, I could *imagine* being a professor, that is, a scholar and a teacher. What I inadequately imagined was the lack of support for my career aspirations, my vocation.

Now begins the part of my story intimately tied to the book *Women of Academe: Outsiders in the Sacred Grove*, an interview research study conducted by Nadya Aisenberg and Mona Harrington. I read this book early on in my graduate studies and quoted it in my dissertation. I tell every woman I meet in higher education to read this book. But, when it came right down to it, I have been as Oedipus with the predictions of the oracle. Despite his efforts to avoid killing his father and marrying his mother, Oedipus walked right into his fate. Our fate as women in academe, according to Aisenberg and Harrington, is to be subject to those “social norms that are constructed to cast women in subordinate, supportive roles in both their private and their public lives” (xii). Despite my fore-knowledge, I have been unable to avoid this fate.

This is my fifth year teaching part-time at a small, public, undergraduate liberal arts university. Part-time means I’m restricted to a two-course load each semester. In these years, I’ve taught all three first-year composition courses (basic writing plus two regular semesters), as well as Introduction to Women’s Studies and one of the four chronologically sequenced humanities courses required of all our students. One year, I taught a one-credit honors seminar on literacy for free. Also, I spend one of my course assignments every semester as a faculty tutor in our university Writing Center, training peer tutors and conducting writing workshops as well as tutoring.

Also important to me is that I perform university service and continue my scholarship. I’ve come in on Saturday to help with the local high school academic quiz bowl, read essays submitted for freshman writing awards, and volunteered with our University day-of-service. During my years of part-time teaching, I’ve written and defended my dissertation, had two articles accepted into edited book collections, published a book review, given papers annually at 4Cs and twice at women’s studies conferences, and served as column writer for the regional women’s studies newsletter.

I did all of this because all of this makes up the life of a college composition professional, and I am now part of that profession. Aren’t I? This is who I am; this is me.

Well, now we reach the climax of my story...for it seems that I am not a college composition professional in the eyes of the institution which hires me. Aisenberg and Harrington tried to warn me; they told me that “part-time work is now treated as

inherently inferior" (130). And they told me that believing my merit would be "recognized by professional authorities without self-advertisement" was just a "merit dream" (52).

What I am, I've been told, is a person hired to teach in a classroom. The service counts for nothing. The scholarship counts for nothing. Sad to say, even the Writing Center work is discounted. The only thing that counts is my performance in the classroom, and the only way it gets counted is through student evaluations. In the fall of '96, my freshman students gave me poor evaluations—too much work, a weird textbook, too few grades, too high expectations. Though I continued to teach, I would not move up in the adjunct ranks until my students gave me better evaluations.

My department chair informed me of all this in the fall of '97, when I *did* take the initiative of "self-advertisement" and asked to be moved up in the adjunct ranks. Aisenberg and Harrington correctly prophesied my reaction—"inexpressiveness [in the face of] professional misinterpretation" (72–73). And I am only somewhat reassured knowing that "such speechlessness or muteness does not seem to depend upon temperament, but is imparted by the position of being a defendant" (72).

My story was still working itself out at the time of the 4Cs. My latest student evaluations were back up to the level they were before the unhappy class, but I had to wonder whether they were good enough. "Good enough" assumes there *is* an objective standard, an assumption I no longer make. Aisenberg and Harrington point out that the rules are always arbitrary. Whoever has the power to make them has the power to re-make them, whenever it suits.

Aisenberg and Harrington speak of "subtle harassments of the spirit" (13) and the "potent effects" of "doubt and denigration" (48). Listen to them. They're right when they say that (a) "the factor of support—received or not received—[is] critical to the course of a woman's professional development" (50) and (b) "needing constantly to prove your worth undermines self-confidence in even the strongest woman" (67).

But, I can *still* imagine myself a composition professional.

In a sermon on stories, my minister reminded me that "stories don't just happen. Our lives—and our choices—shape the stories that we are" (Killoran 5). I'm not letting my story end here. I may be middle-aged and part-time, but hyphens connect as well as divide, and I'm determined to stay connected to this profession. As my minister recommends, "[I] need to move beyond the questions that focus on the past, beyond the questions that focus on pain. [I] need to ask instead the questions that open the doors to the future and the roles [I'm] going to play" (4).

Like Oedipus, I'll have to live with my fate. Aisenberg and Harrington promise me that "the shared experience of outsidership is [not] wholly negative for women, personally or professionally. The position of the outsider may be a highly creative one,

and this is also part of the story" (xii). My experiences to date have been a first draft of my life in the profession. I can compose another.

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"Each One Reach One": A Proposal

Scott Oury

Editor's Note: Scott Oury's article has been significantly cut for the printed issue of *Forum*. The complete article can be viewed online.

Driving back to Massachusetts from CCCC in Chicago, stirred, I pondered the "ground swell" (Sharon Crowley's term) developing to change the situation of adjuncts, and the membership drive discussed in the general business meeting, especially Cynthia Selfe's proposal to provide every teacher of composition who wants to join CCCC, but lacks the means to do so, free access to our profession for a year.

As I drove I thought, why not mount a massive membership drive aimed primarily at our part-time colleagues, an "Each One Reach One" campaign. It would greatly strengthen us, at least begin to unite us as colleagues, and perhaps in that unity provide the means to more rapidly rectify the great divide within our profession. Our invitation to adjuncts to join CCCC would also speak to a familiar experience among part-time faculty: a sense of professional demoralization that can linger even into full-time employment. (See Margret Loweth's article, *TETYC*, Feb. '89, Vol 16, #1.)

We could begin to heal the damage wrought over the years, with a personal invitation—from each of us, one by one—to join the Conference.

I believe that our commitment to our profession as a body (a council, a conference—pick any metaphor for a unified entity you like) will be measured by our commitment to our adjunct colleagues. Half the body is starving; the council is split; the Conference is available largely for the privileged.

What can we do? We can begin simply, each of us, by reaching out to one part-time colleague (at least), inviting him or her to join CCCC and attend the '99 conference in Atlanta. Then, personally or departmentally, we should make all this financially feasible, should that necessity arise. (It probably will.) Since CCCC is working on ways to encourage membership, we should stay in touch to see what's available: perhaps "project access," initiated by Cynthia Selfe, will have some gift memberships; perhaps memberships, a CCC subscription, and conference registration could be made available at a reduced cost, say the \$90 cost to CCCC.

Then we should find ways to bring interested adjuncts to Atlanta for the conference: car pools for those close enough; financial pools within departments for those at a distance. Certainly we can find local housing through colleagues and schools in Atlanta. The Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Forum is also drafting a letter to publishers, several of whom have already suggested that they would contribute to a travel fund. CCCC (perhaps through the Non-Tenure-Track Forum) could administer such a fund.

Can we afford to fund memberships and travel? The bald truth is that we full-time teachers have been funded by our part-time colleagues, a truth that we have only begun to look straight in the eye. We can't afford not to support such an effort.

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