

# FORUM

NEWSLETTER OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONTINGENT, ADJUNCT, AND PART-TIME FACULTY (CAP)

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CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION

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### From the Editor

Janice Albert

In *Forum* of September 2002, we asked for responses to Carol Jago's challenge, Why not teach high school? Two writers, Crystal O'Leary and Eugenia Bryant, have written about their decisions to do just that. Also in this issue, Jim McDonald and Dorinda Fox survey Web sites run by and for non-tenure-track faculty, Darrell Thompson writes about achievements in California, and Ray Mazurek reviews *Academic Keywords* by Cary Nelson and Stephen Watt. Enjoy!

### A Guide to Contingent Faculty Web Sites

James McDonald and Dorinda Fox

Here is a short guide to Web sites of particular interest to contingent faculty in English and composition. Most provide links to other useful sites and opportunities for sharing ideas and experiences.

1. Three regional contingent faculty associations sponsor Web sites—the **CPFA Forum** of the **California Part-time Faculty Association**, [www.cpfa.org](http://www.cpfa.org); the **Boston Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor (Boston COCAL)**, [omega.cc.umb.edu/~cocal](http://omega.cc.umb.edu/~cocal); and the **Madison (WI) Area Technical College (MATC) Part Time Teachers Union**, [www.ptunion.org](http://www.ptunion.org). Each site offers organizational documents, such as constitutions, bylaws, mission statements, or newsletters, as well as strategies for political activism. Each is a good news source for legislation, union activities, lawsuits, and adjunct and graduate

## About Forum

*Forum* is published twice a year by the Committee on Contingent, Adjunct, and Part-Time Faculty (CAP) 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 May 1; for the winter issue, the deadline is September 1. Note: Submissions will not be returned.

Submit your work electronically via e-mail or an e-mail attachment. Address your work to [jmalbert2002@earthlink.net](mailto:jmalbert2002@earthlink.net) and put the words "Forum article" somewhere in your subject line. Submissions should include the following information:

- 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 Janice Albert, *Forum* editor, 565 Bellevue Ave., Suite 1704, Oakland, CA 94610 or phone (510) 839-1140.

It is the policy of NCTE in its journals and other publications to provide a forum for the open discussion of ideas concerning the content and the teaching of English and the language arts. Publicity accorded to any particular point of view does not imply endorsement by the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors, or the membership at large, except in announcements of policy, where such endorsement is clearly specified. Similarly, opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, the Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Special Interest Group, or the Conference on College Composition and Communication.

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student political activities in the region. Boston COCAL, in addition, includes a ten-point program for contingent faculty working conditions and reproduces several articles about adjunct faculty issues. The CPFA Forum provides details on legislation and commission reports affecting contingent faculty, articles by members, and a useful list of ten best practices in California community colleges. The MATC site tracks legislative initiatives around the country. Boston COCAL and CPFA Forum also provide links to listservs on adjunct faculty issues.

2. The **Campus Equity Week** Web site, [www.cewaction.org](http://www.cewaction.org), offers ideas for political action, collected from campuses and faculty associations throughout the U.S. and Canada. Although created for Campus Equity Week in 2001, the site is updated often, with descriptions of political actions at over a hundred campuses, links, and materials such as press releases, political cartoons, songs, skits, and university codes of conduct. The Web site also links to news articles on Campus Equity Week; tracks relevant legislative action, lawsuits, and union activities; publicizes conferences on adjunct issues; and gives adjunct faculty an opportunity to share stories on a "wailing wall."
3. The **AAUP** offers extensive information for political action on its **Part-Time and Non-Tenure-Track Faculty** Web pages, [www.aaup.org/Issues/](http://www.aaup.org/Issues/)

parttime/index.htm (indexed under "Issues"). These pages provide a history and analysis of the growth of part-time faculty in higher education, as well as statistics and other background information. The most valuable documents may be the AAUP statements, guidelines, and principles regarding the employment and working conditions of part-time and non-tenure-track faculty. The site also provides information on state legislation, a detailed guide for building campus coalitions, and a sample petition and faculty senate resolution. For those who want more help, the Web site tells how to purchase the AAUP publication *Working for Academic Renewal: A Kit for Organizing on the Issues of Part-time and Non-Tenure-Track Faculty* and provides an e-mail link to the AAUP National Field Representative.

4. Among professional associations, the best source of data about contingent faculty may be the "Summary of Data from Surveys by the Coalition on the Academic Workforce," which can be found on the **American Historical Association** Web site, [www.theaha.org/caw/index.htm](http://www.theaha.org/caw/index.htm). Look also at the **Modern Language Association** Web site, [www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org), under "Reports and Documents." The "Summary of Data" analyzes the results of a 1999 national survey conducted by the CAW, a coalition of 25 academic societies, covering eleven disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, including English departments and free-standing composition programs. The survey compares percentages of adjunct faculty and graduate students in each discipline and in various colleges and universities. Salary, benefits, courses taught by contingent faculty, computer access, and office space are compared. The AHA site also includes their press release about the survey.
5. Political action for adjunct faculty in composition is addressed in the **CCCC Part-time and Adjunct Issues Starter Kit**, [www.ncte.org/cccc/parttime/index.shtml](http://www.ncte.org/cccc/parttime/index.shtml), an "electronic organizing kit" compiled by the CCCC Task Force on Part-time and Adjunct Faculty. It provides information nationwide, with links to professional associations committed to contingent faculty issues, and two extensive bibliographies. Its link to Web resources was not functioning in July, and some of the information about the task force, including its name and membership, needed updating.
6. Among private groups, **Adjunct Nation** has developed helpful content and many useful links at [www.adjunctnation.com](http://www.adjunctnation.com). Sponsors include publishers of course packets, an online bookstore, a source for online teaching materials, a health insurance and retirement benefits provider, and an office materials supplier. This site also publishes the online version of the magazine **Adjunct Advocate** at [www.adjunctnation.com/nafg/taahometext.html](http://www.adjunctnation.com/nafg/taahometext.html), in addition to links to a dozen articles researched by *Adjunct Nation* staff, dealing with

employment/union issues, plagiarism, adjunct awards and accomplishments, and MLA documents.

The jobs list links to over 400 adjunct jobs listed by state and province, although it could be more comprehensive by including full-time as well as adjunct positions. (A search under "Florida" listed only one job at a small online university.) A grant calendar and grant links lead to helpful sources: databases of funding opportunities, e-mail lists, indices of grants-related sites, templates (for grant letters and applications), and tutorials (for grant letters and applications). The related professional development link refers one to up-to-date calendars on conferences and calls for scholarly papers—as well as book lists. The reference link leads to composition journals, online libraries, and links to local and university newspapers. Finally, the link entitled "Life as an Adjunct" leads to helpful advice. Overall, this is the most thorough and helpful of the Web sites that focus on teaching and professional development.

7. **Adjuncts.com** at [www.college.hmco.com/adjuncts](http://www.college.hmco.com/adjuncts) is sponsored by Houghton Mifflin and functions as a promotion of the company's products. A bulletin board for subscribers allows you to participate in discussions. Adjuncts.com also publishes essays on teaching and adjunct life under "Your Turn" and links to news articles under "In the News."
8. **Adjunct Genie** at [www.ablongman.com/adjuncts/0,4648,,00.html](http://www.ablongman.com/adjuncts/0,4648,,00.html) functions completely as an advertising vehicle for its sponsor, Allyn and Bacon/Longman. Three sets of links lead to information about the publishers' books in content areas or for professional training, access to area book reps, and corporate-sponsored technology resources and training. Repetition is generally desirable in Web design, but this site pushes that concept to the extreme. However, the site does offer visitors the opportunity to obtain a free book for completing a survey and providing contact information.
9. **Lore: An E-Journal for Teachers of College Writing** at [www.bedfordstmartins.com/lore/subscribe.htm](http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/lore/subscribe.htm), sponsored by Bedford/St. Martin's, is described as "a journal for adjunct and graduate teachers of writing, published five times a year and edited by TAs and adjuncts from the University of Illinois, Chicago, as well as recently graduated TAs who have just begun new academic jobs as assistant professors and writing center directors." New issues are e-mailed free if you subscribe to *Lore* by supplying an e-mail address and indicating a specific interest.

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## **Teenagers, Paperwork, and Really Long Hours, Oh My!**

Eugenia Powell Bryan

As a young college student studying the literature of the South, I said, in response to the inevitable question, “What are you going to do with that?” that I would *never* teach high school. I was high-minded and believed that with diligent work and commitment to my beloved area of study, I would land a job in the academy. It wasn’t until after I received my Ph.D. that I realized the sad truth—very few of us would get that coveted position and the lifestyle that went along with it. The tornado of reality swept me up and away from my mental Kansas and dropped me in a place I never dreamed of. After graduation in May 2000, I began working as an adjunct at my degree-granting institution, while still applying for jobs.

In the following months, I worked diligently as an adjunct, enduring the process of sending out numerous letters and CVs. I endured the indignities forced upon the adjunct pool by my university. They failed to pay us on time our first month, and our university president wondered aloud why it was so important since all of us “have husbands with jobs.” I don’t have one of those second-income miracles, but I survived. While my department treated adjuncts as humanely as the system allows, I had to make a painful decision; I went to work in a parochial high school for job security and health insurance.

The decision was made only after many conversations with family and colleagues. They told me that I was giving up (perhaps I did?), that I hadn’t been on the job market long enough (perhaps not?), that I should remain an adjunct for a couple more years, and that my students would be mind-numbingly illiterate. They may have been right about a number of things; however, they were wrong about some of the items on the list that were important to me. The more I learned about the job market and being an adjunct, the more I realized that I had made the right decision. I couldn’t stay in my old graduate student office forever, hoping that some money-blighted committee would see the advantages of hiring me. I didn’t give up; I continued to apply for jobs. I learned through the academic grapevine, friends who had friends on hiring committees, that I was very close to campus interviews for two positions. I was thrilled about both of them; they were perfect for me. Foolishly optimistic, I thought I had found Oz. Even though I clicked my red shoes together dreaming of my home in the academy, the positions were cut due to lack of funding.

My housemate and I did some research on the adjunct situation and the dismal job market, and we knew that we had to do something, anything, to take care of ourselves. After pulling the curtain aside to reveal the truth behind, I knew I didn’t want to live with the uncertainty each semester of not knowing whether I would have enough classes to keep life and limb together. And the students weren’t

boring, illiterate, or stupid. They, unlike the academy, needed someone just like me. I stayed in the high school past my self-imposed one-semester deadline (I came in at midyear when a teacher became ill).

My students respect my long years spent in school. Sometimes this almost makes all the sacrifices demanded of a Ph.D. candidate worth the struggle. They appreciate the “cool” extra stuff I know and share with them. They discuss the literature in lively tones of excitement when they see that artists don’t produce in a cultural vacuum. Unlike many of the first-year college students I taught, they thrilled to new ideas and the freedom to think for themselves. My position offers a certain sort of fulfillment, but it is no yellow brick road to an intellectual home.

There are *many* moments when I still grieve my position and the time and money spent earning my degree. The stages of grief are evident: I pass through disbelief, anger, bargaining, and intense sadness. I grieve the lack of time to research and write, a task I genuinely enjoyed. The months spent locked away writing my dissertation were the happiest of my life. I grieve the loss of a long-held dream of my life in the academy. I grieve for conversations with colleagues who think about theory and books. I grieve knowing that my beloved dissertation will never see the light of day as my first book or even a few articles. I do not grieve job insecurity and the lack of insurance; I won’t bore you with the dismal figures on how little I am paid for this security.

It is a vastly different life than the one I prepared myself for. Anyone with an advanced degree can imagine my indignation at being told by the Diocese that I wasn’t qualified to teach English and must take 100 level education courses (my experiences with the School of Education are fodder for another article). The long hours required to be a good high school teacher were once unimaginable to me; this workload makes graduate coursework alongside teaching courses as a TA seem like a polite tea party. I no longer have the delicious luxury of time for mid-week drinks and conversations about Nietzsche’s theories on morality and Gaston Bachelard’s concepts of space. I wish for the patience of Glenda the Good Witch when the little ones complain about reading and claim they “just can’t (read: *won’t*) write.” The paperwork and guidelines are often overwhelming; I often suspect that 504 forms are really just the legal equivalent of notes from Mom about why her darling can’t do . . . you name it.

Most of my students are an exciting challenge and offer rewards that perhaps a life in the academy never would. High school students respond to being treated as adults with intellectual freedom and responsibilities. One young man told me at the beginning of his senior year that he hated English. “Simple enough,” I thought and asked him, “Can you hang in there and see what happens?” He did and eventually bought his own book of Lord Byron’s poetry. The day before his graduation he came to me, wrapped his arms around my neck in a farewell hug, and said with

tears in his eyes, "I'm gonna miss you, Doc. You showed me how to see the world in a whole different way."

Would my published dissertation ever do that for anyone? I had hoped. I still do. However, the yellow brick road looks longer than ever. I hope I will find time to publish the article that will get me noticed in the ever-deepening pool of applicants. I hope that the economy will improve and funding will allow universities to hire more of us. Until the tides turn, I will continue to enjoy my insurance and know that my job, unlike so many others inside and outside the academy, is secure.

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## **Downwind from Eden**

Crystal O'Leary

While I was finishing my dissertation, I suffered from incredible writer's block. This was not a procrastinator's urge to vacuum the apartment, alphabetize the CD collection, and replace the air conditioning filter. My writer's block formed into a large figure who would stand behind my chair, his hand on my shoulder, and whisper in my ear with the voice of *The Amityville Horror* house, "Finish and get oooooout!"

Ok, maybe he didn't speak that clearly, but I knew he was there. I had felt his breath on the back of my neck before. Near the end of my course work, The Demon would occasionally drop by, and, while I never missed deadlines, I'd find it more difficult than before to complete, say, a seminar paper. I swear it wasn't laziness or a lack of inspiration; rather, it was a certain nagging portent that soon I would be kicked out of the Eden of The Academy and land at the Modern Language Association's yearly convention, résumé in hand and a dazed expression on my face. You see my demon had not been working alone. I had begun reading those *Chronicle of Higher Education* articles about the state of the job market for humanities Ph.D.s. I had begun to listen to those who had gone before me. I didn't want to go east of Eden.

Then, while writing my dissertation, two things happened. First, my mentor from my M.A. Program, an incredibly brilliant and creative man who could draw connections between Belgian symbolist poets and pop culture icons, a man whose lectures were poetic—this man called me. Recently, both his parents had fallen gravely ill in close succession and subsequently died. Like me, he was an only child and single. I know he was speaking in his grief, but he said to me, "Don't sacrifice everything to your career. Don't ignore starting a family and making connections with others. When your parents go, you will be alone." As I listened to

him, I was sitting at my desk, phone cradled under my chin, my computer screen glowing with *My Thoughts on the American Gothic*. Student loans aside, I had given up much to be at that desk, degree and tenure-track job on the horizon. Then the second thing happened: my writer's block demon came with luggage for an extended visit. He reminded me that my twenties were long gone. The dissertation, he told me, would lead me outside Eden's walls into the Land of Nod that those *Chronicle* articles were screaming about—the land crowded with expanding numbers of humanities Ph.D.s and shrinking numbers of tenure-track humanities positions.

I couldn't write for a month.

Then, with graduation looming and the support of an amazing dissertation director, I began to rub my eyes and get back to work. Surely, I thought, if I had worked this hard, given up so much, and been supported by so many kind, smart people, my demon was really just new job jitters—a phantom.

Despite many neurotic incidents that would probably confirm what those who don't read books would call pointy-headed-navel-gazing moments, I did finish, and I did end up at the Modern Language Association's yearly convention. To someone who is fortunate enough to work in that increasingly glamorous Real World, the university job search process appears odd. You can't walk in and apply for a job. You wait for colleges and universities to post highly specific ads. There are few places that colleges and universities post these job ads, and being called for a campus interview is a rare experience. As a result, the MLA may be the only place you can go for a face-to-face interview. Being a former theatre major, I saw the convention as a giant cattle-call audition (think, *A Chorus Line*). The only difference is that, unlike a true cattle call audition, if you just show up at the MLA, you are not guaranteed the chance to sing the first bars of "One (Singular Sensation)." Picking up an interview is rare. To wear that convention nametag, you've already been plucked from a pool of hundreds of applicants; you made it through the first round, and now you have the privilege of the MLA interview.

Unlike almost everyone I knew with newly minted degrees, I did have one MLA interview. I was cautiously optimistic. That feeling turned into a surreal disconnect when I was standing in line, waiting to find where my interview was scheduled. I looked around and saw a mob of well-dressed, very nervous people, who appeared as if they had all decided to give up smoking and gambling two hours earlier. I began talking to a man behind me. He wore a beautiful suit and a nervous smile. "This is my third year at MLA," he told me. I glanced at his nametag. Under his name was one of *the* Ivy League universities.

"Really. . . . wow," I replied.

"Yeah. My wife and baby are waiting for me back in the hotel room. I really hope my interviews go well."

His degree was in history.

Months after my MLA interview, with no communication from the school who interviewed me, I realized I hadn't landed The Job. I wondered if I, too, would be returning for this expensive and horrible experience every year. After a friend went to Los Angeles to break into the movie business, I realized that the odds of my finding a job in film were on par with finding a tenure-track position. And I had left theatre many years earlier because it wasn't *practical*?

Perhaps I would have stayed in the fray. Despite the tone of this article, I promise I'm actually an optimistic person. The reason I am now teaching high school is not only because of the hideous job market but also because of my experience as an adjunct. My English department treated their adjunct instructors as fairly as it could within such a system. My university, on the other hand, was criminal. In the fall of 2000, they published first pay dates for adjuncts, failed to meet them, and offered little reason for their failure, only vague mumblings about budget lines and that we would be paid "soon." As any of you who have struggled through summer employment know, you are desperate for that September paycheck. Landlords and credit card companies wait for no one.

If McDonald's or Wal-Mart failed to pay their employees on the promised pay date, what do you think would happen? The employees would walk off their jobs. Yet unlike Wal-Mart, our university thought nothing of missing a pay date for adjuncts. I didn't walk off the job out of loyalty to my department and my students, even though we were told we had no right to strike in our ironically named "right-to-work" state. Whether or not that was really true, the long-time adjuncts were strangely complacent. "Oh, this happens all the time," they said.

I realized at that moment that I could not survive the job search under conditions where I was obviously exploited and played for a fool. The university could treat the Humanities Department adjuncts this way because we would take it! We were all waiting for The Job, or just trying to survive financially while doing the one thing—teaching university students—that we had sacrificed family, money, and youth to do.

After another year (yes, I did continue to teach through the year), I had a few phone interviews, several in places where weather and geography were real concerns in delivering me to the campuses. Still, no job offer, and another possible year of adjunct joy. I received an offer to teach at a prestigious private high school. I decided to take the position. Maybe teaching high school would be fulfilling in at least some of the ways that college teaching was. After all, I'd be talking about books. The school seemed thrilled to have a Ph.D. on staff. Suddenly, I was not one in a sea of jobless Ph.D.s. I would shape lives and be responsible for the curriculum for my grade level. I would choose the books we would study. I would be appreciated. I would no longer be the poor slob who got this degree and this debt,

yet was somehow not worthy of The Job. Perhaps this job would at least be down the block from the promised land.

I told myself I would continue the university job search, but as those of you who teach high school English know, the amount of papers, after-school obligations, and additional sponsorship responsibilities are numerous. I taught English and public speaking, and coached the speech and debate team, and took them to competitions almost every weekend. I had little time left to sleep, much less complete academic articles. Then a member of the school's English department retired; the school did not replace him. I *might* not have to coach, but I would have to teach in an area in which I had no background. I knew I would have another summer and year in which I would produce no scholarly journals, and thus, I would be one more year on the job market and one year less employable. I found myself waiting for my life to begin.

This year I started a new job at a parochial high school where I am only teaching English, mostly juniors in American literature—my Ph.D. subject area. While I actually like my students' energy and humor, I have over 110 of them; 20 are ninth graders. As most of you know, ninth graders in the first fall quarter still act like middle school students. Some of the students are so small, I fear accidentally gathering them up with their papers and shoving them into my briefcase! I want to make it clear that I do not think I am too good to teach high school, but I know my gift does not lie in teaching literature and writing to children this young. I recognize it takes a certain gift to get ninth graders into high school shape, and I'm afraid I may lack that gift.

With the juniors, I enjoy the thrill of introducing them to certain novels. When students get to college, they have already been exposed to, say, *The Scarlet Letter* in high school, and more than a few hate it. I do enjoy the challenge of getting them to like such novels. I am far from Robin Williams's *Dead Poets Society* teacher, but I have had a few moments. Of course, because of certification standards and Diocese education hours requirements, I'm officially not qualified to teach high school. Sometimes I'm outraged by this fact. Other times I feel it may be true, if not in the education-course-requirement way they mean.

While I was in graduate school, attending conferences, teaching college students, and crafting papers, I imagined something very different from what I am now doing. When in graduate school, I knew I had sacrificed a great deal to become a Ph.D. candidate, but I was optimistic. We were all told that professors hired in the 1960s were retiring in droves; universities cannot depend upon massive adjunct labor and maintain their accreditation. Besides, my department educated "generalists," and it had an outstanding job-placement record. Who could have predicted the creative accounting that drove universities to depend upon adjunct labor, despite the booming numbers of students entering colleges and universities, all

required to take English classes to graduate? Certainly my parents didn't understand these outrageous odds to the tenure-track job or any university position until this year, when the *Washington Post On-line* published an article on adjunct exploitation and the humanities job market.

While graduate school was an amazing experience, when people ask me if they should enter into the Eden of the academy and pursue a Ph.D. in English, I carefully try to warn them against it. I realize these are futile efforts. I always see in their eyes the reactions that *I will be different; she's just bitter*; or worst of all, *but I can't imagine doing anything else*. I'm now almost \$40,000 in debt, and I teach high school, a job I'm technically not qualified to hold. And maybe, just maybe, I'm not. For now, I'm standing downwind from Eden, wondering where to go next.

*Crystal Laraine O'Leary currently teaches at St. Thomas More Catholic High School. Her doctorate is from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.*

### **Contingent in California**

Darrell Thompson

While there is certainly a problem throughout the nation concerning the use of part-time faculty in the college system, it has recently been recognized by the AFT that the West Coast is ahead of the curve where part-time treatment is concerned. This, of course, does not imply that we are where we should be, or that all part-timers on this side of the country have it equally good. Nonetheless, in California there have been a few significant advancements made by and for the part-time college instructors at the community colleges.

The most far-reaching improvement should be known by every part-time faculty member in California's college system because it involves pay equity. In 1999, the Community College Council proposed a pay equity plan, followed by a serious campaign involving part-time faculty and all their advocates. The result: for the year 2001–02, Governor Gray Davis, along with our legislature, approved a \$57 million fund that went to our part-time faculty as a supplemental check; this additional income brought many instructors to near full-time wages for their classes taught. Similar funds have been promised for the current academic year as well, in spite of the rather dour economic circumstances we face. According to Merl Demroff, a very active and knowledgeable union representative from East Los Angeles College, such achievements came largely as a result of lobbying and legislative activity.

Another statewide improvement was when the English Council of California Two-Year Colleges (ECCTYC), our regional arm of TYCA, acquired a new board

member, someone who would represent part-time community college English instructors. A voting member of the board, this member will also publish a regular column in ECCTYC's publication regarding part-time issues—no small steps, these, for a 30-year-old institution.

While these broad steps are significant, there were plenty of local achievements to celebrate throughout the state. All were, as far as I know, essentially accomplished in a similar way—negotiating, often with districts with a history of working to improve the plight of their part-time faculty. For instance, pro rata pay now exists at the Foothill-De Anza District and the Marin Community College District, and has just made its way into the contract at the Los Angeles Community College District—equal pay for equal work being a major concern for all of us. Also at LACCD, North Orange County College District, and a few other districts, there are now paid office hours, although office space is still a concern. Further, some districts are working to achieve health benefits and have made progress in this area. For instance, Los Angeles has recently achieved pro-rata health benefits, most recently including dental and vision. They are following on the heels of some similar successful achievements up in the northern part of the state.

In California, we also had a very successful Campus Equity Week, which may have contributed to some of our successes. A national event designed to bring attention to the conditions of all part-time faculty, it was an effort that the Californians took seriously. The event involved many activities that highlighted the inequities suffered by the part-time work force, as well as union driving which proved quite successful in some ways. A few districts got nearer to representation for their part-timers, and others added substantial numbers to their rolls. Some of the attention-getting events even got press coverage. Behind these activities lies the idea that we should make the general public, our colleagues, and our officials aware of the conditions in which we work. Apparently, it helped. With another Campus Equity Week arriving soon, those who are interested in activities and ideas can find information at the usual-suspect Web sites.

Clearly, we have made some headway in addressing the treatment of part-time workers in our system, attempting to elicit the respect they obviously deserve and place them in conditions that make teaching our students the fully rewarding job that it should be. Teaching—part-time, middle school, pre-k, whatever—is a prestigious occupation, and that should be reflected in the policies that affect *all* of our teachers. In California, we will continue to push for such policies, hoping to set a standard for the way teachers are treated.

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## Book Review

*Academic Keywords: A Devil's Dictionary for Higher Education*

by Cary Nelson and Stephen Watt, Routledge, 1999

Reviewed by Raymond A. Mazurek, Associate Professor, Penn State University

Imagine for a moment that it's the last game of the first round of the NBA playoffs in the 1960s, there are five minutes to play, and the Boston Celtics, in the middle of one of sports' greatest dynasties, are down 19 points. Imagine, for a moment, that the Celtics are coached not by the tough, cigar chewing Red Auerbach, but by the Modern Language Association (also known as MLA, for the information of devoted CCCers who may have forgotten). What sideline advice would be provided? Perhaps it would be: "Let's go out there and continue what we're doing. Maybe our individual stats will be respectable and we can look forward to a long period of time away from the pressures of basketball before the schedule resumes in the fall." If Cary Nelson and Stephen Watt were coaching the Celtics, or better still, chairing the prestigious MLA, the response would probably be more like Auerbach's: the academic equivalent of a full-court press in response to the crisis created by the employment practices of most colleges and universities. For Nelson and Watt, this means that colleges and universities should be judged by their alleged core values, such as academic freedom, fair treatment, and intellectual community, and the way those values are undermined by the exploitation of the part-time, graduate student, and full-time non-tenure track faculty who have since 1993 made up 65% of all faculty in higher education and who undoubtedly teach the majority of undergraduate courses.

Modeled after Raymond Williams's *Keywords*, with strong echoes of Ambrose Bierce, *Academic Keywords* might be better subtitled *The Consequences of the Collapse of Equitable Employment in the Corporate University*. If it is possible for two tenured professors to write a critique of the contemporary U.S. university from the bottom up, then this is it, for the book is permeated by outrage at the loss of fair rewards and fair treatment for the majority of faculty—and as Nelson and Watt note in their definitions, "*faculty* too often means part-time academic laborer" (134). In the section on part-time faculty, the authors point out that they had at first planned no definition section for part-time faculty because almost every section brought the problem forward. Making explicit what has been implicit throughout, they argue that

Part-time appointments are the single worst problem higher education faces, and they are linked to every other crisis in the industry. If you start talking about the detouring of the faculty, you end up talking about part-time employment. If you address threats to academic freedom, you must deal with the part-time scene, where they are worst

[. . .] University governance? Try addressing it without discussing part-timers' role in its future. The quality of undergraduate education? The future of graduate study? Faculty teaching loads? Funding for higher education? The dignity of teaching? The massive shift to part-time employment is at the center of everything we do (211).

The growth of the exploitation of part-time faculty and other university employees, whose jobs are increasingly outsourced to increase the bottom line, can be attributed to several causes. One reason is old-fashioned and hardly complicated: exploitation is profitable. While some academic departments have increasingly become involved, according to Nelson and Watt, in low-cost product testing for private industry, other departments are money-makers. Thus, "at Illinois, as a report presented to the faculty Senate demonstrated, a large humanities department like English turns out to run a large profit overall, whereas units like the Colleges of Engineering and Agriculture run at a loss" (92). Other causes include the falling public support for colleges and universities, which have too often failed to communicate their mission to the public effectively or lobby the legislature successfully. But the problem has also been perpetuated by those of us in the tenured faculty who have been remiss in public virtue, defining professional behavior as the pursuit of narrow career advancement. However well-intentioned individual officers may be, organizations like MLA (or CCCC, for that matter) have failed to effectively address the crisis: "Fiddling while Rome burned, disciplinary organizations have for years promoted individual faculty careers while their participatory departments became increasingly exploitative places to work" (109).

What Nelson and Watt propose instead is a more activist approach: publishing a list of universities that pay less than a minimum (they suggest \$3000 or \$4000 per course for instructors with Ph.D.s), barring full-time faculty at such institutions from certain organizational privileges, such as discounted hotel rooms at conferences or the right to publish in association journals, and in general asking full-time faculty to take responsibility for ignoring the part-time problem—a problem most tenured faculty have ignored despite the formidable protections afforded by academic freedom. (Perhaps they might have added the suggestion that for one year, conferences like CCCC and MLA be suspended while disciplinary organizations focus their whole effort in a meeting that confronts the employment crisis in all of its sessions. If nothing else, that would at least focus the full energy of those organizations on the problem, and perhaps gain some national publicity as well.) Meanwhile, rather than wait for the meaningful help from their tenured colleagues that may never come, part-time faculty are encouraged to unionize—hopefully in organizations that allow them some autonomy from their often indifferent tenured counterparts—and to engage in other forms of advocacy such as those that oc-

curred in 2001 in Campus Equity Week, two years after Nelson and Watt's book appeared.

*Academic Keywords* is not a perfect book. With so many strong opinions expressed and so much evidence that is anecdotal (along with considerable statistical evidence), there will be something to make almost every reader uneasy. I was annoyed that while the MLA was frequently discussed and even the National Association of Scholars received its own chapter, CCCC received only a single mention, when a number of statements against the exploitation of adjunct faculty were cited. Faculty who teach mostly composition may be surprised to learn that the major division in English departments is between traditionalists and advocates of theory, not between literature (theoretical or otherwise) and composition/rhetoric. Too often, Nelson and Watt are limited by their perspective as tenured professors of literature at research campuses. They present much sympathy for exploited rhetoricians but little knowledge of issues in fields such as composition or pedagogy, or of what the academic world looks like to the majority of tenured faculty like myself who have relatively non-exploited, full-time positions at places that are not on Nelson and Watt's list of 100 or so flagship research campuses. While they deplore the low wages paid to the high numbers of part-time faculty at community colleges and say that condescension towards those that hold positions at such colleges should cease, they don't exhibit very much understanding of the lives of community college faculty, which cannot be summed up adequately by discussing exploitation only.

Their section on teaching is thin, and their claim that a strong connection usually exists between outstanding research and teaching is a rather tired one by now. Nelson and Watt's strong support of the reduction in teaching loads that they admit has occurred since the 1960s at research institutions also makes me uneasy. Not surprisingly, academics have almost universally applauded reductions in their own teaching assignments, but such reductions have reinforced hierarchy and have sometimes been part of the problem, accompanied as they have been by the increase in non-tenure line faculty that Nelson and Watt document. Their position can be contrasted with the one that Richard Ohmann took in an equally significant book on the academic profession, *English in America: A Radical View of the Profession* (1976), which also attacked the careerism and class hierarchies in the English profession. No opponent of research and the intellectual growth it fostered, Ohmann nevertheless noted with skepticism that scholarship in English was becoming "a geometrically expanding archive, to be consulted by later aspirants to rank and influence so that they might prepare their own contributions to the glut of print" (40).

But these points of disagreement do not diminish my respect for what Nelson and Watt have accomplished in *Academic Keywords*. Like Ohmann, whose critique of the English profession still sets the standard for comparison, Nelson and Watt are asking for radical change in the profession and insisting that we look carefully at the external relations of the university to forces outside as we redirect the profession to live up to its best ideals and assume greater social responsibility. The last section of the book, defining yuppies, deplores the way some younger members of the profession know the rules too well, and act as if any responsibility that takes them away from their research is an imposition. "Is there one question you can pose to determine whether an assistant professor is well on the way to becoming a yuppie? Yes: what does your department pay its graduate assistants or part-time faculty? 'I don't know' is not a reassuring answer" (308). In 2002, there are none of us for whom that is an acceptable answer.

### References

- Ohmann, Richard. *English in America: A radical view of the profession*. New York: Oxford UP, 1976.
- Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*. New York: Oxford UP, 1976.

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### CAP Events at 2003 CCCC Convention in New York City

- SIG meeting on March 20, 2003, 6:30–7:30 p.m. Featured speaker is Eileen Schell, coauthor of *Moving a Mountain: Transforming the Role of Contingent Faculty in Composition Studies and Higher Education*.
- Join Karen Thompson for a panel on "Professional Transformations: Organizing to Convert Part-time or Non-Tenure-Track Faculty to Full-time or Tenure-Track Appointments" on March 21, 2003, 8–9:15 a.m.

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