ACADEMIC APARTHEID

WAGING THE ADJUNCT WAR

Edited by

Sylvia M. DeSantis

Forward by Robert W. Fuller

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CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PUBLISHING

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This book first published 2011

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-2859-9, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-2859-8

This volume is dedicated to all adjunct educators who have suffered through the sting of second-class citizenship.

The first lesson of power is that we are all alone;
the final lesson of power is that we are all one.

—Lynn Andrews

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FOREWORD

Many academics trace their choice of profession to a teacher who stirred their souls. Epiphanies first experienced at the hands of inspired teachers may shape the rest of our lives. The example such teachers set for us, not unlike that of a beloved parent, gives us a foretaste of the satisfactions of a life devoted to the pursuit of the true, the beautiful, and the just. The exemplary power of such teaching is compounded by the fact that it is in school where we first thrill to such noble ideals. In answering the call to an academic vocation we hope to live our lives in a community committed to liberty and equality, fairness and justice. It's the rare academic who does not take pride in belonging to an *honorable* profession.

This is why, when that honor is threatened or besmirched, academics are unusually prone to anguish.

I was a young college president during the social turmoil that roiled the land in the sixties and early seventies. Within a few years, students, faculty, and administrators at virtually all our institutions of higher learning were serving on committees charged with drafting legislation that would bring their institutions into alignment with newly emergent values of racial diversity and gender equality. By century's end, most colleges and universities had taken steps to discourage, if not disallow, discrimination based on race, gender, age, disability, and sexual orientation.

Once institutional traditions came into question, academics far and wide opted to reform institutional policy to conform to the evolving social consensus. By changing their ways of doing things, they legitimized the same changes in society at large. Institutions that resisted the social transformation were forced to go along, at first prodded by federal legislation, and then, as the new social consensus took hold, encouraged by social pressure.

Once again, we find ourselves in a moral predicament of this kind. From coast to coast, in educational institutions of every kind, adjunct faculty are subjected to discrimination and exploitation. They know it, tenure-track faculty know it, administrators know it. The essays in *Academic Apartheid* eloquently make the case. For every example of discrimination and inequity cited, a thousand more exist. The awful secret is out, and we can no longer avert our eyes. To save our honor, we'll have to deal with this injustice as we did with those that troubled us in the

sixties. If we do not close the gap between our principles and our practice, we forfeit our honor.

I won't belabor the immorality of paying adjuncts a fraction of what other faculty earn, and of denying them benefits, office space, parking rights, and a voice in departmental and institutional policy. The insults and humiliations chronicled in these essays are reminiscent of the degradation and injustice that roused us to act against racial, gender, and other indignities.

Of course, there's a reason that things are as they are. There is always a reason, one which seems cogent enough until suddenly, one day, it doesn't. What began as part-time teaching to meet a temporary need or plug a gap in the curriculum has evolved into systemic institutional injustice.

The practice of two-tiered pay scales is also found in Industry. For example, auto workers are forced to accept contracts in which one group is paid twice that of another—not for reasons of merit, but in order to hold down costs. No one takes exception to cost-cutting, but forcing one group to subsidize another that's doing comparable work, while humiliating them to remind them of their place, is what the world now recognizes as the ignoble policies associated with apartheid.

By working for a pittance, adjunct faculty are serving as involuntary benefactors of other faculty, administrators, and students. In the same way that the work of slaves subsidized the nation, adjuncts are forced to subsidize the university. That Academia has fallen into a practice that warrants the label "apartheid" is inconsistent with both academic and American values. Honor requires that we examine the practice and take steps to grant equal status and equitable compensation to those who, for whatever reason, are classified as adjunct faculty.

How might this be done? Although the essays in this book are more descriptive than prescriptive, they do contain the seeds of possible solutions. Coming up with a plan to end exploitation is never easy, and no doubt will require that we do what we did forty years ago: charge college and university committees, consisting of all stake-holders, with devising an equitable solution.

The adjunct issue has grown to huge proportions. During times of diminished resources, it's hard to enact costly reforms, but we must act. We need to consider all claims and possibilities. Everything must be on the table, even hitherto off-limits matters such as tenure.

As anyone acquainted with adjunct professors knows, they are, on average, as conscientious, committed, and capable of sparking epiphanies among their students as the "regular" faculty they subsidize. We shame

ourselves by treating them shamefully. That we ourselves are the beneficiaries of their victimization only strengthens the case for righting this wrong.

Let me suggest a slogan—Part-Time, Full Status, Equal Dignity—to guide the deliberations of what I hope we will soon see on every campus in the land: a "Committee on the Status and Compensation of Adjunct Faculty."

If colleges and universities tackle this threat to their honor with the same determination and integrity they brought to the issues of civil and women's rights, they will find a way to end the exploitation of those now relegated to the back of the bus. We rose to the challenge before. We can do it again. The longer we wait, the more intractable the underlying economics will become. To get started towards a solution, we have only to listen to the voices of these essayists, and include their like in the committees charged with hammering out a new and equitable academic compact.

—Dr. Robert W. Fuller
October 26, 2010

PREFACE

These stories have earned a voice.

This collection grew out of a similar anthology to which I contributed but never saw published. The email congratulating me on the essay's acceptance was followed a few months later with an apology. Both of the anthology's editors had scored tenure and decided that they no longer had time and/or interest in publishing a collection of have-nots' essays. Stunned at the irony, I appreciated their honesty if not their decision.

In response, another contributor queried the group, asking if anyone wanted to continue the project. I jumped at the challenge…and then promptly lost the co-editor. Busy with commitments, irritated at my to-do list, and stunned by the amount of work needed by us to find a publisher, she resigned.

Alone, in possession of about a half-dozen stunning essays, and disappointed once more, I debated whether to drop the project. I had other writing on which to focus, in addition to a full-time job and a part-time curriculum development gig. Most importantly, the misery of my adjunct days was behind me. Why dredge up that pain and celebrate it like unwanted flotsam left by a careless tide? Would I be enraging the administration for whom I used to teach? *Did I care?* As one who loathes political expediency and its undeserved rewards, I wanted to continue the project but hesitated still.

Shortly thereafter I endured a most unpleasant conversation with a recent Penn State University hire, a fresh new face on the tenure track celebrating his ability to "get out of teaching" his first semester. Around the same time I took additional work "tutoring" online to supplement my income to satisfy an insatiable student loan lender. The work required a graduate degree, the ability to review and comment on, in 30 minutes, a paper of any length, from any school, on any topic, written on any level, from high school student through Ph.D. candidate…and paid $1.00 less per hour than a local burger place.

Exhausted, penniless, and working multiple jobs *again* (all in higher education), adjuncting and its horrors didn't seem so far away anymore. The perfect storm of being chatted up by the smarmy academic one week and seeing my absurd pay stub the next broke open the memories of pain, injustice, and disgust. I hadn't buried them so deeply after all.

But this time, I had a plan. And a powerful choice.

Join me in celebrating this anthology's honest and heartbreaking collection that exemplifies perseverance, uncovers exploitation, and resonates with courage.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank, first and foremost, my wonderful editor at Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Carol Koulikourdi, for patiently answering all of my questions and helping to make this project a true pleasure. Special thanks to Dr. Robert W. Fuller for his advice, enthusiasm, and support; his passion for equity issues—especially as a Somebody who need not concern himself with Nobodies if he so chooses—is inspirational. Additional thanks go to those academics who showed me, through stellar teaching and genuine respect, how to make a classroom sing; thank you, Tom Gardner, Len Hatfield, Paul Sorrentino, and, in memoriam, J.D. Stahl. Special thanks also go out to Cheryl Ruggiero, who always supported me in my enthusiastic graduate student years and, most especially, to Anne Shaffran—a mentor and advisor of the highest caliber without whose unflinching support and guidance I would have sunk like a rock all those years ago. You treated me with respect and appreciation for which I not only continue to remain grateful, but also from which I gained an invaluable understanding of my self-worth in higher education.

Thank you, Dr. Phelan, wherever you may be, for making a difference in this student's life.

Thanks to my exceedingly patient partner, Dax Finley, for all those nights I left you to entertain the Züsinshmertzen, et al. whilst I closed the door to work in solitude. Thanks, as always, to Maria and Glenn; Mom, your support is unmatched and Glenn, thanks for the legal advice…and Salty Dogs (though, thankfully, not at the same time).

And, finally, *thank you* to all of the contributors of this anthology—for sharing your stories (sometimes at personal risk of job loss), having faith as the publication process unfurled, and trusting me with your collective voices.

INTRODUCTION

Grey clouds pregnant with snow hang low in the cold, dusty air. I park my ancient car, pull my coat around me, and slog through the dark November morning towards the English building. Only two months into Sophomore year and I've already blown a test. I dread facing this particular teacher because she's so remarkably nice. She has taken the time to learn my name and has read my essays to the class, calling them exemplary work. I'm feeling fairly shameful at my recent poor performance.

I squint into the shadowed hall and look around for Dr. Ignatio's doorway, tripping over a chair. She sits against an unused wall, papers overflowing into her briefcase, elbows propped on a tiny table. Pushing my most recent English test towards me, she tells me to sit and asks why I have done so poorly, surmising that the low B is the effect of getting to class late the morning of the test. I often look tired, she observes, and guesses that I probably commute (correct) and perhaps work a job in addition to taking classes (right again).

Dr. Ignatio praises my work, lets me know she will be making extra-credit work available to everyone, and tells me she expects me to take advantage and set my grade right. In rapid-fire, she then suggests I declare English as my major since I've already left the pre-med program and am a skilled writer. We have a productive meeting sitting on folding chairs shoved unceremoniously into a forgotten slice of hallway at my elite, private university whose tuition I can ill afford. She praises me in a way I have sought desperately since leaving high school, and all I can do is wonder why we are whispering in a drafty breezeway instead of a proper office.

When I ask, she looks shocked for a moment, stunned into a temporary silence and I wonder at my own boldness. "I'm part-time," she says briskly, "and this is the only space they could find." I remember with amazement the way she looked at me directly, rather than with the whisper of a glance most professors threw my way, and told me I was gifted at a time in my life when I felt hardpressed to tie my shoes without feeling the weight of failure. I also remember a slight embarassment for this amazing professor who resigned herself to having office hours at an old table in the hall. It seemed odd to me then, a clueless student, and it enrages me now.

That hallway meeting with a profoundly caring professor was my first—albeit second-hand—taste of adjunct inequality. Almost a decade would pass before I sat in a proverbial hallway myself, scrambling for work, sweating over contracts that might or might not be renewed at semester's end, worrying over my fragmented living. More than ever before colleges and universities employ contract workers to teach undergraduate courses, with many of us miraculously cobbling together a living without benefits, fair pay, or simple resources like office space or a phone.

Using adjuncts to help increase a school's financial solvency is neither new nor surprising but is, as elucidated by many of this collection's essays, horrifying in its human toll. The price this financially expedient behavior extracts from our educators—the same individuals who are consistently expected to be patient, manage expectations, work personal finance miracles, and eat crow—is exhorbitant. What does it mean for higher education when an individual in the fast food industry makes *more per hour* than an adjunct who may hold three degrees?

I suspect I was always destined for disappointment as an adjunct after having been treated handsomely as a graduate student; during my tenure in my master's program I was afforded everything I needed to succeed: respect, office space, preview books, and freedom mixed with careful guidance that helped me to grow into a thoughtful, well-rounded instructor.

Conversely, as a Humanities adjunct in a department populated soley by instructors borrowed from other departments, I experienced insane jealousy, vicious rage, and hyperbolic accusations. While some adjunct gigs allowed me to keep a sense of dignity, others opened me to inconceivably inappropriate behaviors specifically targeted at my part-time, temporary status—the kind of cruel harassment that would be considered grounds for legal action in almost any other field.

Academic apartheid is rampant in higher education, and the contributors to this anthology face this trend daily, usually without respect or resources, often in poverty. You'll find this collection frank, satirical, bitter, and bold. Some essays resonate with pain and fury, others with quiet acceptance, many with frustration.

The ivory tower's walls are high, especially for those living on its borders.

THE INCREDIBLE INVISIBLE ADJUNCT

RUTHI ROTH ERDMAN

Once you've been invisible for a few years or decades, you kind of get used to it. Similarly, after you've mastered such arts as thrift store shopping, finding free scrap wood for the woodstove, and drying clothes on a line, poverty seems almost normal. With enough experience, overwork and lack of respect become normal, too.

But in the summer of 2002, I made a terrible mistake. I suspended my career as an adjunct at a regional state university to take a temporary two-year position as project staff for a faculty collective bargaining organization. For my initial training, I was flown to Washington, DC, where I was astounded to find myself staying in a posh hotel and dining at luxurious restaurants—all at the expense of my new employer. My employer also provided me with a cell phone, full medical coverage for myself and my children, and a salary of $36,000 a year—apologizing that the salary should be higher, but the project had only so much funding.

For those two years, my children did not qualify for reduced lunches at school, and I no longer qualified for an Earned Income Credit. For two years the term "weekend" took on meaning for me; it now had connotations of relaxation and time for my own projects, not a marathon of paper-grading. Evenings, similarly, were my own, not dedicated to grading today's assignments and preparing tomorrow's. For two years, I was paid mileage for all work-related travel, plus hotel and meal costs. For two years, I had reasonable workloads and decent pay. For two years, I got to experience how the other half lives.

When I went back to adjunct teaching, the full horror of my mistake soon came home to me. Deprivations and insults to which I had become more or less numb over the years now pricked at me as they stood out in sharp relief against my two-year hiatus. The 2006 transition back to my fourteen-year career felt like a precipitous fall from grace. For example, though I had taught at my university steadily since 1988, I found upon my return that I was, forsooth, a *new hire* and would not receive any medical benefits until my second quarter of employment. I had to scramble to find a catastrophic health plan whose premiums I could afford on my now-reduced salary.

What was I thinking to lift my nose temporarily from the grindstone of adjunct life, to assume visibility when I would have to relinquish it again, to taste respect and luxury when I would have to lose them? Now that I have experienced "weekends" in the exuberant American sense of the word, I resent giving over my weekends to exhaustive (and exhausting) essay assessment for which I am paid so much less ($20,000 to $25,000 a year for teaching full time, until the new union raised my income to the $32,000 I still make today). Having miraculously surged upward into the middle class for two years, I chafed at having sunk back into the category of "working poor"…or perhaps, considering my graduate degree, the "genteel poor"?

I must confess that my graduate degree is not a Ph.D.; I have only a Master's degree which, as I long to say before the Board of Trustees, ABSOLUTELY explains why, after over twenty years of teaching at this university, I earn less than a high school drop-out who has checked groceries at Safeway for five years. But given that the university for which I teach is in the business of granting degrees like mine—and an MA is the highest degree it awards—isn't it a bit odd that the institution places such a low value on them and holds them in such contempt?

"Contempt" is not too strong a word for the attitude some tenured faculty have, not just toward the MA degree, but toward adjuncts in general. While many TT faculty are sympathetic toward adjuncts, there are those who fight to deny us ANY advancement at all. When my university's Faculty Senate was discussing the perimeters our faculty bargaining unit would take, a few tenured faculty argued that no adjuncts, not even those teaching full time, should even be included in the bargaining unit. "I've worked hard to achieve my status as faculty member," one tenured professor fumed, "and I don't want to see the definition of 'faculty' watered down."

And adjuncts HAVEN'T worked hard? I suspect that my tenured colleague doesn't realize that at my university, there are about 40 adjuncts who have earned terminal degrees—nearly all Ph.D.s. Many of these have also taught longer than my tenured colleague himself. And surely a Master's degree plus ten or more years of teaching amounts to something, especially at a *teaching* institution? Furthermore, many adjunct faculty members at my university have publication records—astonishing considering their publications earn them no tenure, merit, or promotion.

But how can the tenured faculty know this? Such facts are not publicized or spoken of at my university; the invisibility of adjuncts must be maintained for the comfort of everyone else.

An adjunct colleague and friend of mine with a Ph.D. from a respected university published a book a few years ago based on her doctoral dissertation. The book won prestigious academic awards and was eventually purchased by over 400 university libraries. The dean of our college actually included my friend in a small reception for newly published faculty. At the reception, the dean raved over my friend's book and announced—quite accurately—that my friend was one of the most productive scholars in the entire college.

But this same friend's achievement won her nothing at all in any measurable terms. She did not receive any merit or points toward promotion, as a tenured or tenure-track faculty member would have. Her impressive publication record will never win her the Distinguished Faculty Award for Research, because adjunct faculty aren't eligible to compete for it. There is no official, institutional recognition of her achievement in research and publication. So when my tenured colleague claims he has "worked hard," he probably is genuinely unaware that non-tenure-track colleagues have worked just as hard as he has, earning Ph.D.s and publishing academic works.

Of course, even adjuncts without terminal degrees or publication records generally "work hard." The annual full teaching load for a TT faculty member at my university is 36 load hours—rather high, because this is a teaching and not a research institution. But for an **adjunct** faculty member to be considered as carrying a full load, the count is considerably higher—45 load hours.

Now, here's an odd thing. Even an adjunct teaching the full 45 load hours (15 credits per quarter Fall, Winter, and Spring) is still often classified as "part time," while all TT faculty, regardless of their work load, are classified as "full time." When faculty and administrators discuss TT versus quarter-contract issues, they speak of "full-time faculty" versus "part-timers." I have taught as many as 55 load hours a year and still been called a "part-timer." Adjunct colleagues of mine in English, History, and Philosophy teach as much as an unbelievable 65 load hours a year, but that doesn't make them "full time." By what perversion of language can 65 load hours be called "part-time" when 36 is "full-time"?

That's not the only perversion of language used at my institution to misclassify adjuncts. My colleagues and I are not only "part-timers"; we're also "temporary" or "non-permanent" employees. For years, I obtained a copy every quarter of the faculty records and gaped at my name under the classification of "PT Temp." It boggled my brain every time. But I'm not the worst case. "Temporary" colleagues of mine have taught

here for 30 and, in two cases that I know of, 35 years straight. (Did they get retirement parties when they finally wore out? Don't make me laugh.)

It seems to me as a philologist that these misnomers, if they once were accidental (a carryover from a time when adjuncts really WERE part-time and temporary), are no longer so. The misnaming is deliberately perpetuated, I suspect, in order to keep adjunct faculty in their place.

Yet even if we were all part-time and temporary, that wouldn't justify excluding us from bargaining units or denying us pro rata pay. Why should someone teaching half as much as someone else be paid only one-sixth as much? And why shouldn't part-time employees vote on their union contracts along with full-time employees, just as they do in every other industry that has collective bargaining?

In justice to my university, I must point out that in recent years, there has been a considerable increase in sympathy and respect for adjuncts among some TT faculty, including the Senate and the department chairs. The verdict came down solidly in favor of including adjuncts in the bargaining unit. And about five years ago, the Faculty Senate decided to give adjunct faculty what the students had already had for years—representation on the Faculty Senate. Adjuncts still may not vote for their department senators, but now they may vote, as a body, for two adjunct senators to represent all 350+ of them.

When I became Adjunct Senator three years ago, I immediately saw the formidable challenge before me: to find something to contribute to the discussions at the Senate table. Even though each of my fellow senators represents ten to twenty people while my adjunct colleague and I represent over 350, a considerable portion of the Faculty Senate agenda does not apply to my constituency. As the Senate has consisted for decades only of TT faculty, the focus tends to be on their issues: tenure, promotion, merit, and such. To them, non-tenure-track faculty still tend to be invisible.

The good news is that some complaints about the treatment of non-tenure-track faculty that I've brought up in the Senate have actually been heeded. For instance, two years ago the other NTT senator and I pointed out that the university-level Distinguished Faculty Awards for teaching, research, and service, which had been granted annually for over 30 years, were open only to tenure-track faculty, excluding me and all my NTT colleagues. The Senate actually passed a resolution creating a new, separate award for which only NTT may compete and which is only for teaching. And it came with the same honors as the original awards: an equal monetary prize, a slot to make a speech at Honors Convocation, and a framed professional portrait hung permanently in the administration building.

I was thrilled this year to be the second winner of the award. Heaven knows I could use the cash prize, and it comforts me to know that though I may be officially a "temporary" employee, my portrait in the administration building is permanent. That's the good news, but there's still bad news. Even with this great progress, academic apartheid must yet prevail. While the tenured winners' portraits are all along one wall in a continuous succession from the 1970s to this year's winners, the two NTT winners so far are on a separate wall, with a separate—but equal—plaque. (Doesn't anyone realize that Plessy vs. Ferguson was overturned?)

With this award, I have achieved more visibility than I ever dared to hope for, and almost certainly all I'm going to get. I'm delighted with it, but that doesn't mean that my colleagues, as a body, are yet fully recognized for their existence, their great numbers, or their contributions to the university. The cloak of invisibility has not entirely dropped, as is reflected by the fact that most Senate matters still apply only to tenure-track faculty.

I have decided that there is one kind of recourse available to invisible people: noise. So as Adjunct Senator, I have made it my policy whenever a "generic" topic comes up—say, classroom technology upgrades or the Finals Week schedule—to stand up at the microphone and say something, anything, just to make myself, and therefore the adjuncts I represent, conspicuous.

Adjunct faculty and their issues have long failed to register on the radar screen of the universities where they teach. And so I see my role as analogous to that of the littlest Who in Dr. Seuss's *Horton Hears a Who*: to break the sound barrier for my invisible cohorts and insistently squeak, "We are here! We are here!"

OF IMMIGRANTS AND ADJUNCTS

LORI MAYBEE REAGAN

"How Much Do You Make?"

When my oldest daughter, Hayley, started kindergarten two years ago, I became friends with the mother of Hayley's new best friend. I discovered after several months that "Norma" and her husband "Eduardo" had come to the United States legally from Mexico on tourist visas over ten years ago and simply decided not to return home again. They found jobs, bore two American daughters, became home owners, and resigned themselves to never returning to Mexico again to see their aging parents and growing extended families. Norma works as an evening shift manager at a McDonald's restaurant from 5:00 PM to 1:00 AM, five days a week. She oversees a crew of, on average, twelve workers. She shifts between Spanish and English as she talks with her crew, takes customer orders, fills out paperwork and fills orders, and manages problems and people. When she is able to go home—around 2 AM—she slips into bed and sleeps until 7:30 AM, when she rises to make breakfast for her husband and daughters. After they go to work and school, Norma tries to sleep a little longer, then wakes up again to put her house in order before picking up her children from school. She is able to spend a little time with them, guiding them through homework assignments, before making an early dinner that her family eats without her as she readies herself for her shift.

As Norma and I oversaw our daughters' play dates, our conversations often turned to our jobs. She hated hers; I sort of enjoyed mine. As an Adjunct Professor of English and Women's Studies, I have a wealth of flexibility in my job denied to Norma in hers. I am usually consulted about what courses and what hours I can teach before the semester starts. I select my own textbooks and plan my curriculum. In contrast, Norma's work hours are long and the job arduous and menial. My work hours at the university are not very long. Much of my "work," however, I perform at home—after my children go to bed, when my husband can watch the children for a couple of hours, on weekends. As such, this part of my work—the part I complete at home—is unpaid and virtually invisible to

the university that employs me and to the neighbors who try to account for my being home so much if I am a working woman.

That semester, I taught two classes of twenty-five students that granted three credit hours to each. Although my lecture time only totaled six hours per week, I am also required to maintain office hours, so my six hours became nine. Add in the preparation time and the time needed to design assignments, grade 150 papers, 50 mid-term and 50 final exams, attend mandatory Adjunct meetings, and answer email, and my part-time job feels like it is "part-time" in name only.

Despite my work challenges and time crunches, my job bears little resemblance to Norma's. There is, however, one commonality that binds our jobs together: pay. More specifically, *low* pay.

After spending time together and forming intimacies around our family roles, Norma asked me a question that violates a basic American taboo. "How much do you make?" she asked. I was a taken aback and immediately defensive. My salary has long been a sore point with me because my pay is low, embarrassingly low. Every adjunct knows and, indeed, even many professors could attest that if we calculate all the time we invest in our jobs, our hourly wages would not even come close to meeting Federal Minimum Wage standards. Once, when my husband and I were buying our first home together, the mortgage company we were using required me to write a letter explaining my low pay and forecasting a time when I would be making much more money; the last part, the higher-paying job, has yet to materialize. I remain quiet, sometimes pretending I have not heard the question when the subject of money comes up, because I do not want to admit my low pay.

Since Norma has confided in me her immigration status, I ultimately feel obliged to tell her the truth. She is shocked at the number I state. She is not shocked, however, by the fact that it is very low. What shocks her, I soon learn, is that she and I make roughly the same annual salary. She says, "But you hardly ever work, and I work all the time." In a way she is right. She puts in so many more hours toiling in a physical workplace. However, I invested many more years in pursuit of my training, taking out a number of student loans to pay for this access into a higher-paying career and spending many days and nights in dogged pursuit of this goal. Moreover, much of my work, as I mention above, is not tallied as work—the course preparation, the grading, responding to emails—because it produces no income. I beg to differ with Norma: it is just as much, if not more so, work.

The Unacceptable Transfer of Effort

In their work lives, historically and currently, immigrants, especially field laborers, are often forced to pay rent to their unscrupulous employers for the "privilege" to live in ramshackle accommodations. They are often forced to shop in the "company" store, again owned by their employer, and made to pay exorbitant prices for the products found within. One of the newest trends in the adjunct world appears to be an updated version of the treatment long endured by immigrants. To describe our situation, Lynn Truss's term, "the unacceptable transfer of effort," seems apropos. In *Talk to the Hand*, Truss argues:

> In common with many people today, I seem to spend my whole life wrestling resentfully with automated switchboards, waiting resentfully at home all day for deliveries that don't arrive, resentfully joining immense queues in the post office, and generally wondering, resentfully, "Isn't this transaction of mutual benefit to both sides? So why am I not being met half-way here? Why do these people never put themselves in my shoes? Why do I always have to put myself in theirs? Why am I the one doing this?[1]

Although Truss is discussing a frustration she finds in the relationships between consumers and service providers, her point is equally valid when applied to the relationship between the Adjunct Professor and the university or college which employs her. She is called upon too often to compensate for an employer that does not meet her half-way.

In my case, I am not granted an office. I am, instead, allowed access to a commons room. Should I need to conference with students, we will be often be joined by other adjunct professors and their students. Sensitive subjects can rarely be broached, because there is no guarantee of privacy. As I do not have an office, I have no way to receive telephone messages, so I disperse my cell phone number to students. Paying my cell phone bill, of course, is my personal responsibility. I am allowed to use a communal copier, which serves all adjunct professors and the wait times can be exceedingly long. Because of this, I often make copies at a copy store, an expense for which I am not reimbursed and that cuts into my small salary. I answer email on a computer I have purchased myself using a service provider to which I pay a monthly fee. I pay a fee each semester to park on campus while full-time faculty and staff are granted privileges at no costs to themselves. Finally, if I am asked to teach an on-line course, I again

[1] Lynn Truss, *Talk to the Hand* (New York: Gotham Books, 2005).

shoulder the additional associated-costs—access to broadband or wireless computer networks.

A reasonable question to ask is, "Why do I do this?" Indeed, why would anyone who has invested so much time and money to learn a skill take on such a low-paying job? This is a question that invariably comes up when adjuncts congregate together: Why do we do this? Our answers are almost all cliché. We love to teach. We do not do it for the money. We like to keep our knowledge-bases and skills fresh. We enjoy the environment offered by jobs in higher education. We all loved our own college experiences and enjoy being around students today. These answers I have come to feel are not good reasons. Indeed, something must be very wrong for so many of us to do this voluntarily. But therein lies the rub. Is the adjunct role a "voluntary" one? As I have talked to so many of my colleagues and as I have mulled over my own situation, I have come to feel that the adjunct role is not voluntary, but is instead highly coerced.

Here again I find many parallels between the situations of the adjunct laborer and the immigrant laborer. Our situations, of course, are not entirely analogous and to suggest so would be unfair. Adjunct professors are not held in check by threat of deportation or by societal limitations such as not being fluent in speaking English or functionally literate in reading and writing it. Most of us adjunct laborers are not subject to overt racism or hostile working conditions.

Of course, I can quit my job any time. My income is supplemented (many times over) by my husband's. And the loss of income would not be too severe for my family to overcome. I am a citizen of the United States and I am welcome to apply at many other businesses. I have the requisite paper-trail of a birth certificate and a social security number. This is a factor that does not correlate with many immigrants' economic prospects: my job loss would not present an insurmountable obstacle. I could find employment at my current rate of pay with little challenge.

The university could also decide not to renew my contract. Indeed, the contract I am asked to sign states that I acknowledge that my contract is no guarantee of future employment and the university can revoke my position at any time and for any reason. This is a much likelier course of action than an alternative one, the one that keeps me and so many of my colleagues in the adjunct pool: the prospect that our part-time roles could become full-time positions.

A Feeling of Inferiority

Not every adjunct works on the assumption that if they are competent, and even distinguish themselves at their jobs, she will be granted a job at a higher status and a full-time rate of pay. But many of us do. This hope, I have found, is actively fostered by our supervisors. Indeed they must do this to counterbalance the implicit threat contained within our contracts, the one constant reminder of our precariousness within the university. The university considers us temporary laborers. Further language found in my own contract highlights this temporariness. It tells me that I have no right to serve on any university committee and no authority to counsel students in either an official or an unofficial capacity. I have taught part-time at the university for eight years now. In that time, four full-time one-year renewable positions have been posted. Adjuncts, especially, are encouraged to apply for these positions. This is our carrot, we believe, the reason we have labored under these unacceptable conditions: the real possibility of full-time employment.

I have seen almost every one of my adjunct colleagues vie for the positions. Numerically, they each have a slim chance of being rewarded with the job. But as each job has been filled, three of the four by persons applying from the outside, each adjunct faced an obstacle that none had counted on—her "knownness" to the hiring committee is virtually her undoing. The hiring committee, three out of four times, has preferred to fill the position by the "exotic" commodity, the person coming from another university or another state, the person the committee has no reason yet to dislike or to disrespect, the person who has not proved her unworthiness by allowing her labor to be exploited in an unequal capital exchange with the university in her capacity of an adjunct.

Thus it becomes clear to the adjunct that she is viewed by her superiors as inferior, as unworthy. This depreciation of our esteem by others quickly taints our own self-esteem. "What else can we do?" we lament amongst ourselves. "If we quit our jobs, others would line up to take our places. We are powerless."

This, I feel, is the real crux of the matter, the real reason I can no longer subscribe to the adjunct role as voluntary. We are repeatedly reminded that our role in the academic community is a small and temporary one. Indeed, we are discouraged by policy and by tradition from even associating with full-time faculty. They trot off to their more important meetings while we scramble to make copies or to meet with students in crowded communal rooms. They are guaranteed due process should the university ever decide to fire them. We are let go immediately,

quietly, and for no cause. We are kept marginal and any attempt to ingratiate ourselves or to ask for acceptance into the wider university culture is forbidden.

Sadly, this describes my situation. If I read the above paragraphs to Norma, substituting the word "adjunct" for "illegal immigrant," she could easily claim my situation as her own. It matters little if we perform these jobs—part-time, low-paying academic ones, or full-time, low-paying labor jobs—willingly or even if we absorb immense satisfaction from them. The end result of executing these jobs is a permanent stain of inferiority, a continuing reminder of our unworthiness to participate in the full fellowship of the university community, and, ultimately, a theft of our dignity.

This separation and ensuing loss of esteem, after all, was the very factor that made racial segregation so immoral, decreed the U. S. Supreme Court in their landmark case, "Brown v. the Board of Education." They wrote then words of stinging rebuke that are still applicable today: "To separate them from others of similar […] qualifications […] generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone."[2]

[2] U.S. Supreme Court. Brown v. Board of Education. 1954.

My Time as an Insider, Outsider, Advocate, Adjunct

Colin Irvine

As a white, middle-class male who adjuncted briefly at a women's college, I reflect on these memories in relative tranquility on the eve of my fifth year in a tenure-track position. No longer living and working in that place somewhere on the edge of the university between the students and the powers that be, I have—after four years on the inside of the academy, versus the times I was an adjunct without a parking permit or a campus P.O. box—become convinced that the relationships among adjuncts, institutions, and students complicates and undercuts common knowledge about who in higher education has power and what exactly it means to be privileged.

I have seen and experienced things in higher education that persuade me to think that adjuncts posses a uniquely non-threatening and empowering kind of authority distinct from the power full-time, tenured and tenure-track professors possess. And, most importantly perhaps, I have discovered that adjuncts can, if they are willing and able, tap their authority as both insiders (by virtue of their education) and outsiders (given their status within the academy) and use it on behalf of their students, especially those attempting to find a foothold in college and, in this manner, begin identifying, addressing, and redressing discriminatory injustices. Adjuncts, in short, bring unique perspectives to their approach to higher education. This issue, with its focus on power, relationships, discrimination, and education is much too complicated to be captured through analysis and exposition. One can only, I believe, come at these things indirectly, through stories:

Without thinking, I hurried onto the packed elevator while the door was closing. All conversation stopped. The woman pushing the button for the third floor held her finger suspended over the panel and glanced at me. "Third's good," I said, nodding and half-smiling. She said nothing. The elevator lurched as it started, and the group of us rode from the basement up to the third floor in silence.

Then it hit me. I was the only male in the group. In fact, I was the only Caucasian aboard, and I was apparently overdressed. I adjusted the strap of my briefcase bag on my shoulder and stared at my shoes. The women remained still and quiet, but I could feel them trying to make eye contact with each other, and I could feel them trying to figure me out.

I suppose I shouldn't have been surprised to find myself in this situation. I had accepted a temporary, part-time position teaching a night course in developmental writing at a women's college, and I had been advised that the students who typically take this section come from a variety of academic and diverse backgrounds. But, nonetheless, I was surprised. I felt out of place and awed at how quickly and completely my presence imposed itself on others in this place.

Two weeks earlier, while interviewing for the position, I sat upright and looked as professional as possible while half-listening to the two women on the hiring committee explain that because this night class was a section of an extant offering that had overfilled I would be following another teacher's curriculum and calendar. Doing my best to ignore my internal monologue—talking at me about how much work this was going to be for such little pay—I nodded and smiled as the women underlined the course's importance by reminding me several times that students needed it to pass in order to be admitted into the college as a degree-seeking undergraduates. And yet despite these efforts made to ensure that I appreciated this fact, its import escaped me. As usual, I was thinking about me. Concerned that working under the direction of an instructor familiar with the course and the college's methodology would expose my ignorance and make apparent that I was a fairly inexperienced writing instructor, I assured the women that I would be delighted. We then concluded the interview and parted ways, leaving me less than two weeks to prepare for the course.

In the interim, while trying to familiarize myself with the school's approach to instruction and evaluation—an approach which substituted narrative assessments for more traditional letter grades and points systems—I found myself often sidetracked by contemplations about what it means exactly to be an adjunct instructor. Prior to that point, I had been a high school teacher at my old high school for three years and a teaching assistant at Marquette University for four. I had, in my estimation, always been somewhat in sync with my students and with the school. I had been, I believed, a kind of insider with a privileged, advantageous position.

After serious reflection, I concluded before ever stepping foot into the classroom that this opportunity at the women's college would be decidedly dissimilar from the teaching I had done. Unlike my other experiences in

the classroom, in this instance and at this school I would have no academic or personal ties, and I would be only tenuously linked to the department for which I would be working. What's more, I would have very little in common with the students; thus, these women, I assumed, would be the insiders—those comfortable in the college and the classroom, those with power—while I would be stuck outside looking in at them and their world. I was wrong on both accounts.

As I stood in front of the students minutes after escaping the elevator, and as I prepared to pass out the syllabus and discuss course goals and objectives, I sensed a gap separating them and me, a white, middle-class, highly-educated male wearing a pressed shirt and displaying an uneasy manner standing in front of a dozen Hispanic- and African-American women wearing casual clothes and looking as though they would rather be relaxing elsewhere. To be sure, the cat was out of the bag, the elephant was in the room, and the clichés were almost palpable. Because of what had already come to pass in the elevator, they knew that I knew that they were playing the part of the reticent students who—according to the unwritten script—insist that the teacher do the talking and teaching.

Naively, resolutely, I proceeded with the plan I had outlined; after passing out the syllabus, I explained the assignments, outlined the objectives, talked about my philosophy of teaching, and invited them to talk about their hopes, fears, and expectations for the course. They did not verbally, though their body language and accompanying silence spoke volumes.

I then adjusted my plans slightly. I had them write a letter to me about themselves and about what they wanted and needed from the class. They wrote. They rewrote. They crossed out and scribbled over and started over and eventually completed brief letters by the end of the hour. They submitted the letters—each student carefully sliding hers into the pile—as I wished them a good evening and waited in my sentinel stance until they left the room. I then slumped into a chair and listened to their conversations grow increasingly animated the further the women moved down the hall and away from me.

That evening as I read the letters, I found that each student expressed anxiety about writing in college and commented that previous writing experiences had been marked by frustration and humiliation. Deferential in tone and rhetorically conscious of me, their intended audience, the letters forced me to realize that I was not, as I had imagined, an outsider…at least not from the students' standpoint. I was, by contrast, tied to the school's authority and, more importantly, I was in their estimation linked to the implicit, elusive power associated with academic knowledge and seemingly

erudite, "Standard-American English;" I could speak another language, one they knew they needed to learn if they were to gain access not only to this college but also to the special rights and privileges spoken of on its diplomas.

Surprised by the way the students had received me and suddenly wishing to assure them that I was their advocate as opposed to their enemy, I scrambled to adjust my mindset and correlative approach. I shelved my plans for the second day of class and began by telling them about how I had ended up in this women's college teaching this night class. I began at the beginning. I talked about being a first-generation college student, the son of janitor and a 9-5 working mother. I talked about getting to attend a private high school on a tuition voucher because my dad was the head of maintenance, about going to college and feeling unqualified and overwhelmed. And, closer to home, I talked about my apprehensions connected to teaching at an all-girls' college. I gave them a blow-by-blow account of the interview, and I confessed to feeling unprepared and even somewhat unqualified to teach this course. I then admitted that I would be following another teacher's lead and, in the process, doing my best to help them pass this course and achieve their goal of getting admitted into the college. They listened. Something happened.

In the process of confessing to and making light of my insecurities, and while calling attention to my status as an underpaid and overworked adjunct instructor, I invited the students to share their stories and explain in this way how they ended up in this class and to discuss where they hoped it would ultimately lead. And while noting how eagerly and effectively they assessed and articulated their lives and goals through stories, and based upon the overall change in the classroom tone, I decided to shift the course's emphasis away from exposition and toward story telling with the intent to employ the narrative form as a means of helping the students write effective expository essays. Further, I chose not to deny our differences but, instead, I decided to draw upon them for constructive purposes. I found that, because they knew me to be a person who could, at some level, determine their academic fate, it would be ludicrous and even condescending to deny or downplay my position of authority.

Rather than ignoring the elephant in the room, I pointed it out. But this didn't necessitate that I assert or abuse my power; in fact, admitting to having power meant I could then use it to their benefit. Also, reminding the women that my power was temporary and tenuous and that I was, like them, in a limited situation on the edge of the institution, helped me assure them that as an adjunct instructor in this department, a *visitor*, I was their teacher, though this was not my college. I reminded them, in other words,

that they were my priority and that I was there to help them to do well on the assignments so that they could meet the learning outcomes and, in due course, pass the course and gain admission into the college. And, surprisingly, these admissions and the pedagogical approach they inspired proved effective. The students' writing improved and developed relatively quickly, and the students successfully achieved the objectives established by my superior. What's more, they soon realized that they could learn to navigate the elusive academic language common to college and to the professional world beyond the campus perimeter.

When we transitioned from writing and sharing stories to producing the more typical and often daunting expositional essays, for instance, I called attention to the conventions connected to various genres and rhetorical situations (most notably, the college-level English classroom and its customary assignments). Downplaying the traditional emphasis placed upon mechanics and content, I talked at length about the nuances and unwritten rules associated with writing in college for various people and purposes. We analyzed sample essays from courses I was teaching at Marquette and addressed the similarities among the papers in terms of topic selection, diction, sentence structure, and style.

In the process of discussing these issues and ideas with the students, I found that it was the discourse conventions, not issues related to mechanics and style, that caused these students the greatest unease and anxiety. They knew that they could learn grammar, and they knew that they could improve upon things such as writing better conclusions and avoiding common spelling mistakes, but they also knew that there were unwritten rules not necessarily addressed in their handbooks. This is where I, as one from the establishment and as an outsider/adjunct, came in. I was as alumni and teacher familiar with the unwritten code connected to college-level, formal writing, and I could speak to the students' concerns and help them recognize, abide by, and—when possible and permissible—interrupt these discourse conventions. This, I believe, was the single biggest advantage of being both an insider and outsider/adjunct instructor. I could talk with these women about what seemed to them to be a mysterious, almost unknowable and coded language and help them to realize that they have the capacity and control to identify the conventions and write their essays accordingly. What's more, as an insider—one intimately familiar with the conventions of formal college writing—and as an outsider/adjunct, I could talk knowledgeably and authoritatively with the students about what "they" (meaning those in authority) wanted and expected of them, the students.

As I sit here now, five years later, imagining my students sitting there in front of me—two per table, leaning on elbows, smiles and furrowed brows on their faces, a clutter of bags on the floor—I can't help but wonder where they are, how they are doing in their classes, and how close they are to achieving their dreams and earning their degrees. Perhaps, if time permits, and if I can have the integrity of an adjunct and, in this regard, put my pursuit of tenure on the backburner, I will make time get in touch with a few of them, find out how they are and what they are doing. And if not, maybe I can do the next best thing for them and those who follow in their footsteps—reach out to the five adjuncts crammed into one office down the hall and advocate for them in any way I can as an assistant professor.

THE LADDER AND THE ADJUNCT

CHRISTY LUSIAK

It is not uncommon to think of a workplace like a ladder. In most professions, the ideal situation looks something like this: your hard work will always pay off, moving you up the ladder toward more responsibility, better compensation, or more recognition at the very least. In the world of the adjunct, specifically one teaching freshman composition, this holds true only insofar as the payoff means that a majority of your class moves past the five-paragraph essay and truly grasps the magical "thesis statement." Or that another group of students, chips on their shoulder intact, trust themselves to write more than three pages with ease. Sometimes, that payoff comes in the form of students learning that "their" and "there" are not, in fact, interchangeable, or that "u" and "cause" (as in "because") don't have a place in a paper. At its best, this payoff steps to center stage when students see that there is a difference between writing and writing *well*, or that composition isn't just a course requirement, but a skill that will be continually called upon. Whether to apply for a job, write a book of poetry, or finish a 20-page research paper, the art of writing will allow students to stand out as competent, budding young employees who will begin to climb a ladder of their own one day.

This, perhaps, is what makes freshman composition so important. The stakes are high for students once they pass beyond their undergraduate career, and the skills they learn through a composition course—hopefully to read critically and write concisely—will stay with them long after they pass through my classroom. Adjunct professors shoulder the heaviest load in teaching these composition courses and the reparations for performing such a service are lacking. The ladder of advancement doesn't really exist for us—as independent contractors, we do our job, revel in our students' victories, pray that we have a job waiting for us the following semester, and try to avoid a doctor's visit at all costs. The climate of university English departments is shifting rapidly around the literature/composition divide, and I would argue that from the depths of this divide, part-time faculty could emerge as a tappable resource to facilitate a successful reinvention. I don't believe we ask for much, but there are several changes that can be made to ensure that adjunct professors have what they need to

comfortably exist with the possibility of advancement, financially or otherwise. But first, a little background as to who exactly we are, and what leads us to the ivory gates.

For some who need flexibility, are covered by a partner's health policy, or aren't dependent on their income, adjuncting can be a pretty good gig. For others who love both the flexibility and teaching, but don't have health insurance, decide (for various reasons) not to work toward a Ph.D., and who owe the state a pile of money plus interest, pursuing employment as an adjunct might be viewed counter-intuitive, or at the very least, unwise. I fall into this category of adjuncts, and as a relative newbie (I've been teaching since 2005, but have only carried full loads for the past few semesters), am currently undergoing a baptism-by-fire. While I was aware that the salary of an adjunct was relatively low and rarely included health benefits, I am just learning that as an academic career, it is viewed as a lesser part of the whole, and that sometimes the ends do not, in fact, justify the means.

At my current institution, adjuncts teaching composition definitely outnumber full-time faculty, and I would imagine that this trends nationally for two simple reasons—we work cheaply and general education writing classes aren't considered desirable to full-time faculty (who don't have a Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition, of course). Yet, I've found that very few of us teaching composition actually have academic backgrounds in composition studies either. Many, like myself, have a Master's degree in Literature or another humanities-focused degree. Appointments teaching freshman gen-ed classes are the easiest to come by, and I think many of us eat these positions up, not because we necessarily love to teach the fundamentals of writing, but because we do love to teach, and it's the easiest way to get our foot through the gates of academia.

Whether we have designs on pursuing a Ph.D. or not, some of us think that maybe, *just maybe*, we can forge a path for ourselves by teaching composition that will lead to teaching other courses in our home discipline or lead to a full-time appointment teaching composition. In the meantime, many of us do what we can to work our home discipline into our syllabus—a logical move that can arguably reap unique benefits for both the students and ourselves. But reflecting back upon the ladder, many of us are disappointed to find that this path is one usually forged only by luck, not advancement due to a job well done.

This disappointment generally comes in terms of a lack of health benefits, recognition, evaluation, and compensation, leading to an overall feeling of detachment outside of any progress we see in the classroom. If a large number of adjuncts are already carrying a load of composition

courses, it can reasonably be assumed that we do it for the love of teaching. As such, there are certain rather simple steps that can be taken to maximize us as valuable resources in the composition classroom.

Until universal health care becomes a reality in the US, unattached adjuncts generally exist without health care benefits. I am aware that some universities have now started to offer benefits to part-time faculty, but I've also found that sometimes these benefits are impractical. For example, I've worked at a school that offers health care after two years of consecutive service. While I understand the logic behind requiring a commitment before offering benefits, not only is two years a long time to go without health care, but also adjunct work is not known as a steady gig. At another institution, the two-year requisite was waived, but the most basic health care offering was almost a third of what they were paying me; I simply couldn't afford it. Even if it's impossible to offer a full package of benefits to part-time employees, just giving them the option of buying into a plan at a reduced cost or providing access to minimal services in the health center on campus could be a step in the right direction.

In terms of recognition, I am continually surprised by the amount of announcements for faculty grants, awards, and scholarships that find their way into my mailbox. However, I have yet to come across one that doesn't qualify the award with the phrase "available to full-time faculty and staff only." This is bittersweet. On the one hand, it's uplifting to see that strides have been made to recognize work that is being done within the institution. On the other hand, I am disappointed to see that part-time faculty, especially since there are so many of us, are usually disqualified from this recognition. I don't think that this is necessarily purposeful—adjuncts tend to hop universities and burn out very quickly, but adding even the smallest gesture of recognition could provide both incentive and job satisfaction to adjunct faculty.

Stemming from this recognition, and quite possibly providing an answer to its void, is *evaluation*. The life of an adjunct is largely an independent one. The only interaction I have with others in the department is prompted by chit-chat over the hum of the copy machine I'm hogging, or the brief interlude with a fellow officemate. I send off a copy of my syllabus to the department head's secretary every semester, but this is the extent of my communication with the "management." There are aspects of this that I find empowering—I certainly don't wish to be micromanaged, and I feel confident in my role—but if other full-time faculty and staff are evaluated on a yearly basis, I think that part-time faculty should have this benefit, too. This evaluation could come in the form of a semesterly

consultation or a classroom observation, but would at the very least provide some accountability on the part of both teacher and supervisor.

Salary is possibly the most important factor to address since it affects several other areas of an adjunct's work. I like to think of our compensation as wrapped in a tiny little box tied with a huge paradox-shaped bow: the more hours I put into my classes, the less I get paid. While this quandary holds true for almost anyone working on contract, it becomes problematic for adjuncts specifically. A true part-time job logs somewhere around 20 hours a week. However, I just recently filled out a "faculty activity report" that calculates work hours based on teaching time, office hours, grading, independent scholarship, etc., and modestly calculated that I spent upwards of 38 hours/week teaching and tending to my 75 students in freshman composition this semester. While math was never my strong suit, my wage rounds out to approximately $7 an hour. Though I certainly wasn't shooting to make a small fortune, this breakdown is nothing if not disheartening.

I won't scale back my workload to 20 hours per week in an attempt to make my salary comparable to a living wage or allow time for another job. The reason for this is simple—it would be the students who suffer. Not because I'm a brilliant teacher, but because one of the most valuable learning tools comes to them in the form of extensive feedback on their papers, and this grading takes time. Lots of it. However, this "time" is usually earmarked by other obligations—a side effect of being underpaid. Most adjuncts I know are forced to supplement their wage with other part-time jobs or freelance projects (my supplement of choice), catapulting our work weeks to almost double that of our teaching load just to make ends meet. I find that this is important to consider, because students and faculty alike often characterize adjuncts as *easy*—we don't grade as hard or expect as much as a full professor might. If this is true, it is less intentional and more an unavoidable byproduct of juggling several jobs. Occasionally, the last batch of papers I grade in the wee hours might get slightly higher scores, mostly because I can't spend as much time defending a deserved lower grade, and I don't think this differs from anyone short on time, full-timers included.

Quite simply, the benefit of a wage hike representative of the actual work put into teaching each class would be twofold: it would lessen pressure on an adjunct to stretch themselves thin at the sacrifice of their classroom, and remove some of the bitterness that no doubt comes from feeling being taken advantage of. This sentiment has not gone unnoticed. I recently had a conversation with a professor who intimated that if she were a more senior or tenured professor, she would push for more support

for the part-time lecturers teaching a full load of composition. In her words, she didn't know "how anyone teaching and grading for three sections stayed sane." I've been lucky in building relationships with other faculty members (usually in the copy room), but mostly because I seek them out. These relationships, along with student achievement, are parts of the job that do indeed sweeten the pot.

Ultimately, I'm not certain that an adjunct can expect to climb particularly high on the ladder of advancement. For this to happen, a Ph.D. is required. Perhaps some of the steps toward empowering adjuncts would be better characterized as a stepstool rather than a ladder. This stepstool would provide just a little more stability and attachment for an adjunct to grasp onto. The rising number of adjuncts signals a shift in academia that can't go unnoticed. Even though I find it difficult at times, I am dedicated to my job because I find it truly fulfilling. I think many of us possess this same dedication, a tangible trait that should be utilized in a way that fosters a more reciprocally beneficial relationship within the university community.

THE SUBALTERN IN ACADEMIA: ADVANCING AN ETHOS OF EQUITY

HOLLY FAITH NELSON

There are few academics who have not been granted a sessional appointment at some point in their professional careers and of those who manage to soar above the apprehension (and, at times, drudgery) of contract labour, even fewer who forget the angst-ridden climate of part-time post-secondary employment. That colleges and universities have systematically increased the numbers of adjunct faculty to reduce operational expenses is a commonplace. That tenure-track and tenured faculty members have failed to revolt collectively against this fiscal and organizational policy is perhaps more surprising given that most full-time faculty members are on the left side of the political spectrum, as research in the field demonstrates. Working alongside an underclass of colleagues (more often than not a "pink-collar ghetto"), those who manage to reach the brass ring often hold onto it for dear life to secure financial stability after years of student loans and living below the poverty line. Soon after gaining entrance to the academic paradise, a sense of relief and entitlement is often the order of the day; and perhaps this feeling is warranted. However, it often results in the further bifurcation of an academic department between those considered worthy enough to receive a long-term commitment from the institution and those considered expendable.

The division of instructors into various classes (and this is the appropriate term as academic society is organized hierarchically into groups based on status or rank) has spatial, economic, and emotional impacts on both faculty and students. Adjuncts are generally relegated to cubicles or required to share offices, which are often reorganized each semester. The spatial transience of the adjunct not only creates a sense of economic instability and emotional anxiety in part-time instructors, but also communicates to students that adjuncts are less qualified academically speaking. In relation to their colleagues and students, therefore, adjunct faculty experience feelings of ontological and epistemological inadequacy; they feel themselves to be lesser beings and are often treated as inadequate

sources of knowledge. They become the subaltern "other"—to borrow the term of the post-colonialist theorist Ranajit Guha—in the academic setting.

Adjuncts are rarely invited into the inner sanctum of faculty meetings and, when they are present, their opinions are often ignored or silenced because they are not perceived to have a sufficiently thorough vested interest in departmental practices and policies. The academic elite, therefore, whether willingly or not, are complicit in an organizational structure that often silences and marginalizes the adjunct (as the well-known ex-blogger, the Invisible Adjunct, writing from "the margins of academe" so eloquently described).

That this is the new reality of life in the post-modern academic climate is undeniable and perhaps not particularly post-modern when we consider, for example, that most scholars in medieval England fared little better than their twenty-first century counterparts. However, of a society whose ideological framework is embedded in the great chain of being, a rigidly hierarchical structure is to be expected (and suffering was, after all, to be rewarded in the next life). In post-modern institutions whose faculty routinely produce books and articles interrogating imperial and colonial enterprises and insist on the right of the subaltern to speak (and do not hold much hope for eternal reward), why do we discover such a radical disjunction between gnosis and praxis?

I pose this question not only, say, to postcolonial, feminist, or neo-Marxist scholars at Ivy League schools but also to myself, appointed first-year coordinator and later department chair at a private university in Canada. Having worked as an adjunct at two universities over a four-year period, my tenure-track university appointment was the culmination of an intense period of teaching and research. During this time, I formed close bonds with other adjuncts; as the underpaid underclass with an axe to grind, we felt an immediate affinity for each other. We spoke in whispered voices of the horror of temporary employment and of our fear that it was to be a life-long condition. Having risen at graduate school like Icarus to the sun, we suspected that our slow descent into part-time instruction was equivalent (if not worse) than a fiery or watery end. And yet, we were not, like the radical religious thinker George Fox, inclined "to speak truth to power." To be considered unruly (women) was to seal our fate. Some employment, after all, is better than no employment.

My relationship with adjunct faculty invariably changed once I was not only granted a tenure-track appointment, but was co-opted into the administrative structure by assuming a supervisory role. While I saw the advantage of accepting these positions insofar as they allowed me to participate in improving working conditions and morale, to do so meant

complicity with an academic organizational structure—common to all public and private academic institutions in North America—that permitted the privileged few to benefit from the labours of poorly paid, but often equally qualified, coworkers. Indeed, by assuming an administrative role, my teaching load was reduced by one course, that course being taken up by an adjunct faculty member at a much lower cost to the university. This ethical quagmire is not easily overcome, as the imperative of academic institutions (and individual faculty members) to acquire as much capital as possible is embedded in the economic formations of our culture at large, engendering in the most egalitarian intellectual an overwhelming sense of learned helplessness.

In response to the plight of the Invisible Adjunct, two main courses of action were highlighted: abandonment of academia altogether or blind submission to its realities. Neither of these options seems especially constructive. To abandon academe may simply be to admit defeat (although adjuncts who remain in the academic employment pool may benefit from the reduction of supply of part-time labour) while blind submission is to privilege material gain at the expense of ethical obligation. If full-time faculty defend the right of the colonized subaltern to speak, should they turn a blind eye to a member of the subaltern class working in the office beside them? Perhaps if full-time faculty turn their immense intellectual resources and economic bargaining power (as they are themselves elite commodities of value to their employers) to the plight of the academic subaltern, significant institutional transformation can occur. Though a utopian vision of a thoroughly ethical and equitable academic landscape is, to a certain extent, naïve, any effort of intellectuals to forge a fair and principled workplace based on an ethos of equity is a worthy and necessary pursuit if a bridge between gnosis and praxis is to be built.

STILL AFLOAT:
ONE ADJUNCT'S EDUCATION

LISA WENGER

I love teaching. I have always loved literature, reading, and, especially writing (hence my misguided foray into journalism). But, by accident, I also discovered I love teaching. In January of 2000, I "fell" into an adjunct teaching job at a community college. Having just relocated, I had to abandon my much loved job in journalism and since I had an M.A. in English, I decided it was time to try teaching. I had held back before because I finished my MA when I was 22 and still in braces. I looked like a teenager and felt that any students would feel the same. However, by this point, I needed an escape. I was working a temp office job at an advertising agency and was extremely bored; not only was the job unchallenging, but I actually had to go from department to department to find enough work to do during the day. I submitted a resumé to a local community college, little imagining what the job would entail.

Months went by and I had forgotten I had even submitted the resumé. Then, two weeks before classes began, I got a call. I had the flu; flu so bad I could barely move, much less make myself presentable, but when the call came I was so desperate I did the best I could. I showed up in my stretch pants, a sweater, and looking so pasty I could have been mistaken for the living dead. Apparently, the department chair saw something in me that I did not; I was handed a textbook, sample syllabi from other people's classes, and off I went to prepare my first classes. How hard could this be?

It was on my first day of class that the learning experience really began. As I faced my very first class, I thought I would pass out. Even my voice, so shaky I could barely squeak out words, betrayed my nerves. My only previous classroom experience was as a student, and I had only had two weeks of sifting through other people's syllabi to figure out assignments and schedules. I looked into the sea of unknown faces, and my head swam. I literally had to grab hold of the table in front of me to keep from passing out. What the hell was I doing here? I had never felt such fear in my life! Theoretically, I knew what I was doing. However, when it came to actually speaking to a "live" class and applying what I

had gathered from my own student experiences, that was a different story. Somehow, I made it through the first day of classes (three total). I ended the day realizing there was a lot more to teaching than simply knowing the material and also feeling extremely awkward and uncertain.

I stuck it out, despite my misgivings, and found that with each class and each day, it actually did get easier. By midterm, I realized I had never enjoyed any job more than I did teaching. Nevertheless, I did make my fair share of mistakes that first semester. I learned that students need an attendance policy and, without it, will wander in and out of class, depending on their own whims. It became very confusing trying to decide which students actually were in the class and which had jumped ship. Also, I discovered that in a first year composition course, a ten page research paper (on top of all the other essays and papers) really can be a deal-breaker.

Then there were the excuses. There were excuses for not turning work in on time, for not showing up for class, for being late, etc. When I first started, I believed them all. However, I quickly became jaded. Sick relatives, dead relatives, trips to emergency rooms, trips to the doctor (my favorite, an email from a student who apologized for his absence and explained it was because his doctor told him he had "ammonia"). No matter what excuse a student gave, in at least 75% of the cases, no valid documentation would appear. Thus, I had hard-working students who were always there and always turning everything in on time, and another segment who just wanted to "slide" by with excuses for everything. I quickly learned that in addition to my attendance policy, I also had to revise how I handled these excuses. It was just not fair to those students who followed all the guidelines.

This of course led to newfound conflict management skills. Starting out, I hated the tension that conflicts between students and myself would raise. When a student would argue with me, my stomach would end up tied up in knots for days and, no matter what, I couldn't get the argument off my mind. I also was amazed at the behavior some students exhibited—these were supposed to be college freshman and sophomores. In one class, a male student decided he would shout out "beer" periodically. In another, a group of students decided that talking loudly amongst themselves was far more beneficial than listening to what I or other students had to say. When I threatened to throw them out, one in the group had the nerve to tell me that I couldn't because he had paid for the class! That was when I told him all I had to do was call security, and he would be out for the whole semester. He then decided he just wouldn't say anything at all for the rest of the semester, even when it was related to the class (while he was trying

to rub me the wrong way, I felt this worked to my advantage). There were also temper tantrums over my refusal to accept late work, even though it was clearly in the syllabus that I wouldn't if the student had no valid excuse for why it was late. Needless to say, I quickly learned that I couldn't let this sort of conflict bother me, otherwise I would simply be a very muddy doormat with an out of control class. Besides, there were plenty of other things over which I could tear out my hair.

By the time I figured out just what worked and didn't work, and just how much I did enjoy teaching, it was too late to apply to a Ph.D. program that year. That's when I discovered adjunct teaching's financial "perks." For the next year and a half, I eked a living in the community college circuit. For those of you who don't teach English, the only jobs available to adjunct faculty are the freshman/sophomore composition courses. This means, on top of the teaching hours, one spends countless hours grading essays and writings. On average, each student submits at least 50+ pages of writing per semester. One class will have 25 students and, where I live, one class pays about $1000 per semester at the community college level. By my third semester of teaching, I had upped the ante; I was now teaching seven classes between two community colleges, five of which were freshman comp and two of which were sophomore comp. Do the math: I was pulling in $7000 for half a year's work, with a workload the equivalent of about 1250 pages of written work per semester, per class, plus prep. By midterm, I found myself crumpled in a ball on my kitchen floor, crying, not because of the work load, but because the new housebroken dog we'd just gotten would not stop peeing on everything in the house. Had I not decided to adopt the new dog, everything would have been just fine.

Then, the miraculous occurred! I was accepted into a Ph.D. program and offered an assistantship at $10,000 per year. It was manna from heaven! Not only could I defer my student loans, but I could also take out more! I would make as much teaching three classes a year at the university level as I would make teaching ten classes at the community college level, so to combat my debt, super drive set in. If I worked at my assistantship, plus taught at various community colleges in the area, I could pay off $30,000+ in debt before I graduated. I had a plan and, very soon, little sanity left.

During my second semester of graduate school I realized my own stupidity. I was doing the required first-year semester as a writing tutor in the writing center (20 hours per week), teaching one composition course at the university, teaching two online courses at one community college, and a third online course at another community college, in addition to taking

three graduate-level literature courses. There is nothing like an end of the semester when you have four classes turning in research papers, are working in a writing center, and have three 20+ page research papers to write yourself. It was a complete blur. Most days, I had to check to make sure not that I was wearing matching socks, but matching shoes.

I survived, and the following semester, I not only had my teaching assistantship, but also landed two courses at another local university that paid $2700 per course. I was rich! I would work less and make more! I was definitely wearing rose-colored glasses. What I discovered at the new university was astounding—most of my classes revolve around discussion and group work. Students enjoy the interaction and the fact they don't have to listen to me drone on the whole period. Plus, there's the added benefit that they learn through their collaboration. Unfortunately, these classes were absolutely silent. I would pose a discussion question, and they would stare back at me. No one wanted to talk, and no one seemed to know how to talk. Even when I implemented a discussion ball that was tossed from student to student, I barely got more than a few sentences out of them before they lapsed back into silence. During group work, they would actually whisper, and even when I took them outside, the buzz of insects was louder than they were.

It was the first time I actually had to combat what Paulo Friere termed the "banking concept of education," and it was a difficult task. Apparently, these freshman were quite accustomed to being fed all their information. Actually discussing and debating was something completely new and even scary. In order to make them comfortable speaking, I had to apply a wide variety of tactics, from the discussion ball to small group work to short presentations. During this semester, the prep work for the classes took almost as long as grading all the papers. At Thanksgiving, I was back in the same predicament as the previous semester; on Thanksgiving Day, I found myself foregoing turkey for a laptop, Jonathan Swift, and several beers. The last straw came with a horrendous ice storm at semester's end; without power for four days, I frantically graded papers and handwrote my own 20 page paper by candlelight.

Was teaching really worth all this?

Over the past few years, I have slowed down quite a bit (mainly thanks to my rapidly increasing student loan debt). I do still love teaching, despite the fact I often feel like an over-educated, underpaid babysitter. And yes, I definitely feel adjunct faculty are grossly underpaid. The most we can expect to make is often only around $3000 per class at the university level if we're lucky. At that rate, an adjunct faculty member *has* to teach at least eight classes per year, and that is only a gross of $24,000 per year. That

gross is still well below what most people with a BA can expect to make upon graduation. And depending on where you are located, you may only find community college work. In my area, this adjunct work caps out at about $1200-$1500 per class. To gross even $24,000, one needs to teach about 16-24 classes per year, and at multiple colleges. While I haven't had to try this yet, I am pretty sure it is a highly unlikely way to make a living.

Why not try a different career? Because even as adjunct faculty, I love the subject I teach, and I love teaching. There is nothing more rewarding than having students compliment me at the end of the semester, even if it's just to say "this class wasn't nearly as bad as I expected." As an English instructor, it's also wonderful to see the process students undergo through the course of the semester. They often enter the class with no faith in their writing abilities. By the end of the semester, almost magically, they realize that they actually can write, and that writing isn't as bad as they thought it was. The same goes for teaching literature. Students come into the class dreading literature, believing that they don't and will never understand it, and fearing that their own ideas and opinions are "stupid." Through open, class discussions, through group work, and through their own analyses, they come to understand that while literature may be complicated, it is neither beyond their grasp, nor are their ideas "wrong." They are empowered, and this is something they will take with them into their other classes and even into their own lives.

For me, each student I help, each student who takes something away from my classes helps erase the negative aspects of adjunct teaching just a little more.

GUEST PARKING IN THE PH.D.-ONLY ZONE

JOAN BLACKWELL

I remember the first pre-semester orientation I attended for my new position as adjunct English Instructor. Habitually early, I waited outside the locked door of the meeting room and was soon joined by another woman who stood silently by. To make conversation, I introduced myself and asked, "Are you an adjunct, too?" The woman looked at me as if I had bitch-slapped her.

Despite this telling experience, I managed to retain the impression for several lovely years that as an adjunct professor teaching many of the same courses as those on high, I was as important as the full-time faculty. I can only attribute this ignorance to the plain fact that far from lamenting my marginalization, I rather enjoy it. As long as I show up, treat students with respect, teach what I am supposed to and enjoy decent reviews from my students, I only see my bosses twice a year at each pre-semester orientation meeting.

Of course I realize that I am underpaid. But, I have always reasoned, I knew that going in. If I want a higher salary, it is up to me to seek a job that pays one. Because I like having so much time off (three-day weekends, holidays, month-long semester breaks) and not having to sit on committees where theory rather than action reigns, I have been okay with the trade-off. The day the university pays me what I am worth for part-time work is the day I will start seeing part-time jobs disappear and the competition become fierce. I have never been much for competition.

Thus, such drawbacks never really bothered me until about a year ago when I happened upon a little document carelessly left behind on the communal faculty printer by a full-time "colleague." It was part of an English Department policy draft and it caught my eye because it was titled "Section 4a: Faculty Professional Development: Part-time Faculty." I made a copy of the document and took it back to the adjunct office to peruse where I was astounded to learn the types of assumptions the departmental faculty were making about adjuncts.

The first claim the unknown writer made was this:

> The review of assignments, conversations with part-time faculty, and discussion of other issues that arise in our pre-semester orientations make it clear that many part-time faculty are in need of substantial professional development.

We learn several things from this statement. First, it implies all adjuncts have been evaluated by means of this tri-level assessment. If so, I can state positively the assessment was done in a haphazard, unprofessional manner. If someone has reviewed my assignments, no one has bothered to forward the critique to me. Any conversations I have held with full-time faculty, which are precious few considering my early morning hours, have all been by way of friendly banter; am I to assume these innocuous conversations were staged as a way to assess, by manner and attitude, my professional development needs?

I have frequently been vociferous in our pre-semester orientations, yet no one has ever offered a post-meeting critique of my discourse; am I to assume full-time faculty have been secretly frowning and shaking their heads over my professional opinions, perhaps ridiculing them behind my back? In short, if I am in need of "substantial professional development," why has it not been brought to my attention? Perhaps I am not one of the "many" mentioned in the statement however, I have no way of knowing since whatever their opinion, be it praise or criticism, the department has been uniformly silent.

Another disturbing example of the full-time mindset regarding adjuncts appears in the same document:

> For those [adjuncts] with whom we do attempt to engage in individual professional development, the results are generally minimal.

This rhetoric reeks of class prejudice: Why bother to rehabilitate these people if the success rate is practically non-existent? Just as society often bears some responsibility for the defects of the seemingly unredeemable, doesn't alleged adjunct incompetence speak more to problems in the hiring process or the fact that no matter what kind of job an adjunct does, *reward* will be "minimal," tacit, or entirely non-existent?

Another charge this document lays at our door is this:

> Adjunct faculty realize that they could be terminated at any time for any reason and are, therefore, reluctant to change or adapt their pedagogical practices.

"But," to borrow a favorite line from Martin Luther King, Jr., "is this a logical assertion?"[1] If adjuncts do in fact fear sudden termination, wouldn't we do our best to see that we give the ax-man no reason to look in our direction by being as competent and up to date as possible? One of the only rewards this job allows involves continual rehiring; clearly it is in my own best interest to be as excellent as I possibly can so that those in charge of scheduling will put my name at the top of the list whenever classes are available. Because my survival depends on being consistently rehired, I have been most diligent in changing my pedagogical practices and do so in some way every semester. I have also participated in several professional development activities for composition and have adapted myself to online, constantly changing teaching programs in order to improve my courses. I have also been marginally rewarded for my efforts by being tacitly guaranteed the amount of classes I want at the times I ask for each semester. I have even received a wonderful one-time gift (after nine years of adjunct teaching): a one-year, full-time lecturer's position. I know other adjuncts, those who can afford to stay in this job for many years, who have also found their efforts tacitly rewarded in similar ways. So the assumption that we are not improving our "pedagogical practices" due to fear of termination seems entirely false.

I emphasize the adjunct reward system is tacit because no one has overtly said to me, "Joan, you always get what you ask for because you are a reliable, excellent teacher." I have merely assumed that my happy lack of scheduling snafus and sufficient amount of classes to teach have been the direct result of my service to the institution. That my bosses are happy with me I suppose from the fact that they never have anything negative to say and smile at me when we pass in the halls.

Section 4a further complains:

> Because many adjunct faculty teach at multiple institutions and may have a total of as many as eight composition classes, they are reluctant to create assignments that require students to write multiple drafts or extended essays.

Now, I may be conceited but I actually think this may be a direct reference to me. Part of my vociferousness at pre-semester orientation meetings has included imparting that I teach eight courses—a factoid elicited, I might add, by the emcee of the event, who usually starts the meeting by having us introduce ourselves and say what courses we are teaching. As I am the only one who has voiced the formidable number in

[1] "Letter from Birmingham Jail," para. 25

question, I can only assume the unknown author of this document is thinking of me. So let me state first off that the number of *composition* courses taught has been exaggerated. I usually teach a mere six composition courses, four to five of which, I might add, are given me by the very institution claiming that incompetence and adjunct workload are related. The other two courses are usually literature survey sections. Although it is quite true that due to time conflicts in my schedule I have not required students to *turn in* multiple drafts of their essays, I have always required them to *write* those drafts and bring them to class for peer review. Further, I offer to read student drafts on a volunteer basis, multiple times if necessary, and many, many students take me up on the offer, which has indeed been very time-consuming.

As to the number of pages I require students to write—that is what is known as a pedagogical decision. Many students in my composition courses do not have the necessary skills to write a sustained researched argument, so I shave off a couple of pages from what the department has set as a guideline in order to have more time to teach them the research and argumentative skills they lack. Recently, a Composition and Rhetoric scholar who visited our campus in order to advise us about our ailing Composition II program supported my decision. This professor suggested we require two short research papers rather than one heavily weighted, extended argument research paper, in order to better teach the skills we hope students will take to their upper level courses.

I apologize for the lengthy personal defense against this charge, however it is meant to expose the unknown author's *post hoc* reasoning. I might also add that though this particular statement seems pointed at me, I have never once had any of my methods openly or privately criticized nor have I been told that if I do not cut back on my schedule I will be terminated or not given as many courses. As pointed out above, this very institution has itself been frequently guilty of giving me four to five composition courses per semester. Compare this to full-timers who are not required to teach more than two composition courses, unless composition is their area of expertise. Further, total full-time course load is four classes, less if the faculty member has received some grant, fellowship, or has taken on some duty that relieves him or her of part of this tremendous burden.

It is worth mentioning that full-time employee workload is also covered in a section of the document labeled "Full-time Faculty." There the admission is made that full-time faculty are often "fatigued" by excessive administrative duties, committees, student problems, conferences, etc. However, it is a telling distinction that full-time fatigue is not linked to

possible incompetence, as is the adjunct workload in the section on part-time faculty. It is apparently assumed that those with recognized talents and visible credentials cannot be incompetent no matter how many duties the institution forces upon them, but those of us with less ostentatious merits are incapable of handling heavy teaching loads competently. In other words, adjunct overwork leads to incompetence while full-time overwork leads to fatigue. The intent of the document's writer is clear: to provide a built-in excuse why full-time faculty do not and should not be asked to compensate for adjunct incompetence. Full-timers are already working at capacity and should be used to teach their specialties, not freshman core courses. This attitude is emphasized by the report's statement: "Unfortunately, we cannot place only the best instructors in our classrooms."

When I first read this document, I was angry and vented in an unpublished essay called "Adjunct Rant." But a year later, when I was reading an article called "Controversy and Consensus in Freshman Writing: An Overview of the Field" by Karen Spear[2], I was introduced to a possible perspective under which the full-time faculty might be operating. Although what I am about to quote is an astute assessment of teacher/student attitude in the composition classroom, it could just as well be applied to full-time/part-time attitude as well: "On one hand, the history of freshman writing certainly does show the extent to which the preservation of language purity has consistently been a last bastion of defense against the Other and that the history of literacy crises in this country is laced with classism, racism, and elitism" (Spear 338).

In the same way, the preservation of the vast learning attained through research, publishing, and institutional service obtained by the full-time Ph.D. must be kept pure—for what, after all, are the full-timers defending but their profession from "the Other?" The most desirable way for the adjunct to end his or her adjunct status is by becoming full time. The full-timer's job is therefore threatened and the best way to protect one's job is to claim those who would have it are incompetent.

This, in part, explains the behavior of full-timers who would declare their solidarity with us by observing that adjunct treatment is atrocious, appalling, and reminiscent of when teachers were kept so poor they had to live in the houses of their pupils. These professors cluck their tongues to discover how many courses we teach and encourage us to get full-time gigs. This begs the unasked question: Why don't *you* give me a full-time

[2] Karen Spear, "Controversy and Consensus in Freshman Writing: An Overview of the Field," *The Review of Higher Education* 20.3 (1997): 319-344.

gig? However, it goes unasked partly because such concerned faculty typically use passive voice or blame the situation on the vague pronoun "they," emphasizing the speaker's powerlessness to change the lowly position of the adjunct. But it is also not asked because the answer may be subconsciously understood. The generous smile conveying the full-timer's magnanimity implies, "I am all for you getting a full-time job and joining our learned community—as long as it is not *my* job and preferably not at *my* university."

Full-timers also protect their positions by keeping adjuncts as ignorant about the inner workings of the university as possible. Consider how I found the document on professional development from which I have been quoting. It was left behind by mistake or had not yet been collected by the faculty who printed it. It certainly was not published to adjuncts nor were adjuncts consulted regarding their professional development during the making of the document. We can assume, then, the document was never meant for adjunct eyes. I have worked for four institutions and my experience has always been that part-timers are kept on a strict "need to know" basis. Therefore, adjuncts who want to participate in the community of scholars within their institution often find themselves quite outside the loop on department business. Even the delightful tools of Outlook Express are used to create exclusive email lists. Take, for example, how I learned about this anthology. It was a double-forwarded email. The first professor who received it was a tenure-track Ph.D. who sent it to a tenured Ph.D. along with this query: "Do you have an adjunct email list that this announcement can be fwd-ed to? It sounds like a great opportunity." Since the English Department maintains an adjunct email list as opposed to a full-time email list, adjuncts are easily kept ignorant of the full business of the department.

This is one way full-timers control professional information for adjuncts. They decide which opportunities we learn about and which ones we do not, despite the fact that adjuncts come from a wide variety of work experiences and have varying academic specializations and it would therefore be much more efficient if we were allowed to decide for ourselves what to delete from our email inboxes. Moreover, we are trying, through work experience, to learn all the facets of the academic world in which we hope more fully to participate. Yet, until I was hired for a one-year full-time position, I had no idea the amounts of opportunities I could be working toward until I was put on the full-time email list. While it is not my purpose to make email segregation sound more sinister than it is, it is obvious this form of control can be used by the unscrupulous and ambitious to protect their professional world from "the Other."

It was because I was kept outside the full-time loop at another institution, a community college, that I once became a pawn in the full-timers' workload agenda. This is how it occurred. Suddenly, on the listserv there appeared messages from a full-time faculty senator stating that adjunct salaries at the community college (around $1,200 per class) were below the norm for the metro area and that the faculty senate was going to the floor for us adjuncts to try and raise our salaries to $1,800. This number was derived from research conducted around town in which various institutes' adjunct salaries were added together to get an average. I became active in the discussion because this community college and my current four-year institution were my main meal tickets. Soon I was invited to come to the senate meetings. I went to several, but was never asked to speak. Perhaps I was considered a metaphorical pitchfork or torch. Sadly, since only one other adjunct and I participated in this event, our presence certainly was not menacing enough to carry the motion, which eventually withered and died.

Around a year later, one of the full-time faculty involved in that unsuccessful bid contacted me, apparently in an attempt to try another tack. This time I was asked to estimate how many actual hours I work, as I only get paid for the three hours I spend in class per week. This was indeed an enlightening project. From it, I learned that if all the time I spent writing syllabi, researching my subjects and pedagogical methods, planning lessons, grading papers, dealing with and learning new computer programs, meeting with students, answering their emails, calculating grades and attending meetings was factored into my salary, I was making approximately $3.50 an hour—without tips. It was enlightening in another way, as well. When I asked why this information was needed, I was finally let in on what is, to full-timers, a well-known area of contention: faculty workload.

At this particular community college, a full-time workload is five classes a semester. Any full-time faculty who are asked to take on an unstaffed class above the required five, or want to increase their salary by teaching more than five classes, find their efforts improperly rewarded because the community college pays *adjunct salary* for any courses above the requisite number. Suddenly it all became clear: the full-timers hadn't been magnanimously trying to better the plight of the adjunct, they had simply been trying to raise their overtime salaries. That I knew nothing of the workload issue prior to being used in this self-serving little game is a direct result of full-time control of institutional communication channels. As an adjunct, certain listserv chains and institutional memos are kept

from me; as a result, I have only an imperfect notion of the way the institution works.

If it seems I am a slow learner when it comes to my place in society then consider: I do not have a self-esteem problem so it rarely occurs to me I am a second-class citizen anywhere, much less in academia. Even now that my lowly status is inescapably noticeable, in many ways it does not bother me. Back in eighth grade I made a New Year's resolution not to care what others thought about me and I have never looked back. Still, I find it rather shocking that despite the fact that our CVs and transcripts are on file and there are people right there who can vouch for our competency, adjuncts cannot be promoted to full-time, but must kill yet more trees and irritate yet more people by sending in fresh paperwork, references and transcripts every time we want to apply for a job in our very own institution. Even then, despite our years of experience with the institute, our familiarity with the students and the program, we are often passed over in favor of people who don't even live in the same state. With little incentive for promotion, recognition, or just remuneration, it is a wonder any adjuncts take the job seriously at all.

TENUOUS, NOT TENURED:
A LONG TIME BEING PART-TIME

TERRANCE COX

For thirty-some odd years (some more odd than others), I have taught—part-time stipends to sessional contracts and back again—at Brock University in St Catharines, Ontario, Canada. Digressions to elsewhere in academe and off about the planet irregularly punctuate the narrative. The career path winds to three continents, extends, in some capacity, to all levels of schooling, and courses over half a dozen university disciplines. Much adjuncting to my pleasure and advantage, en route, I have become a "general practitioner" in the arts and humanities. Necessity is a mother.

Offered here are reflections on a career among the "tenuous" faculty, an assessment of the perks and piss-offs of being "adjunct." (I here adopt the term "adjunct" in its American usage, as in this anthology's title. At Brock, my second-class status slot is named, variously, by era and circumstances, "sessional," "stipendary" and "contract" faculty. In the Canadian context, my becoming an "adjunct professor" earlier this new century was a step sideways from contractual employ, with an implied honorific dimension.)

Overwhelmingly, *the* perk is getting to teach university courses and classes. It's a great gig: indoor work, no heavy lifting. Given by circumstance the role of "utility infielder," I have had my fun in various fields: drama, English literature, music, popular culture, and as a player in inter-disciplinary programmes such as Canadian Studies that range even wider afield in the ways of culture and society. More than enough to keep the mind alive. Most days, I can do my job with joy. Mostly when I teach, I also still learn. Nice work if you can get it. Aye, there's the rub!

I came to Brock University at seventeen as part of an experiment. For six summer weeks, eighty of us (all with one year of secondary school normally yet to do) simulated a first year's full range of studies. We were lured to Niagara from all over the province, a mix of "straight A" achievers and misfits with promise, all bored to tears by high school. Established but four years before, Brock was eager to attract high calibre students, ones not likely to choose a very small, very new, "no name"

university. Those of us who passed the audition got to skip a year and enter first year university, scholarships attached. Breaking convention and taking risk, Brock and I began as we would continue.

Intending to major in political science, I was lured to English literature by a blessing of mentors in a department where, during my undergrad years, a hundred flowers bloomed. One auspicious day late in my second year, the chair, Prof Michael Hornyansky, beckoned me out of the English majors' lounge to lead a first-year seminar for an assistant prof who'd called in sick. "It's all news to them," he said advisedly. Officially hired on in my final year, I led seminars through fall and winter, and stayed after graduation to teach in summer session. This is the work I want to do for the rest of my life, I realized. The career goes typically askew about here.

Instead of grad school straight off, I went to Africa, far off. It seemed like a good idea at the time: see the world, make it better. Teaching at a bush school in impoverished Malawi, I did little good, changed nothing but myself. There I began to write: apprentice poems, dreadful fiction. Brief wanderings in African wilds and European capitals led to a garret in Toronto, where I suffered for art and freelanced for newspapers and magazines.

A year or so later, with less in the bank than was due for the rent, I re-entered academe. With another scholarship, I did a Masters in English at the University of Toronto and, thereafter, began to tour as a gypsy scholar, commuting to short-term community college stints, at Mohawk College in Hamilton, at Seneca in north Toronto. (There's an exploitative Iroquois theme to school names hereabouts—that and dead-in-battle British generals). This was dreary stuff, report writing and communication skills. Rare were such pleasures as a literature elective for nurses, media studies with auto mechanics. Summer meanders led back to cram-session Intro to Englit seminars at Brock and, on occasion, now a condensed course or two as off-season lecturer.

Even then, money was the major piss-off. (So it still—majorly—is). In Ontario's college system of those unlamented days, wages were per diem, docked if you missed classes, even for illness or a blizzard. We temporaries had no union, no benefits, and with a clause in the full-time faculty's collective agreement that kicked us out after two years. They had the gall to call us disposable peons of the system "teaching masters."

Ah! but those summers on Twain's river and Leacock's lake; Wordsworth in the shade and breezes; Blakean experiences in rented flats. Bliss it was that autumn first to be a sabbatical replacement, hired by Brock's drama lit stream for their intro survey and an upper-year Shakespeare. Here for the first time, I had the pleasure of teaching students

in their major, "dramatically" enthusiastic about the subject. This is strong drink, indeed, calling for more.

Somewhere about here, revels seemingly ended in the drama department, is where common sense would have done the doctorate, got the union card, started tracking tenure. Instead, I heeded—without, in hindsight, slightest regret—my undergrad "guru," Dr Ibrahim Muhawi, a Palestinian-Canadian, now by circular narrative back home in the Middle East and the head of a department. When he writes a letter that ends with "all you need do is say yes," I do.

Its warzone setting very much a mitigating factor, I did my best at the teaching of Elizabethan drama and modern-era poets—Milton to Muslims was tricky—in the English Department at Bir Zeit University, north of Ramallah, in the occupied West Bank. BZU was, in the late 1970s, a centre for Palestinian protest, in dress rehearsal for the next decade's *intifida*. Frequent student protests led to soldiers on campus, to curfew always and closure often. "Bizarre State," a colleague from Arizona called it. Shut down tight by the military governor a month, we were holding furtive classes in backstreets of Ramallah coffeehouses, in East Jerusalem apartments. One late spring day at Bir Zeit during a demo and its suppression I, literally, barely, dodged a bullet. I marked the seniors' essays and got out.

It gets a bit ad hoc here, back to Toronto, later to Niagara. I write and publish some poems. I practice the fine art of scrambling, which involves grants and stints doing English as a Second Language in both the public and the sleazy sectors. Several times I blinkingly venture into elementary classrooms as an arts council "poet in the school."

More variations on the college theme follow, including a year at Ridley College, a local, prestigious "independent" secondary school (a prep school in American parlance). One of those places where the over-privileged submit reluctantly to education. The rich are not like us. Nor are their schools. And they don't like us much.

From the mid-1980s on, the career path confines itself to the concrete brutalist expanding bulk of Brock, but wanders from programme to department, centre to school therein. A stipend here, a stipend there, a few seminars over there. Budget crises come and go. Enrollment waxes and wanes. The wages get no better. Priceless are the friendships.

One fine autumn term, a colleague (who becomes much more) hands off to me a course in popular music that he had initiated. I had previously taught with Dr. Barry Keith Grant in Brock's first-ever popular culture course. Through him, I become a minor adjunct to that cohort of humanities professors with literary backgrounds who first crossed over

into studies of film and other popular culture. My privilege it is to be associated with a scholar of international repute and, to this day, I owe him big time for the mitzvah of passing on that course, "Music 100," now much evolved and expanded. This is the field that I have tilled, where I have toiled the longest.

Teaching popular music has been transformative. I was as new to the subject as it was to the university. Informed very much as a rock and folk fan, I had second-hand notions about the blues; a novice, I knew even less about jazz. I gave myself post-graduate courses, hacked away for years against the vastness of my ignorance. I listened. I read. I listened again. I read more. I listen yet. And now, when I write about jazz, as I do, I feel like not a complete fraud. In the self-tutorial process, I altered my own aesthetic pleasures. Jazz of all persuasions centres a much expanded world of music, one that diversely includes "world music."

A subsequent fortuitous side-step has me teaching Canadian Studies for much of the 1990s. A new concept then, the programme took an interdisciplinary approach to the study of Canadian culture and society, involving both humanities and social science subjects and faculty. Applying for a position as the humanities person in its co-taught courses, I was interviewed by a committee including Dr Nicolas Baxter-Moore, the social science co-instructor, and newly director of the programme—someone I then little knew. Asked to argue my fitness for the task, I flashed on my inner screen to scenes from a stunningly good BBC docudrama called *Boys from the Blackstuff*. This multi-part feature from 1982 follows the bleak fortunes of a Liverpool crew who lost their hard labour, paving roads with asphalt. The worst off one, called Yosser, drags his homeless waif children behind him, begging for work. "Gizza job!" Yosser endlessly pleads, "I can do that." What the hell, I thought. Putting on my best Scouse accent (think John Lennon), I began "Gizza job! I can do that." Baxter-Moore doubled over, laughing. I passed the audition and we've been the best of friends ever since.

For much of a decade, we taught together a variety of Canadian Studies courses, including upper-year seminars. I developed a multi-faceted intro course on the arts in Canada, and again found myself frequently in *terra incognita*, discussing political culture and cultural policy, sports and age cohorts, aboriginal rights and historic wrongs. A heady brew.

To teach these various and varying courses has been an extraordinary experience. "Awesome!" as might students say: "Way cool!" Getting them and keeping them has not been a matching pleasure. To be tenuous is to be stressed. The cycle of anxiety goes from winter's rumour of hiring freezes

to spring's waiting for jobs to be posted, to application rites and hiring rituals. After summer without wages, only maybe fall comes full circle, back to work.

It can be a near thing. Threats of budget cuts threaten us fringe players first. The right people—the ones you can reasonably sub for—have to get sabbatical leave. Deans and presidents, they come in with new brooms and go on to greater glory. For too long a while, an arbitrary ruling by a Brock vice-president had all of us not on tenure track restricted to teaching 1.5 courses as a lecturer. On the wages of this, a person cannot live. Suddenly, and then for several years, we were competing with grad students for seminar positions.

Plenty of petty stuff rankles, too. Lack of recognition, for one, to the point of being invisible. Three decades at Brock and I have yet to see my name listed among the faculty in the university calendar. I never make the telephone directory. To this day, I show up on the timetable as TBA. On the plus side, my invisibility lets me fly below the radar of power struggles. I am cloaked against university politics. For some tedious time, I had to attend department meetings, even though I had no vote. That has since been deemed cruel and unusual punishment. I do not miss the meetings I now miss.

Office space is hierarchic, coded to status. Plenty of closets have put me in my place. Some years, in order to meet students, I have had to camp out in a colleague's office during his off-hours. Those cubicles in a cluster, curved half walls of woven orange polyester fabric, worthy of the corporate world—these I have sheltered in. Luxury was short term lease of someone else's real office: no shelving for my books, no cabinet for my files. Dusty, dinosaur computers. Often in the basement, seldom with a window. Tucked off in an obscure corner. Given that Brock's halls of academe in layout resemble rabbit warrens, I frequently have to conduct student tours to reveal my secret office.

By the late 1990s, there were enough of us at Brock who had had enough of this at Brock. We unionized. Active in the certification drive, I was on our negotiation team for the first collective agreement, and also for the second. A collective agreement, like a sausage or a legislative bill, is not something you want to be privy to the making of. Undaunted, I was CUPE Local 4207's first chief steward. There is power in a union. The wages are better, within shouting distance of the provincial average. As yet, there are no major benefits, but the struggle continues. In the most recent contract, there is a clause that grants persons in long-time employ the right of first refusal on any position they have filled "successfully" for four of the last five years. This careful language means that as long as the

courses I now teach remain union postings, I have "virtual tenure." Mind you, any such position can be re-assigned to tenured faculty, at any time. There is power in a union. The struggle continues.

For all of this new century, my teaching has been in first year courses, ones with enrollment in the hundreds. Both the Intro to Drama Lit (to which I returned in 2001—our revels were not ended) and the popular music course, so long now my mainstay, have swollen to fill the increasingly larger lecture halls they get scheduled into. For departmental budgets and by administrative principles, this engorgement is good. From behind the lectern, it looks less so. Playing to a bigger house has its ego boost. Reworking the material to reach a larger crowd is refreshing, a new craft to hone. But it gets harder to have any contact with individual students, even to know them by name. More frequently than I'd like, I have to ask students come to office hours to remind me who they are; in seminars sometimes, too. I suspect the number of student names it is possible to know is finite, and I that am over the limit.

Speaking of students, I know I have not made my relationship with students prominent in this narrative, have not reflected on the rewards of leading young minds to their innate potential, and so on. Early in my teaching, especially in summer sessions full of teachers upgrading, I frequently found myself younger than my students. For two decades now, I've been coming upon the kids of kids I taught—I anticipate grandchildren soon—but I entertain no "Mr. Chips" delusions about who I am to them and they to me.

I recently estimated a tally of all "my students." They total a fair-sized town, with a population approaching ten thousand. I could quote my brother poet (and long time, part-time university lecturer) Irving Layton: "Thank heaven I'm not / Jesus Christ- / I don't have to love them." I am a teacher; they are students. I treat them as fairly and equally as humanly possible. Or as "this human-ly" possible. I take them seriously, and so, too, the lectures, seminars, essays and exams. That doesn't mean with gravity; I try for good will, aim for good humour. There is laughter most classes. Learning happens, I hope.

We are not friends, certainly. A few students have become friends, after they stopped being students, but such close and lasting contacts are rare. (I cherish those I have with my former teachers, some of whom also became colleagues). Latterly, I cannot help but see in each new cast of students often some stock characters, the reincarnations of recurring types. This is so of drama majors in particular.

The last decade's growth in student numbers makes the essay marking burden increasingly onerous. I figure that a typical school year had me

reading half a million words of student prose. I can declare that astounding number as almost a killer: in April 2001, on the twelfth consecutive day of marking essays, I suffered a myocardial infarction. The paper I was working on got a C and I got myself to emergency. Since that near-death experience, the music chair has found stipends in the budget for marker-graders. I tote a lighter bale. Soon I'll get a senior's discount.

Back yonder, in the midst of negotiations towards our first contract, I got a letter from the same human resources honcho I fought across the table from. It seemed I was suddenly now eligible for a Brock pension, if I wanted. Decades late in coming, I took his bribe-like offer nonetheless, as better than nothing. Such bounty aside, I do not see me being able to afford to retire until I'm forced to. In this jurisdiction, that's at sixty-five, but the law has been challenged. Prominent among those who lobby for no mandatory retirement are tenured faculty. No surprise; as I said, it's a great gig.

In the twilight of my teaching years, I endeavour to avoid burn-out. I pace myself throughout the term, steady on but no heroics. I do not work day and night. I take most weekends off. I resolve likewise not to go stale, not to get to going through the motions. Blessed with so advantageous a perspective on the perks and piss-offs of being adjunct, I hope to enjoy the many ironies available, avoid the otherwise that breeds cynicism.

A legislated rite of spring in Ontario is the making public of the salaries of all those government employees (which we who teach in university here all are) who earn more than $100,000 per year. It's difficult to articulate how complex is my response to seeing on that list the names of a few colleagues who long ago stopped doing the job—the burntout cases, the time-servers, the cynics—making as much as six times my wages. And then I try to remember how it feels, walking two feet in the air when the seminar goes well; how wonderful to stumble upon brilliance, off on an improvised riff in lecture. Money cannot buy this, but I wish I got more for it. If I had this to do again, I'd get paid better.

In the nigh-on forty years of our relationship, Brock University has gone from barely seven hundred students to its current, stupendous 17,000. Neither of us is unscathed. As I finish off this piece of writing on a gorgeous spring day, (it's Shakespeare's birthday), I am elevating from the deepest circles of year-end marking hell. I *carpe* a *diem* between the labours of essay marking and the burdens of grading exams, the phobias of number crunching. Ten days will see me free and out in the splendid muck of a garden in spring. Free and wheeling about the Niagara peninsula on my bicycle. Free and writing deathless verse. Free and without wages. Until September, most likely.

I hope to keep passing the audition. “Gizza job! I can do that.”

TWO YEARS IN HELL:
MY LIFE IN THE ADJUNCT CLASS

MIKE S. DUBOSE

Recently, I read a message board post from a new Ph.D. deep into his first year of tenure-track employment who was asking for advice on how to survive the "heavy" workload of his 3/3 job. While I was rolling my eyes and trying to work out a way to throttle the whiner through my dial-up connection, I remembered an incident from my adjunct days.

In this memory, I had just jogged into class and had not yet even pulled out my lesson plan before I heard a student let out an "Um, Mr. DuBose?" It was the puzzling tone that got me…not that I'm unused to students being puzzled, but normally, they wait until the lesson starts to announce their confusion. This one was puzzled before I could even call roll.

"Why," the student continued, "are you wearing a Toledo Zoo shirt?"

"Oh, I didn't have time to change after work."

"Isn't *this* your job?"

And then I knew we were going to have an obligatory biographical moment instead of just starting the class. But I was ready; teaching two years of adjunct classes in four different disciplines at three different institutions—sometimes all in the same semester—meant that I had to do an unusual amount of explaining about my existence, such as why I couldn't remember anyone's name, what day it was or, indeed, what subject I was supposed to be teaching at the time.

"Well, this is one of my jobs. I also teach at two other colleges as well as doing the Zoo."

"You actually work at the zoo? What do you do?"

"I feed the tigers."

"REALLY?" This immediately got the attention of the class and, for one fleeting second, they thought I was really cool.

"Nah," I replied, "I rent wagons and strollers to people with kids. I also sell cheap souvenirs."

"What else do you teach?" another student asked.

"Right now, I'm teaching Ethnic Studies at Bowling Green and Intro to Sociology at Terra Community College."

”Why,” one student with a particularly puzzled expression asked, “don’t you just teach all at one college?” That was the million dollar question, and it was one that I had spent a whole lot of time thinking about, but for which I had no good answers. At that particular moment, however, I was more concerned with somehow connecting this impromptu opening conversation to my scheduled lesson and, as this was a Composition class, I knew that might be a bit challenging. I had to cover their next essay assignment, introduce some key theoretical concepts it would require, and a million other things on top of explaining the financial and employment realities of higher education, all in the next hour, somehow making it relevant to a writing discussion.

One thing at a time, though. If I learned anything in my two years of part-timing, it was to take things step by step.

I had two years of adjunct work to learn such lessons. After my graduate funding had run out, I applied for a visiting instructor job in one of the departments where I had taught, and I was quite sure I would get it; everyone in the department said they liked me, two professors who professed to be my friends were on the hiring committee, and the chair of the department herself suggested that I apply. However, they didn’t even call me for a phone interview and I found out I was no longer in the running for the position a few weeks before the Fall semester was to start.

Naturally, I did what anyone in my position (no paycheck, no prospects) would do—I panicked.

I then got a call from my university’s Ethnic Studies department wanting to know if I was interested in picking up a few courses. I still have no idea why they called me. I had never expressed interest in teaching for them, I don’t do ethnicity in my own research, and I don’t think the department should even exist (studying ethnic matters in their own department rather than in History, Literature, and so forth always struck me as ghettoism). I bluffed my way though an interview and then responded to an ad at another university looking for Composition instructors. Even though I had only ever taught one section of Composition, the department was willing to give me 8 credit hours on the basis of a phone interview.

I was happy for the work, but it did strike me as a little unusual that I, a media studies guy, could get work teaching subjects with which I had no experience while failing to get a media job. The next Fall, it got even weirder when a local community college gave me a section of Intro to Sociology, even though the only Sociology course I had ever even taken was Intro, and that was almost ten years before; my Sociology experience (or lack thereof) never came up in the interview. That next Spring, things

got doubly strange when I had to take a part-time job at the local zoo to make ends meet. Here I was, with the highest academic degree, and none of my jobs anywhere near my area of expertise.

It was a hard two years which I refer to as my "Years in Hell." During this hellish period, I was so busy I could never remember what I was supposed to be doing from day to day. Some days, I would get up at 6 AM and leave the house immediately after cereal and a speed shower, and I wouldn't finish until 9:30 at night. I saw my wife rarely and my friends even less. When I started the zoo job, there was a stretch of six weeks during which I worked every single day, without a single day off, and I was still sliding deeper in debt. I was working so hard my brain was frying in the hopes of being a professional academic, but I was also too busy and too wiped to actually do any research and stay an active scholar.

I learned a lot during this time. I was forced to teach myself several new disciplines, and if my teaching evaluations and the one teaching award nomination I earned are any indication, I think I did a good job at disseminating information that I only learned the day before. On top of my new knowledge of Composition, Sociology, and Ethnic Studies, there are many deep lessons from my two years in the adjunct class on being a professional, and they continue to inform my professional life now that I have a full-time job.

Overall, however, the negatives outweighed any possible positives, and my time adjuncting became an awful slog through my own personal Stalingrad. I felt like a success only because I survived, but I ended the adjunct experience deeply cynical about the current and future state of higher education. Being an adjunct has three very real drawbacks which, given time, will fester inside the most die-hard scholars, destroying them in the process; in terms of intellectual curiosity, political awareness, and personal hope, the work is *deadening*.

Intellectual Curiosity

In spite of what my more bitter students might think, I did not become a teacher because I wanted to torture or inflict pain on others. I got into teaching to allow me to do research, to become an active thinker, and to train others to do the same. I started out as a researcher, found out that I enjoyed teaching, and discovered that the two fed each other; when one does good research, one has new insights to provide students.

I started adjuncting while pushing a recently-completed dissertation through my committee and then through the government bureaucracy. I was flush with excitement that I had successfully finished, and I had

grandiose notions of pushing the book revision at breakneck speed, getting a publishing contract, and parlaying that contract into a tenure-track job within a few months. However, physically shuttling my printed dissertation manuscript from place to place was as close as I would get to my personal research agenda over the next two years as a part-timer.

I wanted desperately to be a scholar, but I did nothing while teaching; I had no time. Every spare moment was spent teaching myself subjects before I had to teach them to others, and I literally worked up until bedtime most days. I would be reading my Comp stuff in the minutes before teaching Ethnic Studies and vise versa…if I was lucky and had time to be that far ahead. I would grade while eating breakfast and constructing lesson plans while making sandwiches for both lunch and dinner in the car. I remember sitting in the lobby of a community college, furiously reading one Intro to Sociology textbook moments before going in to lecture out of another so I would appear to know something about the discipline other than what the students themselves had just read, all the while telling myself that I would get to my own research over the weekend or in between semesters.

Of course, this research plan never worked. Saturday would come, and I would find a hidden stack of essays that were already a week overdue. Summers were slightly better; I actually did complete and submit a book proposal draft to a University Press. I took a year for revision—not behavior that ingratiated me to the editors—so nothing came of it which was just as well, as I have no idea when I would have completed any writing should they have wanted more. As a result, I got out of the flow of thinking like a scholar, and I didn't get back to that for over a year until after I had escaped adjunct hell.

Ultimately, teaching and research need to work hand in hand. When teachers are scholars, their scholarship animates them, keeps them abreast of current trends, and it makes the body of knowledge an active, evolving animal. Without that spark, one simply plies a body of knowledge which has become dead to them. If that knowledge shows no spark, how can we ever get our students to engage it? Thus, the freedom for teachers to be scholars is not entirely self-serving; it is a student-centric issue, and by keeping teachers too busy to be scholars, the adjunct system ultimately works against the needs of our students.

Political Awareness

Because of the workload and the constant demand to prepare for classes and teach myself disciplines, I neglected my own work. Apart from

the aforementioned deadening of scholarly inquiry, there was another big drawback: I started to feel like a worker drone.

I wanted to feel like a traveling stand-up philosopher, imparting wisdom and making people a little better in the process. The problem was, since I didn't actually know much about my teaching disciplines and had ceased to be an active scholar myself, I was just spouting off enough material (with which I had no connection) to fulfill the needs of the course. And I did it pretty well considering the situation. I came up with class segments which were funny, insightful, and educational. I had students researching topics in-depth and presenting them to the class at large. My classes deconstructed student essays line-by-line. My evaluations were pretty good, and I am still convinced that I gave my students a better education than I ever personally received in these subjects.

However, I was disconnected from the intellectual substance of my classes. I busted out lesson plans, plowed through essays, constructed tests, but I did so as a craftsman only. I took great pride in my efficiency in teaching the material, but that material did not personally change or influence me at all. I was a good teacher, but I was *only* a teacher.

Even though I felt like a teacher, I didn't really even have the resources to do that effectively. For instance, in one office I had use of an eight-year-old Mac, another office without a computer at all, and one job where I had to hold my office hours in a campus lobby because they wouldn't give me an office. How was I supposed to better incorporate technology into my classes when I didn't have access to technology myself?

I still put everything I had into my classes, because in spite of the bad pay and lack of job security, I desperately believed in my work. After hearing student feedback and reading my formal teaching reviews, I'm still convinced that I gave my students a quality education that was never compromised in terms of either rigor or intellectual depth. However, I was putting forth this massive effort and not getting fully compensated for doing so. I was expendable, and I was clearly treated as such.

Even if I wanted to, there was nothing I could do to change the situation of adjuncts. Tired of having an ancient computer? Complain, and they might just take away your office. Tired of getting the 8:00 AM classes in the town thirty miles away? Complain, and they might not give you any classes next time around. Tired of getting classes in fields with which you're totally inexperienced? Complain, and they might take that class away from you.

The truth, however, is that I never even considered complaining. It wasn't out of any sense of noble duty, or of knowing my place, or indeed of "paying my dues." Honestly, I was too busy to even have time to really

ponder the inequities I faced. It wasn't until I got the full-time (albeit non-tenure) job I have now that I started to really become aware of the class structure of academics. I left my office one night after grading for hours on end, and I found myself worked up over the department's new Assistant Professor's 2/2 workload. Why, I steamed, did he get to work half as much as I while also getting paid more?

By the time I got to my car, I realized that as ticked off as I was, my situation had in fact dramatically improved from the year before. Where was my anger then, when I was teaching five classes in four disciplines at three different institutions? Why didn't I get worked up until after I had escaped that life?

The short answer: it had been ground out of me.

Personal Hope

One of my bleakest moments came during the second or third week of my last semester as an adjunct. On top of my zoo job, one of my three teaching positions was in the town where I live, so I was able to walk to work (thus getting the only exercise a roving academic can get). It was still cold outside, and there was an annoying type of precipitation; rather than raining or drizzling, it was simply misting. The sky was still the eternal grey that typifies February in Ohio, and the bleakness mirrored my mood. I had just gotten done teaching, and the class had not gone well. The students must have made a blood oath not to talk that day, so my own performance went from the usual academic stand-up patter to a more dentist-like tenor of pulling out teeth with rusty pliers to get a response whenever I asked a question.

My walk home went through an alley in the student ghetto where the haphazardly constructed houses lack paint and are mostly decorated with pilfered beer ads and banners. The place did not have an uplifting effect on my soul. I had been on the job market at this point for years, had sent out what seems like thousands of applications, and was wondering if I would ever get a job offer. My lack of ability to do any scholarship, I was quite sure, would doom me to this existence for quite a while.

Looking at my depressing, beer can-polluted surroundings, I suddenly became very sure that I would be there forever, that I would never find real work, that I would have to give up the academic game and go back to the restaurant industry. I would reapply at the old pizza place I used to manage, and they would laugh and say they knew I would never make it in the world of professional academics.

How long, I wondered, would it be before it came to that? How long could I keep credit-carding our food? How long until my seventeen-year-old car, littered with dents, gashes, and slowly emerging rust spots, finally died? How long could I continue to drag down my wife by sticking to the dream of simply getting a job? I did pull out of my mild funk by the end of the day after seeing my lovely wife, and I don't know how I would have survived if she hadn't been there to pick me up.

If one is doing the "adjunct thing" as a path to something else, I do not see how it can be anything other than depressing. The depressed political status, the hindering of personal scholarly agendas, and the sheer resulting exhaustion do not promote upward mobility—they retard it. I have been told that some hiring committees will throw out the files of people who have part-timed too long. Combine this job hopelessness with the sheer poverty from less-than-living wages, and being an adjunct seems to become a self-defeating occupation. Is it any wonder I went through fits of negativity? I suspect that clinical depression must run rampant among the adjunct class, and I would be very surprised if it were not epidemic.

Eventually, I did escape. I could tell the story about how I got a full-time position in spite of going against people I thought were better fits, but that's a tale for another day. I realize that not all adjuncts are all in a holding pattern on the road to the tenure track, and that there are people who, for personal reasons, choose the life, although I can't figure out why anyone would subject themselves to such horrors. Overall, I bet that most adjuncts are hoping for a better existence and see adjuncting as a step in their career trajectory. I also bet that a shocking number of them get stuck in the adjunct track, either to remain there forever or to be sent fleeing into alternate ways of making a living. And that, I believe, is too bad.

I survived my time as an adjunct, and I never want to forget it. I want more people to know the plight of the professional academics who get saddled with part-time, piecemeal work. I truly hope that someday, people realize that adjuncts are the migrant labor on which a lot of higher education is based and, as such, they deserve a lot better than they get. Someone needs to remove the very real negatives to the lifestyle, make it a job that has some dignity, and help those who do the work survive. And who knows? Maybe that person will be me…as soon as I get that 3/3 tenure-track job myself, maybe.

ON BEING EDUCATED ABOVE ONE'S STATION: LONG-TERM ADJUNCTING IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

KATHERINE MARCH

When I saw the call for papers for narratives relating to part-time teaching, I sent the notice around to other adjuncts in my continuing efforts to get my colleagues to write and produce…something. My continual fear is that my colleagues will be regulated to some sort of paraprofessional status if they do not obtain some sort of recognition from outside the campus community. However, one colleague who has joined me in many battles over the past ten years reluctantly told me she couldn't write about her experiences. Doing so would bring up too many disagreeable thoughts. She couldn't risk it and she was not exaggerating. She is working for the health insurance to cover herself and her retired husband. At age 55, she is making $10,000 a year. She avoids the department whenever she can and she is not alone. I have learned over the years that teaching part-time is psychologically damaging, painfully so. I am not sure I am doing anyone a favor in inviting them to write and I am not sure that I should even be writing this myself.

I have taught writing at an isolated public university on quarter-by-quarter contracts for 16 years. I am placebound, a trailing spouse, an outsider, invisible, and yet threatening. I organized the part-timers and helped unionize this campus. I finished a Ph.D. and published. I wasn't supposed to do any of that. In my years of teaching writing to those who did not want to learn, who brought in their adolescent struggles with authority, and with women, and with women in authority and, quarter-after-quarter, projected them onto me, I found most of my psychic relief from my part-time colleagues; together we formed our virtual faculty lounge. This is the positive and necessary part of the job.

This quarter, one of my students dropped by, not at office hours, of course; he just dropped by the office to tell me that he couldn't make class in two hours because he has to make up his anger management session. Seems he missed his usual time because the nasty man in the post office gave him a hard time and the police got involved. *Charming*. Does the

university give me a heads up that I have had a student with anger control problems in my class for the past 6 weeks? Of course not. I keep a professional poker face, try not to pry, call the counselor who can't tell me anything, then seek out an adjunct colleague for a mutual headshaking session. Who else can one call?

At times, though, I have to hide out and avoid too much contact with others or the weight of their insecurity would overwhelm me and I would never be able to get any research done and write those articles that may or may not eventually become published. Handling authorial rejection is always difficult; add to this the weight of others' fears and the resulting psychic wounds can easily accumulate and spiral into depression. And I have seen many walking wounded among the adjunct faculty. Crazy? *We are all crazy here* said the Mad Hatter. And so, I guess, I must be crazy myself.

When I came to this English department, I was working on my Ph.D. and had taught freshman composition as a TA at two universities. I am a product of public education, of working class parents who were the first in their families to gain a college degree. We believed in public education and although opportunities were not great, I took advantage of anything I could get. Somehow, slowly my husband first, then I, fearful of debt, fearful of failure, bootstrapped our way into Ph.D. programs and into a world where people came from gated communities, prep schools—people who had the surety of knowing there would always be a safety net beneath them. We knew we didn't belong. We wondered at the warmth and comfort of the 500 sq. ft. married student apartment and had our first child, then heard of others who complained of a lack of closet space.

The shock was less for my husband, whose degree is in Mathematics, a field where there are fewer graduates, but in the Humanities the class discrimination was more apparent, more obvious. I went to an "egalitarian" school for graduate work, one that had a better reputation for leaving their graduates in a more or less human state when they finished, leaving my husband to work at his tenure-track academic job and care for our son, then joined him while working on my Ph.D. dissertation and toiling in the adjunct ranks—or rather "non-ranks" since adjuncts do not have academic rank.

The department chair at my place of employment was a bit of a bully and quite depressing about anyone's job future, the state of the profession, and life in general, especially if you were a woman. I think he got a lift and a sense of power in depressing others; he was not a scholar and knew it. There was a cadre of female writing instructors on annual temporary contracts who had worked together on various teaching projects over the

years, but as they retired, they were replaced with term contracts, often graduate students who had just finished their master's degree. My officemate was suspicious of my doctoral work. It was as if I had taken on this overwhelming goal of writing a dissertation just to threaten others' jobs. Who did I think I was? No one else was working on a dissertation, expect for the drunken ABD who was hired on tenure track and was on the way out, never to finish the degree. All around me were frightened people. The chair showed up periodically to each new hire's office and told her, "You don't have a real job."

I cannot really explain all of this to tenure-stream faculty in the sciences who don't teach general education classes and for whom the entire idea of teaching a department-developed syllabus is foreign. Again and again, I am told by single professors that tenure track positions must be based on a national search, so the candidate "earns" it, so the department gets the "best fit." And time after time, I see good candidates overlooked because someone in the department did not want competition for the seminar he or she wanted to teach. Or the department inherits former administrators who were hired with tenure and did not work out for one reason or another, i.e. people who have to be taught to use the photocopy machine and whose scholarship is either outdated, minimal, or frankly, a poor fit for a small department. Each year, it seems, we gain more and more administrators as our campus bureaucracy becomes top-heavy and each one comes in already tenured so, when they step down—and they do—they are accommodated.

And then there are the tenured transfers from other departments. None of these were hired for the department's program, but they need to be fitted in. Of course, with the 20 or so subspecialties in English, you could teach for 50 years and never see a tenure-track opening for your particular historical, theoretical, or genre specialty or, if you think you are eligible, you get told that your research is more in cultural studies than literature or they really want a rhetoric degree and not a literature degree. Your 18 years of composition teaching doesn't count. Face it, only some 56% of English Ph.D.s ever move into a tenure-track job.

Fortunately, my dissertation saved my sanity—not the degree, but my subject. I was writing on 19th century women travel writers, women who traveled on their own and wrote about and elbowed their way into newly opening careers that had not yet become so male-identified as to completely exclude them. Studying how 18th and 19th century women positioned themselves rhetorically to edge themselves into professional societies made a lot of sense to me.

Rhetorically, the women's work to which Victorian women were allowed access is termed "auxiliary positions" and includes “helping” positions, such as nursing or teaching young children. These positions carried no real power or professional status, even though women were doing the same work as men; once a large number of women were involved, the position became feminized and seen as subordinate. Typing is an example of this type of work. When typewriters were first invented, male "typewriters" were hired to do the job and the work was seen as skilled labor and it paid enough to support a family. When women entered the work force as "typists," the pay dropped and typing pools were formed. The typists had a lower status than a non-typing secretary. In the 1940s, women who had ambitions in the workplace and who wanted to be independent avoided acknowledging that they knew how to type or refused to learn.

The English department has simply reinvented an academic version of the typing pool, only now it is an adjunct pool.

This process of marginalizing the work of women and minorities is well established and I realize now that the word "adjunct" has come to have the same meaning as auxiliary. Feminist theory allowed me to see the power structure forming around me that edged women out of the profession and into an adjunct, auxiliary position that gave no job security or intellectual freedom. What sickened me was that established professors at private colleges who claimed to be feminist theorists saw no problems with the segmentation of English into tenured literature positions and marginalized writing positions. Attempts to discuss such issues at conferences revealed some disheartening class biases among those who should know better.

I sympathized with my "ladies," the travel writers I studied, and their insistence on writing when their culture told them that writing would make them ill and/or barren. Rather than blame them for not taking appropriately heroic stands that 1970s-era feminists demanded, I admired their ability to keep working and quickly forgave any less-than-properly feminist statements they made. Their positioning seemed to be far better thought out that they were given credit for. Mary Kingsley in her 1894 West Africa accounts would say the unspeakable about Victorian sexism, then quickly perform a pratfall to distract, leaving me wondering whether I just read what I thought I read. I think she knew what she was doing.

"Set yourself to gain personal power—don't grab the reins of power—but [while] they are laying on the horses [sic] neck, quietly put them into your hands and drive," Kingsley says in one of her last letters to a friend

(qtd. in Blunt 139)[1]. So when a dying union needed reviving, a small group of adjuncts took the reins. The question, of course, is if we can keep them. There can be an inherit tendency in union organizing for organizers to edge out the marginalized individuals who kept things going in an effort to broaden the power base and thus, in the process, lose sight of the entire reason for unionization. Adjunct issues are too easily seen as tangential to the profession whereas, in reality, if faculty in higher education do not get a grip on the problem, protect all faculty, and treat them as professionals, I am afraid only the wealthy and privileged will have access to any higher education other than the most vocational type.

[1] Alison Blunt, *Travel, Gender and Imperialism: Mary Kingsley and West Africa* (New York: Guilford, 1994), 139.

Out of the Basement and Into Cyberspace: Possibilities of Equality for Online Adjuncts

Anne Canavan

When I began working as an adjunct on the university level, I knew it wasn't going to be an easy job. I had heard adjuncts talking about the social problems associated with being part-time faculty, as opposed to the more prestigious full-time appointments. I knew about the less-than-inspiring financial compensation. I even realized that, in all likelihood, I would be sharing not only a cramped office, but a small desk, with several other faculty members. This, combined with the fact that I still look younger than my freshman writing students, made the world of live teaching challenging for me as an adjunct. The difficulties and deprivations of traditional teaching for adjuncts has been widely written about, but less has been said about the new frontier for part-time employment—the world of internet teaching and tutoring. In particular, the field of online tutoring can provide many benefits for adjuncts seeking an alternative or a supplement to traditional higher education settings.

In the last several years, the world of online tutoring at the college level has grown dramatically, blossoming with jobs that can be both challenging and flexible. It was only through pure chance that I stumbled onto work with Smarthinking.com, a service that provides a number of tutoring services in several different subject areas. Before I considered this source of employment, I was a bit resistant to online education. I preferred the live interaction with my students, and would only accept hard copies of my student's papers. But the necessity of being able to provide for myself and my dog, as well as the convenience of being able to set my own hours, led me to fill out an application for Smarthinking. I was seeking work in the Online Writing Lab (OWL) and went through a rigorous training session that educated me about response formats, how to prioritize my suggestions, and time management skills. While I still work in both universities and community colleges as an adjunct, I think that my

experience as an online tutor has been a valuable part of my development as an academic. While one should always research a company carefully before accepting a position, the online world can offer such benefits to an adjunct worker as convenience, increased dialogue between colleagues, technology-based teaching experience, and a diversity of experience, all from the comfort of your living room. While most of my arguments will be based on my experiences of an adjunct instructor of composition working in an OWL, online tutoring can offer many of the same benefits to instructors in other disciplines.

Perhaps the biggest draw of online tutoring is the convenience. Traditional live instruction at the university level occurs between the hours of 8 AM and 9 PM, Monday through Friday. The classes that the adjunct instructor in this setting typically receives are the ones that have been rejected by full-time faculty, and often these classes occur at inconvenient times. In addition, these classes may not be finalized for an adjunct until the day classes begin. For those instructors who work full-time jobs or are trying to raise a family, the hours offered by a traditional institution may be far from convenient. This, coupled with the uncertainty of the number of classes offered to an adjunct per semester, can make the attraction of some extra income great indeed.

Online tutoring and instruction have the possibility of offering employment to people who may be more comfortable working irregular hours. For instance, one semester I worked from 7 AM until 10 AM two days a week, and from 9 PM until midnight three days per week. Some employers also offer flexible hours, in which the instructor is scheduled to work a certain number of hours per day, and the timing is up to the individual. For those who live in a home with young children, the possibility of working after the family has gone to bed or before they wake in the morning can represent a chance to work within their field of expertise without taking time away from their family. Additionally, many adjuncts remain part-time employees because they are tied to a certain area of the country, due to family or other constraints. Online work can be done anywhere that has access to the internet, and does not entail the long commute that adjunct instructors often encounter as they are forced to drive where the work is. Some of the tutors I work with do their jobs from such places as Germany and Canada. The ability to maintain a job, even if you should be pursuing work from an alternate location, can be invaluable for academics.

One of the advantages to the online world I had not expected before beginning my job as a tutor was the openness of dialogue that occurs within the community of tutors. In a live setting, adjuncts are generally not

invited to participate in the same forums as tenured or full-time educators, and even within the adjunct community there may be little sense of camaraderie. This is due in part to the adjuncts leading busy, separate lives, but also because there may be a conception of competition between adjuncts for full-time positions. In a live setting where senior faculty may be seen as constantly evaluating adjuncts as potential promotion prospects, one might be afraid to ask questions that may seem simple or imply a lack of knowledge. On the tutoring listserv, however, questions appear on every topic, from style and form, to typing ergonomics and how to tailor feedback for deaf students. Many of these questions would never have occurred to me, but nonetheless I have received valuable feedback from the other tutors by being able to read the replies. There is also a high potential for a variety of responses. By simply posing a question to the listserv, it is possible to receive several, very different responses that can also be archived and kept as a resource for future tutors.

The stratification of experience occurs widely in traditional institutions, and this seems to occur less in an online tutoring situation. The traditional system of higher education seems to imply that adjuncts are much less valuable parts of the academic community than other educators. Through low pay and inaccessible facilities, teaching institutions tell adjuncts they are expendable, as well as undesirable. This sense of being second class can make life in a community college or university unpleasant for an adjunct, and creates a class system, with tenured professors and deans at the top of the ladder, followed by tenure track faculty, full-time instructors, and finally adjunct employees. Also as in a class system, members with similar social status tend to congregate together, further entrenching the distance between the different types of educators.

Some of the tutors I work with in my online job have Ph.D.'s, while others have Master's degrees. Unless there is something in their emails which indicates rank, other tutors have no way of ascertaining this information. One apparent result of this is an increased attention to the *content* of a message, rather than the writer's rank. Also, since there is less direct competition for certain positions, there seems to be a greater willingness to help novice tutors improve. There have also been several instances where I was approached for my expertise by older tutors who were inquiring about changes in the field since they had graduated.

The expectation of little scholarship by adjunct faculty in a teaching position is a direct result of the meager compensation that adjuncts are afforded. This can lead to a perception that adjuncts are somehow unwilling to pursue professional development opportunities, rather than they feel actively discouraged by their affiliated universities and community

colleges. Very few programs have funding in place to help adjuncts afford to go to conferences or to otherwise pursue their scholarship, and this can lead a part-time employee to feel that their work is not valued; therefore, they do not pursue various academic opportunities, generally due to financial constraints. Online tutoring can be a way for an adjunct to explore a new field of pedagogy while generating additional income for professional activities. Many of the tutors who work in the OWL seem focused on scholarship and professional development, and find the flexibility of hours helpful in their pursuit of scholarship in a way that a traditional institution might not be able to facilitate. The explosion of professional scholarship, particularly in the field of composition, relating to teaching in an entirely online environment provides a dialogue which is uniquely suited for a tutor seeking a voice in the wider pedagogical community.

The world of higher education is increasingly becoming more electronic in nature. From cell phones and texting to email, our students are constantly attached to one device or another. It seems clear that the more skilled an instructor is in navigating an online environment, the more desirable they will be to employers. Additionally, at some point soon, many universities may phase out live writing labs in favor of OWLs for a number of reasons, primarily because of cost effectiveness and convenience for the student population. With the services of an OWL, such as the one provided by Smarthinking.com, a university no longer needs to reserve a room (or several rooms) for a writing lab, and they are relieved of the pressures of finding and paying people to staff it. Additionally, students can submit a single question or an entire paper at virtually any time, day or night. For those students who have outside pressures, such as jobs or family, this convenience can prove to be an invaluable part of their education. While an OWL may seem daunting to a student who is not comfortable with the technology, those challenges are comparable to the ones represented by using a word processing program and can be eased by some simple training from the classroom instructor.

Given this trend toward technology-based education, if an adjunct can demonstrate proficiency and experience in an entirely online environment, this skill set can give them the expertise needed to secure a position that offers greater qualitative and quantitative benefits than traditional adjunct work might offer. Particularly for those adjuncts who do seek full-time employment, the addition of experience in an entirely online environment may be the springboard to a tenure track position. Most advertisements for instructors of composition now include a mention that those educators

possessing high degrees of technical aptitude and experience teaching in technology-enhanced environments will be highly preferred.

Another major draw of online tutoring is the diversity of colleagues, students, and assignments that a tutor can encounter. My colleagues at Smarthinking come from all over the globe, and from a variety of educational backgrounds, including technical writing, creative writing, composition and rhetoric, and literature. This broad cross-section allows for different perspectives on how to respond to student work, and a variety of expertise on many different subjects. Additionally, a single OWL shift can provide the opportunity to work with a range of students including those who speak English as a second language, and range in skill level from developmental writers to doctoral candidates working on their dissertations. A final advantage for those tutors who also teach traditional classes is the opportunity to see a wide range of lesson plans from other instructors all over the country. Occasionally, these will spark ideas for new, innovative projects of one's own, and provide a vital way of keeping one's own teaching pedagogy fresh and vital.

I have also become very aware of my language choices when I am responding to student writing. Instead of saying "problem" or "error," I find myself going back and adopting such terms as "challenge" or "area for improvement." While in my spoken discussions of student work, I do not have the luxury of amending my words before the student hears them, in a written environment I can do this. I have also developed more concise ways of defining such ideas as organization and thesis statements, which have affected the way I respond to student work in my live classes. Additionally, Smarthinking encourages tutors to order the areas of concern from higher order concerns to lower ones. In other words, what good does it do to fix the comma splices in a paper that has no apparent organization? None at all. When I read student work with a pencil in my hand for my live classes, my inclination is circle all of the lower order concerns, such as grammar. While these are valid areas of improvement for students, it often leads them to the false impression that once they have made these surface level corrections, their paper is perfect. My experience as a tutor in an environment where I have no red pen has taught me to regard essays in a more holistic way, rather than indulging my knee jerk reaction to proofread. OWLs, as a rule, are not places that proofread student work. They are places where students can have their questions and concerns answered in a different way, hopefully one that leads them to an understanding of the challenges they are experiencing in their writing.

Is online tutoring a perfect solution for an adjunct? No. There are time pressures which may be difficult for some tutors to deal with, and for

others the challenge of simply finding a quiet place to work may be daunting. Family members often do not realize that what a tutor is doing while on the clock is actually "work," since the tutor is doing it at home. Therefore, training those who live with you not to interrupt can be a challenge. Online tutoring also requires a moderate amount of technical proficiency, and a degree of comfort expressing yourself in a concise and positive manner. As with traditional adjunct work, it can be difficult or impossible to support yourself with the income from a single job, and your hours can be variable from semester to semester. For those interested in broadening their pedagogical horizons and with a true desire to help students, however, online tutoring may be an ideal way for an adjunct to make their way out of the basement of traditional academia and into the new classroom of cyberspace.

A Room of One's Own: Nationwide, Office Space at a Premium for Adjunct Faculty

Rob Schnelle

Stooping to clear the corrugated steel overhang of an 8-by-30-foot cargo container, Leo Hemridge exits his new office, shielding his eyes in wan October sunlight. He wears the haunted expression of a man who expects imminent eviction, perhaps because his quarters were formerly occupied by migrant asparagus pickers. Hemridge works as an instructor in psychology at Darwin State University in Darwin, Kansas, where administrators have found a novel solution to the school's shortage of faculty office space. "When the adjunct offices were converted to a student casino," Hemridge explains, "they moved us out here."

"Out here" is a strip of trash-blown cheatgrass hard up against Interstate 70 and bordered on two sides by a 300-acre soybean field. Forty-two rectangular cargo vessels, identically labled "Fresh Oysters," occupy the site. It is here on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays between 3:00 and 4:30 that students in Hemridge's classes may consult with him. The interior of the structure contains office furniture, filing cabinets, and computers (their monitors darkened in the absence of electrical hook-up) but no sign of the colleagues or students who might presumably use them. "I'm the only one who ever shows up," Hemridge says. "It's three miles from here to the center of campus, and the turn-off for the access road is hidden by a scrapyard."

Even so, Hemridge considers himself fortunate to have an office of any description. According to a survey reported in the *Chronicle of Higher Edification,* only 7% of contingent faculty are provided their own offices, while another 42% share space with at least one other colleague. A majority—51%—conduct out-of-class face time in improvised, often extramural surroundings.

The recently published survey was part of an ongoing effort to take the pulse of a workforce many feel has been reduced to penury. "Colleges and universities have created a staffing crisis," says Trish Knish, press secretary for the American Federation of Pedagogues (AFP), and "the

paucity of campus offices is a key indicator." Perhaps it would not surprise Leo Hemridge that the AFP recently labeled higher education "the Wal-Mart of the professions."

Unlike Wal-Mart employees though, most adjunct faculty have no place to hang their hats. They grade papers in bus kiosks or highway culverts, and many just shrug when assigned to classrooms in basements constructed as air raid shelters. Keeping office hours presents a special challenge, however, since it requires faculty members to confer with students confidentially. Knish asks college administrators to "imagine your attorney, your physician, or your accountant having to operate as faculty members do. When I visit my daughter's second-grade teacher, I sit on a pint-sized seat, but at least it's a *chair!*"

The administration at Darwin State appears to concede Knish's point, at least in theory. Hiram Cadge, Associate Vice President of Faculty Management at DSU, says he would like to see adjuncts placed in "optimal environments," but, he insists, "Students come first at DSU. Keeping tuition down is a burden we all have to shoulder." Cadge points to a campus blueprint on one wall his office, which is rigged with scaffolding while workers touch up some gold leaf on the Georgian plasterwork overhead. Finding the location of Leo Hemridge's office, Cadge smiles. "You see," he says, "it's just half a mile south of stadium parking. No one's losing face by working out there. In fact, I envy them their peace and quiet."

Losing face may or may not be endemic to the adjunct life. At any rate, adjuncts themselves are quite candid when discussing their professional homelessness. "It *is* embarrassing," says Paige Prouf, a history instructor at Skeeter State College in Midgeville, Tennessee. "I try to model the life of the mind, and here I am meeting students over fries in a burger joint. I guess you could call it McTeaching." However that may be, Prouf prefers the ubiquitous golden arches to local competitors, citing the restaurant's bright surfaces and exemplary hygiene. "I held my hours in Roscoe's U-Tote-'Em for a while, but students complained about the flies." Provided she is not charged with loitering, she plans to remain faithful to McDonalds: "You could say it's a clean, well-lighted place."

Hygiene is an issue for adjuncts on other campuses as well. Emil Retentive, who teaches philosophy at Gumball University (Muncie, Indiana), has sometimes pondered the propriety of meeting students in a washroom tucked away in the campus library. Turning toward the mirror of his "office" and examining a three-day growth of beard, Retentive notes that classical philosophers often held court in public bath houses.

"Fortunately, this is a unisex toilet. Otherwise I'd feel I was pushing the envelope a bit."

At St. Piebald's University in Rome, New York, Father Donovan Ziffle relies on ecclesiastical percs to deal with the space crunch. Meeting his composition students in a vacant confessional has allowed Father Ziffle to convey "the writer's ethical obligations" as directly as possible. Indeed, the only downside to this arrangement concerns a reactionary tide he says is sweeping the Catholic Church. If Vatican II is revoked, says Father Ziffle, St. Piebald's confessionals may be reclaimed for inquisitional purposes. "I used to hold office hours on the quad, but rumor has it that space is being reserved for autos-da-fé."

Death and professional homelessness merge even more dramatically in the case of Theophila Binswanger, who teaches theater arts at Fluellyn Community College (FCC) in Port Fluellyn, Oregon. Nationally distinguished for its Chauncey School of Necrology, FCC is home to more than 700 cadavers at any given time. Following what she calls her administration's "don't ask/don't tell" policy on space accommodation, Binswanger recently began holding office hours in the Chauncey Morgue. "I think of it as the nerve center of our institution," Binswanger laughs, noting, "the audience down here is livelier than some I've seen!"

"People ask if my students aren't creeped out by the presence of corpses, but you know what Samuel Beckett said: 'There's always something vivifying about the end of a life.' I've found this to be true. My students seem exceptionally focused when they show up for conference hour."

Like Leo Hemridge, Binswanger says she prefers a jury-rigged office to none at all, even if it smells like formaldehyde. Yet she recognizes her situation as symptomatic of declining support for higher education. "For the average part-time faculty member, making rent is hard enough. To have to work out of your car—as some of my colleagues do—is pathetic, and the American public should be ashamed that it's come to this." Glancing at a pair of alabaster human feet projecting from the clutter of her desktop, Binswanger adds, "There's nickled and dimed, and then there's just plain stiffed."

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?

TED SILAR

My name is Ted Silar. I am 55 and an adjunct teacher of Freshman Composition at an expensive, prestigious, private east-coast college. I hold a Ph.D. in English from Lehigh, a private university. I've published literary critical articles in venerable academic journals. My Ph.D. concerns feudal law terminology and I have won poetry awards and a short story award for a work in which I use my linguistic expertise, creating dialogue in impeccable Elizabethan English. I have written tales set in ancient Rome and Renaissance France. I am a professional musician; I perform, compose, and can teach popular songwriting, jazz, and classical composition.

An autodidact, I read widely in politics and the sciences. I have 20 years experience teaching English and manage consistently to manipulate my students into giving me favorable evaluations. These do not begin to exhaust the real list of my attainments, more than many tenured professors hold. I have the degree, the experience, the publications. Still they pay me one-third, one-fifth, sometimes as much as one-tenth of what a tenured professor makes. For teaching *the same course*. Without benefits.

"Why don't you just get a real job? people much too frequently ask. I explain adjunct and tenure, how the system is, quite literally, medieval. Then I explain the glut and specialties, how baby medievalists are multiplying like rabbits. Pressed, I say I'm currently trying to qualify in creative writing because that course, at least, never goes out of fashion, and is always well-enrolled; every college conceals a covey of the aspiring. Moreover, I am good at it.

I explain how I am competing against Ph.D.s from Harvard with books. I used to say this as a joke, but recently my employer of six years advertised for a medievalist position in my own department. Despite my research and experience, I didn't rate an interview. Later, I spoke to the new medievalist.

"You're not from Harvard are you?"

"Yes."

"You don't have a book, do you?"

"One," he answers, shyly, "but I'm working on another.""

Isn't is possible that a Ph.D. with articles could rank as highly as a Harvard Ph.D. with a book? The only way for me to beat out the Harvard crowd, it would seem, is to stand out from the crowd. How, though? I have no idea. The tenure system is obsessed with exponentially-expanding credentials and nothing else, and I will never get enough; life is not long enough.

The Glut and Why it is a Specious Excuse

Paying adjuncts a fraction of what tenured professors make is usually excused by reference to the free market. Free market orthodoxy prescribes: labor market glut = lower wages. This reasoning is specious. No one denies Ph.D. glut, especially in English. Applied mercilessly, shouldn't the free market mean that the glut affects everybody equally? Tenured and tenure-track professors ought to be affected as much as adjuncts. If Boards insist colleges must be more business-like, why don't they exploit everybody?

Crying Poverty

Last year we adjuncts requested a raise and got one, although paltry. Universities claim they're broke—as if they'll go out of business if they don't exploit adjuncts—while simultaneously building multi-million dollar sports and science centers. Total 2006 revenues? Forty-two million. Total cost of our requested raise? A few hundred thousand. Last year's adjunct raise didn't catch up with the cost of living increase since the last raise. An adjunct teaching a full schedule still floats just above the federal poverty level.

The Provost insists our pay is "competitive" which means compared to local community colleges. Full-time faculty get raises every year, without negotiation, calculated in comparison to other colleges similar to ours. Local colleges with tuition comparable to my institution's $36,000 a year pay their adjuncts $4000 - $5000 per course, with some community colleges offering even more. Despite this, adjuncts earn $2300 a course.

Inspiring Teachers

The trouble with teaching in general and adjuncting in particular is the impossibly high expectations teachers are subjected to. *Teachers must be inspiring…it's a calling, not just a job…they should do it for free, for the reward of inspiring the minds of tomorrow*. I hear such cornpone

platitudes everywhere. Every teacher must be a Williams, a Streep, a Dreyfuss, a Mr. Chips. Even teachers swallow this claptrap. I resent being expected to be inspiring. Yes, I know how to keep them happy; I jump up and down, shout, say radical things, act like a freaking clown. I have to, to keep my evaluations up and my job. I am ashamed. Why should I have to play the clown to keep a job?

Money and How I Get It Coming and Going

Last year, I made $16,000. I live in a one-room attic where entering, you hit your head on the ceiling. The landlord just raised the rent by 10% I can't afford. My long distance has been cut off for non-payment. I drive a thirteen-year-old car, rust eating through its ceiling, 200,000+ miles on the odometer. It's 40 miles from my garret in Allentown, PA to Reading where I work.

I drive so far because, unlike other schools, they give me a consistent three courses per semester (not whatever they feel like), they have not laid me off yet, and I'm afraid to try my luck elsewhere, where conditions might be even worse. I receive a gas allowance, but it has not increased since the 90s and my gas costs come to twice the allowance.

To get through graduate school, I accrued high student loan and credit card debt. Because at my income level I could not afford to keep up the payments, they garnish my pay $300 a month (a quarter of my net pay) and also confiscate my tax return. Non-union adjuncts don't get health insurance, so my prescriptions cost $400 every six months, out-of-pocket.

This is the real adjunct life: literally begging, borrowing, and stealing. Why? Because adjuncts are not paid enough. Dinner at mom's. Leftovers. Dinner with me means *you* pay. If I pay, it means pizza or Campbell's tomato soup. I owe all my friends and all my relatives. I still have not paid off my $2000 car.

I am daily reminded that I am 55, I am an adjunct in perpetuity, and I have no idea what I am going to do.

STRIKING TO WIN: ADJUNCT FACULTY, COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, AND STRUGGLES OVER THE COMMODIFICATION OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

J. SHANTZ

A central plank in the corporatization agenda in post-secondary education has been movement away from secure tenure-track positions towards increased reliance on adjunct or contract faculty. Reliance upon adjunct faculty has been a major part of attempts by university administrators to contain costs by paying adjunct faculty on a per-course basis, rather than as part of a salaried professorship, to teach typically larger courses that have often been passed over by full-time faculty. Adjunct faculty are often assigned courses that are outside their research areas with little advanced notice. The first year I worked as an adjunct I was assigned my third of three courses less than a week before the semester started. Efforts by university administrations to keep contract faculty working without even minimal job security provisions or provisions for adequate working conditions is key part of the requirement to "flexibilize" labour as campuses are made to fit the lean production models of other sectors.

Compounding the already numerous problems facing adjunct faculty is the fact that many adjuncts have no collective representation, whether through existing Faculty Associations or combined adjunct and teaching assistant locals or through separate adjunct unions. In Canada as in the US a vast number of adjuncts remain non-unionized. While this fact has made it easier for universities to maintain the inequitable adjunct system it has also meant that few adjuncts have had experiences in a union setting and the important lessons, as well as real material gains, that can be gained from such settings.

Striking To Win

During the fall 2000 and winter 2001 semesters, adjunct faculty, teaching assistants (TAs), and research assistants/graduate assistants (RA/GAs) at York University successfully fought a 78 day strike. The strike at Canada's third largest university, one of the longest postsecondary strikes in Canadian history, was a crucial test in a battle which put collective bargaining at the centre of efforts to protect contract faculty and students against the impacts of neoliberal attacks on postsecondary education in Ontario. The members of local 3903 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) used the strike to win some protection for such important issues as accessibility and quality of education which have not been won by usual means such as student protests, lobbying, and campus referenda. The strike showed the importance of collective bargaining in developing a broader defence of public education in Canada.

Adjuncts successfully combined broader concerns with accessibility, and quality with specific concerns for job security and promotion. Adjunct faculty at York currently have to apply for their jobs every four to eight months regardless of seniority. Even those who have taught a course for 20 or so years have to re-apply to teach it, with no guarantee that they will get it. To protect against this 3903 fought for an increase in the number of conversions of adjunct faculty to tenure stream. The conversion system was itself a victory of earlier adjunct union organizing at York.

If adjunct locals at other universities in Canada were to have a hope of gaining similar protections anytime soon, 3903 would have to hold strong on this principle. Losing on these issues would have been a crushing blow for locals with contracts due such as at Carleton (Ottawa) and McMaster (Hamilton).

From the outset, students across Canada recognized the implications of the York strike in struggles against neoliberal attacks on public universities. As the York Federation of Students (YFS) put it in an information bulletin: "Students and teachers all over Canada are looking to York in the struggle against cutbacks and for high-quality public education." University administrations across Ontario as well as the Provincial government were also keenly interested in the outcome of this particular strike and before it was over put enormous resources into breaking it.

Through years of tough bargaining 3903 members had managed to secure a contract which has been the model other adjunct and TA locals use in their negotiations with their home schools. This alone made the outcome of the York strike significant. A loss would have had devastating effects upon post-secondary education workers across Canadian campuses.

In broader terms, in order for the neoliberal agenda of privatization and marketization of post-secondary education to be fully implemented, defenders of accessible quality education, of which 3903 has been in the forefront in Canada, must be brought to heel or, even better from the view of the administration, eliminated entirely.

Indeed, the proposals made by York administration were standards of the corporatization drive in other public service sectors: privatization, reduced job security, and reductions in wages and benefits. The political character of the strike and its importance in the battle against neoliberal marketization of post-secondary education were reflected in two of the major strike issues: job security and promotion.

The university's intransigence throughout the strike spoke to the political character of the negotiations and showed that the administration believes it has some powerful support for its ongoing actions. The administration hired a Chief Negotiator from an infamous union-busting section of the Heenan Blakie law firm known for defending the then-ruling Liberal government against women workers' lawsuit for pay equity. The same negotiator worked for administrations during faculty strikes against York and Trent Universities.

By an interesting coincidence, York President Lorna Marsden sits on the Boards of Directors for corporations which donated over $28,000 to the same Conservative Ontario government which deregulated graduate fees and is constructing a bill to allow private universities in the province. Her political connections run even deeper, and more complexly since she is the former Vice-President of the Liberal Party of Canada, the very party which set the stage for tuition deregulation by cutting education transfers to the provinces.

The York Board of Governors consists primarily of corporate Directors and CEOs. For example, one Governor authored a 1996 report recommending the Provincial government deregulate tuition fees, a proposal which has been given life in a Bill currently going through readings in the Ontario legislature. Another is CEO and Chair of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce which administers student loans, and profits from the increased student debts related to costly tuition.

It is no wonder then that these administrators have been so opposed to student efforts to halt tuition increases, increase program spending, and convert more adjuncts to full-time faculty. The usual means of student activism, e.g. protest marches, lobbying efforts, student council elections, have lacked any real power to influence decision-making by corporate intent on pushing through changes from which they themselves profit. University workers, however, wielding their strength as workers to

withdraw their labour, are able to hit the Board of Governors where it affects them most—directly at the income level. Recognizing the dual character of students as workers and using the strength of workers to win gains brings collective bargaining to the forefront of efforts to secure workers and students' rights.

Open Bargaining

Collective bargaining and strikes never happen in isolation. As with any tactic their success or failure depends on their context and the manner in which they are wielded. Significant in this regard were the participatory and radically democratic bargaining structures maintained throughout the strike. Throughout the strike strikers made decisions on bargaining demands and overall strike strategy.

Local 3903 held open membership assemblies every week throughout the strike. Decisions about the direction of bargaining were made during these assemblies, which were regularly attended by around 400 members. The bargaining committee made regular reports at those meetings and were only authorized to carry forward positions which had been rendered by the mass meetings. Assemblies repeatedly instructed the bargaining committee to compromise as little as possible and to report fully on the administration's proposals for settlement.

This open bargaining process contributed to the militancy and participation of members. In this way decision-making was retained in favour of general members away from separate committees.

Decisions regarding day-to-day picket practices were made at daily meetings of the strike committees which were also open to all members. When the university threatened to seek an injunction against the strikers' effective pickets, a spontaneous membership meeting of over 400 members voted overwhelmingly to maintain the lines.

Beyond Bargaining

Strikers won because solidarity among workers, students, and anti-poverty activists forced the administration and provincial government to back down from their threats of declaring the strike illegal and/or outside of state-regulated collective bargaining practices.

Strikers even decided to "escalate" the strike by taking flying squads to the bosses' homes and offices including on Bay Street (the Wall Street of Canada) and in the ruling Liberal Party of Canada's national headquarters during the recent national election campaign. Picketers protested the

provincial parliament's newest legislation to privatise post-secondary education and raise the maximum workweek in all industries to 60 hours. The state's timing of passing these anti-worker laws during the strike provoked hundreds of strikers and supporters to organize and rally in downtown Toronto for the strike's specific demands and against the general repression of neoliberalism.

In taking the strike beyond our own workplace the strikers connected our demands with the administrators' conflicts of interests between governing a public university and actively forcing privatization and corporatization. Union flying squads confronted the office of a York University Governor who is also CEO of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and educated the public in general about how many York Governors are also directors of a governmental privatization fund.

The successful demands of local 3903 and the open and innovative practices the local used in collective bargaining and striking challenged not only members' particular work experiences but the neoliberal form of other social "restructuring." Through our efforts the union showed the effective development of collective bargaining as a constructive tool, not only in winning rights for adjunct faculty but in a broader effort to defend accessibility and quality in public post-secondary education.

PROFOUND TREACHERY

SYLVIA M. DESANTIS

I stand in front of the oven warming my hands, sniffling back frustration, having the most treacherous thought of my career: how well will my *Norton Anthologies* burn? Will they curl up quietly as the flames wrap around them, an unctuous offering to the frigid cold? Or will they spark and sizzle, refuse to go quietly, and set off the smoke alarm in their wake? Maybe I could experiment with that ancient dog-eared copy. More likely, I'll just sit and cry. Then I remember her, as I always do in desperate moments, and wonder who she was and if she's still alive.

Obviously homeless, the woman slumps in a dirty pile on the Franklin Institute steps. Neither the freezing night nor my tucking a five dollar bill into the fold of her coat rouses her. *She might have been like one of us once* I say. My undergraduate friends pause briefly and then slip back into easy chatter about grades and shoes as we head towards the bar. I wonder aloud if we should do something for her, help in some way. "You don't spend nearly enough time downtown," says one of my friends in a kind but jaded way. "The homeless are everywhere. Can't help them all." *But we haven't helped anyone* I think. A silent bundle, the woman seems easy to dismiss. So we do.

My friends' cavalier attitude niggle at me that night, and I never forget that woman bundled on the steps. Any one of us could, at any moment, fail at life in an utter and complete way no matter how fortunate, educated, or financed. I had already learned this ugly lesson from my own bruised family history, but seeing it on display so painfully in the middle of Philadelphia in the freezing cold night made it a little more brutal.

Six years later, barely covering rent, I stand freezing in front of an oven, ready to burn books for heat. But for the grace of some higher power, I am freezing inside rather than outside on this night. The rumble and burp of the old oil heater trying to turn on without fuel add to my irritation. Weighted down with two degrees, one full-time retail job, one part-time tutoring job at a local learning center, two part-time adjunct gigs in two separate departments, and an old coat I probably shouldn't get too close to the stove, I wonder at the choices that have led me here.

I'd been warned, heard the gossip, and most irrefutably of all, saw my paycheck, but still I couldn't stay out of the classroom. Extraordinarily more fortunate than many adjuncts—instructors who told tales of horror about holding office hours in their car or paying out-of-pocket for every piece of paper they handed out in class—I was still "in a bad way" as the locals would say. Teaching as a graduate student for the usual stipend had seduced me immediately. The joy had been immeasurable, and the art of teaching mine to hold. My messy, full days brimmed over with a busy frenetic energy I loved completely and too much.

My post-graduation life, however, left me reeling. I owed the equivalent of a small house mortgage in student loans and found an uninterested, glutted job market waiting. I wasn't really eligible for any tenure track positions with my terminal Master's and, ironically, all the desperate Ph.D.s on the market had snatched up the spots anyway.

Astounded at how far my star had fallen, I made my first desperate choice and returned to retail. I loathed every minute behind the register as I thought about being in the classroom. *If only I could teach again everything would be fine.* Teaching was one of the few things that made complete sense to me and, without question, that's why I made my second bad choice; I grabbed up offers to adjunct. My love for the classroom—and less idealistic need to pay rent—made it possible for me to accept behavior I would never consider professionally acceptable, now or since: I accepted classes offered to me less than a week before the semester began. I snatched up a 45-student section of a Women's Studies class that should have been capped at 30 and that required me to leave and return to my full-time job twice a day, three times a week, because of sloppy scheduling. On and on…and no matter how poorly I was treated, I felt fortunate.

I was cheap labor. I rationalized that spending those hours in class made selling dresses and t-shirts easier. I read other adjunct stories and gave silent thanks for my somewhat tenuous office, supplies, and preview copies. I even think I might have been allowed to vote on departmental issues if I had known what they were, although the flyers were conspicuously absent from adjunct mailboxes. But still, beyond the garbage politics, I managed to slip back into a field that had hooked my heart. During the span of my walk between my classroom and the downtown shop where I sold clothing (often to my own students—"awkward" is an understatement), I wondered if I was actually quite lucky and just didn't know it.

I stayed silent the time I returned to my office and found my desk cleared, my next semester's contract given away without notice, my

belongings bent, folded up, and crammed unceremoniously into an empty bookshelf, all the result of an unstable full-time faculty member who believed that such "unnaturally high" student evaluations from an *adjunct's* class would ruin the departmental median. I told myself stories—that it didn't matter, that it wasn't me, that Women's Studies faculty as a whole feel the sting of marginalization—but the incident broke my spirit. If I couldn't even rely on the advocacy of fellow scholars to treat each other humanely and who, in my naïve mind, are always already bound *by the very ideology we teach*, what hope did I have of achieving recognition or fair treatment from a faceless and removed administration?

You're not being appreciative enough I would tell myself, trying desperately to buck up, stay positive, push that black abyss of depression out of my periphery, and silence the relentless voice pointing out that only a phenomenal loser works four jobs and still struggles to pay a meager $475 in rent.

Today I say with complete assurance: there was nothing wrong with me except the insanely high standards I set for myself. Rather, the paradigm was broken. The common practice of throwing certain "undesirable," grading-intensive classes to graduate students and adjuncts like corn to hungry pigs had provided me a grand opportunity to both fall in love with teaching and, as an adjunct, continue that love affair—in its own way, a blessing—but who wants to spend a lifetime as the other woman? As much as teaching invigorated me, I knew deeply and profoundly that I couldn't sustain my lifestyle. Heating myself by the oven had introduced me to self-hate and disappointment too profound for any classroom satisfaction to balm.

Sky-high evaluations from both administrators and students (even those who had earned poor grades) reflected my dedicated, if blind, love of teaching back at me, but I couldn't continue. I refused to cobble together classes, income, and life satisfaction from here, there, anywhere. Nothing about going hungry or being in poverty would make me a better teacher. Feeling such profound lack only ever made me cynical. Even if I couldn't always articulate it, I knew I was worth more, as a person and teacher.

Too tired to maintain my maniacal schedule, I took a part-time writing job that spun itself into full-time multimedia work and I taught myelf an entirely new skill set. I even got some oil for that heater. The price? I stopped adjuncting. Completely. I made the final severance by leaving the town where I had learned to love the classroom. Life improved, but at a sad price. I teach online occasionally, but I refuse to adjunct per se, so other forms of student engagement have to be enough. I still work in a

university and have taught one-off sessions here and there, but I miss those sustained, semester-long relationships.

A few years back I met a new faculty member at a University Libraries function who bragged proudly about his skill at "getting out of teaching" his first semester. His pleasure and pride made me sick and furious. What about those of us who would have snapped up those classes once upon a time? His ignorance pained me. Those like him, products of a system thwarting its own purpose, embody nothing but a lack of respect for and defilement of higher education's mission. And they're paid well for their treachery, behavior much more criminal than burning some old *Norton's*.

I've since made peace with most of my ill treatment as an adjunct, though some days the memories still surge up to a boil, the injustices burning hot and clear in my mind. I suspect only those willing to stay up all night grading papers for a few dollars understand my fury, and my attempts at peace. At least we know—cynicism and all—that when we choose to place ourselves in a classroom, our Truth makes a difference.

UNDERVALUED, OVERWORKED, UNDERPAID, DOWN UNDER

TAMSYN O'TOOLE

Six-twenty AM. An alabaster stripe gives form to the harbor's horizon. This is Sydney, the largest city in Australia, a country where labor laws were once strong and a sense of "a fair go" was celebrated, if not always implemented. But times change as surely as night turns to dawn. Over the last dozen years Australian universities have endured many changes, not all conducive to intellectual pursuit, most of them unfavorable to staff and especially unfavorable to those trying to get their foot in the academic door. At times I wish the door would simply be slammed, even if it means amputation of my metaphoric foot, and with it my dreams.

But there is no time for dreaming just now. Pity, because a luminous pink is streaking the eastern sky, lighting the harbor and buoying my mood—so dark when the alarm had woken me at 4.50 AM, a breakfast, a walk, and a bus trip ago. There is much to be done before I dash through the gates of Bullamanka University (BU)* where I have held a variety of casual and brief contract positions for the last 13 years.[1] I pull from my bag the last of the essays I had ceased marking at midnight, when that dilemma hit: What will serve my students better—to get their essays back early, or to have me vibrant and enthusiastic for my lecture?

The need for sleep had received the nod but, as so often happens, once in my bed, nod off I could not. Worries of the world weighed upon me, not least my workload, my frustration that writing and research keep getting pushed aside, and my wondering what might happen to an aging,

[1] In Australia, "casual" work is paid by the hour, though the university calculates the expected hours involved, so that many hours, e.g. for essay marking with decent feedback, might go unpaid. "Contract" work, with more equivalence to full time work, is work undertaken over a set period, but usually falls short of payment for the full period of preparation needed prior to commencement of classes. "Contract" lecturers generally get paid for five months of a semester where full-time staff would be paid for six months, despite the same amount of work being involved.

marginalised, non-tenured academic who feels she still has so much to give but who fits so poorly into the set of values in today's universities.

Between essays, I grab glimpses of the spectacular sunrise, resentful at being denied the chance to imbue its loveliness. It is bright and beckoning—everything that my "career" is not. Back to the marking.

I jostle other passengers to alight first from the ferry. I may write about community and the upholding of thoughtfulness in the face of greed as part of my research. I may critique soul-destroying efficiency priorities that take no account of the people on whom they impact. But with just 20 minutes to purchase a ticket, catch one train and then another, I turn into the subject of my own critique. I cannot miss either train. I cannot arrive flustered. I cannot stumble. I am expendable.

It is only three stops on the first train, not long enough to mark essays or revise my lecture but long enough to start a list. I am on the second train before the catalogue of chores is complete and my stomach churns at its length and the optimism needed to confront it. My stomach gives another turn. Is it my situation or do I have a bug? Does it matter? For casual workers, there is no sick leave. Contract workers are entitled to sick leave but are loathe to take it.

Thought of entitlements jolt my memory that union fees are due. I need to write to the union as it has sent me a bill for unpaid dues. Don't they realise I didn't pay for several months because I was not working then? They give discounts for paying a year at a time. In my 13 years of casual/contract academic work, I've never been paid for a full year. No discounts for the disadvantaged.

I add to my list "email the union" and think of the irony that I am taking this matter up with them when there are so many other matters on which I should be hounding the union: loopholes the university finds for extracting a little more all the time out of its casual workforce. Sometimes I think the university must employ a fleet of assiduous researchers to find these loopholes. I mull over their likely status—permanent or casual? Back to the essays.

Nearing the end of the train journey, they are complete. The students will get them back promptly and most will be appreciative. Appreciation is more likely to come from students than from those who employ me. One problem with being in a situation where one is allotted fractional and intermittent work is that it puts you in a position of needing the work badly. From there, it is all too easy for those who make use of your services to believe they are doing you a favor by giving you any work at all. Exploitation can take on the hallmarks of benevolence. Those at the receiving end know all too well its true nature but dare not express it.

Eventually, I arrive at BU. It is early in session so I scurry, head down, past the offices of colleagues, though few of them are yet in. I hate coming back to work and having tenured staff[2] who have been paid for their holidays ask, "How was your break?" Break? For us it is a break in pay, not in academic chores. Sometimes I teach a third semester over summer to keep some money coming in. For some inexplicable reason, tenured staff think I have lots of extra time due to being casual/contract. You try working three semesters instead of two per year, I want to say to them, and see how much spare time you have. See how relaxing your "holidays" are. See how much time you have for research and writing.

Breaks are also a time of looking for jobs, utterly exhausting psychologically. It doesn't count for research, of course, though there is much research needed for each application, which must be tailored to specific criteria and constructed in some form of "weasel words" that I truly have not mastered. Another veritable industry seems to have flourished around the writing of job descriptions in universities. Recently I looked up the job vacancies at a different university in Sydney. Every single vacancy was in administration or marketing, none in teaching. That's the overall trend. Welcome to the corporatization of intellectual thought.

There was a time, I'm sure—unfortunately before I started this academic caper—when people looked at what you'd done as an indication of what you could achieve. If you'd written prolifically and been published, then they assumed that you would have a good publication output. If you had taught a great deal of subjects successfully, then they assumed that your teaching development was already underway. Now it seems less about what you have shown you can do (which is perceived as all so ho-hum) and more about what you can promise, using the slickest, albeit superficial, marketing spiel. I have had a number of young, promising, suave candidates appointed over me who, on paper, it seemed to me, had much less going for them. If it was once cream that rose to the surface, it is now bubbles and froth.

The dean has told me that older people with good track records are favoured on some occasions but that often universities are looking for

[2] Tenure in Australia has traditionally been different to tenure in the US. An academic in Australia, having attained a position and satisfied its requirements, could once have expected tenure to follow much more easily than would be the case in the USA. Tenure has now become much more difficult and with less guarantees, as universities, mostly for reasons of economic efficiencies, have become increasingly reliant on either casual or contract staff who have no guarantee of continued employment, despite their performance.

young people with "fresh ideas". Why didn't he just stick a knife in my chest? I felt so hurt. Due to being casual/contract, and therefore not a part of the faculty[3], no one has ever asked for my ideas. I not only have "fresh ideas," I have old and unused and brilliant ideas that are trying to burst forth but there is no one interested to receive them. While tenured staff get consulted (though perhaps not enough), it is assumed that I have nothing to offer, no right to contribute. It is as though I have no brain, no imagination, no capacity for drawing ideas from all the experience I've had. Not only is this undervaluing me and my collective experience, but it is a tragic waste of a resource.

I teach in a department that has been whittled away after years of losing staff and utilising casuals in their place. This is not atypical of the situation in Australian universities. Given the divide between tenure and non-tenured academics, this necessarily diminishes the core from which ideas are drawn. Of course, this may be useful for contemporary universities as they retract from areas of critique to engage more in corporate collaboration, in line with Australian Government insistence on decreased reliance on government funding. But for those who are marginalised—often those with greater experience of hardship and alternative worldviews, which have traditionally served universities well—their views are unlikely to be heard.

By now I am in my office, piled high with half-written articles and unfinished research that remains desperately in need of attention and funding. The attention could be given if I had sabbatical leave, to which I am not entitled, of course. As for funding, who would fund research by somebody only contracted for the next several months? These days, one of the objectives of distributing research funds is that it can help further someone's career. I don't really have a career—I barely have a job—so that quickly disqualifies me.

I am lucky, however, to have an office and at present I don't even share it, although at times I have. Being on the periphery means that I will be the first to lose my office and am moved pretty much on the whim of where others would have me. At one stage I moved five times in half as many years. It's the same with mailboxes. I have to constantly give mine up to any young promising person that comes along, with lesser credentials but so much more panache.

The tenuous mailbox is symbolic of my status at large, which is anything but large. Several years ago, after having substituted in various

[3] In Australia, a faculty is understood more as an institutional division of a university rather than a collection of academic staff.

emergency situations that arose, I naively thought that reliability, versatility and willingness to co-operate would be noticed and would stand me in good stead. I knew there were no tenured positions on the horizon but I expected to be first in line for any contract work that emerged. At the time I was casual and part-time. A full-time contract position did arise, initially unbeknownst to me, for I am out of the communication loop unless somebody deigns to pass on tidbits of information. But the department had meanwhile conjured up a scheme to bring a big name to the university, somebody fresh and with an international flavor. The first I knew of this was from a mass email celebrating the one-semester appointment of someone from overseas (and I have heard, thought not had confirmed, that his travel and transfer expenses were paid). He was not a big name. They had to settle for less. He was well qualified but no more so than myself.

This was indisputably my moment of hitting rock-bottom. I already felt despondent that the position had come about to replace somebody going on long service leave, triggering me to reflect on having been at BU for ten years, the qualifier for long service leave—so long as you count as real staff, and I didn't.[4]

Casting off the fairly willing and easy-to-get-along-with nature that I felt I generally displayed around the faculty, I was angry both at the appointment over me and that I had not been considered or kept informed in any way. Colleagues were keen to reassure me that there had been no malice intended in overlooking me and that, indeed, I had not been discarded as unworthy, but rather it had simply been forgotten that I existed, in the process of throwing around names for a suitable contender. Another dagger in the chest. Another reminder of how invisible peripheral staff can be.

The exciting overseas academic who got the position left in circumstances that were all hush-hush but seem to have spelt loudly that this had not been a wise appointment. He left word undone and many miscalculated marks, meaning many students risked receiving lower grades than they should have. Someone needed to fix it. That someone was me. I have never received a word of thanks, let alone payment, for rectifying this situation.

[4] Long Service Leave is an entitlement in Australia, to workers who have been employed on a permanent basis with the same employer for 10 years. It is usually three months paid leave after 10 years and accrues after that, according to different Awards under which conditions are set. Some of this may be jeopardised under recent Industrial Relations legislation by the Howard Government.

In the absence of any acknowledgement, I wonder if anyone ever pondered that originally they should have considered me for this contract position. Do people reflect on their mistakes in today's heavily corporatized universities? I know I excavate my past for the points at which I may have contributed to my own predicament as a marginalised academic. In any case, while none of the faculty's powerful people acknowledged that I might have been a better choice, I did take the step up from casual to contract staff, with the next contracted position coming to me. This was a good moment. While it fell far short of achieving a tenured position, peripheral folk have to be grateful for the smallest of mercies!

But back to my day in the office. By now I have consulted with students, chased up, confirmed and reported cases of plagiarism, organised for books and readings to be set aside at the library, and made peace with a disability officer who, weeks prior to the commencement of session and when my contract was no more than a gleam in the dean's eye, was pursuing me while I was away at a (fully self-funded) overseas conference. She had been demanding that I provide electronic copies of lectures I would give in a subject I would teach in a session under a contract that had not yet been signed. When I told her, from the opposite hemisphere, that was not possible at that time, she replied that "good teachers" can always provide such material on demand.

"Good teachers" is open to definition, of course, but I like to think I meet most of those definitions, despite the obstacles encountered by the uncertainties that surround my job, or series of jobs, which might be cut short at any time.

Many of those obstacles involve being taken for granted but also an application of double standards. Pay and conditions are delineated and inflexible, with firm cut-off dates, but expectations, research and students' ongoing needs and problems are all ongoing and require a process of fairness and attention which does not fit neatly into BU's calendar. For example, promptly following the expiry of contracts, email and library "privileges" cease, along with access to databases necessary for recording students' marks. Essays of students who have had extensions on their work often come in after the expiry of my contract, but I am seen as having the responsibility for marking these, updating records and informing administration. This is difficult to do without access, which I have to constantly re-initiate, sometimes only to have it cut out again within a week or two and still before all marks are complete. These dealings are small but ongoing tasks that fall on non-tenured staff and never tenured staff. They are part of a plethora of minutiae with which

non-tenured academics have to deal but which do not show up in our list of official duties.

The inflexibility of an administratively top-heavy system works to teachers' and students' disadvantage at both ends of the semester. This semester my contract was somehow overlooked. Not only did I have to work in good faith (that is, without money) for several weeks until the paperwork was found, but I could not borrow from the library until I was again officially "on the system". Hours and hours that I would have liked to have put into subject preparation were instead spent—futilely, as it turned out—trying to get around a system that would not and could not acknowledge that it was in everyone's interests for me to be able to borrow library books and access library databases.

Back to real time. A heavy schedule of classes is about to begin. I have not put the finishing touches to my lecture, as I'd hoped. Luckily, I have the basis for a lecture and I won't have to "wing it," a skill I am blessed to have but which I am loathe to use. Every fill-in academic must be able to "wing it", for notice of running a subject can be as little as two weeks and the topic can be uncomfortably outside of one's established field. By the time I've researched a subject and written a class plan, the writing of an actual lecture is a luxury I don't always have.

Many years of teaching may not bring recognised rewards but it does amass a cache of teaching skills and bountiful confidence, not bad assets when you face a class. Most of the students know I am a fill-in. Many find out when they say how much they have enjoyed my classes and want to know what classes I'll be teaching next. I can only shrug my shoulders in the time-honoured casual way. The students are themselves very familiar with casual and part-time work. They jam their studies into increasingly demanding bit-jobs, sometimes a bit here and a bit there, in bars, pizza parlours and call centres. They juggle these jobs with their studies in the hope of one day having a real job. I do something similar, but I like their chances better.

Today I am helping the students of one class understand the concepts of socio-political context, institutionalised inequities, and broader social injustices. Many of these 19 year-olds, brought up with uncritical media and in the shadow of the cult of individualism, are finding it tough going, but my own words fall meaningfully on my own ears. It is a lesson for me as well and I take heart from it. Too often I deride myself for the position I am in, convinced that the problems must largely lie within me. Why else would I work at something for so long, seemingly with good results in both teaching and publication, only to be permanently discarded? I am

reminded to look at the broader picture, the shifts in society and how individuals find themselves in positions not always of their own making.

My mammoth workload remains the same but seems a little lightened in the wake of this timely reminder. Like this morning's flamingo sunrise over Sydney's silver harbor, it brightens my mood and strengthens my resolve to go on. I know, too, that I am one of many to be adversely affected by changes in tertiary education in this country. I can persist all the better for knowing that my story applies to many others.

I may never get asked for my ideas, but I have a vision and expectations of what a university should be. It should not be left to neo-liberal apologists and bean counters that think education can only be measured in economic terms. It should be a place where people of commitment to social critique can feel they belong. Whether BU embraces me or not—and on present indications, I would have to say it has no desire to embrace me or my vision—I will keep teaching and writing and contributing in some small part to what universities ought to be about, as long as I can. That may not be long at all.

I will most likely be on the last ferry tonight. It will be nearly 1.00 AM when I get home. Unlike last night, I will sleep well, partly because I will be exhausted, and partly because I know about collective struggle and that it relieves me of some of the torment that is part of being a marginalised academic.

But just now I have another class...

Everything in this story is true. However, the author's name and the name of her university have been changed to protect her from some of the obvious ramifications that might befall a casual/contract employee.

'SUCKING HIND TIT': ADJUNCTS AND ACCESS IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

PAM WHITFIELD

Our English department has a dirty little secret: we're terrified of adjuncts. We must be, because last fall we instituted a new by-law that grants them continued access to our department meetings, but forbids them to vote, even on issues that directly impact their work.

After that November meeting, most of our English adjuncts, who had been admirably and selflessly involved in our department, slunk off without even an audible whimper, never to be seen at a monthly department meeting again. This by-law unfortunately coincided with a drop in enrollment which meant that only one measly composition course was offered to a lone adjunct for spring semester. I often wonder, if they maintained even a small teaching load, would our adjuncts have come back to our meetings? What makes it necessary to divide academic departments into the haves and have-nots? And what can a former adjunct-turned-tenure-track academic like me do about it?

The Adjunct Threat

Our department has historically disagreed on whether adjuncts are allowed to vote on department business—and years before also voted to deny adjuncts the vote—but only last fall did we (re)codify our consensus by a very narrow margin which has, nonetheless, become "law." Depending on the year and the department chair, adjuncts have indeed voted on some of our most contentious issues, including whether our second semester freshman English course research paper would be limited to a focus on literary analysis. (I voted as an adjunct, on the losing side of that question.) Often our adjuncts simply flew under the radar screen, showing up at one or two meetings a year, so that many long term, full-time faculty did not know who they were and, being Minnesota-nice, felt uncomfortable asking their identity or singling them out. This lack of

collegiality actually provided a fissure through which part-timers could slip in and exercise their democratic rights as members of the department. Now the crack has been sealed up.

Why are our adjuncts perceived as such a threat? They are not vying for our classes or our jobs. This department has over-hired in recent years, and has no retirements on the horizon, so the adjuncts are well aware that no new full-time positions will be posted in the foreseeable future. Our department also has "collected" an increasing pool of adjuncts in recent years, yet is able to offer them fewer and fewer courses each semester. In fact, our college was hit this past year with a decline in enrollment—the first in a decade. These combined factors mean that the English department can barely offer enough courses each semester to keep our full-time faculty at their designated course loads and still maintain acceptable student enrollments in those classes.

Minnesota is, nonetheless, a good state in which to work in higher education. Tenure is easy and relatively painless to obtain at community and technical colleges in this state[1], and academics (both full-time and adjunct) enjoy the support and protection of faculty unions, with hard-fought contracts negotiated every two years. Our institution in particular has created many initiatives designed to improve life and work for adjuncts, including a series of in-service workshops. The college faculty union works hard to make them feel included as well, and encourages them to observe committee work, give presentations, and involve themselves in professional life.[2]

In addition, limits are placed on the number of courses taught by adjuncts, preventing a department from exploiting underpaid academics or laying off its own tenured faculty in favor of cheaper labor. And if adjuncts teach five or more credits in a semester (one-third of a full time load), they are placed on the salary schedule and paid at the same rate as

[1] In the two-year colleges of this state, we faculty often refer to ourselves as "tenured," but officially it is termed "unlimited fulltime." When a faculty member is first hired, she is termed "probationary fulltime." After three years of employment and favorable performance evaluations, she becomes "unlimited fulltime."

[2] The faculty union does not encourage adjuncts and even probationary fulltime faculty to serve on college-wide committees because, as the faculty president explained to me, "They might be put into positions where they feel like they can't say no. It's not fair to them; they don't have the job security to freely voice their opinions." He also implied that the union wants to protect adjuncts from intimidation by administration.

full-time faculty—another rarity nationwide.[3] Minnesota is actually pretty adjunct-friendly, as faculty unions have consistently negotiated favorable policies for its part-time members. Adjuncts here also benefit from a "rolling over" policy that allows those who have taught full-time course loads to move into full-time openings with a streamlined hiring process.[4]

Although the state and the faculty union have attempted to create greater equality for adjunct faculty, the same cannot be said of my department. Here, class consciousness runs as deep as molars and proves as sticky as barnyard mud. Why is it acceptable to shut out our English adjuncts from department life and deny them a voice in the citizenry that governs itself in our narrow hallways? Because, evidently, they already have "got it good enough" and should be grateful. In the semesters that an adjunct manages to teach credit hours equal to one-third of a full-time load, he or she can leap from the lousy adjunct pay-per-credit rate to the full-time salary scale, which means a pro-rated pay that can be as high as $2000 per credit. Many of our adjuncts have spouses who work full time as doctors, computer programmers, or teachers themselves; many adjuncts teach at multiple institutions, pursue further education, or hold other part-time jobs in addition to teaching on our campus. They "get by." Sympathy is hard for them to come by in our land of milk and honey and protected territory.

I mentioned this schism to a fellow writer at a poetry reading in a nearby farming town. A seventy-year-old woman, and also a former adjunct, Betty hrumphed and told me that adjuncting was like "sucking hind tit." I imagined my colleagues (me included) jockeying for position as tiny piglets (it wasn't hard) alongside the mother sow, the state educational system. We scramble over each other, we claw and root for a teat we can latch onto, a lifeline that can sustain us. We lay nestled against our mother sow while the proverbial runts, the adjuncts, take turns sharing the limited hind teats.

There is one advantage to sucking hind tit if you're a baby pig, as Betty informed me: "the milk is richer at the back." But I'm not convinced

[3] Technically, adjuncts who teach more than five credits in a given semester are termed "part time faculty" and also benefit from accruing seniority. This means that, semester to semester, non-fulltime faculty can fluctuate between adjunct and part-time status. For the purposes of this essay, I keep the terminology simple by referring to all non-fulltime faculty as adjuncts.

[4] Adjuncts in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system must still compete against a full pool of qualified candidates; however, they benefit, if they have taught full time course loads, from being automatically granted an interview for the position.

that an English department should run like the farrowing pen at a hog farm, or that my colleagues and I should make our decisions based on hunger, strength, and greed.

Many tenure-track faculty make one dangerous assumption: adjuncts are less qualified to teach than themselves. Our English adjuncts are not unqualified to teach; they meet minimum qualifications for the state and have significant college-level teaching experience, not to mention auxiliary qualifications such as Peace Corp work or published writing. In fact, most of them are no less qualified than the majority of our longstanding full-time faculty and, in a number of cases, may be more so. We employ one English adjunct with a doctorate from prestigious UW-Madison, another who adjuncted at Northwestern University, and a third who was tenured at an out-of-state community college before moving to Minnesota. Several adjuncts hold a second master's degree in ESL or reading, which greatly benefits the students at a community college where many courses are developmental and populated with second-language learners. This past year, two of our long-term adjuncts landed full-time positions at other two-year colleges in our state. Although most adjuncts are seeking full-time employment, a few of my colleagues do adjunct by choice.

Our department also employs adjuncts with recent M.A. and M.F.A. degrees whose pedagogical methods may be more "progressive" and more infused with composition and developmental writing theory (the bulk of our teaching loads) than many of our esteemed but older colleagues who obtained their master's degrees in the 1970's and 1980's. In fact, having a master's degree, as opposed to a doctorate, may create a source of contention and spawn its ugly cousin, the self-protective attitude of condescension, where full-time adjunct relations are concerned. Longstanding full-time faculty who have not immersed themselves in recent theory and pedagogy may feel insecure about possessing a well-worn master's degree, and transpose this feeling onto our adjuncts. A person can only be identified as a "have" when there exists a group of "have nots" in the back row, slurping up whatever is left.

Life as a Have-Not

Our adjuncts do not agitate to take over the department; they do not undermine our committee work, overturn policies, or even question (out loud, at least) the goals and priorities of its membership. They do, however, perform a lot of thankless tasks and volunteer for the grunt work

that needs doing and does, in fact, support and further the goals and priorities of our academic institution.

Four adjuncts currently work as writing and ESL specialists in our campus learning center, where I direct the writing area and staff. They work part-time hours and teach a few courses at our school. They tutor in the trenches, helping under-prepared, non-native, and nontraditional students improve their writing, reading, and thinking skills. When these adjuncts are teaching in our English department, they are accorded a modicum of grudging respect as colleagues. When they work as "college lab assistants" in the learning center, however, they are viewed as staff, supplemental instructors, or even paraprofessionals, all terms that clearly have less power and prestige in the campus hierarchy than the term "faculty." I imagine their frustration: on Monday and Wednesday mornings, teaching a composition course makes them faculty and thus "equals" to their colleagues. On Tuesday and Thursday, however, they are psychologically stripped of their graduate degrees and advanced training and labeled "tutors," although tutoring work is equally as demanding as classroom teaching, and often more so.

When the writing services of the learning center came under fire at a department meeting last fall, I was called to defend our center's philosophy and methods. I was also hit broadside, as were the writing specialists, by comments about their abilities as teachers and tutors. I watched them in the back of the room where they sat quietly, invisibly, listening to their colleagues say, "I don't want tutors helping my students with thesis statements and structure" and "I deal with global-level concerns in my classroom; the tutors are only qualified to deal with grammar and lower order concerns."

Perhaps these tenured faculty did not even realize that the tutors in question were in the same room, that these tutors are considered qualified by the state educational system to teach the same classes as tenured faculty and, most importantly, that these tutors have been highly trained for composition teaching and writing center work. This demoralizing debate about the learning center's role vis-a- vis composition teaching continued for months, until both the adjuncts/writing specialists and I learned to ignore it and forge ahead independently of the department.

Our English adjuncts have also developed websites for campus programs, started a literary reading series that brings in local and regional talent, created and taught workshops for students, given campus wide lectures, built an online virtual tool for department meetings, served on college-wide committees, and led the area council of English teachers, bringing high school and college faculty together. From my perspective,

every one of these ventures was a thankless task that received little initial support and almost no subsequent gratitude from the majority of their colleagues.

In some cases, our adjuncts have managed to obtain renumeration (usually in the form of grant money) for these important initiatives, and all of the ventures have proven both successful and ongoing. That said, none of these initiatives was part of their job description and none translated into a full-time job, increased pay, or greater job security. In fact, adjuncts' willingness to serve the institution and profession in such ways may actually undermine adjuncts as it trains the school, its administration, and full-time faculty to expect such selfless and uncompensated service. The argument remains that adjuncts get paid and treated poorly enough as it is; they should not have to do committee work or campus service in addition to teaching courses.

I was one of those adjuncts who merrily volunteered for improbable causes and marginalized projects. I developed the new equine science curriculum; this college now boasts the only two-year equine degree program in the state. I served on search teams and committees, I gave faculty talks on teaching critical thinking skills and assessing writing. I lobbied the administration for increased funding for presenters at conferences; I was constantly presenting at conferences, or answering a call for papers, and I needed financial support. When the college created its first ever (and long overdue) new adjunct faculty orientation, I spoke on a panel about "getting involved" in the institution.

I was one second class citizen of the academy who didn't even realize I was being looked down upon by the "haves." I was too busy teaching, speaking, writing, and meeting new people. I had left academia for three years when I relocated to the Midwest and started a family, and I sorely missed it. I wanted badly to play the game, but it never occurred to me that I might be considered uppity for excelling in areas that are shunned by full-time faculty at our school.

Clearly I didn't know my place. At one state-wide English teacher's conference, only two faculty from our college attended: myself and the most senior faculty member. And I was the one presenting. She heard my talk, introduced herself afterward, then asked if I would give my paper to the entire department. The department was not interested, it turned out, to hear from an adjunct, but this colleague was interested in me. The following year she became interim dean, then department chair and coordinator for the learning center—I was lucky to have her as a mentor. Once I became full-time, I had the opportunity to collaborate with her in

multiple endeavors. Many of our institution's most successful initiatives have her name behind them. She, too, began as an adjunct.

In fact, I'm learning that our entire college is staffed with one-time adjuncts. Some former (secret?) adjuncts in our department who are now tenured are careful to guard their status, as if it were shameful or somehow second-class to admit that they had once worked for our institution, or any other, on a part-time basis. At social gatherings or during office tête-à-têtes, I have been informed in whispers that "so-and-so was an adjunct too, you know."[5]

If adjuncts are a threat, perhaps it is because when the have-nots become the haves, as I did, the power balance shifts in important ways. This is especially true in our college, where adjuncts are not "automatically" hired when a position opens up. On the contrary, every unlimited full-time position must be publicized as a national search, and English openings, in particular, attract up to three hundred applicants (many of them Ph.D.s) in a given year.[6] When an adjunct lands a tenure-track post, a "have not" clearly has been deemed to be a "have." Suddenly other faculty have to revise their opinion of this colleague's status and abilities. They have to recognize—at least publicly—this individual as an equal.

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[5] In 2004 my college held a well-attended and much-appreciated informational event called, "Meet, Eat and Greet! An Open House for Part-time and Adjunct Faculty Members." Afterward, the Center for Teaching and Learning used an anonymous survey to assess the event's impact. One faculty member wrote, "I am glad that you sponsored this event, I had many questions about minimum qualifications. However, now I feel like I am 'out' as a being 'just an adjunct.' A lot of people told me tonight that they thought I was full-time. I feel like my credibility in committees and on campus will be reduced now that people outside my department know that I am an adjunct."

[6] A graduate school colleague who has been on the national job market multiple times and adjuncted at state universities in the past, has found that at the four-year level, "there are few places that hire tenure track faculty from the adjunct ranks." I believe this "prejudice" stems in part from the aforementioned assumption that anyone who has adjuncted must be, by default, somehow professionally flawed or un(der)qualified. Although it is possible for adjuncts to be hired for full time, tenure-track positions at two-year colleges, and my school's faculty is a great example of that possibility, their having taught at the institution for years does not necessarily give them an advantage, as they still must compete against a candidate pool that is regionally or even nationally competitive.

Turning the Tables

The empowerment that a new "have" gains through a full-time position can be put to benevolent use in service of the adjunct army still toiling at the back of the barn. I have learned to speak loudly and often of my former adjunct status. I have learned to acknowledge the contributions of the adjuncts I work with, and to encourage them to speak up and participate in academic life. I ask other colleagues, "did you ever adjunct?" and draw out their stories. The last time I met with my dean, he admitted that, yes, he too had adjuncted. His eyes took on distance and I realized that he had almost forgotten that small but important detail, yet seemed happy to be reminded of it. How egalitarian it feels to have been one of the masses.

At the same time, I recognize that when adjuncts do participate, take on leadership roles, develop new campus initiatives, and behave as if they are entitled to equal status as educators, they risk criticism and censure. Upstarts can be punished for forgetting their "place." In a faculty-driven institution, the unlimited full-timers largely control access. Empowered adjuncts may not be able to run a department or even change its policies, but they can raise the bar on faculty performance, bring in new pedagogy and methodology, and shift the departmental discourse in new and exciting ways.

Equity issues for adjuncts still exist, even at our fine institution. First, our department has historically over-hired adjuncts. When this practice is questioned by adjuncts, the pat response is both smug and intimidating: "It is administration's prerogative to hire as many adjunct faculty as they see fit...we can always use more adjuncts." Having too many adjuncts in our hiring pool dilutes the course loads they are offered, and prevents some of them from making the five-credit leap to salary scale pay each semester.[7] The combination of too many adjuncts, too few classes, and lower enrollment has created a very discouraging hiring outlook for the adjuncts in our department.[8]

Laws could improve at the state level as well. One adjunct told me about existing legislation that disallows anyone who works for an educational

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[7] The current administration encourages course assignment procedures that place as many adjuncts as possible on the full time, pro-rated salary scale. However, in semesters that a department has few unassigned courses left after filling fulltime faculty schedules, the leftovers are distributed more thinly to all adjuncts.

[8] That said, not hiring new adjuncts can translate into a certain level of stagnation: with only old full timers and old adjuncts, new ideas are less likely to enter the academic institution. As one department chair told me, "There has to be a balance."

institution to draw unemployment benefits during the summer.[9] "It's nearly impossible to walk into Walmart or the local grocery with a M.A. or Ph.D. in hand and get someone to hire you for two and a half months and then let you go," she stated. Full-time employees can opt to have their pay spread over the twelve-month calendar, while part-time employees do not have this option. In addition, adjuncts are not necessarily eligible for health care or other important benefits; if they do qualify for health benefits, they usually receive only a partial, pro-rated benefit and that benefit is subject to change or withdrawal each semester, based on their employment status and teaching load. Living with that level of insecurity is daunting.

Finally, if this state would pay all adjuncts on the faculty salary scale, regardless of the number of credits they teach each semester, life as an adjunct might become more economically viable as well.

Job equity is an ongoing issue and does contribute to the demoralized status of adjuncts everywhere. But the more insidious form of discrimination stems from attitudes of condescension and disdain with which many adjuncts must cope on a daily basis. Having job equity is good, but feeling equal and respected for that work is even better.

Most adjuncts admire their full-time colleagues and aspire to be like them, to achieve that level of job security and status. However, when admiration is answered with condescension or disdain, it sometimes turns inward and festers in the adjunct's ego. One adjunct commented on how the lack of collegiality in the department has inadvertently damaged her professional self-esteem. "My fellow instructors know quite a lot, and …I have a high amount of respect and admiration for my colleagues, yet I know that deep in their collective heart-of-hearts, their opinion of me is low," she wrote. "The sad fact here is that what they know means much, and if they know I am somehow inferior, somehow comparatively inept, then it must be true, right? This is a hard blow… I wonder if my full-time

[9] In Minnesota, employees of educational institutions are disqualified from receiving unemployment benefits for the periods between academic terms if they have a reasonable assurance of return to comparable employment the next term. A seasonal employee who is not scheduled to teach or work over the summer would not be eligible for unemployment if she has a return date in the fall with approximately the same level of scheduled hours. For adjunct faculty it depends on whether they are expected to be assigned a comparable teaching load. "Comparable" is up to the unemployment specialists to determine, and thus each unemployment application is individually reviewed. That said, Minnesota is one of the few states in the nation that even allows adjunct faculty to apply for unemployment compensation. This law is considered to be "liberal" since adjunct positions are, after all, considered to be temporary jobs.

colleagues even realize the extent of the damage to the psyche this attitude causes."

When adjuncts are told that their voices and ideas don't count, that they do not have even a single vote in a monthly meeting, they often go underground, but they do not cease to be colleagues. After last year's by-law passed, "I just felt as if my presence was not wanted at the meetings anymore," one adjunct told me. "I felt like a total nuisance, as if I was a four-year-old in pajamas still up after bedtime. So I left." Our English adjuncts will have very limited teaching loads again next semester; I hope they will resurface in department meetings, if only to be a silent and steady presence.

I want to serve with adjuncts on committees, I want them to participate as full members in our department; I want them to have access to professional development, collegial support, and the decision makers on our campus. I want them to receive fair pay, have job security, be respected for their contributions, and enjoy their work. I want them to know how much they add to the quality of academic and campus life. These are the same wishes I hold for my fulltime colleagues.

In our department, we have sought to regulate and control adjuncts, to limit their actions as a body. We might even be said to oppress them vocationally. We certainly have alienated and offended them. Yet they stay on and work; often they have no choice. Serving in a class-saturated, hierarchical institution does not mean, however, that we must act like pigs at feeding time. Higher education may not be an ivory tower, but it is also not a barn floor.

Everyone should try sucking a little hind tit; it has the power to make our academic relationships richer, more complex, and more civilized.

CONTRIBUTORS

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