

to be the ultimate challenge presented in the text. The authors provide yet another "demonstration" — they themselves have "outgrown themselves" in their search, not for "truths" but for new "beliefs."

At times the skeptic in me is awakened by the haunting question, "Are Harste, Woodward and Burke raising yet another orthodoxy to undermine existing educational orthodoxies?" That skepticism must be a residual of experiences with literature I have read in the past, an expectation that nothing revolutionary can enter the domain of literacy literature. (Or, am I resistant to the "brain bending — outgrowing" challenge?) Indeed, the authors, consciously or unconsciously, attempt to dispel the "enemy" as they invite response, even reaction, to what they view as a "working paper." I am reminded of a key statement early in the text, "... in order to judge the quality of the literacy experience one must judge the quality of the "trip" taken by young children. "It would seem that the "mental trip" taken by the authors only incidentally culminated in a book — their "arrival point." It would seem that their "arrival point" is an open invitation to the readers to energize their own "mental trips" as they read this book, but more importantly, as they observe children in the intriguing process of literacy. I'm convinced that orthodoxies will emerge from this book but, then, no author can be held responsible for a pervasive mentality which searches for panaceas. I am equally convinced that the impact of this book will be significant not only for the challenges it projects but also for the "demonstrations" it makes about research methodology and interpretation. I believe *Language Stories and Literacy Lessons* has the potential to become a "blueprint for a quiet revolution" (p. xx).

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BOOK REVIEWS

Abel, Emily K. *Terminal Degrees: The Job Crisis in Higher Education*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984, 253 pages, \$24.95 (U.S.).

Terms such as "disposable dons" and "displaced academics" do not sit well with full time faculty in institutions of higher learning. Neither do "free-way flyers", "itinerants", and "migrant" labor pools. Often committed to defending underprivileged groups distanced from their own experience, they are content to overlook the existence of an underside and underclass within their own ranks. "Gypsy scholar" has a far more romantic ring to it than academic proletariat. It suggests freedom from institutional constraints and a free-floating intellectualism that are to be envied. However "gypsy scholar" cloaks the marginalization and anonymity of those academics "at the juncture when they confront the possibility they may be unable to convert academic credentials into career success" — Ph.D.s, candidates, sessional instructors, part-timers, adjuncts and those waiting to be denied tenure (p. 3).

Unable to cross the great divide into permanency, these scholars internalize a perceived failure which diffuses radical politization by transforming it instead into self-directed blame.

Lacking job security, health and pension benefits, or even, in most cases, the rudiments of participation in departmental and disciplinary life, this new academic proletariat, although essential for the maintenance of the shrinking, fund-starved public institution, is almost bereft of rights even as its responsibilities within the academy expand. (p. ix)

The results are personally catastrophic and intellectually wasteful; and worse, "Defining part time faculty as failures, full timers feel justified in resisting their demands for first class treatment."

Emily Abel incisively dissects many of the sacred cows of higher learning by examining anachronistic assumptions that, favouring the "haves" and preventing incursions by the "have-nots" keep the "system" in place. Scholarship is too often seen as property and tenure as monopoly. "Oversupply" is effectively interpreted as discrimination against women who have disproportionate representation among the "discard" group. Confidentiality protects fulltimers but is perilous for part-timers. Moreover there has taken place a "commodification of academic work — the displacement of scholarly mastery by marked competitiveness with each other militating against group identification among displaced academics. In short, there "is no consolation among competitors." (pp. 50-51).

In this perceptive analysis of the fundamental structures of higher education Abel argues that scholarly merit is assumed to be instantly recognizable by the equally meritorious. This seems a reasonable proposition if one

has not been excluded from or victimized by the process. Because of the conventions supporting elitism and merit, full time faculty intransigently refuse to re-examine the realities of the new phenomenon of displaced academics by denying any responsibility for the tenuous circumstances that circumscribe their personal and scholarly lives.

Such denials are not surprising for to do otherwise would be to radically challenge the meritocratic system that has rewarded fulltime faculty. Such faculty prefer to believe they 'made it' on special merit, they were deserving, or someone recognized their worth. Committed to similar principles of merit those who do not 'make it' internalize the judgements passed on them, become a buffer against unemployment during retrenchment, receive the least rewards, operate under debilitating institutional and socio-psychological conditions, have few support structures, and contend with the least preferred schedules, assignments, and salaries. Consequently they endure feelings of bewilderment, shame, envy, failure, impotence, low self esteem, intellectual alienation and social isolation. "It's like your whole reference group has thrown you out," one respondent observed, while another said that displaced academics were "like stray dogs hanging onto a dump truck that is going down hill." (pp. 24, 154).

The difference between this study and others examining the same subject rests in its qualitative methodology. Nevertheless it constitutes a disturbing critique while at no time straying from a rigorous analysis based on Marxian theories of production and consumption. Despite the author's acute sensitivity to her respondents' pain, despite her capacity for moral indignation, at no time does it degenerate into a polemic. Neither does it resort to scapegoating. Rather it dissects institutional structures that are no longer functional by describing the experiences of respondents who feel they are "passive participants in a process that determines their lives," (p. 57). Abel challenges us to reconsider comfortable assumptions and contribute to the imaginative creation of alternatives. These pages do not represent the chills of despair but instead are a call to moral responsibility.

The study sample of 43 displaced academic interviewees were Ph.D.s, or candidates. Names were refereed, or taken from a retraining program, newspaper articles, and academic conferences. Half of the interviewees were female which matched the general population under study. All but two were white and all came from leading universities.

The study includes chapters that examine institutional structures and the myths associated with academic unemployment while it disassembles conventional academic premises which appear to rest on *a priori* claims. Such claims conveniently militate against solutions to the problem by shifting the burden of blame and responsibility onto its victims.

The interviews demonstrated that displaced academics often exhibit a greater commitment to their disciplines than full timers, teaching and researching as they do under great handicaps. These include financial restrictions that inhibit the application and job hunting process, networks that exclude outsiders, "wired" jobs and dishonest advertisement, little access to research funds, last minute course cancellation without reimbursement, no professional allowance for books, or journals, or conferences to keep abreast with one's field, reliance on "contacts" and "chance" openings (many positions are solicited) and rapid burn-out without the usual system of rewards and reinforcements. Abel illustrated the socio-psychological consequences of such fragmented work lives, especially as part-timers are rarely appointed to permanent positions, a situation made less likely the longer they stay on the "treadmill".

Because of the greater commitment and the fear of losing their disciplinary powers many are caught up in the "perish and publish" syndrome but become oversized for positions and judged according to the criteria of 'merit' by those who are sometimes less meritorious than they. Moreover when compelled to retrain they undergo grief and a sense of abandonment and betrayal, conscious of being an "embarrassment" to their advisors who continue to recruit graduate students only to encourage them to re-tool or seek work outside their specialization. Many advisors give false hope that the bright ones will make it. (After all *they* did).

The most alarming thing about *Terminal Degrees* is that its author, a much published scholar whose own merit, if this study is any example, is beyond question has been forced to retrain from historian to public health worker. There can be no clearer example of wasted talent. The loss is academe's, an academe now middle aged and desperately in need of mutual exchange between fulltime and part-time faculty.

Before reading Abel's study this reviewer had misunderstood her own sense of anger, shame, ambivalence, vulnerability, and "diminished sense of self." My "daily contact with tenure track professors highlighted my

sense of relative deprivation" (p. 22) as with so many like me. I too have adopted all "the strategies of adaptation" Abel records. The book, however, is not recommended as a catharsis but as a meticulous example of research that has both a face and a voice; we have all known its actors. *Terminal Degrees* should be compulsory reading for all graduate students and their advisors; indeed, all of us who claim to be part of the "community of scholars". If displaced academics learn to live with "a diminished sense of self" it is imperative that fulltime faculty understand that the life of the mind itself is diminished in the process.

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Adams, Anthony and Jones, Esmor. *Teaching Humanities in the Microelectronic Age*. England: The Open University Press, 1983, 150 pp., \$12.95.

Even though *Teaching Humanities in the Microelectronic Age* is placed squarely in the arena of British educational policy and in the humanities area of curriculum it has broad appeal. I would like to explain why that is so, as well as comment on some issues which emerge from its broad significance.

An extensive network of computer related organizations and a burgeoning literature in this field have emerged in the U.K. These organizations have produced much of this extensive literature in the field, and this book provides the reader with some insight into how these organizations operate and how they have influenced thinking about microcomputers in education in the U.K. That, in itself, is an interesting lesson in the process of innovation in this rapidly changing field.

The British government has invested heavily in microcomputer technology for schools. Witness the major microcomputer education project (MEP) network and the "Microcomputer in Every School" program which provides matching funds from the government for equipment purchase and the non-optional inservice programs that go with this program. This money has stimulated considerable INSET activity, lessonware development and general writing about microcomputers in the U.K. *Teaching Humanities in the Microelectronic Age* provides the reader with a useful guide to this literature. If one is at all bewildered by the many alphabet organizations referred to in the book, the index is a useful guide to them, but better still there is an appendix that describes what these alphabet organizations are and a further appendix which provides an annotated bibliography. The appendix on criteria for evaluation of soft-ware probably raises more questions than it answers.

While the title of the book refers to humanities, issues that are discussed cover much of the curriculum. About the only areas not represented are science, mathematics, and computing science. The authors take pains to point out how wrong-headed it is to give these areas priority. They blame the British government for promoting the view that student experience with microcomputers improves their employment prospects and enhances industrial development. This is not an unusual line to take. Our own Science Council has urged reform of science teaching in Canada in much the same terms, and it is the sort of rationale one expects from governments concerned about such matters as employment and productivity. One interesting difference is that in the U.K., large sums of money have been given to schools by central government. Such direct intervention is, of course, not possible in Canada due to political realities. But I want to look at the question of how to justify investment in microcomputers in schools later.

The authors' definition of humanities covers a lot of ground. Added to that is the importance they attach to the development of language across the curriculum. Their idea seems to be that what is good for language arts is good for the whole curriculum, and using computers in language arts is a good thing because it might stimulate basic changes in how language is taught across the curriculum. In that sense they are at one with Seymour Papert who claims that experience with computer languages like LOGO can profoundly alter what children gain from their time at school, or with Ontario computer guideline writers who think that self-concept will be enhanced through computer studies.