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Review of *The Gypsy Scholar: A Writer's Comic Search for a Publisher*, by S.S. Hanna.

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variable and may lead to the epistemological fallacy of dichotomizing gender.

According to Chafetz, the book is written in a manner "that it can be read by undergraduates who have not necessarily studied general sociological theories" (p. vii). She also promises to present "the array of feminist theoretical approaches in sociology and in other sister disciplines that can be of direct benefit to sociologists in their attempt to understand the complex relationships between gender and a host of social phenomena" (p. 1). These statements remind us that potential readers can be from two different groups with diverse backgrounds, interests, levels of training, and comprehension. No matter how noble one's intention in attracting and satisfying a broad spectrum of interested people may be, one must not forget that the two groups vary considerably in their expectations and purposes for reading a book. Neither group can completely benefit from the text because its content is too familiar to informed readers and too complicated for the uninformed reader. In my judgment, those who have a basic familiarity with sociology and issues of gender inequality will benefit considerably from *Feminist Sociology*. Thus, it may be used as a reference book by students at intermediate levels.

Ali Kamli
Washburn University

The Gypsy Scholar: A Writer's Comic Search for a Publisher. S.S. Hanna. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press. 1987. 153 pages. \$15.95.

This fascinating, humorous, frequently insightful, and well-written book simultaneously illuminates the difficulty and trials of searching for college and university employment and instructs new teachers in strategies for publishing their first non-fiction book. With humility and humor, Hanna recounts his personal odyssey as a "gypsy scholar" in marginal teaching positions in small, denominational schools in Oklahoma, Kansas, and Pennsylvania. Hanna's story is a "life-history document" in the best tradition of autobiographical sociology. Beginning teachers and first-time authors will find this book "a good read," and today's part-time instructors and "freeway flyers" will recognize in Hanna a stalwart and sympathetic colleague.

In Part I of the book (pp. 3-105), the reader joins Hanna as he earns a Ph. D. in literature at Indiana University and shares with him the daily ritual and sobering comedy of reading (and commenting on) the rejection letters that result from his 295 applications for academic employment. Several diary entries are reprinted verbatim as are numerous examples of variations on "the application" and "the rejection letter" as communicative acts. Faculty retrenchment cuts, at two schools where Hanna eventually found short-term employment, force

repetitions of the job hunt. The book includes several examples of professorial failures and successes in the classroom. The author candidly outlines his deepening participation in the religious life and mission of the denominational colleges in which he taught, wrote poetry, started two "little magazines," and became a part-time athletic coach (men's football and women's soccer). Hanna's straightforward account of the working intersection of religion and post-secondary education is particularly informative to this reviewer, given my preference for the religious anonymity of large state schools. However, Hanna's reflexive consciousness lacks perfection where women are concerned. This is one of the book's few faults. Throughout his early professorial journey, Hanna recorded observations in his diary and turned the substance of his notes, reflections, and experiences into a manuscript titled, "*The Gypsy Scholar*" (of which Part I of this book is an abbreviated version).

Part II of this book (pp. 109-147) details Hanna's frustration and perseverance in trying to secure a publisher for his longer manuscript, "*The Gypsy Scholar*." This narrative gives the book at hand an unusually reflexive twist: it includes the history of its own transit toward publication. Part II is a documentary tour of the publishing industry and Hanna's subsequent realization that "editors at commercial houses or university presses often give contradictory advice." The sequential reading of the rejection letters Hanna garnered from a wide range of American publishers is frightening and instructive; it gives understanding to the reams of rejection letters that young academics, including sociologists, can accumulate in trying to get their first books launched—especially if their books take on anything approaching an "atypical" style, methodology, topic, or audience. Hanna recounts several applied tactics, with examples, designed to gain the attention of publishers. There is hope here in knowing that Hanna eventually succeeded in finding a publisher, although the readers will be disappointed if they look specifically to understand why Iowa State University Press finally accepted the work when so many others declined—for this reason the brief "Afterword" (pp. 149-153) is not fully satisfactory.

This book will be particularly challenging to advanced graduate students who are presently seeking or contemplating full-time academic careers. It will also challenge recent doctorates who want to publish a scholarly monograph but have been—to this point—deeply frustrated by rejection and contradictory advice from publishers. Hanna shows by example how to meet these two situations with humor, hard work, perspicacity, and commitment. What the book needs, from a sociological point of view, are comprehensive analyses of the structural and institutional factors that constrained and defined the situations in which Hanna found himself as a professor and a writer; it is the challenge to provide these analyses that mark this

book for assignment and discussion in sociology of education courses and seminars that address the everyday realities of teaching as a career.

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The Teaching Professor. M.G. Weimer, ed. Madison, WI: Magna Publications, Inc. Published monthly (except June/July). One year subscription is \$39.00.

First, a few essentials about *The Teaching Professor*. According to an opening statement by the editors, it is a "newsletter for college professors about college teaching." Its purpose is to "make a constructive contribution to instructional health and well-being," by "providing pragmatic materials aimed at increasing instructional effectiveness" (Weimer 1987). The editors include a series of "features" in each issue of the newsletter. I counted six that appeared quite regularly: a) "Contemplations" (usually a pithy, thought-provoking quotation), b) "Research Focus" (highlighting, in readable and usable form, some items or items of research related to teaching), c) "Teaching Aids" (useful examples contributed by individual faculty from experiences in the classroom), d) "Learning More" (specific suggestions about where readers can learn more about some topic), e) "Forum" (an issue-oriented feature often generated by a reader and followed in later issues with responses from other readers), f) "Student Update" (information and commentary focused on students' educational needs and interests), and g) some editorial commentary, often placed as an opening teaser. The features are usually substantive, sometimes provocative, and selectively useful.

In this review, I want to reflect on *The Teaching Professor*. I confess that when I received a "newsletter" to review for *Teaching Sociology*, I was less than enthused. Frankly, I was skeptical—another publication on teaching in an already crowded market! But . . . I began my work. I read each issue thoughtfully and ever so gradually I became intrigued. As I look back, I suppose the editors had "warned" me in the first issue where they announced that a newsletter like this could create "instructional awareness by causing faculty to wonder: Do I do that? Should I do that? Infusing teaching with a steady supply of new ideas keeps it fresh and invigorated" (Weimer 1987, p. 1). They were correct. I was drawn in and I began to ask questions. I came across an idea here, an example there, all of which set me to thinking. I was "converted" and I want to indicate why by discussing what I believe are some of the strongest aspects of *The Teaching Professor*.

First, the material is presented with a combination of humor and seriousness. It is not "preachy" or heavy-handed and is even lightly seasoned

throughout with a touch of "let's not take ourselves too seriously lest we become neurotic."

Second, the format of the newsletter lends itself to pithy and suggestive contributions. They tend to "tease" the imagination, to challenge cherished and sometimes uncritically-examined teaching philosophies, values, and methods, or they raise dimensions of importance in teaching not usually recognized or tried. We all have too much to read, but I believe I would read this newsletter because it can give me some chuckles, insights, and ideas in a very short space, some of which might just improve my teaching and my sense of confidence in teaching. (I do not mean to suggest that every piece in this newsletter will be of interest to you every time. Not at all! But because it can be perused in a relatively short time, you can neatly sort out what you want. But be warned. You might also find yourself getting caught up in "thinking" about only one of the pieces that will take more time than you intended.)

Third, this newsletter manages to maintain a pretty good balance between conceptual and applied materials. With few exceptions, the editors usually avoid presenting trite "how-to" methods. When applications are presented, they are usually substantive, often presenting the "why" for doing something as effectively as the "here's what I did." Testimony to how this publication drew me in is the fact that I have incorporated several wonderful ideas from *The Teaching Professor* into my courses this semester. Furthermore, there are some interesting conceptual "issues" that get discussed here (e.g., statements and responses on "Teaching Awards," "Grading Students' In-Class Participation," "Teachers: A Case of Multiple Identities," "Factors That Do Influence Student Evaluation Results," "Teaching and Research," and "Ethics in Teaching"). There is also a good discussion about the nature of syllabi, including an excellent example.

Fourth, while it is certainly true that other publications deal with these topics too, there is something different about *The Teaching Professor* that gives it its own niche. One of the things that makes this newsletter different from, say, *Teaching Sociology* is that it provides a better vehicle through which faculty can "converse" with one another. Since it is published monthly and it contains short pieces, it especially lends itself to the exchange of ideas and examples on a quick turn around basis, expediting and enlivening the "conversation."

Fifth, *The Teaching Professor* is interesting because it is multi-disciplinary. I am impressed by the wide range of disciplines represented in those who write for this newsletter, and who also, presumably, read it. Humanists, scientists and social scientists are represented. Reading the newsletter brings home nicely how those of us who teach, and are so often distanced by compartmentalization in our disciplines, also have a very significant common ground upon which we can share ideas and examples. At the same time, of course, such diver-