# *Editors' Column*

Readers of *JBW* often ask why the journal no longer publishes thematic issues, as it did when Mina Shaughnessy and Sarah Fortune were the editors. The explanation which we have always given is that such issues are too difficult to complete in a timely fashion. In fact, it was only when Lynn Troyka became editor of *JBW*, and stopped organizing each issue around a central theme, that it began to adhere to a regular schedule of publication. This particular issue of *JBW* represents a departure from that wisdom.

After returning from the Fourth National Basic Writing Conference, "Critical Issues in Basic Writing: 1992," held in College Park, Maryland, on October 8–10, we approached David Bartholomae about publishing his keynote in *JBW*. He readily agreed, but also suggested that we solicit other papers from the plenary sessions of the conference. Further consultation with several other members of the Editorial Board who had also attended, confirmed his and our view that the keynote and the plenaries of the 1992 conference deserved full and immediate coverage in the basic writing community's journal of record. Therefore, this issue of *JBW* represents our first thematic issue in many years.

The Fourth National Basic Writing Conference was anything but a dull "academic" event. Speakers did not hesitate to present strongly felt and often controversial views of "critical" issues in basic writing pedagogy and theory. There was constant discussion and debate—both during the scheduled sessions and at coffee breaks and meals—about what basic writing is or should be. Some even questioned whether, in fact, our discipline has a legitimate claim to exist.

Forthcoming issues of *JBW* will contain other papers presented at the concurrent sessions at the conference, in particular reexaminations of Mina Shaughnessy's work and legacy.

Before introducing each of the papers, we must express our gratitude to the Executive Committee of the Conference on Basic

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Writing that planned and organized the event, and to conference chairs Eugene Hammond and Carolyn Kirkpatrick—both for putting together such a stellar event and for their enthusiastic response to our proposal that the keynote and plenaries be published in *JBW*. CBW is a special interest group of CCCC. The conference was cosponsored by NCTE and the University of Maryland.

In the keynote address, David Bartholomae characterizes much of basic writing "as a way of naming (and producing) a curriculum, an area of study, a type of writing and writing practice—as a way of organizing (and producing) that version of the social world represented in our colleges and universities...."

In the second article, Peter Dow Adams describes the preliminary results of an informal study about the "success rate" of writers in the basic writing program at the college. He calls into question whether the benefits of such separate programs outweigh their disadvantages and suggests further statistical investigation and exploration of curricular alternatives.

Tom Fox argues that having students overcome the real social and political barriers of racism, sexism, elitism, and homophobia are necessary requirements to support any claim about the relationship between language mastery and academic or economic access.

Jerrie Cobb Scott explores those factors she identifies as contributing to the recycling of a deficient pedagogy. The paper challenges basic writing professionals to move to a higher level of critical consciousness in designing and implementing a pedagogy of success, thereby eliminating recycling deficits into programs designed for marginalized students.

Jeanne Gunner considers the negative consequences resulting from the lack of a clear definition of a basic writing professional and the importance of reasserting the value of teaching as central to this definition. Karen Greenberg takes issue with David Bartholomae's assertion that most basic writing courses are "obstacles rather than opportunities." Instead of marginalizing students, she believes that basic writing programs, particularly at CUNY, fulfill Bartholomae's notion of "sorting students into useful and thoughtful groups," and teach large numbers of high school students, transfer students, and returning adults the "linguistic, cognitive and social components of academic literacy to make the transition to college level work." William Jones discusses the success of historically Black colleges, rooted in expressions of existential attitudes of resistance, which include Black religious folk statements and the blues, as providing models for

writing programs for inexperienced Black and Latino students. Mary Jo Berger describes what basic writing teachers and administrators can do to improve both the status and the funding of their programs.

Finally, we are delighted to welcome Professor Peter Rondinone, director of journalism in the English Department of LaGuardia Community College, CUNY, to the Editorial Board, beginning with this issue. His work in journalism and its usefulness in the teaching of basic writing will make a strong contribution to *JBW*.

— ***Bill Bernhardt*** and ***Peter Miller***