EDITORS' COLUMN

Community is a contested word in this issue, but it has also revealed unsuspected resonances and vulnerabilities to us here in New York City since September 11th. Sorry for the lateness of the issue, we have other reasons for wanting to invoke what has happened, yet we also know the new convention of simply citing the date obscures the fact that it was not just an event but a catalyst for a chain of changes that continues to unwind. We are not interested in listing disruptions. It's just that, even now, we can't imagine beginning this column without acknowledging what happened at the beginning of this academic year — and continues happening in consequence. May we all experience more safety and sanity in the future than we have in the recent past.

But back to the issue. We lead off with some pieces that represent an interesting departure for us (and most journals). Aware that, in Joseph Harris and Mark Wiley, we had two authors writing on different sides of an issue — the idea of "community" — we encouraged them to engage each other even as they were preparing the versions of their work they would publish. Invited by us to offer up a version of a conference keynote that was still notes for a talk, not yet the paper it has since become, Joseph Harris was able to read Mark Wiley's piece and respond to it as he was preparing his final version — something he notes as he begins "Beyond Community: From the Social to the Material." Mark's "Rehabilitating the 'Idea of Community,'" already reviewed and revised, was in its final version at this point, so he elected to do a separate, short piece as a response to Joe's work. Needless to say, we're very glad that another medium, e-mail, allowed two contributors to have a kind of dialogue while developing and presenting their views.

E-mail made another contribution to this issue, in a way. A new listserv — Teaching_Basic_Writing — has been set up, moderated by Laura Gray-Rosendale (a past *JBW* contributor) and sponsored by McGraw Hill; its modus operandi is to invite experts to publish overview statements on particular areas of interest, then lead a discussion of these on the list. Tom Reynolds' piece on training BW teachers became the basis for his article "Training Basic Writing Teachers: Institutional Considerations" (where you'll find information on the TBW list as well). It may be due to its point of origin (though we also know Tom well enough to know it is characteristic of him) that the article does not presume to deliver answers but, instead, elects to pose provocative and useful questions, questions that direct our attention to our own

institution-specific goals and contexts, our own enabling and disabling constraints, our own (dare we use the word?) communities.

Speaking of which, Donald McCrary, in "Speaking in Tongues: Using Womanist Sermons as Intra-Cultural Rhetoric in the Writing Classroom," shows how consideration of the kind of discourse that conjures community can help to interpenetrate circumscribed venues of language use. With a rich offering of examples, not least of all ones drawn from his own classroom, Don shows us a compelling paradox: that making boundaries visible grants them a kind of transparency; acknowledging the walls of the classroom and what they shut out, he finds, can sometimes make us and our students that much more able to see beyond them.

Another piece rich in classroom-based examples, used in a way we found especially appealing, is Anmarie Eves-Bowden's "What Basic Writers Think about Writing." Her own classroom-based research is nested in an account of what a new teacher (and a newcomer to the field) has had to learn about basic writing, and what (with its help) she thinks her students need of that new knowledge. We may sometimes think too much about the field as so much ground covered, forgetting that it is, for each individual who comes to it, terra incognita to be rediscovered again and again. Here the scholarship is not simply reviewed but tested against the hard facts of the classroom: not just what the scholars (and one teacher) think the students need but also what the students think.

Finally, there is Trudy Smoke's valedictory piece. Here we must drop the editorial we, so that one of us, the other editor, can refer to this exemplary fosterer of scholarship and publication in the third-person. As Trudy prepares to step away from *JBW* after more than half a decade as co-editor, she takes an opportunity to reflect, but she is due some reflection about her as well. The role of editor is necessarily an exercise in self-effacement: an editor knows her work to be successful precisely to the degree it is invisible. But take it from one who knows: the hours Trudy invested in *JBW* are way beyond reckoning — invaluable to the journal as well as countless — while her patience and energy seem still more boundless. During a time when the enterprise of basic writing was increasingly under attack, wracked by controversy and contention (especially from without), she kept the keel of *JBW* even and steady, dedicating herself in particular to showing the world just how thoughtful and insightful the practitioners and scholars who submitted work to this journal are.

The contributors to this issue are clearly cases in point, as we trust you will find.

-- **George Otte** *and* **Trudy Smoke**