

# EDITORS' COLUMN

We are pleased with the ways in which the contributions to this issue describe fruitful applications of theory in the classroom and also consider the big picture—where the field of basic writing is at present and where it may be headed in the years to come. Several articles draw attention to the importance for students of effectively integrating a variety of “voices” in their essays. As basic writing teachers, we need to help students learn to include the ideas of others in ways that “dialogue with” and support their own views. Whether these outside perspectives originate in the larger community via service learning projects, in primary source documents such as position papers or song lyrics, or in traditional college reading assignments, the ability to orchestrate multiple voices is crucial to success in college writing. Helping basic writers to develop an awareness of and facility with the integration of different voices is extremely challenging and indirectly implies the responsibility to teach reading as well as writing, thus making our work in the BW classroom broader and more complex than it has often been viewed in the past. The final two articles point out the need for improved and expanded teacher education to help basic writing instructors deal with the new challenges they face.

The first three articles remind us of the great value of looking closely and critically at actual student writing. Using a variety of theoretical and rhetorical lenses, the authors of these articles provide fresh and intriguing perspectives on the discursive moves students need in order to succeed as college writers, suggest productive ways of responding to student texts, and question the rhetorical and cognitive processes revealed in the supposedly reflective documents known as portfolio cover letters.

In “Ventriloquism 001: How to Throw Your Voice in the Academy,” Hannah Ashley and Katy Lynn apply Bakhtinian voicing theory to the analysis of student writing. The authors suggest that the manipulation of reported discourse is at the heart of successful academic writing, and they offer a taxonomy for analyzing the different voices that students invoke in their essays. Both this article and the one that follows describe practical classroom techniques for teaching students to use complex theoretical concepts in considering effective ways to revise their own writing and that of their peers.

“Belief Spaces and the Resistant Writer: Queer Space in the Contact Zone” resonates in fascinating ways with the previous article. Thomas Peele and Mary Ellen Ryder use the concept of belief spaces, adapted from the work of Gilles Fauconnier, as a way of hearing the various voices in student work. They illustrate their approach by looking at two essays written in response to a “contact zone” assignment

that asked students to select and analyze a document for areas of cultural conflict. One of the students chose to analyze a song by the rap star Eminem. The resulting essay not only has homophobic overtones but, more to the point, ambiguous belief spaces. As editors, we realize that the rap lyrics quoted by this student may be shocking and offensive to some readers. Nevertheless, after consulting with several members of our Editorial Board, we decided that it was essential to quote freely from the student's essay and to include both drafts of his paper in the Appendix. The authors make it clear that they do not condone this student's implied meaning, but they explain how the belief spaces concept provided a way to talk with the student about revising his paper without silencing the expression of views with which the instructor disagreed.

In "Student Reflection and Critical Thinking: A Rhetorical Analysis of 88 Portfolio Cover Letters," Laurel Bower problematizes the issues raised by this relatively new genre of student writing. Surprisingly few of the cover letters she examined in her study showed evidence of genuine reflection about the student's writing process. She suggests that possible reasons for this may include the audience (usually the teacher), the length (in most cases, one page), and the point in time (the end of the semester, when students are busy with exams and projects for other courses). She concludes by recommending ways that teachers could actively encourage students to develop their metacognitive abilities through assignments that would lead to real reflection.

"Basic Writing and Second Language Writers: Toward an Inclusive Definition" by Paul Kei Matsuda is a historical account of the relationship between the fields of basic writing and English as a Second Language, often reflected in the pages of this journal. Matsuda suggests that because of demographic and institutional factors, the two fields frequently overlap, and non-native speakers of English are often enrolled in basic writing courses. This is particularly true for the growing number of so-called Generation 1.5 students, who were born in non-English-speaking countries but received at least part of their high school education in the United States. Matsuda argues for improved programs and teacher preparation so that basic writing instructors can better serve all the students enrolled in their courses, including the growing number of second-language writers.

"Integrating Reading and Writing: A Response to the Basic Writing 'Crisis'" by Sugie Goen and Helen Gillotte-Tropp illustrates how challenges sometimes become opportunities. Faced with an administrative mandate that students who did not complete remediation within one year would be "disenrolled," a team of faculty members at San Francisco State University developed a new fully integrated reading/writing program in which students could complete remedial require-

ments as well as first-year written composition within their first year of study. While this program is still in its early stages and the evaluation of its effectiveness continues, the initial results are extremely promising. Moreover, the collaborative process of curriculum development and pedagogical transformation described in the article provides a worthy model for others to emulate. As the journal was going to press, we learned that the Conference on Basic Writing has selected the SFSU program to share its 2004 Award for Innovation.

With this issue, we say farewell and thanks to three people who have served *JBW* well. Mary Carney, the journal's subscriptions manager for many years, has decided to step down. In the future, subscriptions will be handled by our publisher, Boyd Printing in Albany, NY. Our former editorial assistants, Mikhail Gershovich and Rhona Cohen, have accepted exciting new positions within the City University of New York. We welcome with pleasure their replacements, Johannah Rodgers and Karen Weingarten, both CUNY Ph.D. candidates in English.

Finally, we note with sadness the death of Marilyn S. Sternglass, professor emerita of English at City College of New York, CUNY. Many in the field of basic writing have benefited from Sternglass's work as a scholar and teacher. Her most recent book, *Time to Know Them: A Longitudinal Study of Writing and Learning at the College Level*, documents the struggles and ultimate success of a group of open-admissions students at City College who were followed during the six years of their studies. The book, which was the 1998 co-winner of the Mina Shaughnessy Prize of the Modern Language Association and won the 1999 Conference on College Composition and Communication Outstanding Book Award, argues powerfully that, given enough time, students who are initially placed in developmental courses can succeed.

—Rebecca Mlynarczyk and Bonne August