

EDITORS' COLUMN

It has been several weeks since the Superbowl riveted the attention of millions of football fans in a common interest: to mark with enthusiasm for one's team the gain of yardage across a field. For those of us who teach basic writing, we note a parallel: In basic writing, as in football, there are few seamless, field-long progressions. Setting goals and moving toward them is a conflictive process, typically one of advancement and return. Fortunately, however, our profession aspires to new directions; no dashing to demarcated end zones for us! As Bruce Horner observes, "locating" basic writing is a constant process of re-locating it, marking—and allowing for—its varied movements, such that each innovation adds to the complexity of our endeavor.

The articles of this issue speak to basic writing's reality of progressions and returns. Steve Lamos' article, "Minority-Serving Institutions, Race-Conscious 'Dwelling,' and Possible Futures for Basic Writing at Predominantly White Institutions," prompts us to recognize that, as an institution, Basic Writing is not alone in its struggle to offer ensured access to the academy for marginalized students. As Lamos notes, minority-serving institutions provide longstanding traditions of accessibility and outreach. Expanding on Nedra Reynold's notion of "dwelling" as an inspired form of engagement with and within spaces that challenge educational fairness and justice, Lamos looks to MSIs as models of educational leadership that spark race-conscious ideologies, practices, pedagogies, and service-learning activities. In this way, MSIs are poised to counteract the "contemporary neoliberal higher education climate" that has widely restricted options for basic writers. By tracing the correspondences between MSIs and Basic Writing, Lamos helps our field envision new spatial and discursive embodiments of educational equity and social justice.

Our next article, "Troubling Discourse: Basic Writing and Computed-Mediated Technologies" by Leigh Jonaitis, delimits current thinking about technology and basic writers. Jonaitis interrogates some dominant "stances" (as set out by Bertram Bruce) toward computer-mediated technologies to expose the fault lines in their assumptions as to what basic writers do or do not need, or what basic writers can or cannot do. In the process, Jonaitis returns us to a more relevant understanding of D/discourse, acknowledging Gee while pushing toward Foucault: it is Foucault's alignment of discourse, social practices, power relations, and knowledge construction that best helps us to recognize the influences, both institutional and technological, actively constructing the basic writer. Hence we can assess each of the stances Jonaitis critiques along political lines. As Jonaitis contends, basic writing instructors

“cannot be ‘neutral’ toward computer-mediated technologies in the classroom: whether or not one is addressing computer-mediated technologies in the classroom, one is taking a stance that is decidedly not neutral.” Nor is technology something one “adds” to writing instruction, or an element to merely transform it. Like Lamos, Jonaitis returns Basic Writing to essential values of equity and justice that require basic writers to fully participate in evolving literacy.

In our third article, “Interrogating Texts: From Deferent to Efferent and Aesthetic Reading Practices,” Cheryl Hogue Smith works to renew our understanding of basic writing classrooms as reading classrooms as well. In Smith’s truly integrated reading and writing approach, Louise Rosenblatt’s theories of efferent and aesthetic reading stances find entrée into basic writing as a field that likewise encompasses reading. Smith leads from efferent and aesthetic stances to a third one, the “deferent” stance, prevalent among basic writers. The deferent stance, she writes, is “adopt[ed] when [basic writers] defer their interpretations of text to other readers or defer to the counter-productive emotions they experience during the process of reading difficult texts.” From here, Smith offers an instructional strategy that engages students in rigorous, collaborative re-readings, such that students “examine their own thinking as they read difficult texts and . . . focus more on what they don’t understand than on what they do.” Reading actively, students experience their returns to the text as constructive, exploratory processes and opposed to failures of comprehension. Academic progression in literacy happens by way of return.

Our next two articles are literal returns to individuals whose basic writing-themed stories have previously appeared in the pages of this journal. In “Steep Houses in Basic Writing: Advocating for Latino Immigrants in a North Georgia Two-Year College,” Spencer Salas revisits his “Sweet Water College” series of ethnographic narratives focusing on Taylor St. John, a sensitive teacher of ESL students who sees her own “interpretive” advocacy work as essential to her teaching. Once more, Salas elaborates the ways in which political, institutional constraints, counteracting an open admissions agenda, impact instructors’ roles within and beyond the classroom. This is especially the case for instructors like St. John who are critically in touch with their job’s social justice mission. In “Steep House,” Salas reports on a highly contentious town hall meeting on immigrants’ right to access a postsecondary education in the face of threatening state legislation. St. John’s advocacy for illegal immigrants, whom the legislation would exclude from postsecondary education, rankled people’s notions of teachers who stand in solidarity with these students and why their work matters. As well, Salas challenges Basic

Writing as a discipline historically committed to open admissions to engage more explicitly with state legislation aimed at excluding immigrant youth from opportunity structures of our society.

Finally, Kevin Roozen returns his student, Charles, to these pages in “Comedy Stages, Poets Projects, Sports Columns, and Kinesiology 341: Illuminating the Importance of Basic Writers’ Self-Sponsored Literacies.” Proceeding from his earlier article on extraliterary activity and basic writers, Roozen explores Charles’s journey beyond his basic writing designation. Now in his second year at the university, Charles continues to draw on an array of involvements that offer greater access not only to interdisciplinary course content but also to styles and strategies of writing that mine rich, prior writing experience. As a result, Charles excels. Roozen’s article also returns us to his earlier theoretical framework, emphasizing the extent to which broad literacy development can be repurposed toward basic writers’ success with writing in the academy. As before, Roozen’s picture of Charles prompts us to notice students’ ability to productively multitask with their own literacy/ies and seek pedagogies that elevate students’ literate talents.

The spirit of progressions and returns mapped in this issue is captured by a longtime reader’s gift of a nearly complete set of this journal’s work since its inception in 1975 through 1996. Barbara Kroll, Professor Emerita of California State University-Northridge, has donated her personal copies in the hope that current and future scholars will benefit from the experience of holding—in their own hands—the words and labor of the progressive scholars who have helped lay our foundations (see News and Announcements for more information). Kroll’s donation and the authors in this issue remind us to plot those points where our most forward-thinking teaching, administration, and research intersect with the past.

—**Hope Parisi** and **Cheryl C. Smith**