

Editor's Introduction

Access Places

EDUCATIONAL ACCESS IS WON AND LOST AT A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT SITES IN AND BEYOND classrooms at any given moment. Students' job and family obligations, their primary and secondary school training, their cultural backgrounds (and foregrounds), as well as the operations of bursars,' counselors,' and financial aid offices, and the functions of various other administrative and governmental units across campuses and across states intersect to shape the environments that students and teachers occupy when they meet to engage English Studies. A primary aim of any English instructor committed to educational access and empowerment, then, is to develop pedagogies (and research and service agendas) that intervene at sites that might otherwise curtail democratic intentions and to enhance functions at sites already committed to facilitating those aims.

In this issue of *Open Words*, particularly, contributors foreground the spatial dimensions of their work. The authors discuss ways places impact their teaching, and they explore means through which pedagogy might, at the same time, impact places. In "How Soon Is Now?" Tony Scott explicates the means by which institutional practices represent colleges as academic no-places, neutral ground on which Horatio Alger-like myths might be promoted. His article complicates this image, articulating the corporate interests that undergird campus life and policy and describing the circumstances of non-traditional constituencies currently attending college in great numbers. In this light, Scott develops a pedagogy that legitimizes students' experiences and helps university space become "a more rightfully occupied space for working, working-class people," a place that helps the present become the subject of education rather than something that needs to be "quickly transcended." Such a concern with contingencies of place persists throughout Laura Roger's attempts to enact a Freirean pedagogy in prison writing classes. In "Finding Our Way from Within," Rogers reports on classroom settings in which movement beyond present circumstance, let alone counter-hegemonic action, is profoundly complicated. Her location problematizes the liberatory aims upon which she grounds her teaching, raising issues in regard to notions of trust and surveillance often overlooked in considerations of Paulo Freire's work and in non-carcer-al settings more generally.

In their movement between two institutional settings, Karen Cajka and Moira Casey, in "From Other to Another," recognize the geographical determinants that impact

their graduate institution's attempts to develop a writing program inclusive of regional campus concerns. Using Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopias as their point of departure, Casey and Cajka report on the relationship between curricular changes at their school's central campus and their effect on the work of graduate students and adjunct faculty at its multiple regional campuses. The essay interrogates ways in which geographical, political, and pedagogical concerns intersect as the two writers describe the school's attempts to "value distance and difference" in its efforts to translate curricular change across its many locations. For Kim Gunter, in "Queer Disruption in the Rural South," such an attempt at translation throws into relief political forces at work beyond her already politically infused GLBTQ writing course. Gunter's narrative account calls attention to institutional contexts that can curtail or facilitate the success of such a course as she traces its development at one location that welcomed its focus and examines the difficulties she has experienced establishing the curriculum at another university. Gunter not only unpacks the intricacies of the resistance she has endured at this latter site, but also identifies the pockets of support she has encountered and theorizes the queer potentials of her persistence in such circumstances.

Together, these pieces and the review article on political pedagogies by Gae Lyn Henderson that concludes this issue advocate for teaching and for scholarship on teaching that is decidedly emplaced. Henderson's critique of scholarship on critical pedagogy rests on the premise that open admissions and other non-traditional students write more effectively when they work with curricula that is rhetorically contextualized within the political realities that structure their worlds. For me, Henderson's piece and others in this issue of *Open Words* lend ballast to John Alberti's argument that "All too often our [field's] discussions of the future of literary studies and pedagogy in higher education are limited by models of college life rooted in enduring but increasingly misleading images that takes the experiences and practices of elite research universities and liberal arts colleges [. . .] as the norm of higher education" (5). Certainly, for those of us who labor daily to provide educational access to constituencies whose concerns get too often elided in the more traditional configurations of college life, the specificities of the contexts in which we work and all the competing interests that course through them are far too integral to ignore. To do so—to ignore where we are—would amount to our teaching amnesiac-like to students identifiable to us only when they accord with the image of those "elite" students already selected to thrive in this undemocratic world in which we live.

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Works Cited

Alberti, John. "Returning to Class: Creating Opportunities for Multicultural Reform at Majority Second-Tier Schools." *College English* 63.5 (2001): 561-84.