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Dear Colleagues and Friends~~

Welcome to 2014 and to our first issue of the year! I’ve titled the introduction, as you can see, as “The Pursuit of Promise,” this in recognition of our round robin review, with promise here referring both to the historical promise of higher education to address class structures and to questions about how well we are, or are not, making good on that promise, questions that increasingly are focusing the attention of those both inside and outside the academy. And we have, of course, our regular reading, in this case two articles, our CCCC Exemplar Remarks, a review essay, and a poster page, all of which I introduce here. In addition, I conclude this introduction with a goodbye to several departing CCC Editorial Board members and a welcome to an equal number of new members.

As its title suggests, our first article, Thomas Deans’s “The Rhetoric of Jesus Writing in the Story of the Woman Accused of Adultery (John 7.53–8.11)” focuses on Christ’s encounter with the woman who in the New Testament is

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accused of adultery. More specifically, Deans attends to this episode—when Christ warns, “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her”—in part because, as he notes, “it is the only canonical biblical passage in which Jesus is represented as writing” and thus may have something to teach us about writing, in equal part because that writing is silently performative, composed in front of an audience so as to create a pause that is rhetorical. Analyzing this episode, Deans links the public performance of Christ’s writing both to its power to prompt rhetorical silence and to its function of “provok[ing] reflection” for all the participants in the episode. In addition, Deans recommends such a practice to us in our negotiations, especially when an audience seems to question our claims, as well as to students, who might in the process find that writing is more than merely “a technology for transmitting information, delivering arguments, or expressing oneself.”

In our next article, Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes take up issues of identity and ways we understand and misunderstand difference. In “Flattening Effects: Composition’s Multicultural Imperative and the Problem of Narrative Coherence,” Alexander and Rhodes observe that when our well-intentioned efforts to create commonalities emphasize likeness, we can be blinded from “perceiving and analyzing critical differences. We call such emphases on ‘shared humanity’ the flattening effect, or the subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) erasures of difference that occur when narrating stories of the ‘other.’” As a remedy for flattening effects, Alexander and Rhodes argue that multicultural pedagogy needs attention to both—to our common humanity and to the critical differences distinguishing us. In this context, the authors focus on queerness specifically, identifying excess as the defining feature and source of its “most important contribution to literacy, critical engagement, and writing.” Pedagogies with subjectivity and justice at their core, according to Alexander and Rhodes, might work toward unknowable difference, rather than identity, as “a powerful critical and compositional tool,” and toward this end they make suggestions for helpful reading, viewing, and writing practices.

Keith Gilyard is our next author, in this case of his CCCC Exemplar Award acceptance speech, delivered in Las Vegas at the 2013 CCCC. Drawing on his own past, Keith recommends that in working with students, we cast a wide net as we attend to language and power, which he exemplifies well in his own thanks:

So some wine on the page for the fellas on the corner. Some praise for the women in the kitchens of my youth. Much love to teachers who inspire. To young scholars and to future scholars, here's to you dazzling the world in ways that I have yet to foresee.
Our next entry is our third round robin book review. Our first of these, taking up *Academically Adrift* (AA) in February 2012, engaged four composition scholars with differing responsibilities and perspectives in thinking about the claims made by the AA authors. Our second round robin review likewise: in February 2013 three of our colleagues considered two volumes assessing the value of college, Delbanco’s *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be* and Keeling and Hersh’s *We’re Losing Our Minds: Rethinking American Higher Education*. For this issue’s round robin review, I invited four of our colleagues to consider a set of four volumes analyzing the role of class in higher education, a topic important in a country that in theory is committed to social equality and to schooling as a mechanism for supporting such equality. Does schooling make the difference in altering class that we, at least sometimes, believe that it does? Interestingly, two of the four books—Irv Peckham’s *Going North, Thinking West: The Intersections of Social Class, Critical Thinking, and Politicized Writing Instruction* and Mike Rose’s *Back to School: Why Everyone Deserves a Second Chance at Education*—are written by two of our own; the other two—Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Laura T. Hamilton’s *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality* and Jenny M. Stub’s *Inside the College Gates: How Class and Culture Matter in Higher Education*—by researchers less vested in the role of composition in fostering student success. And as our reviewers explain, the news on this front isn’t good. In “The Persistence and Complications of Class,” Sharon Mitchler provides cogent summaries of the books; and in “The Unseen Weight of Class,” Bradley Dilger links those observations to his institutional realities, to class, and to our reluctance to talk about it—“We rarely talk about class, though we feel its weight all the time, in the regular stutterings of long-neglected institutional infrastructure, but more painfully in the realities of students who come to class without books, decline participation in clubs because they have to work, or simply disappear after running out of money.” Sue Hum, in “When Institutions and Education Reproduce Social Class Inequities: What Else Factors In? Or, The Problem of Stinky Skin,” uses a telling example from her personal life to query a relationship between class and race and whether that relationship can ever be altered; and in “For Whom Does It Profit?” Lisa Mahle-Grisez trains an experienced eye on the working-class students she knows so well—“It is through rough travel on winding and bumpy roads, not on straight pathways, that the working-class student enters and leaves higher education. . . . First-chance writing teachers have the responsibility to find out [who is really profiting] as we travel beside our working-class students on their paths.”
We then have the pleasure of reading Chris W. Gallagher’s review essay “All Writing Assessment Is Local,” which he begins by defining the local relative to his own hometown, Boston:

The lesson we in Boston are still trying to learn, as we approach the sixtieth anniversary of Brown vs. The Board of Education and the fortieth anniversary of Boston’s busing order, is that “local” is not the answer; it’s a question: What kind of community, neighborhood, home shall we be? Local control means local responsibility—the obligation to learn how to live well together. It means—because this is what it will take to live well together—challenging entrenched privilege and systemic racism and classism. It means recognizing that our local is interconnected with other locals from which we have much to learn.

Using this context as a background, Gallagher takes up four volumes that, like Boston and like much scholarship in writing assessment, “operate from the proposition that all writing assessment is local”: Norbert Elliot and Les Perelman’s edited Writing Assessment in the 21st Century: Essays in Honor of Edward M. White; Asao B. Inoue and Mya Poe’s edited Race and Writing Assessment; Michael R. Neal’s Writing Assessment and the Revolution in Digital Texts and Technologies; and Heidi A. McKee and Danielle Nicole DeVoss’s edited Digital Writing: Assessment and Evaluation. In addition to reading the volumes separately and reading across them, Gallagher closes with a set of questions that writing assessment practitioners and scholars will want to consult.

And last but not least, this issue closes with a poster page, this one addressing multimodality.

My last task in this introduction is bittersweet: saying goodbye to CCC Editorial Board members and welcoming new members. CCC Editorial Board members—whose names are on the masthead—serve for a three-year term. As I explained last year, during 2012 we worked with members to create staggered departures so that the Board will continue to retain institutional memory while also welcoming new views. Over half of those departing this year chose to extend their three-year terms for a fourth and final year; the others served the normal three-year term. At the end of 2013, then, we said goodbye—and thanks!—to Jonathan Alexander, Asao Inoue, Steve Bernhardt, Elizabeth Clark, Heidi Estrem, Lynnee Gaillet, David Gold, Susanmarie Harrington, Barbara L’Eplattenier, Jaime Mejía, Sharon Mitchler, Anthony Pare, James Porter, and Sue Hum, a terrific group of reviewers and advisers. At the same time, we have
said welcome aboard to Linda Adler Kassner, Barbara Bird, Sheila Carter-Tod, Cinthia Gannet, Carolyn Handa, Jim Kalmbach, Maria Jersky, Kevin Roozen, Carol Rutz, Raul Sanchez, Patrick Sullivan, and Scott DeWitt. In addition, Chris Anson, who had stepped away from the CCC Editorial Board while he served as Chair of CCCC, has stepped back in to complete his term. In advance, thanks to our new CCC Editorial Board members for the help I know they will provide both to me as I complete my editorship and to Jonathan Alexander as he takes the editorial reins.

Please enjoy the reading within; before long, I hope to see readers at CCCC in Indianapolis, and I look forward to talking to you again in June.

*Kathleen Blake Yancey*

*Florida State University*

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**In Memoriam**

Linda S. Bergmann

1950–2014