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From the Editor

Kelly Ritter

This issue of College English brings an eclectic mix of perspectives and research on rhetoric, writing, and institutional discourse. In some of our past issues since my editorship began, I’ve been able to trace a very clear theme, line of questioning, or unified perspective across two or more contributions to a particular issue. Though I can’t quite do that this time, I find that inability kind of exciting, because it means that our journal continues to draw a wide range of perspectives on the endeavor of teaching and researching within English departments across campuses nationwide. In other words, this issue of CE probably says, above all, that it’s pretty hard to pinpoint what College English or college English is (though I do want readers to know that in forthcoming issues, we’ll get back to trying to answer that question more explicitly—I promise).

Instead, we have a great lineup of contributions on multilingual writing, rhetoric, and writing education abroad; reimagining the training and education of college teachers; queer theory, faculty and institutional norms (and normalization), and professional development; and the role of liberal educational practices in longitudinal assessment of English students’ learning. I suppose that when I lay out these four articles in this way, as a group, I do see connections that on the surface may not otherwise be immediately obvious. Matthew Heard’s attention to how we professionalize new teachers of English and writing can and likely will bear directly on how those English majors about whom Sheryl Fontaine and Stephen Mexal write will eventually be educated, and how they will come to regard their own intellectual work in the liberal arts (especially because both Heard and Fontaine and Mexal reference the Frameworks for Success in Postsecondary Writing, coauthored by the NWP, CWPA, and NCTE). The graduate international writers with whom Amber Engelson—our Emerging Voices featured writer for this issue—works in Indonesia would certainly have something to say, in turn, to Heard’s own teachers in training, especially as they consider how “inventive acts” play out in their pedagogical designs, and how those acts will, almost certainly, need to take into account not only undergraduate...
but also graduate writers of multiple home languages as well as diverse religious and cultural backgrounds.

Moreover, Catherine Olive-Marie Fox’s considerations of what it means to “ queer” the ways in which we regard class-based and other normalizing training and development for college and university faculty certainly has something in common, theoretically, with Heard’s disruption of typical teacher training methods, as well as with Fontaine and Mexal’s observations regarding alumni assessment surveys and their focus on simple school-to-job equations in their design. Further, Fontaine and Mexal’s longitudinal perspectives on the English major and career trajectories—which has at its root some questions about use-value, class, and typical versus atypical curricula—resonate with Fox’s exploration of classed bodies and the academy’s view of what constitutes a “correct” professional pathway in English studies. Finally, Engelson’s extension of Deborah Brandt’s sponsorship theory certainly has some interesting reverberations in Fox’s queering of departmental roles and discourse as well, especially if we consider how significant international student populations are and will be in the future to our departments and programs here in the United States. I am guessing that CE readers can find even more connections here than I just have; these are but a smattering of how this issue’s articles may be read across, with, and against one another.

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Given the weaving of such rich and emergent scholarship into what I see as potentially meaningful conversations about English studies as a field, perhaps this is a good time to share with readers an extended passage from the archives of College English to remind all of us that the risks taken and theories posited in this issue are logical extensions of the work the journal has always aimed to do. The passage that follows comes from one of the past editors of the journal, Frederick L. Gwynn, in his 1955 annual report to NCTE. It is a sample of the archive mining I will occasionally do in these introductions to provide some connections between the history and future of this journal, and to bring past editorial voices into dialogue with my own present aims (whether in agreement, or disagreement). Within a much longer passage accounting for the work of the journal over the previous few months (the kind of accounting I, and my fellow NCTE journal editors, must still do each year), Gwynn remarks,

As the commemorative article on Wilbur Hatfield in the October issue states, the aims of College English are still those of the English Journal in 1912: “(1) To be representative, to ‘give voice to teachers in all sorts of schools in all sections of the country,’ as ‘a clearing-house of opinions, experience, and investigation.’ (2) To be ‘progressive’ (the adjective has taken on equivocal connotations since 1912): ‘We do not wish to
root, tear, up, and overthrow, but we are eager to move steadily forward.’ (3) To aim ‘at a high standard of excellence in style and typography.’ (*CE* 1955 Annual Report)

While I hope the quest to maintain typographical and stylistic standards is no longer an issue, given the advances in printing and technology since 1955, I do want to highlight Gwynn’s statement about being progressive, even as I myself might occasionally want to “root” or “tear up” staid assumptions about our field in the pages of this journal. Moving forward—as difficult as that movement may sometimes be—is critical to this or any journal’s development, and being representative of and “giv[ing] voice” to scholar-teachers working in a variety of institutions (two-year, four-year, and other postsecondary institutions with special populations or charters) is a mission that continues to be particular to *College English*. I hope this issue of *CE* speaks to that voicing in particular, with its focus on teacher training and identity and writer development (and identity) both here and abroad.

Gwynn edited *College English* from 1955 to 1960—a fascinating time in the history of NCTE and departments of English across the country—and died suddenly in 1965, at the too-young age of forty-nine. As James E. Miller Jr., then editor of *College English*, wrote in his memorial to Gwynn in the February 1966 issue of the journal,

> I remember vividly that evening when [Gwynn] showed me the volumes of *College English* published under his editorship: he held them and leafed gently through them as though they contained part of his life. In a way, indeed, they did. And I remember, too, his talk of the future of the profession; there was a kind of quiet excitement in his voice as he talked about the changes needed—changes that were surely coming. As it turned out, he helped to bring those changes about. (419)

This remembrance strikes a chord with me, as I already have some sense of what it means for this journal to be an important part of my life, and being probably near to the same age Gwynn was when Miller paid him that visit. Here’s hoping that all of us at *College English* can carry on this fine tradition of bringing about those necessary changes to the profession and the field, with all of your support as readers, contributors, and members of the English studies community. Happy reading.