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{ SAVE THE DATE }
Adult basic education for older learners remains a vital but largely unexplored area for literacy studies. Rosenberg approaches the people in this excellent book with that most precious human instrument for researchers and novelists: an attentive ear. —Eli Goldblatt, Temple University

Rosenberg reminds us that even those who are nonliterate have a relationship to writing—usually one charged with violence. Yet she also reveals how that relationship can change, even late in life. Keenly observed and gracefully written, this book enriches our understanding of the extracurriculum of composition. —Tom Deans, University of Connecticut

Equally likely to assume that nonliterate people do not know, think, or understand in the ways they do, that the silence of nonliteracy is both intrinsic and deserved. But as Lauren Rosenberg illustrates, marginalized adult learners are quite capable of theorizing about their position in society, questioning dominant ideas, disrupting them, and challenging traditional literacy narratives in American culture. In Desires for Literacy: Writing in the Lives of Adult Learners, Rosenberg takes up the imperative established by community literacy researchers to engage with people in motivations and desires to become more literate when they choose reading and writing for their own purposes. Focusing on the experiences, knowledge, and perspectives of four adult learners, she examines instances in which participants resist narratives of oppression, particularly when they become authors. Rosenberg’s qualitative study demonstrates that these adult learners are already knowledgeable individuals who can teach academics about how literacy operates, not only through how students, instructors, and scholars of composition think about the meanings and purposes of literacy.

Lauren Rosenberg

The Desire for Literacy

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Lathan’s critical historical analysis of the Citizenship Schools on South Carolina’s Sea Islands draws on oral histories, personal interviews, and archival data, allowing her to theorize about African American literacy practices, meanings, and values while demonstrating the symbiotic relationship between literacy and the Civil Rights Movement. Central to her research are local participants who contributed to the success of citizenship education, and she illuminates in particular how African American women used critical intellectualism and individual creative literacy strategies to aid in the struggle for basic human rights.

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New from NCTE

Structural Kindness
Essays on Literacy Education in Honor of Kent D. Williamson

Darren Cambridge and Patricia Lambert Stock, editors
Foreword by Linda Darling-Hammond

228 pp. 2015. Grades PreK–College.

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In his role as executive director of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the late Kent D. Williamson influenced the course of literacy teaching and learning, especially in the first years of the twenty-first century. In this collection, influential scholars and practitioners pause to reflect on his intellectual leadership and the impact of his vision. Taken together, these essays document the profession’s hard-earned wisdom about the issues and challenges facing literacy educators in the current era of dramatic social, cultural, and technological change. The collection also launches the work of the newly established Kent D. Williamson Policy and Advocacy Center in Washington, DC, as it demonstrates ways in which the profession can connect literacy research, theory, and practice to educational policy and advocacy.

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On Multimodality

*New Media in Composition Studies*
Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes
CCCD/NCTE Studies in Writing & Rhetoric Series
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As our field of composition studies invites students to compose with new media and multimedia, we need to ask about other possibilities for communication, representation, and making knowledge—including possibilities that may exceed those of the letter, the text based, the composed.

In this provocative look at how composition incorporates new forms of media into actual classrooms, Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes argue persuasively that composition’s embrace of new media and multimedia often makes those media serve the rhetorical ends of writing and composition, as opposed to exploring the rhetorical capabilities of those media. Practical employment of new media often ignores their rich contexts, which contain examples of the distinct logics and different affordances of those media, wasting the very characteristics that make them most effective and potentially revolutionary for pedagogy. *On Multimodality: New Media in Composition Studies* urges composition scholars and teachers to become aware of the rich histories and rhetorical capabilities of new media so that students’ work with those media is enlivened and made substantive.

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From the Editor

Kelly Ritter

As this, our May 2016 issue, arrives in your postal mailboxes and in your email inboxes, we will be just about exactly between two major conferences in the field of Rhetoric and Composition: the 2016 Conference on College Composition and Communication and the 2016 Rhetoric Society of America meeting. These two conferences’ themes are “Writing Strategies for Action” and “Rhetoric and Change,” respectively. I suspect that many CE readers will be opening our current issue as they settle in from attending CCCC or as they prepare to go to RSA or (for some lucky folks who still have ample travel money in this age of extreme financial austerity) as they come home from Houston and gear up to fly out to Atlanta, experiencing both meetings as a pair of conversations framing the end of a busy spring semester and the coming promise of a quiet(er) summer.

It is thus fitting that our May issue should showcase new and innovative scholarship that attempts to both write toward, and advocate for, action and change in a variety of compelling ways. Each of our authors is concerned with approaching a cultural artifact, as studied in our field, through a new theoretical lens—one that will subsequently give that artifact new and revived meaning for future study and/or potential classroom application. Each of these authors also advocates for a considerable shift in the way we regard artifacts, challenging staid practices and uses, and interpretations, in one case down to reconsidering language itself. One might argue that such a proposal for transformation is, at its core, the heart of the work we do in English studies (or academe in general): We scholar-teachers want to take what is old and make it new. We want our students to see through more critical, engaged eyes; we want colleagues to recall and appreciate our scholarship as productive reification. But what I hope readers will take away from the work in this issue—including the provocative review essay that rounds out its contents—is that no meaning is static, no analysis singular or fixed, even for topics that we might consider “closed,” or at least thoroughly debated and catalogued in our journals. The authors in this issue, two advanced graduate students and two assistant professors, challenge us to look more
deeply at what we might have previously regarded as sufficient “action” or “change” in order to pull more tightly on those conference themes noted here.

I mention the academic rank of our authors because it’s particularly exciting to me that the scholars featured in this issue are our newest colleagues, including not one, but two “Emerging Voices.” Readers may recall that we had the good fortune in our March 2016 issue to also have two EV authors (Jessica Bannon and Matt Sumpter); we find ourselves again in this enviable position due to the great pool of talented authors in English studies whose work we are privileged to be among the first to publish. Even though my issues as editor of CE will draw to a close fairly soon, I want to keep encouraging new scholars to send their scholarship out to our journals—not only CE but also the variety of other venues in print (or online) today—without fear or hesitation, with courage that they have something to offer, even if that offering meets with question, suggestion, or challenge from peers in the spirit of making it better and brighter. This is good work you, our emerging colleagues, are doing. We need to see more of it.

The first of our Emerging Voices articles, which opens this issue, is Gregory Coles’s “The Exorcism of Language.” This article proposes how we might re-see Kenneth Burke’s work, in particular his theories of terministic screens, in terms of incendiary language—in other words, labels that originally sought to offend, marginalize, or undermine a particular group or individual (including but not limited to those who identify as LGBTQ) but have now been taken up by that very group as a new term of unity and power. Alluding to his article’s title, Coles notes that “it is not at all outside the realm of Burlean possibility that words themselves might be exorcised in the same way as things” because “[t]he terministic screens words carry with them are always subject to the potential for alteration, for ‘rescreening’” (429).

More specifically, Coles argues,

Minority groups may recognize damaging terministic screens within a dialogue, but they rarely have the power to eliminate those words from discourse. . . . Instead of eliminating a derogatory word from discourse, they can attempt to reclaim that word by performatively causing it to select and deflect different portions of reality, limiting its ability to function pejoratively. Such a terministic “rescreening” would have the power to disarm dominant discourse even as it left that discourse semantically intact. (430).

Coles goes on to provide suggestions for how instructors might employ this notion of “rescreening” terms in their undergraduate classrooms, for example composition courses. This article should be a fascinating read for those of you interested in new applications of Burke’s work, in the evolution and dynamism of language, or in new theoretical perspectives (that can be translated to pedagogical moments) on the difficult conversations our students want to have—with us and with each other—when faced with literature or other texts that confront discriminatory language, stereotypes, or the oppression of marginalized groups.
Our second Emerging Voices feature is Charles Lesh’s “The Geographies of History: Space, Time, and Composition.” In this article, Lesh argues for a new way of looking at revisionist historiography, often characterized as “local” histories of writing and rhetoric that counter master narratives written to a national scale. Lesh asks that we consider the spatial dimensions of historical work on equal footing with the notion of the history itself; that scholars act as “the cartographers of disciplinary time” (447). Lesh advocates for a new way of thinking of local histories—specifically as a challenge to the “either/or understanding of spatial and historical work” over a privileging of “historical scholarship sensitive to the spatial politics of a given site” (449). To do this, Lesh argues for a greater attention to both critical spatial theory and emerging areas of research, such as the geohumanities—or “the rapidly growing zone of creative interaction between geography and the humanities” (464), in relation to the archival and historiographic narratives we tell regarding composition’s complex histories, so as to better “account for and recognize the spatial politics of specific sites of historical significance” (449).

Readers may think, from my description of the article, that this approach is already in play in various local histories—as place figures dominantly in many of these accounts. But Lesh wants us to take our understanding of “space” one step further, invoking Massey’s “space-time” as well as Bakhtin’s notion of chronotope in contemplating that

as we more reflexively em-place our histories and resist more totalizing narratives, we simultaneously resist the notion that our objects of inquiry are either historical or spatial. This distinction becomes much messier, overlapping . . . the spatial language found in revisionist historiography indicates a collapse of a time or space approach in our research. (449)

Certainly our CE readers who are themselves historians of the discipline should find Lesh’s proposal intriguing in its implications for their own studies as well as for the directions historiographies of composition might take from here forward (as a personal example, Lesh applies his theories to my own work on basic writing in a way that I found quite compelling). But readers who are not so invested in history should also find much to value in Lesh’s argument, as it questions our fixed notions of location versus time—of the mythology that a kind of pedagogy or a kind of student is not as bound by his or her “place” as by his or her moment in history, both in terms of writing production and writerly identity. Lesh’s article, finally, has implications for future collaborative work involving historical study across disciplinary boundaries and research platforms—already underway, for example, in the form of digital historiographies showcased by Enoch and Gold in CE in our November 2013 issue.

Our third and final featured article in this issue is from Katherine Fredlund, who applies the principles of CHAT (cultural-historical activity theory) to feminist histories, building a connection in this issue between her work and Lesh’s re-visioning
of space and time, as well as drawing upon the larger themes that emerge across the articles as a whole regarding language, power, and representation. Fredlund’s article, “Feminist CHAT: Collaboration, Nineteenth-Century Women’s Clubs, and Activity Theory,” uses as its central archival examples three nineteenth century women’s clubs, Boston’s Gleaning Circle (1805), Oberlin’s Ladies’ Literary Society (1846), and the Boston Women’s Era Club (1894), to first, “articulate and present a Feminist CHAT method that can help researchers identify factors they may not be aware of while recognizing power and difference as important aspects of any activity system” and second, “to theorize collaboration as an activity system in which the activities of persons, artifacts, institutions, communities, practices, and productions of difference interact in order to reach a goal” (471).

Fredlund’s goal in repurposing CHAT for archival ends is to showcase how feminist CHAT “affords a richer vision of women’s historical practices while allowing feminist researchers to theorize how gendered literate practices function as activity systems” (472). Fredlund interrogates key principles of CHAT, including the theoretical deployment of power as a “runaway object” and the hypothesis that “a Feminist CHAT understanding of collaboration . . . can recognize the ways difference and power interact with language and within conversation,” all the while noting that “an activity theory understanding of collaboration allows for the recognition of contributors while also understanding that contributing and collaborating are not one and the same” (479). Fredlund’s final look at the women’s clubs in this context—and in the context of others (Buchanan, Gere) who have studied historical accounts of women’s collaborative activities—allows her to illustrate that “the differences between women’s clubs’ practices present a way to understand how collaboration mutates as a result of the cultural and historical evolution of objects and activities” (482). This article should appeal to our readers who appreciate both the ongoing efforts in rhetoric and composition to recover women’s extracurricular rhetorical practices, as well as alternative methods for understanding historical action. Fredlund’s theory-rich discussion should be useful for those readers also seeking models of inquiry into methodological paradigms that complement, rather than cancel out or undermine, one another in practice.

Finally, we shift to an analysis of scholarship that addresses both historical and present-day rhetorical representations of under-represented groups in both mass literacy instruction and public and private writing spaces, via Christie Toth’s comprehensive and engaging review essay of recently published books by Stephen Schneider, Susan V. Meyers, Risa Applegarth, and Barbara Monroe. Toth’s essay certainly invokes both the concepts of rhetoric and change and of taking action, as she ties together her reading of these four books with the observation that she herself has “become increasingly aware that all rhetorical situations in the United States are, by dint of their location, part of the settler colonial ‘situation’” noting that set-
tler colonialism “characterize[es] settlement as a past event rather than a persistent structure . . . ignor[es] or den[ies] continued Native presence, and obscure[es] the reality that both settlement and Indigenous resistance are ongoing” (497). Using this lens, Toth encourages readers to view these titles as a grouping that, to a greater or lesser extent, might be read with “explicit attention to the settler colonial situation” which in turn “might inform understandings of the relationships between rhetoric, writing, and structures of oppression in the United States, whether or not one’s work focuses primarily on Native American issues” (497). Toth ultimately argues, from her position as a scholar working with student writers at the Navajo Nation’s Diné College, and by way of a careful analysis of where and how each of these titles intersects with notions of settler colonialism in its approach, that such a perspective “can offer a productive lens for examining an array of structural oppressions: this is not just a niche concern for those of us focusing specifically on Indigenous issues” (509). Such a reminder seems fitting for this issue of CE that, as a whole, seeks to force our readerly perspectives into necessarily new ways of seeing.