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Our 79th volume of *College English*, which opens with this September issue, is once again representative of the range of outstanding scholarship being produced in English studies today. In this issue, we have work on multimedia composing, rural literacies and student identity, LGBT literature/literary canons, and disability studies and writing. Even though my typical editor’s introduction more traditionally summarizes and/or spotlights our table of contents in order of appearance, in this case, I’d like to instead focus on each featured piece as representative of an area of English studies seen in our pages (some much less frequently than others), with some thoughts on why this area is important to the ongoing mission of our journal.

I’ll start by noting how pleased I am to be able, in this issue, to bring to readers work from literary studies—an area where we have been able to publish very little work in our pages since I’ve been editor—and also LGBT studies. I think the difficulties we have had in publishing literary scholarship in general (not specific to LGBT issues) stems from the difference between the mission of *College English*—to present work that is of wide interest to a diverse body of scholar-teachers in postsecondary English departments and that discusses larger problems, issues, or concerns of those scholar-teachers—versus the mission of much of the literary scholarship we have received, which is often more concerned with a particular literary work (or works), period, or theoretical approach. That latter category of work certainly has tremendous value in the field, and much of the work we have received in this category is of fine scholarly quality. But for us, it’s not been what is usually termed a “good fit” for the journal. As such, *College English*, for these past five volumes at least, has been more visibly focused on scholarship related to literacy, writing, rhetoric, and, with less frequency, issues in the profession, with only a smattering of pieces focused on broader literary concerns.
I feel it’s important to emphasize, however, as my editorship rapidly draws to a close—and for the editor(s) who will follow me—that literature and literary study (and cultural studies and film studies) does have a place in this journal. As you read John Pruitt’s article, “LGBT Literature Courses and Questions of Canonicity,” I hope you will see how we spotlight a particular approach—wider, perhaps, than more specialized or literature-only journals—to this considerable corner of English studies. The added value of Pruitt’s article is its concern with the teaching of literature as an enterprise—or as the MLA divisions might term it, as “A Profession”—but also the intersections between traditional notions of “canon” and alternate formations thereof, in this case a canon of LGBT literature. Anchoring his analysis of these intersections in a significant body of scholarship on LGBT literature and queer theory, as well as an analysis of forty-five LGBT literature courses offered nationwide since 2005, plus supporting interviews with thirty-two of these courses’ instructors, Pruitt explores what constitutes an LGBT literary canon, and further, highlights “the various means by which we all, as English instructors, struggle to measure the worth of literary texts, include them on or exclude them from required reading lists, and present them as teachable texts” (87).

My emphasis on the relative rarity of this type of work in College English, however, should not overshadow the other three areas of English studies that we feature in this issue and that have a slightly longer trajectory of publication in CE—namely, rural literacies (Sara Webb-Sunderhaus), disability studies (Elisabeth L. Miller), and digital and multimedia composition (Crystal VanKooten). Each of these articles draws our attention to corners of English studies (or in the case of disability studies, also intersections with other academic fields) that increasingly move toward the more acknowledged middle, at least in the field of rhetoric and composition.

In the case of our lead article by Webb-Sunderhaus, rural literacies generally and Appalachian literacy practices more specifically have been an acknowledged part of composition research since Shirley Brice Heath’s 1983 study Ways with Words and occupy a critical place among other regional research into community literacies, discourse communities, and issues of language, dialect, and identity formation, particularly in relation to stratified populations within higher education as a whole, but acutely, in writing classrooms. College English has long since promoted the spotlighting of individuals, communities, and products of our culture that are neither mainstream nor dominant in their position in the college/university or in the profession. Sara Webb-Sunderhaus continues this trajectory in her article, “‘Keep the Appalachian, Drop the Redneck’: Tellable Student Narratives of Appalachian Identity,” in which she examines the implications of “our culture’s tellable literacy narrative” as limited by the “either/
Editor’s Introduction

or possession” that is literacy, through a close look at two students’ narratives of their Appalachian identity—as influenced by and highly cognizant of public discourse on “Appalachianness,” and as tied to literacy practices that work both toward and away from that communal identity.

Whereas Webb-Sunderhaus discusses teacher practices and attitudes as influential or restrictive for identity narratives that students construct, a number of recent, prominent studies by scholars with institutional homes in English departments illustrate how disability studies—as an interdisciplinary field that works both within and outside the humanities—also offers English studies a means of understanding student diversity and difference and uses that understanding to make the classroom a more useable and welcome space for writing instruction and literacy acquisition. Many of us who direct writing programs know the importance of training our new instructors to be sensitive to the markers of difference that students may bring. We also know that it is critical to augment or enhance one’s classroom spaces and pedagogical techniques to not only accommodate, but to include in our baseline assumptions about, the variety of ways our students have always had diverse learning needs.

Elisabeth L. Miller’s article in this issue, “Literate Misfittings: Disability Theory and a Sociomaterial Approach to Literacy,” highlights the challenges students can encounter in our ableist classrooms as well as in other writing situations through her study of eight writers—in this case, adults between the ages of twenty-four and eighty-two. As Miller argues, “while the social and material aspects of literacy come together to facilitate literate practice, learning, and identity, they just as often exclude, hinder, and block” (36). What makes Miller’s work such a valuable contribution to our pages, and to forwarding the mission of CE, is not just her argument for a keen understanding of disability frameworks for teachers of writing and others who aid in the literacy of our citizenry, but also her employment, in doing so, of a demographic we are rarely able to profile: adult writers who are nonneurotypical. While the academy as a whole needs to make a more concerted effort to understand traditional-age, nonneurotypical students, English studies in particular, with its investment in writing as a mode of learning, has an even greater need to do so. The title of our journal is College English, but I like to think that what we discuss, theorize, and model in our pages regarding postsecondary English studies extends ultimately to lifelong pursuits. Miller’s article gives us some new ways to think about what that longer view of literacy looks like for writers for whom the “materials of literacy, indeed, simply do not always fit for . . . bodies and minds,” (42) and how we should go about making that ongoing material-body “misfitting” a priority in our research.

Finally, moving from marginalized literacy communities and populations to multimodal composition in first-year classrooms, Crystal VanKooten’s article,
“The video was what did it for me’: Developing Meta-Awareness about Composition across Media,” also represents the wider concerns of our journal, or at least the concerns that I hope we have begun to more deliberately profile in our pages. When I first took over as editor of CE a few years ago, I observed that scholars of digital rhetorics, multimodal composing, and rhetoric and technology more broadly were not sending us their work (or at the very least, I wasn’t seeing it in our pages). I wondered why this was so. As I recall, Byron Hawk’s response to this question, as featured in our March 2013 symposium querying, “What is College English?” was that College English was not where he “saw himself.” This stuck with me as I sought to encourage more of our rising stars in digital rhetorics and multimedia composing to send in work and to consider College English as, perhaps, less mainstream and more innovative—should I say daring?—than it had been in the past, through no particular prescription or plan by any one editor. I believe that this open encouragement has been what has allowed us to publish past work in this area, in pieces by Julie Lindquist and Bump Halbritter, Adam Koehler, Steph Ceraso, Pamela Van Heitsma, and of course the special issue by David Gold and Jessica Enoch. VanKooten’s article continues what I hope will be a strong thread of scholarly inquiry in future issues of College English, with her study of meta-awareness in digital (here, video) composing, which she defines as “a student’s ability to move consistently between enacting multimodal compositional choices and articulating how and why those choices are effective or ineffective within a rhetorical context” (58) and which leads, in the case of the video projects composed by the students in her study, to strategies for the successful “transfer of compositional knowledge across media” (59).

As always, I hope you enjoy this issue of the journal. I look forward to providing equally smart and compelling work by our best scholars in the rest of the volume to come.

To our readers

You will notice that the physical dimensions of this issue of CE are a bit smaller than what you are accustomed to seeing. Increasing costs for paper, manufacturing, and mail processing have required a reduction to a more standard 6” x 9” page size. Rest assured, this change does NOT reduce the amount of text that appears on a page nor the page length of each issue.