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The first two articles that appeared in *College English* were eulogies for Thomas Wolfe, who had died suddenly the year before (Braswell; Kohler). The abrupt demise of a promising young American author might seem reason enough to focus on him when the journal debuted. But *CE*’s spotlighting of Wolfe at its premiere was consistent with the literary bent of its predecessor, the College Edition of the *English Journal*. Moreover, as Maureen Daly Goggin (42) and Erika Lindemann (519) have pointed out, articles about the production, analysis, and teaching of literature dominated *CE* for subsequent decades. During this period the journal treated other subjects as well; composition, linguistics, and creative writing did show up in its pages. Still, literature was the major concern. It’s no surprise, then, that in 1949 scholars and teachers of composition launched a journal promoting their interests, *College Composition and Communication*.

Since the 1970s, however, *CE*’s emphasis has notably changed. By now, it has become chiefly a venue for scholarship in composition, rhetoric, and literacy. Articles in literary studies appear sometimes, but are hardly the norm. It’s a situation that I, for one, am fairly content to accept, because it seems to reflect our major audience’s preferences. Yet, *CE* does get numerous submissions on literature. Unfortunately, a significant number seem designed to lure just a coterie of readers. Today, *CE*’s own readership is broader. Even literature specialists who consult it represent all sorts of subfields: medieval to postmodern, poetry to prose. Too many of the literary-oriented manuscripts we receive are, sadly, more parochial, being close readings of a single text from one historical era. This kind of essay seems more appropriate for a journal exclusively devoted to the period: say, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, or *Victorian Studies*, or *Modern Drama*. Meanwhile, as editor of *CE*, I feel able to accept such an essay only when it clearly and consistently elaborates implications for literary studies at large—or, even better, for the whole discipline of English.

The potential contributor to *CE* who wishes to stick with one work of literature can, in fact, move in this wider direction. A good way to do so is to think of the work
not as something worthy of regard in itself, but as a case study or perhaps a test case. For example, in our July 2008 issue, Lisa Eck’s account of how she has taught Tsitsi Dangarembga’s novel Nervous Conditions becomes a more general model of pedagogy, applicable to other texts that American students might find culturally strange. And in our current issue, Gail Ivy Berlin focuses on a fragmentary lyric to demonstrate how affective response can blend with historical analysis, even when the material represents horrific suffering and death. To be sure, there is nothing inherently “wrong” in close reading. But a journal like CE is a vehicle for treating it not as an end, but a means, for developing ideas that might inspire a lot of us.

W O R K S C I T E D


