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From the New Editor

Melissa Ianetta

Such is the reputation of this journal that its editor is consulted or listened to on matters about which he knows little or nothing. I surprised myself frequently by discovering how quickly I could summon an opinion on questions I had never before contemplated.


As did many of my predecessors, no doubt, I prepared to write this note to the reader by looking back at other samples of the genre offered by the individuals who have sat at the College English editor’s desk. This exercise yielded many insights, a few daunting thoughts about the weight of the tradition I am attempting to carry on, and an occasional smile, as with the epigraph included here. For as of this writing, while I am not yet the official editor, already I have Opined Editorially on the state of the discipline, the crafting of essays, the selection of materials for publication, and what the new cover of College English should look like. (On this last item: I hope you like it. Indeed, I hope I like it, since as of the frosty March day on which I am writing to you, we haven’t yet actually created one.)

In addition to such moments of wry recognition, I have also noted the ways in which the genre of the editorial introduction has evolved over the journal’s history. Some editors chose to write them every issue. Some never wrote them. Some only said hello and goodbye, so to speak, offering an editorial note in only their first and last issues. This latter approach is the one I intend to take, more or less. In this first issue, I am here to greet the reader and outline my hopes for the next five years. In my final issue, I’ll return to ruminate on how things turned out. Admittedly, I may return occasionally to these pages if the occasion warrants, but overall my plan is to let the authors of our essays speak for themselves. Rather than contribute via print those editorial opinions Miller describes, I will offer my commentary via video made available through the
NCTE social media accounts (Twitter: @NCTE; YouTube: NCTEEnglish). As of this writing, we’ve posted a few subtitled videos describing my editorial goals and methods on the NCTE YouTube account, and they can also be accessed through the College English Facebook page. We plan to make more of these videos over the next several months in response to frequent questions we receive from authors. If you follow NCTE on Twitter, you’ll receive notice when a new video goes out. Using social media in this fashion allows the journal both to be more responsive, I think, and to reach our readers through a broadened range of communication modes.

This use of social media is not just an effort to be more nimble in response, however; it is also intended to increase writers’ access to the journal’s pages. That is, there is much academic mentoring that is accessed through fairly narrow gates, such as the graduate institution one attends, the institution where one is employed, and the access—or lack thereof—of travel funds to attend national conferences where scholarly conversations evolve and where publication workshops are held. By making workshop-style information available online, I hope that we can help new scholars decode the gestures and genres that populate our journals.

Another initiative aimed at broadening access is the new feature “And Gladly Teach,” which seeks to elicit evidenced-based descriptions of highly innovative and successful teaching. In an attempt to best accommodate this kind of work in the journal’s pages, we’ve established separate criteria for such contributions.

- **Audience awareness and broad applicability of argument** provide a primary criterion for authors considering submitting to this feature. That is, published essays will demonstrate a consideration of the teaching interests of the broad readership of the journal. In addressing those interests, successful essays will describe forms of pedagogy and instruction strategies that are applicable to the wide range of disciplinary specialties that comprise contemporary English studies.

- **Evidence and method** will be used in a persuasive fashion that allows the reader to see not just what occurred in the classroom under consideration but also the empirical data collection that allowed the author to determine the impact of the activity. Such data might include, for example, classroom documents, student reflections, class surveys, and other learning outcomes data. As with all other research involving human subjects that is published in College English, manuscripts sent out for review must all have approval from the IRB at the appropriate institution(s).

- **Engagement with current scholarly conversations** will be evident in successful And Gladly Teach submissions. These works will describe the scholarly research that provides the intellectual context for and to which these essays respond.

You can find more details on this feature on the journal’s NCTE webpage (http://www.ncte.org/journals/ce/write/andgladlyteach). As I believe the pursuit of excellence in teaching is where the subspecialties of English find a shared
identity, I strongly encourage you to consider sharing outstanding models of teaching practice that match these criteria.

While this feature is newly-introduced, it nevertheless follows a recurring focus among College English editors, namely, the classroom as a nexus of readers’ mutual concern. That is, and as John Schilb wrote in his own 2006 inaugural column, the journal “has been known for its interest in certain subjects, and I welcome especially articles devoted to these. One is pedagogy. Even today, few journals focus on the teaching of expository writing, even fewer on the teaching of literature. I want to maintain CE’s commitment to both” (9). Six years later, Kelly Ritter echoed these sentiments, noting “The label of ‘teacher’ itself is at the core of our mission, and contains multitudes” (10). In creating this new feature, I hope to amplify and expand the teaching tradition that has long animated the journal’s pages.

As seems to mark the outset of many editorial terms, while starting a new feature I will be discontinuing others. The “Emerging Voices” callout will no longer be included in essay headers, although the journal will certainly continue to support new contributors to the field. Indeed, two of the authors included in this issue, for example, Sue Mendelsohn and James Rushing Daniel, would have been featured previously under that designation. So too the “What Is College English?” feature will no longer appear in order to allow for the publication of additional research-based essays.

Reading across editorial notes from the past seventy-odd years also brought to my attention a feature that has become dormant: the appreciation of past editors. That is, in earlier years, each editorial term was followed by a brief “In Appreciation” that thanked the previous editor for years of service and commemorated that individual’s contributions. To honor that history, I conclude in that fashion my own entry in the inaugural editorial note genre. The editors of College English who have come before me have created an imposing tradition, indeed, and it is one to which I hope to do justice. Louise Z. Smith, for example, edited the journal when I first encountered it, and my early readings of College English showed me the field that would give me an intellectual home. Jeanne Gunner was the first editor to publish me; her graciousness and patience with a new author set me a standard that I hope to model in my own practices. Just as John Schilb’s work on literary theory and composition theory was instrumental to my own development as a junior scholar, so too his evenhanded leadership of the journal will be equally helpful as a model as I take this new step. And, of course, the immediate past editor, Kelly Ritter, brought a passion and level of energy to her advocacy for the journal and its authors that I can only find daunting now, at the onset of my own editorial voyage.
Even as it’s early days in my editorship, I already have incurred my own debts of gratitude. Foremost, Carolyne King, the current associate editor, has been instrumental in creating the editorial processes that we will use at the University of Delaware. Her analytic ability, understanding of the field, joy, and sheer hard work has made all things better as we began this project. John Ernest, UD’s Chair of the Department of English has made our work possible; I’m grateful for his support but not surprised as he’s always been eager to bring new resources to our department and new experiences to our students. Finally, I would like to thank Dean George Watson of the College of Arts and Sciences for his ongoing belief that the best campus writing culture incorporates teaching, research, and service. I am fortunate indeed to have such colleagues. Moreover, my sense of appreciation exceeds the boundaries of my own campus. I am thankful to the editorial board you see listed in the journal’s front matter for agreeing to share their wisdom and experience. And finally, I’d like to thank NCTE’s Pam Crews and Kurt Austin, who are working very hard to make this transition smooth and who have a sense of fun and adventure about this work that makes collaborating with them a pleasure. Thanks to you all.

I’ll close by inviting you to send your questions and comments to collegeenglishjournal@gmail.com and by inviting you to enjoy the riches that follow—I hope you’ll enjoy these essays as much as I have.

Works Cited