

Notes from the New Editors

Michael Clarke, Faye Halpern, and Shaobo Xie

Faye Halpern, one of the three new editors of *ARIEL*, remembers that her eleventh grade English teacher required her students to begin each of their essays with a preposition followed by a gerund. “By revealing the evil inherent in all human beings, Nathaniel Hawthorne revealed the hypocrisy of the Puritans.” That is the opening line of an essay for which Faye got a high mark because she used words like “inherent” and ended on a very resonant note, with a statement about sin and human nature in general.

As the new editors of *ARIEL*, Michael Clarke, Faye Halpern, and Shaobo Xie want to seize the opportunity of their inaugural editor’s column to make explicit—in what we hope is not absurd or oppressive pedagogical fashion—what kinds of articles the journal will be looking for. We do not require gerunds or statements about sin and human nature, but there are some guidelines we think it is useful to make clear. In the next issue’s editorial column, we will meditate more fully on the current state of the field, although we will take the opportunity here to briefly summarize the journal’s purview insofar as it relates to the kinds of articles we are seeking.

In her inaugural editor’s column in 2002, Pamela McCallum narrated the evolution of *ARIEL* from its inception in 1970. *ARIEL* began as a study of the literature of former British colonies, what was then known as “Commonwealth” literature, scrutinizing the “complex critical, passionate and sometimes troubled dialogues with the ‘great tradition’ of literature in English” (McCallum 2). Under the editorships of Ian Adam and Victor Ramraj during the 1980s and 1990s, *ARIEL* reinvented itself as a journal of postcolonial criticism and took up the questions this new field of inquiry raised. Over the past 10 years or so, the journal has expanded its parameters to engage with the newly emergent field of globalization and cultural studies while carrying for-

ward its established legacies, addressing issues such as globalization and indigenism, citizenship, translational and transcultural identity, interaction between the global and the local, and the new forms and sites of exploitation and colonization in the age of transnational capitalism. While continuing to be interested in articles that engage with questions like how postcolonial literature “writes back” to the canonical, imperial, or metropolitan centers, we wish the journal to grow in globalization studies and in other areas of interest. We would also like to invite scholars who are interested in hemispheric studies and diaspora studies to contribute to the journal; these fields of inquiry have used insights generated by postcolonial theorists—and sometimes reacted against them—to illuminate authors and regions that would not have originally qualified as “postcolonial.”

We would also like to say a few words about something that is not always made explicit in the guidelines journals provide potential contributors: not just the “what” of the kinds of questions and texts we are seeking but the “how” of the kinds of critical engagement that compels us. We are especially pleased with articles that work on multiple levels, articles that do not just offer a close reading of a text or set of texts but that use that close reading to intervene in a scholarly conversation. The conversation might be local: for example, it might involve what the text has been interpreted to be about or the possibilities it offers for political resistance or the way the text has been categorized or the text’s relationship to a larger body of work. Or the conversation might have to do with a methodological question or theoretical claim. These conversations are not, of course, mutually exclusive. The best articles often contribute simultaneously to our understanding of particular texts as well as methodological or theoretical debates.

One of the questions we ask readers when they assess an article for publication in *ARIEL* is this: “What does this article contribute to the field?” It is not enough that an article performs this intervention implicitly; instead, we ask that authors be explicit about which scholarly conversation(s) they are engaging with and the form their intervention(s) takes. In other words, how does the article change the world of existing interpretation? We do not require that whole cities be razed or new land

masses arise, but somehow the vista must be a little bit different once the reader has finished the article.

Works Cited

McCallum, *Pamela*, ed. "Introduction—Notes from the New Editor." *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 33.2 (2002): 1-6. Print