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From the Editor

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Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature, Volume 26, Number 2, Fall 2007,
pp. 191-197 (Article)

Published by The University of Tulsa



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From the Editor

A very lively few months have passed since I wrote the prefatory comments for the Silver Jubilee issue last spring. Our ongoing efforts to shift from paper-based to computer-based operations have driven much of our activity this past semester. The essays published in this issue are the first that Sarah Theobald-Hall and I have edited with keyboard rather than with pencil. This was an enlightening process for both of us, and we have learned a great deal about the relative benefits of both approaches to editing. I would like to thank the authors in this issue for the exceptional patience they showed as we adjusted to working in this new format. While Sarah and I pondered the ins and outs of computerized editing, Karen Dutoi, our book review editor, continued to refine the database of specialist readers that she, in collaboration with our former book review editor and several of our interns, developed over the past two years, while writing a procedural manual for the positions of book review editor and subscriptions manager. Jennifer McKellar, a technologically savvy former intern of the journal, has provided indispensable assistance to Karen in the database work. Sara Beam overhauled both aesthetic and operational aspects of our website, with what I think are marvelous results. Perhaps the most noteworthy change is that, starting with this issue, the website will feature abstracts of every article published in the journal. Courtney Spohn-Larkins, who currently is overseeing our subscriptions, and Michael Griffin, who has been working as a volunteer for the past semester but will begin an internship in January, took a continuing education course in order to assist with maintenance of the website. I would like to thank all of them for their hard work on these various projects.

This month Sara Beam is completing her three-semester internship with the journal. We will miss her presence in the office a great deal, but we look forward to Michael's transition from volunteer to intern as Sara's replacement. Andy Trevathan, who interned with us last year, graciously agreed to interrupt her work with the journal so that she could provide needed assistance to the University of Tulsa's writing program. We are looking forward to her return to the office in January, when she will complete the final semester of her internship.

The projects that have kept us so busy over the past few months have not been undertaken out of avid technophilia, but rather out of a belief that these changes will help the journal meet the goal both Holly Laird and I have articulated of expanding the journal's international reach. Some of the greatest obstacles to our working with authors and readers overseas

are practical ones, including the time and money expended in transporting paper overseas. Editing our forthcoming publications by computer will facilitate our communications with our authors, whether they are in the United States or abroad, just as the readers' database helps us track a larger number of manuscripts as they are sent to and read by a larger and more geographically dispersed pool of specialist readers. Over the next year we plan to take the additional step of implementing software that will allow us to accept electronic submissions while maintaining our long-standing system of blind peer review. Although we will continue to accept paper submissions, having a system in place to accept electronic submissions and dispatch them to our readers will make our process more welcoming to international and domestic authors alike, and it will allow us to circulate manuscripts more quickly.

Significant and time-consuming as all these activities have been, the most eventful project we have undertaken this year is a restructuring of our editorial and advisory boards. With many members of the editorial board serving since the journal's founding, and with just a few new appointments made by Holly Laird in her eighteen-year editorship, the editorial board has provided *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* with a backbone of strength and stability through sometimes turbulent times. Like my predecessor editors, I have asked a great deal of our board members, seeking everything from readings of submissions to contributions to our special issues. I have been deeply gratified by the willingness all the board members have shown to continue supporting the journal under my editorship. While I have stressed continuity since becoming the journal's editor, I felt that the journal is in a strong and secure enough position, and so much has been asked of the current board, that the time is right for some changes.

I have asked all of our editorial board members if they would accept appointments to the journal's advisory board, where I hope they will continue to support the journal through more occasional consultation. I also have begun to invite a new set of scholars with a wide range of expertise to join the editorial board for three-year terms. I plan to assemble this new board gradually, making approximately three appointments per issue, so the final result will be an editorial board of about eighteen scholars whose terms are evenly staggered over three years. It will then become a regular duty of the editor to make three appointments to the editorial board every six months. This issue therefore is the last one to list our traditional editorial board, and the masthead of the Spring 2008 issue will be the first to present the restructured advisory and editorial boards.

I am very happy to announce that three scholars have accepted three-year appointments to the editorial board, effective January 2008. Dianne Chisholm is Professor of English at the University of Alberta. A specialist in modernism, literary theory, and queer cultural studies, she is the

author of *H.D.'s Freudian Poetics: Psychoanalysis in Translation* (1992) and *Queer Constellations: Subcultural Space in the Wake of the City* (2005). She served as consultant editor, with Juliet Flower MacCannell and Margaret Whitford, on *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary*, edited by Elizabeth Wright (1992), and this year she guest-edited a special issue of *Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge* titled *Deleuze and Guattari's EcoPhilosophy*. Having most recently developed an interest in ecological and environmental criticism, she is at work on a book project, "Earth Matters: A Nomadology of New Nature Writing."

Maram Epstein, who may be familiar to our readers from her contribution to the Silver Jubilee issue, is Associate Professor of East Asian languages and literatures at the University of Oregon. A specialist in late imperial Chinese literature, she has been focused on reading novels from the Ming and Qing dynasties in their cultural contexts, attending in particular to representations of gender and sexual desire. Professor Epstein is the author of *Competing Discourses: Orthodoxy, Authenticity, and Engendered Meanings in Late-Imperial Chinese Fiction* (2001), along with several articles examining gender in Ming-Qing vernacular fiction. Having recently been awarded a fellowship from the American Council for Learned Societies, she is at work on a new book with the working title, "Orthodox Passions: Narratives of Filial Piety in Eighteenth-Century China."

Elizabeth Robertson, who also contributed to the Silver Jubilee issue, is Professor of English and Director of the Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder. She is a cofounder of the *Medieval Feminist Newsletter* and The Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship, and she has authored and edited many books and essays on Chaucer, Langland, female readership, and depictions of women in medieval England. These include *Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Audience* (1990), *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, an essay collection coedited with Christine Rose (2001), and "This Living Hand: Thirteenth-Century Female Literacy, Materialist Immanence and the Female Reader of the *Ancrone Wisse*" (*Speculum*, 78 [2003], 1-36). She has a forthcoming study, *Medieval English Religious Prose for Women: An Edition of "The Katherine Group" and Chaucerian Consent: Women, Religion and Subjection in Late Fourteenth-Century England*.

Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature is fortunate to be graced by these first appointments to its new editorial board, and I look forward to announcing new appointments regularly in future issues.

The essays in this issue are marked by eclecticism both in their topic and approach. The first essay, Mercedes Maroto Camino's "Negotiating

Woman: Ana Caro's *El conde Partinuplés* and Pedro Calderón de la Barca's *La vida es sueño*" calls attention to a female playwright of Spain's Golden Age who has begun to emerge from several centuries of obscurity over the past three decades. Through an intertextual reading of *El conde Partinuplés*, one of only two plays from the large corpus of Caro's work that are still known to be extant, and *La vida es sueño*, one of the best-known plays by her famous contemporary Calderón, Camino is able to show how Caro "questions the paradigm of passivity and 'incompleteness' attributed to women by the dominant contemporary discourse." That Caro does not directly subvert her culture's patriarchal treatment of women, but rather prods her audience to question their attitudes to women and patriarchy, becomes clearer when we see how she inverts or revises central images, narratives, and relationships from Calderón's better-known play. While contributing to the ongoing efforts of Spanish literary scholars to recuperate women writers of the Golden Age, this essay reminds us of the potential intertextual study can offer for feminist literary study.

In "A Track to the Water's Edge": Learning to Suffer in Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*" Anna Maria Jones locates a feminist agenda in frustrated reader responses to New Woman novels of late Victorian Britain. Noting the disappointments that feminist readers have found in these novels from the 1890s onward, especially "the texts' semi-articulate expressions of desire," Jones considers the possibility that these novels "offer to their readers the possibility of activism *through* reading." The authors of these texts, that is, present reading as an educative process, and it is one that enlightens its readers by indefinitely deferring the fulfillment of their readerly wishes. In this way the experience of reading imitates the sacrifices that women of the novels' era must perform if they are to make possible a better, future world. Through a close reading of *The Heavenly Twins*, Grand shows how readers are denied happy endings or even truly pleasing interludes, even as they allude to better possibilities on a narrative horizon. In so doing Grand gives her readers a small sense of what they must suffer for a future they can never enjoy. To be frustrated by a New Woman novel, then, is to be opened to the possibility of awakening to a future that is worth sacrifice. It is also to encounter a feminist outlook that aligns women's enlightenment and empowerment with female sacrifice.

Marsha Bryant tackles a notoriously opaque modernist text and performance piece by engaging with its imperialist contexts in "Sitwell Beyond the Semiotic: Gender, Race, and Empire in *Façade*." A combination of chamber music and spoken poetry created in collaboration with Sir William Walton, *Façade: An Entertainment* has puzzled audiences and critics since its first production in 1922. Noting that the most fruitful readings of this piece in recent years have made use of Kristeva's distinction between semiotic and symbolic discourse, Bryant argues that in order to make sense

of the poem's most nonsubversive elements, especially its depictions of women, "we must shift our critical locus from the unconscious to the national imaginary." Doing so requires acknowledging the many moments in which Sitwell makes use of racist stereotypes and practices prominent in early twentieth-century Britain, ranging from hypersexualized Hottentots to decadent Chinese women. Bryant concludes that, neither outrightly subversive nor conservative in its treatment of these figures, the poems in *Façade* "parody the Empire's efficacy at the same time that they reinforce the racial stereotypes that helped to maintain it." Bryant's essay opens a new avenue of interpretation for Sitwell's work, even as it reminds us that neither literary experimentation nor female authorship "guarantee[s] progressive politics." In this way she also makes an important contribution to the current efforts of literary scholars specializing in many periods and regions to grapple with the relationship between aesthetics and politics.

Doris Davis's "De Talkin' Game': The Creation of Psychic Space in Selected Short Fiction of Zora Neale Hurston" is directed by a focus on Hurston's own fascination with oral eloquence. Drawing upon Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s well-known work on the Signifying Monkey along with elements of Hurston's own life, Davis explores Hurston's depictions of female characters who preserve themselves from emotional oppression or physical violence through their spoken words. The short stories in particular, she argues, often display black women out-signifying and out-witting male trickster figures, deploying black rhetorical tropes and alluding to important figures from African mythology as they win psychological empowerment. Ultimately a celebratory account of Hurston's celebratory treatment of black women, the essay links Hurston's work closely to the African American oral tradition, even as it calls attention to her lesser-known work and suggests some ways in which Hurston links the act of surviving to the articulation of it.

In "Exploring the 'Mind of the Hive': Embodied Cognition in Sylvia Plath's Bee Poems," Jessica Lewis Luck draws upon and integrates a wide range of scholarship dealing with cognitive theory, body studies, and feminism in order to develop an innovative reading of Sylvia Plath's bee poems. Rather than representing a poetic search for a true inner self or even for a stable subjectivity, "the lyric laboratory of the bee poems," she argues, "facilitates an experimental attempt to imagine a form of embodiment that does not dissipate into script or surface." Luck reads the bee poems as progressing gradually and deliberately from an external, culturally directed model of consciousness to one that "incorporates the deeper morphological structures." One outcome of Plath's poetic experiment is an understanding of consciousness that is self-organizing and connectionist rather than hierarchical and monolithic, with the body and mind mutually influencing and directing each other. Through this cognitive model Plath

is able to break away from biological essentialist and culturally constructed models of sex and gender, presenting a new understanding of identity that offers “a potentially new foundation for feminist projects.” While offering an exciting approach to Plath, this article suggests the fascinating implications cognitive theory may hold for feminist literary criticism more generally.

Feminist postcolonial criticism, economic history, and material culture studies inflect Jennifer Nesbitt’s “Rum Histories: Decolonizing the Narratives of Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Sylvia Townsend Warner’s *The Flint Anchor*.” In this article Nesbitt considers the role that rum plays in the depiction of white women as both victims and implicated beneficiaries of an imperialist economy with plantation slave labor at its core. Focusing on two women’s novels set in the West Indies shortly after emancipation and written during the turbulent post-World War II era of decolonization, she explores the rich significance of rum as metonym of imperial domination and instrument of white, male entitlement. Facilitating both Antoinette’s spiral into madness in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Julia Warner’s slippage into alcoholism in *The Flint Anchor*, rum both reinforces stereotypes of female corruption and stands for the broader moral degradation that Britain suffers from its oppression of distant others. As international commodity, as addictive substance, as signifier and trigger of moral corruption, rum proves to be a crucial component in a feminist and postcolonial analysis of these novels.

This issue’s Archives essay, “The Writerly Life of Eva Frances Douglas,” presents archival research in pedagogical context. Randi Lynn Tanglen, a graduate student at the University of Arizona, describes her introduction both to the work of Eva Frances Douglas and to the activity of archival research while taking a seminar on “Women’s Diaries” with Professor Judy Nolte Temple. Tanglen’s essay calls attention to an understudied translator, scholar, and author of the early twentieth-century United States whose career was overshadowed somewhat by that of her first husband, Charles Fletcher Lummis. As Tanglen notes, Douglas’s meticulous attention to her literary records, as well as her self-presentation in her diary, suggests that a fascinating narrative waits to be told of a largely self-taught woman who sought literary renown while struggling to meet the demands placed on her as wife and mother, even as she enjoyed some of the entitlements of a white, middle-class woman with domestic help. Tanglen’s description of Prof. Temple’s course also provides an illuminating narrative of teaching through the archive with exciting results.

I would like to close this preface by calling our readers' attention to an upcoming special issue. My colleague Katherine Adams, whose book, *Owning Up: Privacy, Property, and Belonging in U.S. Women's Life Writing, 1840-1890*, will be published next year by Oxford University Press, will be guest-editing a special issue of *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* on "Women Writing Race." The special issue will be an effort to unpack exactly what is connoted by a phrase that has received occasional mention in scholarly publications and literary circles for well over a decade but has not received detailed, systematic scrutiny across the bounds of nation, language, or region. I look forward to seeing the exciting collection of essays to be assembled in this special issue. I expect those articles will provoke new and wider attention to the ways in which women writers have both contributed to and questioned the historical construction of race as a category that asserts essentialist, even ontological status. I encourage our readers to read and respond to her call for papers, which is in the Announcements section of this issue.

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