

## From the Editor

This issue of *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* continues with Part II of our special forum "On Collaborations." All these papers are produced from within the academic context of literary studies, and together they militate against the entrenched notion of the solitary scholar-writer. Whereas Part I was divided evenly between papers by collaborators speculating about their own collaborations (one a literary collaboration, the other scholarly) and papers by single-author scholars worrying over problematic collaborations from the past, Part II centers on issues of collaboration that have arisen in the careers of university women (past and present), who have collaborated successfully with each other. In my preface to Part II, I discuss the kinds of conclusions that, I believe, can be drawn from the forum and so will say no more about it here.

The forum is followed by four scholarly articles, which carry on *Tulsa Studies'* dual mission: the recovery of forgotten or neglected women writers and the construction and reevaluation of feminist critical/theoretical premises. These articles move from an opening essay whose primary examples derive from eighteenth-century literature to three articles on turn-of-the-century women writers: one a poet and a beauty, the next a "new woman" novelist, the third a poet and performance artist. The latter three essays also explore various problems of sexuality: the first, Graham R. Tomson's transgressions of the double standard through her successive divorces, remarriages, and renamings; the second, Sarah Grand's concern with venereal diseases and wives' victimization by husbands carrying syphilis; the third, the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Lovinghoven's use of the confession to expose and permit a woman's sexual adventures. The rise of the doctrine of aestheticism at the turn of the century—with, on the one hand, the threat it posed to the realistic novel and, on the other hand, the interest it excited in some women poets—is charted in intriguingly complementary ways in the careers of Tomson and Grand.

In the first of these four essays, Kathryn R. King shows that the needle-pen trope—which until recently has been seen as a polar opposition by influential feminist critics—is a complex, interactive figure in texts prior to the nineteenth century. The metonymic pen yields assurance and pleasure, not just anxiety. Focusing on two eighteenth-century novels, Jane Barker's *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies* (1723) and Charlotte Smith's

*The Old Manor House* (1794), King analyzes the needle-pen's figuration of the relationship between these authors' identities as women and as writers—relations that are not uniformly troubled or agonistic. In Barker's novel, needle and pen are continuous with each other in a narrative of "words becoming women's work." Smith tells "the story of female theft of public language" in the figurative "exchange of the needle for the pen." By exploring a little noticed subplot in Smith's late eighteenth-century novel, in which the female protagonist, Monimia, takes possession of the pen, and by then demonstrating this subplot's collapse into the more standard romantic plot, wherein Monimia is absorbed back into the male protagonist Orlando's narrative, King also shows how difficult it was to "imagine an 'outside' to patriarchy" or to its "logic of female subordination."

Linda K. Hughes unearths a woman poet nearly erased from literary history; she is remembered today as an object of male desire. Reconstructing Graham R. Tomson (1860-1911) from the details of a story whose fragments are scattered like those of a "maenad-torn creature," Hughes finds Tomson developing several important, ultimately interrelated dimensions of fin-de-siècle culture. Tomson's sequence of divorces, remarriages, and name changes might have been intriguing in a male aesthete, but were unacceptable in a woman. Yet she managed both directly and indirectly to trace the continuities between aestheticism, the beautiful female body (her own body), and the "monstrous" underworld of forbidden sexuality and rage in women. But, given the social constraints of her time, Tomson's enterprise necessarily led also to severe contradictions: she was at once a rebel against "bourgeois womanhood" and profoundly "invested in conventional codes of women's aesthetic and erotic appeal"; she was both a public beauty and a male-identified poet, who reenforced aesthetic standards of female and poetic beauty; she was both a beauty and a beast.

Marilyn Bonnell takes up Sarah Grand's "struggle with the forces of canonization," to illustrate how an aestheticizing outlook became "normative and prescriptive," triumphing over Grand's perspective as a "new woman" novelist. Bonnell's focus is on *The Heavenly Twins* (1893) and on Grand's championship of an ethic of care, focused on women's "reality" rather than on artistic expression. Grand was concerned, Bonnell argues, with the benefits that devolve from reading a text rather than with texts in and of themselves; she saw realism as an instrument of social concern. Bonnell invokes Carol Gilligan's theories to articulate the gendered difference in values that Bonnell finds anticipated in Grand's deviation from aestheticism. *The Heavenly Twins* was an enormous popular success, but from the start its male reviewers faulted its style and grammar—an anxiety that revealed insecurity both about the novel's status as art and about the democratization of education for the lower class. Mostly male writers and

critics eventually reestablished a (masculine) critical paradigm excluding women.

Irene Gammel looks into the final work of Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven—a woman who enjoyed brief fame as a poet and performance artist in Greenwich Village. Gammel is concerned with Elsa's autobiography (composed just before her suicide in 1927), which "traces the history of her adventurous sexual life in fin-de-siècle Germany." Elsa sent successive sections of this manuscript to her friend Djuna Barnes, and Gammel bases her argument directly on this manuscript. Gammel argues that the female sexual confession quickly became popular in the twentieth century, though it is rarely explored as a gendered discourse; Baroness Elsa helped shape this "female" genre and its strategies of resistance. Exposing patterns of sexual abuse and exploitation, her confession inscribes Foucault's "insurrection of subjugated knowledges," and Elsa puts "the misogyny of Germany's first generation of 'New Men'" (all well-known artists) on trial. But Elsa's confession also reenacts the process by which truth-telling becomes a "prison" for its confessor (and a more heavily barricaded one for women than for men). Despite her radical parodistic play, Elsa is caught and silenced by the confession's conventions, and she was eventually "recontained"—remembered exclusively—in men's art.

I am happy to end this Note with two bits of news of interest to regular readers of *Tulsa Studies*. The first is that Jane Garrity, who received one of our first travel-to-collections grants for her work on Anna Kavan, has published an essay emanating from this research, "Nocturnal Transgressions in *The House of Sleep*: Anna Kavan's Maternal Registers," in the Summer 1994 issue of *Modern Fiction Studies*. Second, a recent review of scholarly journals in the 25 November 1994 issue of *TLS* gives a prominent place to *Tulsa Studies*. Given the rarity of reviews of journals, we were especially gratified to see this one.

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