

## From the Editor

When Holly Laird and I began to discuss the possibility of a collaboratively edited issue of *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* that would mark a transition between our editorships, emotion quickly emerged as a topic that both captured our individual interests and touched on our own responses to such a transitional moment in the journal's history. Emotion has received a great deal of attention from literary scholars in the past two decades, and this work has yielded sophisticated readings that have had a vast and varied impact on literary study. Renewed interest in the culture of sensibility and moral philosophy of the Enlightenment has led to a focus on both sensation and emotion as core components not just of interpersonal relations but also of political formations, economic exchanges, and artistic production. In addition to informing our understanding of the role emotions play in a wide range of texts, this scholarship has reinforced the ongoing expansion of the literary canon by demonstrating the intellectual worth and substance of works, many written by women or for women, that previously were dismissed as sentimental. Scholarship on emotion also, of course, has informed sophisticated new readings of gender, showing how various emotional responses in different cultural moments are marked as quintessentially masculine or feminine. Bearing on questions of female authorship, female readership, and femininity, then, emotion seemed an important topic for *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* to address.

Diverse though their topics are, these essays share a focus on exploring the heuristic potential of emotions. Feelings, that is, provide access to otherwise unknowable aspects of authors, their work, and the conversations in which they participate. As three essays in this issue indicate, much of the illuminative force of emotions pertains to the relationships authors have—or wish they had—with others. Attending to the intersubjective components of emotions in turn tells us a great deal about these authors' contributions to aesthetic theory and discourse. In "'Miserable Reflections on the Sorrows of my Life': Letters, Loneliness, and Gardening in the 1760s," Stephen Bending shows how the letters and journals of Lady Mary Coke, who led a life of relative seclusion for decades after her effort to divorce her libertine husband made her the object of scandalized attention, articulated her feelings of abandonment, resentment, and despair through her comments about gardening. Devoted to gardening as an activity that staved off loneliness even as the garden itself embodied her solitude and her fall from public life, Coke provides us with a striking counterpoint to the prevailing eighteenth-century British idealization of rural retirement as an existence

of virtue and peace.

As the title of her essay, "Romancing the Sublime: Why Mary Wollstonecraft Fell in Love With That Cad, Gilbert Imlay," indicates, Cynthia D. Richards explores a romantic relationship that most Wollstonecraft scholars have met with vaguely embarrassed puzzlement. Focusing on Imlay's *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America*, along with Wollstonecraft's *Letters to Imlay*, Richardson speculates that Wollstonecraft found a sort of intellectual and emotional fulfillment through this otherwise disappointing lover. His writings and her responses, she argues, helped Wollstonecraft gain access to and articulate a "female sublime," an experience that Edmund Burke had described only in relation to male subjects attempting to exert power over the objects of their gaze. Analyzing Wollstonecraft's infatuation with Imlay thus helps us see how she sought to reformulate one of the definitive emotional experiences of a masculinized Romantic aesthetic for a female subject.

In "Vernon Lee's Art of Feeling," Joseph Bristow illuminates another author's intellectual project through an exploration of her relationship with a collaborator and intimate friend, Clementina ("Kit") Anstruther-Thomson. Noting that their contemporaries' tendency to dismiss Lee's and Anstruther-Thomson's work as a manifestation of their homoerotic desire has distracted from the full significance of what they were trying to accomplish, he both explains their aesthetic project and explores the complexity of Lee's feelings for her collaborator. Even as Lee sought to demonstrate that the basis of a person's response to art could be located in particular somatic phenomena, a project that involved the scrupulous observation of Anstruther-Thomson's body as she observed works of art, Lee surprisingly developed from this focus on somatic reaction an inclination to stress the empathetic and mental components of aesthetic response.

An important aspect of recent scholarship on sensibility and emotion has been an exploration of the moral implications of affective response, particularly the question of whether a sympathetic response to the sight of suffering inclines a spectator towards ameliorative action or pleasant but morally callous sensation. This is a question that has preoccupied philosophers of emotion at least since Aristotle, and three essays in this collection deal with the responses of particular women authors to this moral dilemma from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. In "On Fairy Tales, Their Sensitive Characters, and The Sensible Readers They Create," Christine A. Jones argues for the importance of including late-seventeenth-century fairy tales, especially those by Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, in literary histories of emotion theory. While novels often have been located as the center of this sentimental literary history, fairy tales present an important

alternative genre for the development of a culture of sensibility in that they craft narratives around “the triumph of sympathy and the punishment of cruelty.” These stories enhance an early modern somatic vocabulary of emotion, teaching their readers to interpret the emotional responses of their characters through tears, blushes, and other physical signs. At the same time, they use their marvelous components to validate heroes and heroines who display their feelings in a departure from the social constraints of realistic narrative. In this way fairy tales link goodness with emotional expressiveness and empathy, validating an affectively based moral code in keeping with much of early Enlightenment moral philosophy.

If Jones’s article captures the optimism that met emotion theory in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Barbara Judson’s article, “Sympathetic Curiosity: The Theater of Joanna Baillie,” deals with the more cautious attitudes that met emotionally grounded understandings of morality in the late eighteenth century. Judson demonstrates how Baillie’s *Plays on the Passions* present “sympathetic curiosity,” or a natural inclination to view human suffering, as a phenomenon that can be harnessed by the theater either to encourage callous voyeurism or to inculcate an audience’s desire to heal that suffering. Baillie’s theory also involves a supplanting of the church with the theater as an institution devoted to the inculcation of morality in the populace. She argues that the theater can exploit the spectatorial dynamics that churches do, seen most acutely through the treatment of Christ’s passion, but with greater effectiveness and less corruption. Judson thus shows that even as she “unabashedly places voyeurism at the heart of moral inquiry,” Baillie develops a thoroughly secular prescription for the ethical education of the public, one rooted in a suspicion of institutional religion and a cautiously optimistic belief in the power of sympathy.

Although dealing with a different genre and setting, Ken Parille’s “The Medicine of Sympathy: Mothers, Sons, and Affective Pedagogy in Antebellum America” presents a discussion of emotion that is similarly instrumental and cautious. Surveying advice writings for mothers along with novelistic portraits of sentimental mothers and their morally problematic sons, he discovers surprisingly ambivalent attitudes to maternal sympathy for boys in the antebellum period. Although these writers “endorsed sympathy as a child management tool,” they expressed worries that overly sympathetic mothers would fail to discipline their sons. Such boys would develop into self-indulgent, callous men lacking appropriate moral sentiments or a sense of responsibility toward others. Mothers in these advice writings were called upon to temper their sympathy with what modern writers might call tough love, restraining their emotions for the

sake of the public good. Besides compelling a reconsideration of the status of sentimental views of motherhood in antebellum America, Parille's essay, like Judson's, calls into question the degree to which writers in this period viewed emotion as a natural effusion of feeling or as a device that could and should be deployed for social, moralistic ends.

Finally, in "Women, Animals, and Jane Goodall: *Reason for Hope*," Marianne DeKoven ponders the potential of emotion, especially when expressed through patriarchal, nonrevolutionary rhetoric, to motivate progressive political action. Her focus is on the hope, "or the possibility of a future that enables positive affect," evoked by Jane Goodall in the best-selling memoir she wrote with the assistance of Philip Berman. As in Judson's and Parille's essays, emotion emerges as an instrument that an author can use to harness an audience's sense of human (or in this case, human and nonhuman) interconnection in the cause of a greater good: the cause, that is, of nothing less than saving an exploited and increasingly inhospitable earth. This twentieth-century text suggests optimism about the ability of emotion to motivate moral action, even as it reveals the care and craft with which Goodall and Berman evoke specific feelings in service of a quietly radical political agenda.

Examining several emotions in many genres and cultural contexts, these seven essays show us not only the centrality of emotions to our interpretation of literature; they also compel us to consider the persuasive force of feeling, whether that persuasion be directed towards the seduction of a single person, the development of an aesthetic theory, or the motivation of a large audience to political engagement. At the same time, these articles provoke questions about the nature and origin of affect. To study emotions, then, is almost inevitably to press against the question of where emotions end and nonemotions, such as rational thoughts, bodily sensations, or the fabricated symptoms of feelings, begin. The boundaries between these categories are difficult to locate, and these seven essays each compel us to ponder where, or even whether, emotions can be demarcated in contrast to physical or mental impulses. What are and are not emotions, and do their origins lie in the body or the mind? How do we categorize human responses such as hope and lust? How do we regard affective displays that are not authentically felt or that are manipulatively elicited by other people, such as actors in a play? That these essays deal with texts written by, and sometimes for, women, who historically have been stereotyped as more emotional than men, makes the questions they provoke all the more important. The contributions to this issue do not present a unified answer to these questions; rather, they suggest the varying responses writers and readers in Europe and America have brought to the quandary of feeling over the last three hundred years.

When Holly and I settled on emotions as the theme of our coedited issue, little did I realize how intensely affecting this moment in my life would be. In a coincidence of personal and professional transitions, I became pregnant shortly before undertaking the editorship of the journal. On 21 February 2006, I gave birth to a large and healthy baby boy named Thomas Michael Buoye. In spite of everything I had read, in spite of all the stories I had heard from relatives and friends, nothing did (or perhaps could have) prepared me for the way in which parenthood magnified my feelings and, at least temporarily, eradicated any facilities I had for detachment. That I was, in the midst of this powerfully emotional personal experience, helping to prepare for print scholarly articles on emotion, added a fascinating and uncanny dimension to my intellectual life. I approach this preface now with a renewed awareness of the difficulty of undertaking scholarship on a topic that must always remain somewhat elusive to analysis, as well as great satisfaction that Holly and I were able to gather such thoughtful and probing essays from such excellent scholars for this issue.

I mention my son's birth partly because this event has made it all the more important that I express my gratitude to the staff of *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* during this time of transition. It has been a pure joy to work over the past academic year with Sarah Theobald-Hall, our managing editor, and Lisa Riggs, our book review editor, our editorial interns Elizabeth Thompson and Karen Dutoi, and our volunteer intern Sheila Black. They have been models of efficiency and graciousness as I have learned my way around the office, and they all displayed great patience with me during the weeks immediately preceding and following my son's birth. I owe particular thanks to Sarah and to Carol Kealiher, the managing editor of our sibling journal *The James Joyce Quarterly*, who organized a baby shower. Elizabeth Thompson, who designed our new web site, which you can see at [www.utulsa.edu/tswl](http://www.utulsa.edu/tswl), and who oversaw the journal's advertising for the past four semesters, recently has completed her internship. We miss her greatly in the journal office, but we welcome her replacement, Sara Beam, and thank them both for their technical expertise and dedication to the journal.

In some ways it is premature for me to thank Holly Laird, as she is by no means leaving the journal right now. I nevertheless would like to express my gratitude to her for giving me the opportunity to edit *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* and for initiating such a positive experience of collaboration and transition. Since I arrived in TU's English Department in 1998, Holly has been a source of collegiality and advice. She also has been a model to me of intellectual passion, scholarly rigor, generosity, and pure hard work. Indeed, because my son's birth coincided with the final editing of this issue, Holly took on a greater share of the work on this special issue

than I am sure she anticipated. Having labored as the editor of *TSWL* for seventeen years, she graciously has agreed to stay on for the next two years in an advisory capacity as executive editor to ease this transition. I therefore look forward to continuing to work with her, even as I am excited and honored to be following in the footsteps of her, Shari Benstock, and Germaine Greer. I will defer to the next issue any detailed discussion of my plans for the journal, but for now I would like to express my commitment to maintaining the editorial goals articulated by the journal's preceding editors: most of all, of publishing work that expands and refines our knowledge of women's literature and feminist theory. I hope that this coedited issue on emotions constitutes a first step in that direction.

*Laura M. Stevens*  
*University of Tulsa*