

From the Editor

If this issue reaches you later than we would have liked, it will be because this is the first issue of *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* to be generated through desktop typesetting. We hope that the change will be invisible and errors minimal, but please understand—and let us know—if you notice any mistakes we have made. No new staff were hired for the purpose; we retrained ourselves. But like other scholarly journals that run independently of university or trade presses, it is essential for us to become more economically efficient and technologically proficient. Linda Frazier and I are very grateful to all our graduate students who have worked hard in this process. We especially acknowledge the contributions of John Bury, who joined the staff last year with prior experience in desktop publishing and who has given his time and knowledge generously to help make this happen. We wish to express particular thanks also to the University of Tulsa and the Leta Chapman Trust, which granted us the special funding necessary to buy equipment for this transition.

This issue opens with two articles concerned with the reproduction and revision of imperialism in the postcolonial. Mary Lou Emery's "Refiguring the Postcolonial Imagination" investigates the tropology through which "visuality is figured and refigured," particularly in texts by Jean Rhys, Jamaica Kincaid, and Michelle Cliff. She scrutinizes the reflexive relationship between "a European epistemology of the visual" and the "re-creation in postcolonial literatures of vision, and thus the imagination as something else" not exclusively "of the eye." In particular, these writers employ and transform the classical rhetorical strategy of *ekphrasis*, the verbal description of visual art. By "extending it to excess or rendering its absence a significant presence," Emery argues that "these texts narrativize the links between representation and the social relations of colonialism and neo-colonialism." Rhys, Kincaid, and Cliff undermine and revise the "narratives of conquest" and "the construction of masculine identities" that have occurred through various kinds of visual art, especially those of European primitivist paintings, of contemporary American photographic portraits, and of commercial film.

Sheila Kineke's article is the first that readers have enthusiastically recommended for publication to have emerged through research undertaken with one of *Tulsa Studies'* travel grants: having won a grant in 1994, Kineke visited the University of Tulsa McFarlin Library Special Collections to study Jean Rhys's manuscripts. Building upon Emery's prior work on Rhys, Kineke considers the ways in which the "submission, fatalism, and masochism that mark Rhys's main female characters" are a side effect of "the female condi-

tion” in white Western culture and specifically of the operations of male mentorship by Ford Madox Ford. Kineke sees Ford and Rhys’s relationship, further, as enacting on “a microcosmic scale the dynamics of cultural imperialism that defined modernism’s relationship to the ideas and art of the non-Western world.” The dual processes of “rewriting personal and national histories” are, Kineke stresses, inextricably connected to each other for writers like Rhys, whose own cultural stories have been suppressed.

In the next essay in this issue, “Plotting the Mother,” Elisabeth Rose Gruner argues, following Marianne Hirsch, that Victorian novels rarely focus on motherhood or on “the multiplicity of ‘women,’” which the figure of the mother necessarily encompasses, for a mother is also still a daughter and usually a wife or a lover too. But in three generically exceptional Victorian novels by Anne Brontë, Ellen Wood, and Caroline Norton, Gruner finds “plots engendered by the debates over the 1839 Infant Custody Act,” the first Parliamentary act to be centered on mothers “as a separate class of citizens,” and she shows that, while these novels do not discuss this act explicitly, nonetheless this legislative “refiguration of maternity . . . especially in the language of the debates” made way for consideration of motherhood “detached from courtship or marriage.” All three novels, moreover, “exhibit unusual plotting, false closure, narrative intervention, and even, arguably, artistic failure in their single-minded focus on the multiplicity of female roles.” Finally too, these texts enter into issues of “maternal sexuality and desire” that they then subordinate to a domestic ideology but “cannot entirely contain.”

Claire M. Tylee focuses in her article, “Imagining Women at War,” on Edith Wharton’s wartime writing. While Wharton wrote—as Peter Buitenhuis argues of the older generation of World War I writers—pro-World War I literary propaganda, on the one hand, which draws “a paper curtain across the Western Front,” and fiction, on the other hand, that allows “for question, for irony and debate, for the exploration of personal problems” raised by the war, Wharton produced fiction that also—though this goes unrecognized by Buitenhuis—raises questions about gender and the status of women. Two minor stories in particular, “Writing a War Story” and “The Refugees,” explore women’s roles through the mask of fiction and through irony, “imagining an untrained American VAD and a British spinster in wartime France.” As Tylee argues, these stories thus suggest what is feminist in Wharton’s tactics as a writer. These stories were, moreover, “experiments that prepared for the narrative strategy of her major postwar novel, *The Age of Innocence*.” Drawing upon feminist theories of the relationship between women’s art and humor, by Elizabeth Robins and Cicely Hamilton, as well as upon contemporary film theory, Tylee shows Wharton evolving feminist narrative strategies.

In the last essay in this issue, Barbara L. Estrin considers the ways in which Adrienne Rich “contest[s] her own representations,” in *An Atlas of the Difficult World* (1991), “widening the Petrarchan revisionism she began in the 1978 ‘Twenty-One Love Poems.’” Rich anticipates Judith Butler’s “revisionist linguistics” by showing that poetic form itself is often “seductive and dangerous,” making the poet “part of the problem she seeks to solve.” Rich tries above all to allow the repressed other back into poetry, “despite the fact that the other who speaks will turn around and indict her as a conspirator in the displacement process.” This complex theoretically grounded discussion of “Adrienne Rich’s Postmodern Inquietude” is combined with incisive new readings of Rich’s poems.

In addition to reporting on this past summer’s travel grant winner, I wish finally to mention two recent developments of potential interest to *Tulsa Studies* readers. First, we congratulate Loretta Stec, who won *Tulsa Studies*’ grant this year. Stec used this support to investigate Rebecca West’s work in McFarlin Library’s archives. Second, we wish to announce that, in addition to employing a regular staff of graduate student editorial interns, we have begun to create opportunities for undergraduate students to work in the office. This summer a student from Hampshire College, Katheryn Desiree Waidner, volunteered her services in exchange for the experience of learning something about the publication process, as also did a University of Tulsa sophomore. In the future, we expect to have undergraduate student interns receiving university course credit for a semester’s work in this office. Finally, it may interest readers to know of my election in the last year to the Women’s Studies Executive Committee of the Modern Languages Association. The Women’s Studies division is the largest (approximately 3,000 members) of the MLA, and, as for most of the other divisions, its primary task is to arrange a series of panels at the MLA’s annual Convention. Within a year, I will become chair of this committee, and before then, I would like very much to hear from *Tulsa Studies* readers who are MLA members about what topics seem most engaging or urgent to you now. Please let me know by writing to me at the University of Tulsa or by emailing me at: holly-laird@utulsa.edu.

Holly Laird
University of Tulsa