From the Editor

This issue of *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* opens the last year of the millennium quietly, less in the spirit of a *fin de siècle* than of yet another turn of the century, in a spirit of sober assessment and retrospection rather than of apocalypse. Like previous turns of the century, this one is marked by the extraordinary productivity and creativity of numerous women writers, who are (to risk a mighty generalization from within the midst of this change) mostly less concerned with imagining millennial upheaval than with figuring the particularities of ongoing social change. Coincidentally perhaps, the articles in this issue, all accepted through our strenuous regular review process, are similarly concerned with representations of domestic and social practices by women writers, which, for each of these writers, struck close to home. Most of the articles position themselves, moreover, not in relation to a century change, but in relation to previous mid-century moments and texts. These articles nonetheless consider the ways various women writers negotiated dilemmas that will, unfortunately, probably survive the Y2K.

Building on the work and insights particularly of Patricia Hill Collins and Sara Ruddick, Joanne S. Frye focuses on questions about childrearing raised by Tillie Olsen's 1956 short story, "O Yes," in order to tackle the difficult challenge of "antiracist mothering" in the 1990s. Undaunted by the inherent conflicts involved in resisting white culture's racial privileges from within, Frye wrestles with the problem of "placing one's children at the fulcrum of social change: between the urgencies of their own self-confidence, underpinned by the privileges accorded by covert racism, and the opposing urgencies of parental and internal pressure to resist racial privilege." How, asks Frye, does a mother teach a child "to act on" Ruddick's "demands of conscience," even as "the child's own comfort in the world will have to suffer?" Through analysis of Olsen's story, Frye suggests some important alternative practices for a motherhood resistant to racism.

Lynn M. Alexander returns to mid-century Victorian England, to reconsider the ways in which women, and women seamstresses especially, were routinely selected by women and men writers alike to "represent the working classes and to illustrate the hardships and possible social repercussion of industrialism." Women and children were preferred as workers in factories and mills for a number of reasons; but, of course, because the seamstress was associated with domesticity, she presented a far more appealing image to mid-

dle- and upper-class readers, who were inclined at this time to associate factory workers with violent uprising and immoral abandonment of the home. Alexander describes working conditions of the Victorian seamstress that echo reports I have quite recently been reading of sewing sweatshops in Appalachia. Writers like Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, Elisabeth Stone, Frances Trollope, and Mary Gaskell could nonetheless deploy the figure of the seamstress to urge their readers to intervene on workers' behalf. Paradoxically, it was "the seamstress's seeming lack of power" that made her "powerful as a symbol."

Sara E. Quay's article recrosses the Atlantic to focus on Susan Warner's popular novel of 1850, *The Wide, Wide World.* Rooted in Warner's own loss when her family moved from New York City to Constitution Island, this novel reflects a broader sense of cultural dislocation in America at this time. As Quay argues, "homesickness is the affective corollary to the literal and figurative longing for home that shaped so much of mid-nineteenth-century American culture," as "the newly established American middle class" tried to develop both from a "collection" of nationally and geographically diverse individuals into a "coherent group" and from the "utilitarian" Age of Homespun to a consumer culture. Home "stands as a metaphor for the middle-class search for its identity." Warner's novel suggests that when an individual "invest[s] objects with affect, by imagining them as repositories of emotion connected with her home"—that is, by creating keepsakes—"she can overcome the pain—the nostalgia—of modern life." Quay thus demystifies the ways in which domestic fiction, more generally, copes with nostalgia and change: "Standing at the juncture between these two distinct cultural definitions of material things, keepsakes became the focus of middle-class life because they represented emotional continuity in the face of great personal and social change"—keepsakes including, not least, "attachment to books like Warner's that evoked and even encouraged their readers to feel nostalgia" for home.

Similarly, Victoria Rosner scrutinizes Doris Lessing's reconstructions of "home" in her autobiographical writings through the lens of early twentieth-century pamphlet guides to Southern Rhodesian settler culture and architecture. Rosner considers more specifically the ways "the architecture of the mother-daughter relationship is constructed in the context of empire and . . . motherhood is materially reproduced in relation to the family home." Inspired by the British Empire Exhibition of 1924, Lessing's family set out to produce a colonialist homestead of their own. But quite unlike Warner, Lessing does not strive for "keepsakes" of her colonial home. Rather, Lessing subsequently imagines "her adolescent rebellion as an 'emigration,' a journey out of the mother country to parts unknown." Moreover, while women generally have seemed extraneous to the process of colonialism, Lessing shows,

on the contrary, "the unexpected reciprocity of maternity and colonialism, a relationship most clearly played out in border skirmishes fought by mother and daughter across the house/bush boundary."

Laura J. Murray investigates the problematic (post)colonial collaboration between Native Canadian writer Maria Campbell, white actress and playwright Linda Griffiths, and theater director Paul Thompson, as they strove to produce Campbell's play, *Jessica*, in the 1980s. This article breaks important new ground in demonstrating Thompson's central role in this collaboration and in analyzing the play from within the context of Campbell's relationships to Griffiths and Thompson. Indeed, though Campbell's autobiographical *Halfbreed* (1973) is generally perceived as heralding the beginning of Native Canadian literature, Murray's article offers one of the first interpretations of *Jessica*. Murray argues that, from the start, Griffiths, Campbell, and Thompson "understood their exchanges of experience in contradictory ways: in terms of the feminine gift economy parallel to the capitalist economy, in terms of a traditional native gift economy, and in terms of a trade economy." When these contradictions rose to the surface, as Murray writes, and "when the more utopian and ongoing models of exchange, giving and trading, came into crisis with the contract, it was hardly surprising that talk would turn to stealing, for stealing has been the ground metaphor for relations between Native or Metis people and white people since the first treaties were made and broken."

Finally, I would draw your attention to the panels sponsored by the MLA Women's Studies Division this December. I look forward to greeting you at our three panels, two of them focused on the newly controversial question of "beauty" and aestheticism in literature and contemporary culture, and the third on the (to a feminist mind) companion question of "aging." The first panel, "Theorizing Beauty: The Aesthetics of Hair, Bodies, and Brides," features Shuli Barzilai, Lisbeth Gant-Britton, Lisa Walker, Jodi Schorb, and Tania Hammidi (the last two panelists in collaboration). The second panel, "Theorizing Beauty: The Aesthetic, Race, and Feminism," features Pamela Caughie, Anne A. Cheng, and Mark Edmundson. The third panel, "Theorizing Age, Aging Theories," chaired by Sidonie Smith, features Robyn Wiegman, G. Gwen Raaberg, and Elana Marshall. I hope you will attend these sessions and join the discussion following the participants' papers.

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