

## From the Editor: Feminism and Time

Striding into the 21st century with the 21st volume of *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, we mark the time and times with a special issue dedicated to heady, also often down-to-earth speculation about "Feminism and Time." Before turning to the contents of this issue, however, I wish to share some other milestones of the year.

First, in April *Tulsa Studies* joined JSTOR's new Language and Literature Collection and its stellar archive of scholarly publications; this means that all except the most recent five volumes of *Tulsa Studies* will be available electronically to our readers and scholars as of this coming fall.<sup>1</sup> Following the lead of PMLA in its initiative to enroll major scholarly journals in this archive, we see this as an opportune moment to broaden our presence in library archives and make *Tulsa Studies* that much more accessible to a widening readership. So many issues and articles in so many of the past twenty years of publication remain as fascinating and pointed today as they were when first printed: from Germaine Greer's inaugural essay on L.E.L. (vol. 1, no. 1); through Shari Benstock's theoretically informed issues and debates, Nina Auerbach's prescient "Woman and Nation," and (since 1988) our numerous internationally recognized issues, "Toward a Gendered Modernity," "South African Women Writing," "After Empire I and II," "On Collaborations I and II," "Political Discourse/British Women's Writing, 1640-1867," "Women Writing across the World," and the prize-winning "Redefining Marginality"; to our groundbreaking archival features, including previously unpublished manuscripts by authors such as Virginia Woolf, Edith Wharton, and Ann Yearsley, or bibliographies of authors like Grace Paley and Carolyn Kirkland, and many articles much-sought after for reprinting in anthologies elsewhere.

Also in the electronic medium, along with the publication of this volume and *Tulsa Studies'* twenty-year index, we will be posting an internet version of this index on *Tulsa Studies'* homepage, thus creating immediate easy access to information about past issues (see [www.utulsa.edu/tswl/](http://www.utulsa.edu/tswl/)). We are grateful to our editorial intern, Christine Cavitt, for producing this important index of all our recent back issues. For copies of any of these but especially the most recent issues that you are missing (that is, volumes 16-20, since issues will not be available through JSTOR until they are more than five years old), simply write to us, as usual, at *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, University of Tulsa, 600 S. College Ave., Tulsa, OK 74104-3189. The prices for back issues of the journal remain an extremely afford-

able \$7.00 (domestic) and \$8.00 (non-U.S.).

Not to be missed, the forthcoming fall 2002 issue of *Tulsa Studies* (founded in 1982) continues our celebration of twenty years of publication with publication of a special forum on "The Adoption Issue." Several prominent scholars—among them Janet Beizer, Susan Bordo, Andrew Elfenbein and John Watkins, Margaret Homans, and Alice Jardine joined us for this inquiry into what adoption, both "open" and "closed," international and domestic, single- and dual-parented, gay and "straight"-parented, has meant to their lives and thought. The results are a seminal collection of essays on what adoption does and ought to mean and not mean to nonadoptive parents as well. This forum presents a long overdue challenge to presumptive "norms" of parenting, as adoption becomes a needed trope here for what nearly every parent already does.

In addition, the fall 2002 issue features Part I of "Ann Yearsley and the Politics of Patronage," by Frank Felsenstein. Introducing a newly discovered trove of poems and letters by Ann Yearsley, Felsenstein responds with fresh information, editorial work, and interpretation to Moira Ferguson's extended article and edition of unpublished poems by Yearsley in the spring 1993 issue of *Tulsa Studies*. Supported by grants from the Leonard Hastings Schoff Publication Fund of the Columbia University Seminars and from the West Yorkshire Archive Service in Leeds, Part I of Felsenstein's work will be followed in the spring 2003 issue with an edition of the manuscripts themselves.

We wish to herald a prize that one of our authors has received for an essay published in the special forum on "Problems of Beauty in Feminist Studies," vol. 19, no. 2. Earlier this spring, Shuli Barzilai's essay, "'Say That I Had a Lovely Face': The Grimms' 'Rapunzel,' Tennyson's 'Lady of Shalott,' and Atwood's *Lady Oracle*," was named the "Best Essay on Margaret Atwood" for 2000-01 by the Atwood Society. This essay and the forum in which it appeared remain among the more exciting recent publications of the journal (if you missed it, see paragraph three of this column). Congratulations to Shuli.

Granting one of our own awards, this spring we received a particularly interesting application from international scholar Dott. Michela A. Calderaro of the University of Trieste, for one of our travel-to-collection fellowships. Seeking to pursue her research on Eliot Bliss, Phyllis Shand Allfrey, and Jean Rhys at the University of Tulsa's McFarlin Library, Dott. Calderaro will be focusing in particular on the lesser-known Creole Writer Eliot Bliss's letters and diaries. We look forward to her visit to Tulsa and congratulate her on winning this award.

We wish also to announce a new Book Review Editor for the coming year: Marilyn Dallman Seymour. Already entering into new tasks, Marilyn

will shortly be taking over from Olivia Martin. We thank Olivia for her quietly steady enthusiasm for women's writing and this journal and for her repeated, diligent returns from intensive coursework and extracurricular projects to the complex details of this position. Taking her exams as I write this, she is likely to be embarked in less than a week's time on a dissertation that will contribute significantly one day to the very sort of scholarship on women's writing she has nurtured as Book Review Editor. Meanwhile, Marilyn comes to this position as highly qualified as we could ever desire and with a passion for feminism and women writers (like Doris Lessing and Nadine Gordimer). We wish her well and know you (especially, our reviewers and many correspondents) will enjoy working with her in the years to come.

While still in the midst of announcements, I would also like to call the attention of feminist modernist readers and feminist Joyceans to the fact that in the week of 16 June 2003, the University of Tulsa NEH-endowed Comparative Literature Symposium and Sean Latham, new Editor of the *James Joyce Quarterly*, will host the 2003 North American James Joyce Conference in the halls of T.U. We look forward to its presence here on campus with keynote speakers Shari Benstock, prize-winning former Editor of *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*; Thomas Staley, Director of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin and founding Editor of the *James Joyce Quarterly*; Robert Scholes, rising President of the MLA; and Robert Spoo, immediate past Editor of the *James Joyce Quarterly* and a former Editor of the *Yale Law Review*. Notable events during the conference are likely to include a trip to OK Mozart; the opening night Bloomsday banquet; a display of the famous Joyce materials at McFarlin Library; a reception hosted by the *James Joyce Quarterly*; and a roundtable of past *James Joyce Quarterly* editors.

Finally, both the current special issue on "Feminism and Time" and the earlier special forum on "Problems of Beauty in Feminist Studies" have proved so rewarding that we hope to repeat their successes with another future issue again derived from papers sponsored by the Women's Studies Division Executive Committee of the MLA. For this December 2002, Shirley Geok-lin Lim has organized a tripartite series of sessions on transnational and international feminist studies: "Transnational and/or Transgender Cultural Productions" with speakers Gillian Whitlock (Queensland), Kenneth Chan (Singapore), Susan Rudy (Calgary), and Tina Chen (Vanderbilt); "Feminism in the Shadow of Global Capitalism," chaired by Sidonie Smith (Michigan), with speakers Nina Y. Morgan (Kennesaw), Susan Alice Fischer (Medgar Evers, CUNY), and Yi Zheng (Tel Aviv); and "U.S. Women's Studies, International Women's Studies, and the Practice of Literary Criticism" with Marguerite R. Waller (U.C.,

Riverside), Jane Lilienfeld (Lincoln), Harriet Davidson (Rutgers), and Lori Rowlett (U. Wisconsin, Eau Claire). In addition, the executive committee is cosponsoring a cash bar this year with the Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession. If you can find your way to New York City this December, be sure both to visit these MLA sessions and meet us at the cash bar.

“Feminism and Time” originated in a series of panels organized by Robyn Wiegman and by the Women’s Studies Division Executive Committee of the MLA in December 2000. For her readiness to help in evaluating and making recommendations about these essays, I want also to thank the special reader for this issue, Ruth Salvaggio. Almost all of the original MLA papers reappear here in revised, amplified versions and together produce a far-reaching, manifold exploration of what time means to and for feminists. In the three original panels, the order of the papers differed only slightly from the order published here. On three panels focused, respectively, on “Feminism and Time,” “Feminism in Time,” and “Feminism against Time,” Elizabeth Grosz, Rita Felski, Betty Joseph, Misha Kavka, Dana Heller, Elena Glasberg, and Jennifer Fleissner developed for their audiences new feminist approaches to the metaphysics of time, to feminist history and historical feminism, and to feminism’s futures. How, they asked, does time defeat feminists—has it done so? What can feminists do with and about time? How will feminism look in the future?

Still asking those questions in further refined, sophisticated, yet exploratory forms in this issue, we have altered the order, first, to position Jennifer Fleissner’s forceful article (critiquing some dimensions of the “historicism” in feminist studies of nineteenth-century American literature—an arena in which one pathbreaking American feminist critic after another has arisen in the last three decades) at the turning point between the first half of the issue of generalist essays, scanning in the broadest terms the metaphysics and antimetaphysics of feminist time, and the second half, which, while still taking up some of the largest questions that can be asked about time, also probes with more exactingness particular historical and social situations and particular cultural and literary texts. Second, for comparable reasons, we have repositioned Betty Joseph’s essay to follow Fleissner’s: Joseph’s essay takes off brilliantly where the generalist essays leave off—with Joseph’s acute discussion of the “belatedness” of the “Other woman” in Euro-American feminism and of its mediation specifically by Jamaica Kincaid’s *Lucy*.

Opening this issue is Elizabeth Grosz’s latest foray into the question of “becoming”: here she queries “Feminist Futures?” and more particularly the future of feminism’s relationship to “prevailing practices and forms of

knowledge.” As Grosz herself described her aims in her first proposal for this essay, “feminist theory, and political discourse more generally, have tended to elide the question of time and its implications for identity, being and becoming by taking ready-made conceptions of temporality that link it to the privilege of the past or the present. This paper explores the ways in which a more positive and productive conception of time, one which links it to futures that are as yet not capable of being envisioned, may help feminist theory to understand its own investments in the present and resistances to the future.” Salvaggio locates the “strength” of this essay precisely “in its argument that understanding ‘time as a dynamic force’ is of crucial importance for feminist theory” and in its “provocative alignments of such theorists as Irigaray, Deleuze, and Bergson” in the interrogation of modern knowledge.

“Telling Time in Feminist Theory” might well function as a subtitle for this issue as a whole. Under this title, Rita Felski’s essay returns to the concerns of her recent book *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture* to map out four basic modes of feminist temporality, which “shape and circumscribe feminist thought”: time as redemption, as regression, as repetition, and as rupture. In a style that often verges on prose poetry, Felski argues that “to envision the shape of time is to be caught up in the expansive reaches of a moral and aesthetic vision. . . . Time knits together the subjective and the social, the personal and the public; we forge links between our own lifetime and the larger historical patterns that transcend us.” Feminist thinkers, argues Felski, do not uniformly place time at the center of their theories, nor do they produce a unique version of time, but in comparison with many other types of thinking, they are “more creative in their metaphors, more diverse in their stories, more promiscuous in their allegiances.” Yet while confusing, this multiplicity is one of the goods of feminism: what “we need,” Felski urges, is “a pragmatics, not a metaphysics of time. The many times of feminism make it clear that no one time can do justice to the complexities of feminism or the world.”

Taking up the question of being “out of time” implied by the still-prevalent term “postfeminism,” Misha Kavka teases open the paradoxes of “Feminism, Ethics, and History, or What is the ‘Post’ in Postfeminism?” As Kavka characterized the argument in her MLA Proposal for this essay, “the ‘post’ [of ‘postfeminism’] indicates both an end to feminism and a platform for new feminist debate precisely because it provides a focal point for the meaning, usage and constituency of feminism today. What this paradox tells us, in fact, is that feminism has no end, just as the multiple trajectories of feminism mean that it has had no clear beginning.” Kavka compellingly delineates feminism’s “time” as a “utopian” and an “ethical” history (the latter in its “pragmatic as well as universalizing forms”) rather

than a “temporal” history. “To say then,” as Kavka does, “that feminism occurs in ethical history is to stress that it is both materialist and driven by a concern with justice, that it happens as much in history as it is motivated by ideas that do not constitute and cannot be contained by linear history.”

Salvaggio describes Jennifer Fleissner’s essay, next in this issue, as “a refreshing and thoroughly informed inquiry into the often unquestioned biases of culturalism and historicism as they influence more ‘social’ readings of literature.” Returning us to the issue of “Is Feminism a Historicism?” Fleissner provocatively argues not—as recent feminist literary historians have been doing—that feminism’s chief merit is to “‘historicize’ even better than” other “new” historicists, but rather that any unremitting emphasis on social historicism results in omitting “some of what is most radical and important about feminism as a method of reading,” a method that involves a “self-differing temporality.” In other words, “feminism has often been especially attuned to the way it is brought into being by the same formations it seeks to critique, as Butler’s notion of ‘repeating with a difference’ suggests.” “Most strikingly,” Fleissner argues, “‘locating’ texts in a historical past risks turning both the literary texts [that feminist historicists read] and [feminism’s] own critical predecessors into fossils to be examined and labeled, rather than voices that might in any way speak back—indeed, might speak back to the very procedures used to make sense of them.”

Betty Joseph’s “Gendering Time in Globalization: The Belatedness of the Other Woman and Jamaica Kincaid’s *Lucy*” unravels the “time lag” between modern Euro-American capitalism and non-North Atlantic nations, hence also between the feminist model of the female subject within metropolitan capitalism and the “belated” Other, often a migratory working woman. Focusing on an interview with a conservative politician in India and on Kincaid’s *Lucy*, Joseph details two responses to regional “failure[s]” perceived by “otherwise triumphalist” globalists: the first, “a nationalist-culturalist one,” which, understanding culture “merely as the eroding of religious and social values, inevitably finds itself leaning towards the moral and sexual policing of women”; the second, an “alternative narrativization” of the time lag, “one that may allow feminists to conceptualize alternatives to the universalist categories that are becoming hegemonic (timeless) under globalization.”

“Found Footage: Feminism Lost in Time,” by Dana Heller, ingeniously reads the publicity surrounding *The Blair Witch Project*—the mock documentary or “found footage” of three student filmmakers trying to produce a film about the legendary witchcraft in the town Burkittsville—next to the HBO film *If These Walls Could Talk 2* (1999)—a narrative triptych about four generations of lesbians. Through analyzing the trope of “discovery of documented images and voices” of the feminist “past,” Heller

shows how “history” is “mobilized to play decisive roles” in the intense, current “cultural struggle over how we remember feminist histories and over whether, indeed, we remember feminist history at all.” Heller’s important discussion further discloses filmic “metaphoric evidence of vanished possibilities, heroic gains heretofore unrecognized, and invitations to reconsider the consequences of feminism’s struggles to continue itself, to reproduce itself through time.” As Heller evocatively notes, “at a time when feminism as a political movement is pronounced as nowhere and barren—save for exclusive and rarefied locations—feminism as a national myth shows up everywhere, its presence coded as memories that circulate throughout the current contests for national meaning that popular culture mediates.” And Heller dares us with this critical question: “Given the tendency of neoconservative national myth to empty history of feminism and given popular culture’s coding of feminism as time-sensitive, antiquated, and bygone, how might feminists aspire to make the *was* an *is*, or to take the lead in the redirection of popular and political discourses, remembering feminist histories in all their variation and belligerency?”

As Salvaggio reported, the closing “sharp and suggestive” essay of this issue is “a fascinating article on feminism’s troubled relations with history and historiography, approached through a reading of Le Guin’s ‘Sur.’” Thus dovetailing Fleissner and Heller’s concerns with how feminist history is told, Elena Glasberg’s essay—“Refusing History at the End of the Earth: Ursula Le Guin’s ‘Sur’ and the 2000-01 Women’s Antarctica Crossing”—shares Joseph’s concern as well with now quite literally marginal “ends” of the earth. Uninhabitable, yet nonetheless the last opportunity on the globe for “discovery,” Antarctica is a matter not merely of space but of time. As Glasberg indicates, “Antarctica came quite late to the scene of cultures and since its arrival has remained marginal at best. Yet as a spatialized symbol of time, of the lateness of the hour, and of the emergency of the need for the preservation of future possibilities for culture, the South Pole operates as a cool site, if you will, for the often overheated arguments surrounding the history of the movements against Western dominance, both patriarchal and colonial.” Glasberg urges us to reconfront the ways “Le Guin’s destabilizing fiction has profound implications for any feminist futures being presently produced. . . . Le Guin’s suspicion toward autochthonous ontology, or narratives that place their authors at their own beginnings, might prove productive for feminist, subalternist, and post-colonial theorizing both against the presumptions of standard history and within competing revisionisms.”

I have chosen here to focus on summaries of each distinctive essay in its turn and on citation of these essays’ self-summaries, and I have thereby resisted generalization of what these seven essays might add up to, as if they

produced some greater “sum total” of the whole. Yet there are a number of tropes, questions, and problems that wind through this volume, such that once a reader has reached the “end” of Glasberg’s essay, that reader would be well advised to begin again at the beginning, reseeing Grosz’s “becoming” through the lens of all that follows and working one’s way through each essay once more. Several of these essays themselves take up a twenty-first century version of the age-old figure of endings-as-beginnings, indeed of endings and beginnings that turn out to be no such things. Then too, these essays recur frequently, with varying nuances and conclusions, to the crucial dual functions of repetition in time and of temporal discontinuity. Oscillating repeatedly between theorization and pragmatics, sometimes embracing both, at other times forcing this polarity back apart, these essays reflect on the consequences of their arguments not only for feminist history and for the history of feminism, but for the ever-transforming relationship between feminism, anti-feminism, and the production of knowledges. The essays of “Feminism and Time” defiantly take the risk of describing and enacting not only sceptical feminist self-critique, but various, assiduously articulated feminist ethics. They take the risk of their own multiplicities.

Holly Laird  
University of Tulsa

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The full list of journals in this collection includes *African American Review*, *African Languages and Cultures Supplement*, *Alif*, *American Literary History*, *American Literature*, *American Speech*, *Boundary 2*, *Callaloo*, *Chinese Literature*, *College Composition and Communication*, *College English*, *Comparative Literature*, *Diacritics*, *ELH*, *French Review*, *The French Review Special Issue*, *German Quarterly*, *Hispania*, *Hispanic Review*, *Italica*, *Japanese Language and Literature*, *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, *Language*, *MELUS*, *MLN*, *Modern Language Journal*, *Modern Philology*, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, *New England Quarterly*, *New German Critique*, *New Literary History*, *PMLA*, *Poetics Today*, *Renaissance Quarterly*, *Representations*, *Review of English Studies*, *Rhetoric Review*, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, *Social Text*, *Speculum*, *Studies in English Literature*, *Studies in the Renaissance*, *Transition*, *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, *Twentieth Century Literature*, *Yale French Studies*, and *Zhurnal Ministerstva Vyshego Obrazovaniya*.