

From the Editor: New Beginnings

In 1696, over one-third of the plays performed on the British stage were written by women.¹ Never in the twentieth or twenty-first centuries have we come close to matching that percentage.²

When I cite this statistic in my classes, it shocks students who believe that gender equality is already a reality, that we live in a postfeminist world in which women's voices are deemed equally important as men's. In reality, of course, our world still considers women's writings lesser, too emotional, insufficiently funny, out of touch with mainstream audiences. We need only look to V. S. Naipaul, who commented in 2011 that "I read a piece of writing and within a paragraph or two I know whether it is by a woman or not. I think [it is] unequal to me," or to Mike Lazzo, creative director of Adult Swim, who recently attributed the lack of female writers on his staff to the fact that "women don't tend to like conflict, comedy often comes from conflict," to see recent instances of women's writings being devalued and dismissed.³ Indeed, in 2013, Wikipedia editors were criticized for quietly removing female authors from the list of "American Novelists" to relabel them separately as "American Women Novelists," silently maintaining masculinity as the default authorial setting.⁴

In her final preface to this journal, my predecessor Laura Stevens addressed the theme of invisibility, and I, too, take up that theme. I begin my term as editor in the midst of a contentious election year in the United States, feeling the weight of the many ways in which women's voices are erased, overlooked, mocked, or silenced. It is a year in which prominent review publications such as *The New York Times Book Review*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New Republic* routinely publish significantly fewer reviews of books by women than by men.⁵ It is a year in which women on the internet face a barrage of threats and hate speech for sharing their opinions.⁶ A year in which the husbands of female Olympians are praised for their wives' accomplishments, in which references to a female news anchor's menstrual cycle are used to shame and silence her, in which some still insist that the fifty-eight women who have accused Bill Cosby of rape must be lying.⁷ It is with full knowledge of these and myriad other injustices that I take up the mantle as editor of *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, honored to follow in the footsteps of Germaine Greer, Shari Benstock, Mary O'Toole, Holly Laird, and Laura Stevens. Each of these women has worked to overcome the intellectual absence of women from the public sphere and the academy, insisting that our voices and our words matter. Their commitment to women's literature and the promotion of women's voices has made the

world a better place for all of us, and I hope to prove myself a worthy successor to this editorship.

In my capacity as editor, I pledge to continue publishing the best scholarship on women's literature from around the globe, maintaining our journal's international scope and broad chronological range. At the same time, I hope to turn our focus inward. We live in a precarious time for the academy, when slashed budgets, the casualization of academic labor, and a growing cultural disdain for the humanities (and gender studies in particular) have made it increasingly difficult for academics to pursue literary study. In light of these growing problems, it is my hope that moving forward, *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* can serve as a forum for discussing challenges in the academy as they impact women scholars or the study of women's literature. To that end, I would like to invite submissions for a new section of the journal called "The Academy." I see these pieces, up to 2,500 words in length and informal in tone, as performing two interrelated functions. First, they will offer academics a scholarly venue for editorializing on the joys, problems, and pitfalls of being a woman or studying women's literature in the academy. It will be a space to share perspectives on the ways in which gender inflects our experiences as teachers and researchers, both full time and contingent. I envision "Academy" pieces on wide-ranging topics including, among others, the problems of emotional labor, surviving the tenure track as women academics, achieving a balance between life and work, navigating the world of academic publishing, and sustaining research productivity off the tenure track. Second, this section not only can highlight obstacles within the academy but also can offer innovative solutions from around the globe, both with the awareness that different countries face different academic challenges and in the hope that cross-cultural intellectual discussion will bring to light new approaches and strategies for all. I encourage scholars to use this forum to share unconventional funding sources, describe programs that have been particularly successful at their home institutions, discuss changing metrics for valuing research, evaluate how we measure labor, or interrogate cross-cultural barriers to study. As I envision a broad scope for this section, I welcome further suggestions for pieces that discuss the issues facing the academy and their impact on studying women's writing.

As I begin my tenure as editor, I want to express my deep gratitude to my colleagues in the English Department at the University of Tulsa, who have demonstrated such faith in me by appointing me to this position. I am endlessly thankful to them for making the University of Tulsa such a

wonderful place to work. Thanks also to Provost Roger Blais, whose support for the journal has been unwavering, even in difficult economic times, and to Janet Haggerty, Dean of the Graduate School, who has graciously supported our summer interns. I am deeply indebted, too, to our managing editor, Karen Dutoi, whose hard work and dedication make *Tulsa Studies* what it is. I am grateful for her support, her good humor, her advice, and her patience as I have learned on the job over the past two years. Thank you also to our graduate interns, Annie Paige and Amy Pezzelle, without whose labor we could not proceed, and most especially to Megan Gibson, our book review editor, who coordinates our entire manuscript review process and keeps my work life organized. I would be hard-pressed to function without her calm professionalism and ability to get things done.

Finally, I want to express my deepest gratitude to Laura Stevens, our outgoing editor, at this moment of transition. I first met Laura in December 2007, when I interviewed at the Modern Language Association Convention in Chicago for a position at the University of Tulsa. I was a terrified graduate student pretending to be a professional, and she quickly became a valued mentor, helping me transform pretense into reality. Laura has been a source of support through each milestone in my career, from initial hiring to book publication to tenure, a sympathetic ear for the thousand little problems of academic politics, and a generous fount of knowledge, ever willing to share her expertise. I could not have asked for a better colleague, coeditor, and friend, and while we will continue to see one another daily—our offices are right next door to one another—I will miss our collaboration on the operations of the journal. I look forward to our last joint project, our upcoming coedited special issue on young adult fiction. Over the past eleven years, *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* has been deeply enriched by Laura's intellectual stewardship, and thus it is bittersweet that I—and the *Tulsa Studies* family—must say goodbye.

One of the editorial prerogatives to which I have most looked forward is the chance to work with our editorial board, a group of academics I greatly admire. This fall, we say goodbye to Meryl Altman, Susan Strehle, and MaryEllen Higgins, with deep thanks for their service. In their place, I am delighted to introduce three new members, listed here in alphabetical order.

Carol Fadda is Associate Professor of English at Syracuse University. She attended the American University of Beirut for her bachelor of arts and master of arts, after which she went on to receive her doctorate in English from Purdue University. She focuses her research and teaching on Arab and Arab American literatures and cultures, critical race and ethnic

studies, gender and sexuality, and transnational and diaspora studies. She is the author of *Contemporary Arab American Literature: Transnational Reconfigurations of Home and Belonging* (2014) and is a recipient of a National Endowment for the Humanities summer grant and a Future of Minority Studies Fellowship. Her essays have appeared in a variety of journals, including *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, and *College Literature*, as well as in the edited collections *Arabs in the Americas: Interdisciplinary Essays on the Arab Diaspora* (2006), *Arab Women's Lives Retold: Exploring Identity through Writing* (2007), *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature* (2009), and *The Oxford Handbook of the Arabic Novel* (2015). Her new book project, tentatively titled "Dissident Minority Citizenships: Enacting Cross-Racial and Transnational Solidarity in an Age of 'Terror,'" explores discursive formations of United States minority citizenships that challenge racial, ethnic, and religious divides, and at the same time, re-imagine transnational solidarities with anti-imperialist struggles in the Arab world.

Marjorie Howes is Associate Professor of English at Boston College, where she specializes in late Victorian literature, nineteenth- and twentieth-century Irish literature, Anglo-American modernism, feminist studies, and postcolonial studies. She is the author of *Yeats's Nations: Gender, Class, and Irishness* (1996), for which she received the American Conference for Irish Studies's Michael J. Durkan Prize for the year's best book in literary and cultural studies, and *Colonial Crossings: Figures in Irish Literary History* (2006). She has also coedited four volumes on W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, and Irish literature, including *The Cambridge Companion to W. B. Yeats* (2006). She has published many articles on late Victorian and twentieth-century Irish literature, serves as series editor for *Irish Literature in Transition*, and is currently at work on a new monograph, "Slavery, Ireland, and the Transatlantic Imagination, 1830-1863."

Monika Mehta is Associate Professor of English at Binghamton University, where she specializes in South Asian cinema, postcolonial studies, feminist and sexuality studies, new media and film studies, theories of nation-states, globalization, diaspora, and cultural production. She is the author of *Censorship and Sexuality in Bombay Cinema* (2011), which won the 2012 CHOICE award for Outstanding Academic Book. She has also written numerous articles on gender, sexuality, and censorship in South Asian cinema. She is currently coediting *From Bollywood to Hallyuwood: Mapping Power and Pleasure Across Pop Empires* (forthcoming from University of Hawai'i Press).

My pleasure in welcoming our new board members is tempered by loss: on 28 May 2015, Jane Marcus, Distinguished Professor of English at the City College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York, and member of the *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* advisory board, passed

away. Dr. Marcus was the author of multiple books on modernism and feminist literature, including *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* (1987), *Art and Anger: Reading Like a Woman* (1988), *The Young Rebecca: The Writings of Rebecca West, 1911-1917* (1989), and *Hearts of Darkness: White Women Write Race* (2004). She was also well known for her commitment to social justice, and she did not view her activism as distinct from her academic work. In *Art and Anger*, she wrote,

No more burying our wrath, turning it against ourselves. No more ethical suicides, no more literary pacifism. We must make the literary profession safe for women as well as ladies. It is our historical responsibility. When the fires of our rage have burnt out, think how clear the air will be for our daughters. They will write in joy and freedom only after we have written in anger.⁸

While I never had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Marcus in person, the air in which I write today is much clearer because of her scholarship, her activism, and her deep belief in human rights. Her loss is mourned by all of us at *Tulsa Studies*.

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NOTES

¹ F. P. Lock, "Astraea's 'Vacant Throne': The Successors of Aphra Behn," in *Woman in the Eighteenth Century and Other Essays*, ed. Paul Fritz and Richard Morton (Toronto: Hakkert, 1976), 30.

² In 2015, women playwrights contributed 21 percent of the plays produced in the United States; see Olivia Clement, "Only 1 in 5 Plays Written by Women This Season—Down from Last Year," *Playbill*, 21 September 2015, <http://www.playbill.com/article/only-1-in-5-plays-written-by-women-this-season-down-from-last-year-com-363340>. As of 2014, they represented just 15 percent of screenwriters, down from a high of 17 percent; see Todd Cunningham, "WGA: Women Screenwriters Losing Ground, Money to Male Counterparts," *The Wrap*, 14 April 2014, <http://www.thewrap.com/wga-women-screenwriters-losing-ground-money-white-male-counterparts>. Women playwrights in the United Kingdom fared slightly better, authoring 31 percent of plays produced in 2013; see Lyn Gardner, "In 10 Years, Nothing has Changed for Female Playwrights—It's Time to Act," *Theatre Blog, The Guardian*, 28 April 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2015/apr/28/nothing-changed-female-playwrights-uk-theatres-gender-equality>.

³ See Amy Fallon, "V. S. Naipaul Finds No Woman Writer His Literary Match—Not Even Jane Austen," *The Guardian*, 2 June 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/jun/02/vs-naipaul-jane-austen-women-writers>; and Julia Alexander, "Adult Swim's Excuse For Not Hiring Women is a Perfect Example of TV's Problem," *Polygon*, 4 October 2016, <http://www.polygon.com/2016/10/4/13156398/adult-swim-female-writers>.

⁴ Amanda Filipacchi, "Wikipedia's Sexism Toward Female Novelists," *The New*

York Times, 24 April 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/28/opinion/sunday/wikipedias-sexism-toward-female-novelists.html>.

⁵ Annalisa Quinn, "Book News: Byline Tally Shows There's Still Gender Bias in Book Reviewing," *NPR*, 24 February 2014, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/02/24/281951613/book-news-byline-tally-shows-theres-still-gender-bias-in-book-reviewing>.

⁶ Elle Hunt, "Online Harassment of Women at Risk of Becoming 'Established Norm,' Study Finds," *The Guardian*, 7 March 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/mar/08/online-harassment-of-women-at-risk-of-becoming-established-norm-study>.

⁷ Laura Bates, "The Hotly Contested Olympic Medal Table of Sexism," *The Guardian*, 22 August 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/womens-blog/2016/aug/22/the-hotly-contested-olympic-medal-table-of-sexism>; Holly Yan, "Donald Trump's 'Blood' Comment about Megyn Kelly Draws Outrage," *CNN*, 8 August 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/08/politics/donald-trump-cnn-megyn-kelly-comment/>; and Chiqui Esteban and Manuel Roig-Franzia, "Bill Cosby's Accusers Now Number 58. Here's Who They Are," *The Washington Post*, 23 May 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/lifestyle/bill-cosby-women-accusers>.

⁸ Jane Marcus, *Art and Anger: Reading like a Woman* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1988), 153-54.