

Journal Work in the Age of Coronavirus, Part 2

As I write, it has been six months since I composed my last preface and six months that we have been living with the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. As I write, it is also a week before the most momentous election of my lifetime, which follows a summer of deep pain and anger over American racism. On a local level, it has been a summer of adjusting to—or rebelling against—the new normal, of finding new ways to socialize or taking calculated risks about old ones, of learning to work effectively from home, and of developing new teaching practices and techniques.

Not all of these changes have been horrible. From an accessibility standpoint, our abrupt transition to online and hybrid forms of learning and work have opened up new avenues for access. According to Zoë Berry, “for some 61 million Americans with disabilities, the ability to work, learn and socialize from home has been an unexpected expansion of possibility.”¹ I myself recently benefited from our newly accessible work culture when I injured myself in a bicycle accident. Rather than having to cancel class during my initial convalescence, I simply shifted my hybrid courses fully onto Zoom and was able to continue teaching largely unimpeded. My students, meanwhile, have been able to Zoom in from their homes abroad, from campus apartments when in quarantine, and in one memorable instance, from an airplane on the way to visit relatives. I hope we retain the capacity for such radical accessibility when things eventually return to normal.

But on the flip side, the pandemic has obviously made many things much more difficult. We are all, I think, experiencing some level of anxiety around national politics; none of us knows exactly what the world will look like in six months or even six weeks. Most faculty are also experiencing varying levels of teaching anxiety, as we struggle to connect with students remotely. I am certainly not the first professor to complain about the difficulty of teaching to black Zoom squares, and I am considering requiring students to turn their cameras on in future classes, although I acknowledge many good reasons not to do so.² From the perspective of a journal editor, I can attest that many of our daily tasks are substantially more difficult, including quote checking since our interns do not always have regular access to library resources. And of course, it is difficult to build a cohesive community when we are never together in person; while some in-person classes are occurring on campus, our journal interns are all working from home.

The pandemic has also accelerated the crisis in higher education with lowered enrollment leading universities across the country to cut departments wholesale, often in the liberal arts and humanities.³ My university is

currently undergoing a strategic planning process of its own, and that process has absorbed much of my attention given my current role as President of the University of Tulsa Faculty Senate. In the future, I will write about service work in times of precarity and invite academic pieces on that topic, but for now, I will simply acknowledge that it is difficult to maintain my scholarly identity in the face of such substantial and consequential service commitments.

Despite all of these obstacles, however, the work of the journal carries on, and you now hold in your hands (or see on your screen) a volume of which we are all proud. That this volume exists at all is a testament to the University of Tulsa students, faculty, and staff who have taken the pandemic and our collective health seriously. When the semester began, I expected that all in-person functions would be shut down within two weeks, but our community has embraced safety precautions and kept our campus transmission rates well below state and local averages. I am also grateful to our interns, who continue to do their jobs despite logistical roadblocks, and to our authors, who continue to submit excellent work and undertake requested revisions despite the pandemic challenges they, too, are undoubtedly facing. And I am especially grateful to Karen Dutoi, our Managing Editor, who continues to shepherd all essays to print and whose deep stylistic talents improve everything we publish. This volume is a tribute to her capable leadership.

This semester, we were excited to welcome two new interns to our team: Subscriptions Manager Danielle Calhoun, a second-year master's student, and Publicity Manager Ciara Graham, a first-year doctoral student. Last year's Subscriptions Manager, Jennarae Niece, has been promoted to the position of Book Review Editor, a position she will share this semester with outgoing Book Review Editor Lily McCully, before taking over full-time in the spring. I am grateful to each of our interns for all the work they have done this fall!

As we greet our new interns, we also say good-bye to three board members, whose work has been invaluable to us over the past three years: Mary Chapman, Leslie Bow, and Gillian Dow. We are so grateful for your contributions to the life of the journal! In their place, we welcome the following new members of our editorial board:

Anne Anlin Cheng is Professor of English and American Studies and affiliated faculty in the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies and the Committee on Film Studies at Princeton University. An interdisciplinary and comparative race scholar who focuses on the uneasy intersection between politics and aesthetics, she works primarily with twentieth-

century American literature and visual culture with special focus on Asian American and African American literatures. She is the author of *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (2000); *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface* (2010), which received an Honorable Mention for Best Book of 2010 from the Modernist Studies Association; and, most recently, *Ornamentalism* (2019). Her work has appeared in journals such as *Critical Inquiry*, *Representations*, *PMLA*, *Camera Obscura*, *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, and she is a contributor to the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Huffington Post*, and *The Nation*.

Praseeda Gopinath is Associate Professor of English at Binghamton University, SUNY, where she specializes in masculinity studies, literature of South Asia and the South Asian Diaspora, cultural studies, twentieth-century British literature, and colonial and postcolonial studies. She is the author of *Scarecrows of Chivalry: English Masculinities after Empire* (2013) and has published work in *Contemporary Literature*, *South Asian Popular Culture*, *Oxford Bibliographies of Literary and Cultural Theory*, *Textual Practice*, *Journal of Celebrity Studies*, and *Studies in the Novel*, among other journals and anthologies. Her current transdisciplinary project, tentatively titled *Vernacular Masculinities: Men in Place*, explores the literary and cultural forms of local masculinities and their disruption in contemporary India.

Chloe Wigston Smith is Senior Lecturer in eighteenth-century literature at the University of York. She is the author of *Women, Work, and Clothes in the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (2013), which was shortlisted for the Millia Davenport Publication Award from the Costume Society of America, and coeditor with Serena Dyer of *Material Literacy in Eighteenth-Century Britain: A Nation of Makers* (2020). She has published articles and essays on a variety of topics, including servant dress, travel literature, theatrical portraiture, trade cards, it-narratives, and most recently, the representation of small things in poetry and culture and small trade in Frances Burney's fiction. Her research has received funding from the British Academy, the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, the Yale Center for British Art, the Huntington Library, the American Association of University Women, the Folger Institute, the Lewis Walpole Library, and the National Endowment for the Humanities in the United States. She is currently at work on a coedited collection with Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Small Things in the Eighteenth Century: The Political and Personal Value of the Miniature*, which is under contract with Cambridge University Press.

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NOTES

¹ Zoë Berry, “When the World Shut Down, They Saw It Open,” *The New York Times*, 24 August 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/24/style/disability-accessibility-coronavirus.html>.

² See, for instance, Beth Daley, “5 Reasons to Let Students Keep Their Cameras Off During Zoom Classes,” *The Conversation*, 17 August 2020, <https://the-conversation.com/5-reasons-to-let-students-keep-their-cameras-off-during-zoom-classes-144111>.

³ The University of Akron is one such school that announced substantial faculty layoffs; see Robin Goist, “Arbitrator Sides with the University of Akron in Layoff of Nearly 100 Union Faculty,” *Cleveland.com*, 18 September 2020, <https://www.cleveland.com/education/2020/09/arbitrator-sides-with-university-of-akron-in-layoff-of-nearly-100-union-faculty.html>. For discussion of the pandemic’s effect on enrollment numbers more broadly, see “How Covid-19 Has Affected College Enrollment,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 October 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-covid-19-has-affected-college-enrollment-11602783463>.