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Announcements and Comments

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Announcements and Comments

ROUGHLY a decade ago, feminist literary critics began to challenge the assumptions of a critical tradition that both emanated from and reflected a male-dominated culture, a tradition aggressively biased against any writer who was not “mainstream” and “universal” (white, male, middle-class, straight). The mission of feminist criticism was clearly revisionist: to expose these biases of the critical establishment and the stereotyping of women in the “classic” (male) texts; to look at these classic texts with new eyes; but, most importantly, to resurrect women writers from oblivion and restore them to their rightful places in the literary canon. While the revisionist impulse of this initial stage of feminist criticism shows no signs of waning, feminist critics of this decade are raising still more questions, among the most exciting being: what is the relationship between gender and literary voice? Is there a distinctive female style, tone, content, imagery? Is language gender-specific?

The essays in this special issue explore some of these new questions as well as revisit more familiar ones. In the opening essay, Pamela Annas examines the complex and problematic relationship of a woman poet to language, and hence sees “the necessity for women to reclaim words and images, to reverse the way words are put together as well as the words themselves, to review the whole tradition of poetry, [and] to repossess and reinhabit language.”

Feminist critics have begun to recognize that, while the relationship of women writers to language is an important issue, we must move beyond examinations of language in women’s texts if our claims about a discrete “female aesthetics” are to be valid. Claims that certain features are distinctly female must be verified through comparison with parallel texts by men. Carolyn Naylor and Marie Umeh both survey the cross-gender significance of images and motifs of Afro-American and African writers. Naylor discusses the motif of the journey that figures so prominently in the literature of Afro-Americans, but she notes that the women writers’ treatment of the motif differs significantly from the male writers’. For women the journey is inward and deeply spiritual; for men, outward and political. Similarly, Umeh discusses African writers’ preoccupation with the image of the mother, concluding that, with few exceptions, male writers image the mother as supreme and long

suffering. African women writers, on the other hand, attempt to shatter these glorified images of the mother in often literary ironic fashion.

Not only do feminist critics see the importance of gender to gender, female to male studies, but they also see the necessity for examining male texts for greater purposes than confirming the presence of female stereotypes. Judith Wittenberg's essay on Thomas Hardy subjects his first novel to rigorous scrutiny to show that Hardy's much vaunted sympathy for women is covertly undermined "by a whole series of narrator-controlled elements—generalizations, physical perspectives, imagery, forecasting," etc.

Sarah Orne Jewett is popularly identified as a "regionalist" and "local colorist" for her New England landscapes. To be sure, Jewett's sense of place is certainly a strong feature of her work, but her stories transcend the particulars of the New England region to embrace much larger concerns. George Held and Marcia Folsom, for example, notice the feminist dimensions of Jewett's work. Held argues that "A White Heron," her most frequently anthologized story, "reverberates with meaning for such issues as the socialization of girls, the balance of power between the sexes, and the need for a woman to be true to her nature." Folsom analyzes what she terms Jewett's "empathic" style reflected in her management of narrative and dialogue, a style which avoids the quaint, sentimental celebration of the country of the pointed firs.

Feminist literary criticism has to be credited with raising questions about literature, particularly women's literature, and methods of critical inquiry that had not been raised before. The essays collected here reflect that questioning spirit, and if this issue fulfills its more important function, then still more questions, more extended critical investigation, will be generated. These essays also reflect the vitality and energy that has marked feminist literary criticism since its beginnings. We too have experienced that vitality and energy in preparing this special issue of the *Colby Library Quarterly*.

DEBORAH MCDOWELL
PHYLLIS MANNOCCHI
Guest Editors

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

PAMELA ANNAS is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts at Boston. She has taught previously at the Goddard/Cambridge Graduate School for Social Change. Her Ph.D. is from Indiana University. She has published articles in *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, and *Science Fiction Studies*; and she has published poems in various

journals. She was editor of a special issue on Women's Studies of *Radical Teacher*, No. 7 (Spring 1981). Her present article is part of a larger work-in-progress entitled *Unnaming and Renaming: Modernism and American Women Poets*. Other works-in-progress include an anthology of new writing by working class women, and a book on the *Science Fiction/Fantasy of Mary Shelley and Charlotte Perkins Gilman*.

CAROLYN NAYLOR is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Santa Clara, California. She was previously an assistant professor at Tufts University, and an assistant editor at Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Her Ph.D. is from Boston College, her M.A. from Michigan State University, and her B.A. from Hunter College. Her dissertation was entitled "*Blind Us with thy Being*": *Jean Toomer's Mill House Poems*. Her work-in-progress is on "City as Wilderness Experience in Strange's *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide when the Rainbow is Enuf*." She has been a Danforth Associate, and a University Fellow at Boston College. She attended an NEH Summer Seminar at Yale University in 1980.

MARIE A. UMEH is a Lecturer in English at Anambra State University of Technology, in Awka, Nigeria. She has a B.A. from St. John's University, M.A. from Syracuse University, M.P.S. from Cornell University, and Ph.D. in African Languages and Literature from the University of Wisconsin—Madison. She was a Graduate Fellow both at Cornell and at Wisconsin. The title of her dissertation was *Women and Social Realism in the Novels of Buchi Emecheta*, and she is now at work on a book about the novels of Buchi Emecheta.

JUDITH B. WITTENBERG is Assistant Professor of English at Simmons College. She was previously an instructor at Tufts University. Her Ph.D. is from Brown University, and her B.A. from Cornell University. She has published *Faulkner: The Transfiguration of Biography* (University of Nebraska Press, 1979); and she has published on "Faulkner and Eugene O'Neill," and on "The Critical Fortunes of *Barren Ground*," in the *Mississippi Quarterly*. Her article, "William Faulkner: A Feminist Consideration" is forthcoming in *Feminist Perspectives on the American Novel* (G. K. Hall, June 1982).

GEORGE HELD is Assistant Professor of English at Queens College, CUNY. He has a Ph.D. from Rutgers University, M.A. from the University of Hawaii, and B.A. from Brown University. He has published articles in *Michigan Quarterly Review* and in *Exercise Exchange*, and is at work on an article on the poets Edward and George Herbert. He was a Fulbright Lecturer in Czechoslovakia, 1973-76.

MARCIA McCLINTOCK FOLSOM is Associate Professor of English at Wheelock College, in Boston. She was previously Dean of Studies at Wheelock, and has taught at Boston College. She has M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of California at Berkeley; her B.A. is from Wellesley College. Her dissertation title was "*In Equall Portion*":

Equality of the Sexes in Spenser's Faerie Queene. She co-edited, with Linda Kirschner, *By Women: An Anthology* (Houghton Mifflin, 1976). Her work-in-progress is entitled "Breaking a Code in Women's Writing," and concerns the kind of intuitive awareness discussed in her present article.

JHS

IN THIS special issue dedicated to women and literature, we thought it appropriate to acknowledge Special Collections of the Colby Library for several fine collections of women writers. Among the largest is the Vernon Lee Collection, comprising the author's extensive personal correspondence, many of her manuscripts and journals, and a large part of her personal library. There are also major collections of the works of Willa Cather and Sarah Orne Jewett. In addition to Jewett, Maine women writers represented with outstanding collections include Elizabeth Akers Allen, Celia Thaxter, Kate Douglas Wiggin, Laura Richards, Margaret Deland, Margaret Flint, and Mary Ellen Chase.

We would also like to acknowledge John H. Sutherland, general editor of the *Quarterly*, for his encouragement and his patient editorial guidance through all the stages of this special issue. To Sam Atmore, Audio-Visual Librarian, who helped us with photography, and to J. Fraser Cocks III, Curator, Special Collections, and Patience-Anne Lenk, Associate for Special Collections, who helped guide us through their treasures, we offer our sincere thanks.

The picture on the front cover is of Zora Neale Hurston, and is from a photograph in the Beineke Library, Yale University. We would like to thank the estate of Carl Van Vechten for permission to reprint it here. The picture on the back cover is of Sarah Orne Jewett, and is from a photograph in the Jewett Collection, Special Collections, Colby Library. The illustrations for the articles on Sarah Orne Jewett are two of the miniature watercolor landscapes painted by author Rachel Field in her personal copy of the first edition of Jewett's *Country of the Pointed Firs*, which is also part of the Jewett Collection. The frontispiece is an oil painting entitled "Pasture—Fairfield" by Gina Werfel, Assistant Professor of Art, Colby College.

PHYLLIS MANNOCCHI
DEBORAH McDOWELL

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS made a number of significant acquisitions during October and November.

The James A. Healy collection of Anglo-Irish literature was fortunate to be able to make a significant addition to its Cecil Day Lewis collec-

tion. We obtained Lewis' first book of verse, *Beechen Vigil; and Other Poems*, London: Fortune, 1925. This acquisition fills an important gap in what is very nearly a complete collection of Lewis' work.

The Healy library also added the 1930 Tauchnitz edition of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Unlike Joyce who rejected Catholicism in the effort to find his literary voice, Francis MacManus remained within his native religious tradition and wrote tellingly of rural Ireland of the 1930's and 1940's. The Healy Room acquired MacManus' *Pedlar's Pack*, a 1943 collection of stories, essays and verse. John Lyle Donaghy was an Ulster poet overshadowed by the giants of the Renaissance period. Two of his volumes of verse written in the early 1930's, *The Blackbird* and *Into the Light*, were obtained for the Healy library. Poet and typographer Sean Jennett produced several books of verse in the 1940's. We obtained *Always Adam* (1943). Daniel Corkery devoted his life to recreating the "hidden Ireland," the native Gaelic culture submerged by the British. Among his finest creative work are three plays assembled in *The Yellow Bittern and Other Plays* (1920), a copy of which was purchased for the Irish collection. Contemporary Irish poet Seamus Heaney has achieved an international reputation. His *Bog Poems* (1975) was added to a substantial collection of his books.

The Robinson Room was the recipient of two handsome gifts. In memory of his wife, Martha, Bertrand W. Hayward (C. '33) gave to Special Collections four Willam Carlos Williams first editions. Included are *Spring and All* (1923), two editions of *The Collected Later Poems* and *Two Drawings, Two Poems* (1937) done in conjunction with William Zorach. Alfred King Chapman ("Chappie"), for whom the College Archives Room is named, donated a fine holograph letter written by Abraham Lincoln in 1856 regarding some legal matters in which he was engaged.

Two minor poets who were involved with the New York literary renaissance during World War I, Donald Evans and Arthur Ficke, wrote notable verse. The Robinson Room obtained Evans' *Nine Poems From a Valetudinarium* (1916) and Ficke's *Man on a Hill-Top* (1915). Two first books were obtained. John Hall Wheelock, who has been writing and publishing poetry for over sixty years, started in 1911 with *Human Fantasy*. Diane DiPrima published her first book, *This Kind of Bird Flies Backward*, in 1958.

On September 26, during Upperclass Parents' Weekend, the Colby Library Associates sponsored a second annual bookfair featuring Maine publishers and antiquarian bookdealers. Ongoing construction of the Library addition had deprived us of the loading dock, so the fair was moved to the second floor of Roberts Union. Eleven dealers and one publisher exhibited their wares to over 300 customers who visited the booths throughout the day. The emphasis was on books printed in or

about Maine, but also available were materials on the United Society of Shakers, and military and transportation history. Everyone, customers and dealers alike, seemed pleased with the fair and plans are being made now to sponsor the event again next year.

J. FRASER COCKS III
Curator, Special Collections