

From the Editor . . .

The present *Nineteenth-Century Prose* Special Issue on John Ruskin, guest-edited by Sara Atwood, had its genesis three-and-a-half years ago when Sharon Aronofsky Weltman guest-edited a previous special issue on John Ruskin (Vol. 35, No. 1: Spring 2008). I was so impressed by the many fine essays in that issue, and especially by Sara Atwood's essay on Ruskin's *Fors Clavigera*, that I wanted to publish more Ruskin scholarship. The volume before you is the result, and it more than meets my expectations. Atwood did an exemplary job in choosing contributors and meeting deadlines, and her planning and execution were meticulous throughout the long process of putting together a special issue. Moreover, she has contributed not only an Introduction to the volume, but also a fine review essay on Anne Colley's *Victorians in the Mountains: Sinking the Sublime*. In addition, the review section marks the publication of Atwood's own book, *Ruskin's Educational Ideals*, which displays the same graceful style and careful scholarship that impressed me in her essay in the previous *Nineteenth-Century Prose* issue on Ruskin.

In the review section, after reviews of the books about Ruskin by Stuart Eagles and Sara Atwood, we segue across the ocean to consider questions of beauty and usefulness in crafts-era Boston. The topic is one that would have interested Ruskin and William Morris, and in fact in many ways Beverly Brandt's book, *The Craftsman and the Critic: Defining Usefulness and Beauty in Arts and Crafts-Era Boston*, demonstrates the reach of Ruskin's influence. Indeed, the "well-read and well-connected" members of the influential Society for the Arts and Crafts in Boston (229, below), included Ruskin's executor, Charles Eliot Norton. Reviewer Peter Betjemann, who wrote the lead article for the Fall 2009 issue of *Nineteenth-Century Prose* ("Craft, Telos, and the Representation of Labor: Nineteenth-Century Readings of Benvenuto Cellini"), finds commonalty between Ruskin's thought, and the topics and philosophical underpinnings of Brandt's fine study (230) – which is not surprising giv-

en that “Ruskin and Morris appear as [...] guiding stars” of “the literariness of the craft movement” (231). Moreover, Brandt’s book and Betjemann’s review interface nicely with Carmen Casaliggi’s article in the present issue, “Craft and Labor in John Ruskin’s Romantic Tradition, *The Harbours of England*” (65-84).

The next two reviews address Shannon Mariotti’s *Thoreau’s Democratic Withdrawal: Alienation, Participation, and Modernity*. Rochelle Johnson recognizes Mariotti’s work as coming from multiple perspectives of cultural history and political science, as well as “philosophy, literature, and environmental history” (233), while Richard Schneider, our resident ‘Inspector of things Thoreauvian,’ examines Mariotti’s work through a close comparative reading of the rhetoric and philosophy of Adorno and Thoreau. Taken together, the reviews give a ‘Thoreau-going’ assessment of Mariotti’s book. Both reviewers have a good deal of praise for the work, and both qualify that praise (234-35 & 240), although Schneider’s doubts seem somewhat more far reaching (“Pairing Thoreau with Adorno does indeed reveal an implicit political significance to Thoreau’s withdrawal into nature that most readers might otherwise miss. However, to suggest that Thoreau’s excursions into nature are a deliberate ‘mission against the state’ is to ignore all of the other more obvious reasons that Thoreau had for exploring nature [...]” 240).

Finally, our issue concludes with Chris Louttit’s review of *Rewriting Texts, Remaking Images: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, an edited collection by Leslie Boldt, Corrado Federici, and Ernesto Virgulti that addresses the current state of the relatively new-in-name, but in fact old-in-practice, discipline known as “adaptation studies,” which reflects a general trend of soul-searching that has been going on in Comparative Literature for at least several decades. As such, this is a timely topic for *Nineteenth-Century Prose*, which strives to be as interdisciplinary and trans-national as possible, and is therefore a suitable conclusion for the present issue.

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