

From the Editor . . .

The present issue of *Nineteenth-Century Prose* has been a long time in the making: several of the articles have been waiting in queue for nearly three years. The reason is not hard to discover: Sara Atwood's fine Special Issue on John Ruskin (38/2), and John Powell's wide-ranging and voluminous double issue on Nineteenth-Century Religion and Prose (39/1 & 2), kept this general issue waiting in the wings. But now that the current issue has arrived, it's a nice representative sample of our journal's fare – from the early nineteenth century to the end, and from Britain to the United States.

We start out with Erika Behrisch Elce's cultural studies topic on Leopold McClintock's literary reconstruction of Sir John Franklin's 1845 Arctic expedition – in order to make the events conform to an imperial British sense of heroism and duty (in the face of colonial evidence to the contrary). It's nice to have a lead article on Arctic exploration – a subject too seldom seen under the rubric of literary and cultural studies. And it's a nice addition to the exploration of 'the social construction of unreality' that is routinely undertaken under the rubric of colonial or post-colonial studies. I count it a plus as well that Behrisch Elce's essay, although in a field that is subject to a good deal of theorizing, is clear and fresh.

The second essay takes us back to the early nineteenth century and, like Behrisch Elce's essay, is a cultural studies topic that deals with the social construction of reality. Daniel Mangiavellano's "De Quincey, Coleridge, and the Literary Model of Habit" shows how De Quincey's writings helped to construct later views of opium addiction or "habit," and how such published views in turn affected the relative public perceptions of De Quincey and Coleridge's use of opium. This topic might usefully be extended to the seemingly insoluble problems of today's endemic illegal drug use and the resultant problems of criminal enforcement.

The following two essays return to the most popular topics in our journal on the American side of the Atlantic – Emerson and Thoreau.

Jason Richards' "Emerson and the Gothic" gives a completely new – and completely convincing – view of Emerson that fits well with relatively recent reassessments of Emerson from a variety of perspectives, including his recognition of the tragic side of life – which was present all along if only we were conditioned to see it. And Randall Conrad's traditional close reading of the Old Carlisle Road passage from Thoreau's *Journal* – one of the most dense and cryptic – is illuminating as well, especially with Conrad's highly detailed and sensitive rendition of Thoreau's personal background.

The next two essays by Claire Charlotte McKechnie and John Paul M. Kanwit return to the cultural studies and social history side of things. McKechnie addresses a late nineteenth-century strand of Gothic that is more directly inflected by sensational literature than the more private Gothic that Jason Richards is pursuing in his examination of Emerson. And McKechnie's focus casts a broad net that includes not only Gothic literature, but also the way Darwinian evolutionary theory played into the construction of the "Gothic dog" in relation to the public's fear of rabies during the late Victorian period.

Meanwhile, Kanwit explores a very different sort of social construction – the creation of what later became the professional discipline of art history and criticism, and the contribution of women to that development – especially Lady Eastlake, whose husband Charles was the first director of the National Gallery. Although Lady Eastlake was unfairly overshadowed by such famous male art critics as Ruskin, Pater, and Wilde, she and other female art critics generally were more concerned with factual background than the male critics, who followed the tradition of Vasari by sometimes telling apocryphal tales about their subjects. Lady Eastlake, along with Anna Jameson and Emilia Dilke, brought a factualism to art criticism that "included the precise attribution of artworks as well as the analysis of the material conditions under which artworks were produced" (142, below).

Ashley Faulkner's "Virgin and Child with John: Ruskin's Typical Romance," is less concerned with the social construction of reality and

more concerned with John Ruskin's private use of biblical typology to in effect apotheosize both his mother and his wished-for bride, Rose La Touche, who died at age 27 in 1875, and whose spirit Ruskin claims contacted him during a visionary and auditory dream of Saint Ursula when he was in Venice during December 1876. The topic of John Ruskin and Rose La Touche has fascinated scholars and laymen – perhaps sometimes for the wrong reasons – but Faulkner's virtuoso riffs on Ruskin's personal use of biblical typology adds clarity and understanding to the subject.

The final essay, Jamie Horrocks' "Vernon Lee, Oscar Wilde, and the Dialogue of 'New Aesthetics,'" demonstrates the considerable influence of Lee's 1881 "A Dialogue on Poetic Morality" on Wilde's 1889 "The Decay of Lying: A Dialogue," which was taken by British aesthetes as a foundational statement of the theory of "art for art's sake." In the process, Horrocks reminds us that Oscar Wilde's "'new aesthetics' were hardly new as the 1880s drew to a close" (201, below).

The present issue is rounded out with seven reviews, five of which are of exceptionally broad, cultural studies topics. The collection begins and ends with the more narrowly-focused works. First up, Clint Machann, veteran Arnold specialist who guest edited our special double issue on Matthew Arnold for 2007 (Volume 34), reviews James Walter Caufield's *Overcoming Matthew Arnold: Ethics in Culture and Criticism*; and concluding the issue is Peter W. Sinnema's review of Peter Betjemann, *Talking Shop: The Language of Craft in an Age of Consumption*. Peter Betjemann is already known to readers of *Nineteenth-Century Prose* from his lead essay in the Fall 2009 issue (36/2) that was titled "Craft, Telos, and the Representation of Labor: Nineteenth-Century Readings of Benvenuto Cellini."

Two of the remaining five reviews are concerned with American literature: Kent Ljungquist reviews James L. Machor's *Reading Fiction in Antebellum America: Informed Response and Reception Histories, 1820-1865*; and Johanna R. Landis reviews Justine S. Murison's *The Politics of Anxiety in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. These

two reviews on American culture and literature are more than balanced by the remaining three reviews on broad topics of British literature. Two of the books on British topics are edited collections: our Editorial Board member, James Mulvihill, reviews *Romanticism/Judaica: A Convergence of Cultures*, edited by Sheila A. Spector; and Chris Louttit, who reviewed another edited collection in the *Nineteenth-Century Prose* Special Issue on John Ruskin (38/2), here reviews *Victorian Transformations: Genre, Nationalism and Desire in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, edited by Bianca Tredennick. And finally, John Carter Wood reviews Monica Flegel's topic of cultural studies and social history, *Conceptualizing Cruelty to Children in Nineteenth-Century England: Literature, Representation and the NSPCC*.

The present issue is extraordinarily full – both figuratively and literally, as reflected in the oversize page count (we are more than 30 pages over the usual 250 pages per issue), which in part reflects the delay caused by the previous unexpected double issue. In the next issue, we hope to redress the over-emphasis on the British side of things by celebrating the completion of the Harvard edition of Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Complete Works* – a project that has been on-going for nearly 60 years and whose completion will be cause for great celebration among Emerson scholars.

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