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Special Issue:

Relations: Literary Marketplaces, Affects, and Bodies of 18th - and 19th-Century Women Writers

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Introduction

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<1> During a Q & A at this year's British Women Writers Conference (BWWC) on "Relations," Melisa Klimaszewski asked what we, as scholars and critics, but also as feminists engaging across institutional hierarchies, should consider when we question, challenge, provoke, and argue with one another.⁽¹⁾ In other words, do the stakes of and our feelings about disciplinary methodologies shift in feminist spaces? In intergenerational ones? In spaces we share physically? If so, how? Once a multigenerational, cross-hierarchical group of bodies that participate in (increasingly) demanding scholarly marketplaces are physically in a room together and can debate with one another from and about feminist perspectives, what affects are produced or rejected? What responsibilities do we have to one another? In preparing this special issue, we have returned to Klimaszewski's question—and the nexus of questions it opened up for us—again and again.

<2> The question was a response to Mary Jean Corbett's keynote address about Virginia Woolf's complicated relations with Lucy Clifford, a writer she hardly knew but about whom she had strong feelings. Woolf looked down on the older woman's (financially necessary) participation in a literary marketplace that she associated with the bodily degradations of "rancid cabbage and old clothes." In an endnote to the article version of this talk presented here, Corbett further reveals that upon hearing of Clifford's death Woolf wrote to her sister: "All that remains of her in my mind is a cows [*sic*] black blubbering cunt: why that image persists I know not." Woolf spells her disdain for Clifford in language so gendered and embodied that it demands a recognition of the affectively and politically complicated ways in which women working in the same field can provoke one another. What are our responses to women writers and scholars; what are our obligations to our intellectual predecessors (and heirs); what does the unwieldy nature of relations among women look like; what do we want it to look like?

<3> Relationality is a particularly apt focus for any conference and the papers in this special issue closely reflect conference proceedings: the essays by Mary Jean Corbett and Nancy Yousef are keynote-length

talks while the essays by Constance Walker, Mimi Winick, Rachel Ablow, and Anna MacDonald are panel talks a little shorter than your average journal article. In planning this issue, one of our aims was to hold on to the conference-style nature of these papers—to offer textually something that was shaped with an embodied presentation in mind. We hope that this enables complex, thought-provoking, and even troubling tensions between embodied and textual relations. Yousef’s essay asks us to consider the value of emotion deepened by reason, and therefore of “second thoughts.” She situates this discussion in a reflection on the relationship between reason and emotion, troubling mind/body dualism in a tradition recently reinvigorated by the turn of literary and cultural scholarship toward affect. We hope that this special issue similarly troubles the relationship between immediacy and second thoughts, addresses the variety of embodied academic spaces, and attends to the vexed relation between emotion and reason.

<4> Our intellectual lives can so often proceed in bodily isolation, writing at home or sitting in the library with a recent journal issue. But conferences—like classrooms—are relational spaces in which the affective responses to the engagement of our bodies in our scholarly marketplaces are hard to ignore (especially when the air conditioning goes out in New York City in mid-June!). Once we’re doing scholarship in a room together, how are we supposed to act and feel about each other and how does that shape the work we do? How do the practicalities and demands of academic marketplaces affect our relations in space and time? How do shared feminist goals feed, shape, and complicate those relations? As Corbett says of Woolf’s relationship to Clifford, asking and answering these questions about relationality is “instructive and [necessary] for feminist critics, in that it is, in part, about generational relations between elders and youngers...”

<5> The papers in this issue demonstrate a shared questioning of the affective, bodily, and market-driven dimensions of relations in literary text and lived experience. Our authors ask whether there are specifically feminist ways of sharing and supporting ideas, whether there are particularly marked affects associated with relations among women, and what happens when thinking is embodied and/or tied to economic necessity. How do affects reflect or alter bodies? How do literary relations reflect or alter affects? How do the demands of professional networks shape relations, bodies, and feelings? This is to say that several features of relationality come to the fore as dominant preoccupations in this issue: affects, bodies, and marketplaces.

<6> The field of literary scholarship on relations has most often focused in interesting ways on family, friendship, and romantic relationships.⁽²⁾ Our focus in this issue on relations and markets makes more visible the imbrications of affects and bodies in isolated, impersonal, professional, and/or market-driven relations, challenging the notion that the feelings and physicalities of relations are primarily “personal.” We notice that concerns with affects, bodies, and marketplaces often overlap in ways that are suggestive without being prescriptive: it is compelling to think about the frequent scholarly *ménages* between affect, embodiment, and marketplace in the work presented here, compelling, in part, because of the shifting allegiances between these three recurring concerns.

<7> Rachel Ablow, in her paper, suggests that “pain is in some sense produced between people.” This idea was particularly interesting and suggestive to us, and served as the basis for a refrain that guided us

as we organized this issue: what *is* produced between people? And in what ways does that which is produced between people fruitfully trouble our conceptions of production? These questions are central to what we see all of these papers doing and this collection shows the range that the questions hold: both when read individually and when read together, these papers connect relations in marketplaces, bodies, and affects and the points at which the three meet and diverge.

<8> Many of these papers also pose questions, implicitly and explicitly, about when relations become marketplaces and/or when marketplaces become relations. Constance Walker's paper, for instance, makes us wonder about the point at which literary exchange becomes something that sells a journal; Corbett encourages us to think about the point at which markets inform (bad) relations and the role of the abjected body in that dynamic; Mimi Winick asks about the point at which relations are productive of greater potential in a resistant marketplace; Nancy Yousef makes visible the surprising overlaps between various marketplaces of ideas, revealing an unexpected correspondence between contemporary affect theory and Romantic and post-Romantic thinking on the relation between emotion and reason; Anna MacDonald troubles our notions about the points at which women's relations with marketplaces work violently on bodies and the points at which they work productively in bodies; Rachel Ablow suggests that bodies in pain produce relations that both reject and rewrite affective expectations.

<9> This clustering of interests in bodies, marketplaces, and affective relations is also present in our contemporary professional lived experience. Of course, the work we do is not separate from the bodies in which we live, from the feelings we have, or the professional marketplace in which so many of us now struggle to become established. The stakes and challenges of our lived contexts require, form, and elicit affective responses and relationships that our scholarship too seldom treats as connected to its subjects of concern. Indeed, one of the increasingly pressing conversations taking place in our classrooms, in our departments, at our institutions, and in our national political discourse takes as its subject a fundamental question about whether our work, particularly certain kinds of our work, is sufficiently "productive." There have been attacks—like those of Scott Walker on the University of Wisconsin system—that propose limitations to one of the central values of academia: fostering a life of the mind. As we write, non-teaching Adjuncts at our own institution are petitioning for pay that has been delayed for reasons obscured by overlapping bureaucratic systems—a deferral in our marketplace that has made significant impact on bodies and affects, particularly the bodies and affects of the women and other marginalized persons disproportionately employed in the tenuous positions most vulnerable to these types of abuses. Attending to the confluence of lived experience, bodies, affects, and literary marketplaces for women writers of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries has made visible to us some overlaps between their concerns and those of contemporary scholars, especially apprentice-scholars in the earlier stages of their careers.

<10> BWWC 2015 was an ideal place to explore this confluence between affects, bodies, and literary marketplaces. BWWA and the annual conference it organizes are both known for actively supporting and welcoming early-career scholars, graduate students, and even in some cases students from BA or MA programs who have been encouraged by faculty mentors to investigate the field in its professional

context. Indeed, one of the papers we selected for publication in this issue is written by a Master's student whose scholarship struck us as important, elegant, and fascinating. In other words, BWWA is an organization that already considers the interrelation between literary marketplaces, bodies, and affects, and supports this interrelation insofar as it affects its own scholars.

<11> In addition to its intergenerational span, this issue gestures toward the chronological span of BWWC, ranging from Mary Wollstonecraft to Virginia Woolf and, thereby, ranging across a period in British history that saw marked changes in the ways women participated in marketplaces, experienced their bodies, and responded to affective expectations. These papers are also formally diverse, covering poetry and prose, the periodical press and biography.

<12> Mary Jean Corbett's "'Ashamed of the Inkpot': Virginia Woolf, Lucy Clifford, and the Literary Marketplace" asks us to consider the relationship between Virginia Woolf and Lucy Clifford, an essentially passing relationship shaped by lightly overlapping social/professional circles and treated by Woolf with disdain and anxiety. Corbett's article contributes to the too-small field of scholarship on the non-canonical Clifford, whose writing career was fueled by financial exigency after the sudden death of her husband and whom Woolf associated with the money and gossip-grubbing impulses of a literary marketplace about which she was herself deeply ambivalent. Clifford, freighted with the somatic necessities of feeding and clothing two children, produced, according to Woolf, half-formed art and sullied conversation. Corbett frames her work in "Ashamed of the Inkpot" with Woolf's well-known assertion that women writers "must think back through our mothers" to argue that this "'thinking back' can take many different forms, not all of them so celebratory as that statement typically conveys."

<13> Nancy Yousef's "'Emotions that reason deepens': Second Thoughts about Affect" attends to the paradoxical idea, posed by Mary Wollstonecraft in *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, that reason deepens emotion. Wollstonecraft's critique of moral sentimentalism, Yousef argues, challenges not only the reliability of "quick emotions," but also the assumption that it is reason that is intensified by emotion. Yousef tracks this paradoxical thinking along an unexpected genealogy, first linking Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen, and George Eliot to Immanuel Kant, and then linking these writers and thinkers to contemporary affect theorists like Ruth Leys, Martha Nussbaum, and Amelie Rorty. Yousef grounds this relationship between Romantic and post-Romantic writers and contemporary affect theorists in a reading of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, showing that Austen's fiction collaborates in the complication and articulation of the joint role of emotion and reason. This article asks that we reconsider our notions about the relationships between Enlightenment philosophy, nineteenth-century women's writing, and contemporary affect studies by looking at their shared preoccupation in troubling the relationship between reason and emotion.

<14> In "Scholarly Collaboration for a Feminist New Age in Jane Harrison's and Jessie Weston's Alternative Histories," Mimi Winick argues that by collaborating to give their "generalist" female knowledge the reach of a specialist, and by writing women into the center of history, Harrison and Weston are exemplars of feminist scholarship in their period. Harrison and Weston each cultivated a scholarly *personae* through which they embarked on a correspondence—there is no record of their ever meeting—that allowed them access to one another, opportunities to grow their networks and promote

each other's and other women's writing, and, perhaps most importantly, to "valorize conventionally 'feminine' social knowledge practices."

<15> Constance Walker's "A *Ménage à trois* at the *Monthly Museum*" sheds light on the literary relations of three early-nineteenth-century poets writing in the Della Cruscan tradition in ways that speak to the play of embodiment and disembodiment at work in textual expressions of affect. Walker demonstrates that poets who wrote to one another in the *Monthly Museum* are notable because they skirted sentimentality and sensibility, hetero and homo eroticism, public and private, lyric and drama in order to express a sense of relationality shaped by marketplace gatekeepers, founded on an explicitly textual erotics reliant upon notions of embodiment.

<16> Rachel Ablow's "Hypochondria and the Failure of Relationship," suggests that hypochondria might be usefully considered as "a way to resist the homogenizing and normalizing influence of social life, while at the same time offering new avenues for communication and even communion." She shows that the experience of pain calls attention to the ways that experience is singular, not shareable, and even preferably so. Nevertheless, hypochondria also serves relational purposes. Ablow considers the possibility that, at least in *Villette*, it serves as an alternative form of sympathy: it "might make possible the recognition of others' feelings without any claim to understand or sympathize with them."

<17> In "Edible Women and Milk Markets: The Linguistic and Lactational Exchanges of 'Goblin Market,'" Anna MacDonald offers a compelling intervention in Rossetti scholarship. MacDonald draws a parallel between the "female expressions" of the poem and of lactation, showing that anxieties about feminine literary and linguistic participation in literary marketplaces are related to anxieties about mother/child dyads in mid-Victorian culture. "Edible Women" frames these literary marketplaces and bodily dyads as sites of necessary connection and also potential corruption: these female expressions "were always already implicated in larger monetary and linguistic economies, and Rossetti dramatizes this convergence in her poem."

<18> Our own relations and the literary-historical ones we study are ongoing sites of negotiation with real, embodied, affective consequences. Indeed, in putting together this issue, we have come to think of relations (in our scholarship and in our scholarly lives) as often in tension with the data outputs of "productivity." Writing, like giving a paper at a conference, is a way of connecting with others, not a quantifiable list of products, a CV list of publications, or a biographical blurb. Though there is increasing pressure to measure productivity for the job market, promotion, and tenure in our professional marketplaces (and though this increasing pressure corresponds at this moment to a rising field of scholarly interest in relationships between data and literature), this issue is a reminder that the things we measure in our work are more tenuous and interesting and flexible than available productivity metrics make visible. Indeed, thinking about our affective and embodied feminist relations in the context of marketplace recalls what Nancy Fraser recently called the second wave interest in challenging productivity on the grounds that it institutionalizes the "separation of two supposedly distinct kinds of activity: on the one hand, so-called 'productive' labor, historically associated with men and remunerated by wages; on the other hand, 'caring' activities, often historically unpaid and still performed mainly by women." (3) Fraser associates this interest with a feminist impulse that has been largely subsumed in a

neo-liberal professionalization among privileged women in the global north, a professionalization that has outsourced rather than prioritized the devalued labor of “social reproduction.” Thinking about the relation between *kinds* of labor—conference planning, mentoring, writing, provoking, arguing—gives us space to put pressure on the separation between embodied and affective concerns and professional ones. Rethinking marketplaces as relational spaces challenges divisions between professional productivity and social reproductivity by prodding the border between production and care. Production therefore becomes the ongoing investigation of relations, a site to trouble and prioritize what is (re)produced between people.

Endnotes

(1)BWWC is the annual meeting of the British Women Writers Association (BWVA), an organization invested in feminist scholarship, under-read women authors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and fruitful engagement between graduate students, early-career scholars, and established ones. BWWC 2015 was organized and hosted by a steering committee of graduate students from the CUNY Graduate Center and made possible by Eileen Gillooly’s generous donation of space at Columbia University’s Heyman Center. Our committee chose the topic “Relations” in reference to the research interests and strengths of our students and faculty at the Graduate Center and but also in honor to the memory and scholarly example of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Sedgwick’s influential literary and interdisciplinary work in queer theory established her readings of culture, text, and subtext as touchstones in the analysis of relations. Sedgwick’s work asks us to think more carefully about the relations that precede, exceed, and challenge ideology, about the relations between emotions, intellects, bodies, and labors, and about the relations between our political/personal investments and methodological/professional entanglements.

Our interest in “Relations” speaks also to the model Talia Schaffer has provided for students at CUNY interested in gender and nineteenth century literature and culture. Schaffer’s work -- in *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes*, *Novel Craft* and her forthcoming *Romance’s Rival: Familiar Marriage in Victorian Fiction*, for example — emphasizes women’s relationships to themselves, to one another, to men, to their labor, and the historical and lived conditions in which that labor is performed. Schaffer’s interpersonal modelling of mentorship and collegial support has provided an equally strong reminder to us about the stakes of relations. ([^](#))

(2)See, for example, Sedgwick’s *Between Men*, Ruth Perry’s *Novel Relations*, Sharon Marcus’ *Between Women*, and Mary Jean Corbett’s *Family Likeness*. ([^](#))

(3)In an October 15, 2015 interview with Gary Gutting on feminism in the neoliberal moment. Fraser associates this interest in production versus social reproduction with a branch of second wave feminism but her concerns are about contemporary neoliberal tendencies that encourage women of the professional classes to achieve by outsourcing care work to underprivileged workers. ([^](#))

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