

NINETEENTH-CENTURY GENDER STUDIES

Issue 18.2 (Summer 2022)

Introduction: Women and Other ‘Undesirables’⁽¹⁾: Female Creative and Technical Labor in Nineteenth- Century Print Culture”

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<1>In 2010 Michelle Levy astutely observed of women in print culture during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that “To date, most of the scholarly effort devoted to women and print has focused on recovering acts of female authorship—with the result that the work of a handful of later eighteenth and early nineteenth century women writers is now reasonably well known, and is taught in specialized, field-based courses at college level” (p. 29). And while authorship has been the center of the feminist recovery movement of the 1970s and 1980s, begun in large part by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Levy calls for scholars’ continued work in recovery to attend to a broader concept of women in print culture: “Yet even the dozen or so writers who appear with some regularity in anthologies represent only the tip of the iceberg: thousands of women participated directly in print culture as authors, editors, and translators, though much of their work is entirely forgotten, and indeed may not survive in even a single copy” (p. 29). This special issue of *Nineteenth Century Gender Studies* hopes to answer Levy’s call by lifting up scholarship to thereby acknowledge and celebrate the labors of women and other individuals in print culture whose work was deemed “undesirable” by social power hierarchies during this period, such as those involved in translation, editing, librarianship, advertising, and scientific and periodical publishing.

<2>These individuals’ labor would remain uncelebrated and uninterrogated without a methodology that attends to the gendered power structures in the writing of history that have disguised, dismissed, and obscured their labors in the first place. Kate

Ozment's foundational 2020 article, "A Rationale for Feminist Bibliography" gives a genealogy and pedigree of bibliography as a field that has been led by, and centered on, the achievements and interests of cisgendered, white Euro-centric men. She calls upon work that has long been done by feminist scholars in the fields of book history and bibliography over the last three decades to define a new kind of field and method that this special issue takes up. Feminist bibliography, Ozment articulates, is a field and practice "that explicitly gathers feminist methodologies to intervene in the genderless inheritance of bibliography in book history and revise it to foster rather than inhibit feminist scholarship" (p. 151). In 1998 Leslie Howsam questioned in "In My View: Women and Book History" if a "Women's Book History" was possible, and Lisa Maruca, Trysh Travis, and Sarah Werener independently bridged this work into the early 2000s and today. However, it is thanks to Ozment's article that all scholars now have not only a citation history of the voices who have established feminist bibliography as a field and its influences, but also of the reasons it is made necessary by the gendered prejudices of the writing of history that continues today.

<3>Contemporary scholarship on women and non-male individuals' labor in the print trades in the long nineteenth century is growing. Notable scholarship includes Jennie Batchelor's work on the periodical, *The Lady's Magazine*, in both digital indexing of the journal and an investigation of its authorship, production, circulation and reception in the forthcoming *The Lady's Magazine (1770–1832) and the Making of Literary History* (2022); the 2021 special issue of the *Huntington Library Quarterly* on Women in Book History, 1660–1830 edited by Michelle Levy and Betty Schellenberg; [*The Women's Print History Project*](#)—a bibliographical database of women in the print trades of the long eighteenth century, namely "not just as authors, but also as printers, publishers, booksellers, editors, compilers, translators, engravers, illustrators, and composers"; work by Kirstyn Leuner on *The Stainforth Library of Women's Writing* showcasing Francis John Stainforth book-collecting interests in the works of women from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; and Cait Coker's revelations about the commonality of women performing physical labor in the printing trade, such as working the press, casting type and book binding. Kate Ozment and Cait Coker's *Women's Book History Bibliography* serves the essential work of creating for the first time a bibliographical hub as not only a list of citations, but also a collection of identifying proofs of the existence of this labor historically and the current scholarship on it so that it is not lost again to the critical writing of history. Further notable research relating to women's creative and professional labor, between authorship and reception, in periodicals and wider print culture includes the volumes of *Women, Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1830s–1900s*, edited by Alexis Easley, Clare Gill and Beth Rodgers in 2019,

and *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1690–1820s*, edited by Jennie Batchelor and Manushag Powell in 2018; the 2018 special issue, “Domesticity, Culture and Victorian Press”, in *Victorian Periodical Review*, edited by Julie Codell; Dianne Roman’s 2016 dissertation *Women at the crossroads, women at the forefront, American women in letterpress printing in the nineteenth century*; and Maria Damkjær’s edited volume *Time, Domesticity and Print Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2016), which focuses on female employment within the creative arts, such as those involved in engraving and literary production.

<4>As editors of this special issue, we imagined this as a manifestation of Ozment’s acknowledgement via feminist bibliography that women have always been in book fields, but their labor has often not been “counted” or seen as valuable. And not just women—all people who fall outside of the white cisgendered, heterosexual identity sphere have been understood as “undesirable” subjects of studies, or examples of scholars. We also intend this special issue as part of what Derek Spires defines as “Liberation Bibliography.” Rather than merely returning these “undesirables” to our history, scholarship, and future understanding of print media, we have collected articles that make “a conscious and intentional practice of identifying and repairing the harms of systemic racism, settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and other oppressive structures in and through bibliography and bibliographical study” (Spires 5). This issue contributes to these areas, but still sees white middle and upper-class women as the largest portion of its subjects, a shortcoming of which we are aware. Colleen Flaherty observed in August 2020 that submission rates by women declined markedly that year because of COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting challenges to their professional and personal lives. Women-identifying, and Black, Indigenous, Asian and Pacific Islander, and LGBTQ+ scholars have been overwhelmingly forced to leave aside academic work to take on uncompensated care work in the last three years, resulting in further unbalanced publication of scholarship in all fields. For this special issue, we arranged for a longer call-for-papers to submission period, and worked carefully to ensure that feminist scholars who undertook the peer review of the submitted articles would provide constructive and timely feedback. By and large these peer-reviewers were themselves representative of the same demographics of scholars divorced from intellectual work by gendered, class, and racial inequities that were heightened by the pandemic. The editors of this issue themselves faced during its production cross-global job-related relocation, increased care responsibilities, increased formal service responsibilities related to their employment, heightened instances of emotional labor, spread of COVID-19 in their households, the grieving of loved ones lost to and during the pandemic, restrictions in their ability to travel for personal and professional purposes, a dearth in research-

based access to resources, and innumerable other obstacles to intellectual labor. The authors included here have as well.

<5>The articles in this issue do not do justice to scholarship about, and of, non-white individuals and their labors. We make clear the many obstacles that the last few years have pressed on scholars, editors, and intellectuals so that future readers of this work can contextualize its contributions and shortcomings. However, *Liberation Bibliography* is “less about adding new objects and categories to the existing system,” though of course that is part of this work; rather, more importantly it “asks us to explore how current practices emerged and whose interests they were crafted to serve” (Spires 6–7). Each of the articles in this special issue addresses both of these issues: identifying labors of women in the history of print culture, *and* addressing the systems that not only kept them on the margins but were also specifically built to keep these “women and other undesirables” from the creation and history of print culture and out scholarship in that field today.

<6>Kimberly Glassman, in “Harriet Sheppard’s (1786–1858) Scientific Writings: Nineteenth-Century Canadian Periodicals in Transatlantic Print Culture,” explores how the Linnaean taxonomic classification system, with its newly accessible language, introduced botany as the ideal study for young women in the nineteenth century. Glassman reveals, however, how the overt sexual undertones of plant reproduction increasingly ostracized women from botanical and zoological science in print, both as contributors and consumers. By providing a close analysis of the publications of Scot Quebecer Harriett Sheppard (1786–1858), Glassman demonstrates how scholars can better understand how women in the margins navigated politeness and decorum to contribute to transatlantic information networks amidst expectations of the female ideal at the turn of the nineteenth century. Sheppard’s active scientific research into the names of potential new North American flora, shells, and songbirds using Linnaean taxonomy contested the role of women in botanical print culture. Through a clever balancing of family small talk and humble displacement of agency, Sheppard produced scientific writings without seeming indecorous, cushioning her work in submissive and domestic tones. As a contributor to Kew Gardens director William Jackson Hooker’s (1785–1865) transatlantic botanical network, Sheppard’s work draws attention to the gendering and othering within colonial botany, as well as the complex identity politics at play within nineteenth-century international scientific practices that divided countries, gender, and social classes.

<7>In “Advertising Women’s Entrepreneurship in *The Green Sheaf*: Pamela Colman Smith and the *Fin-de-Siècle* Marketplace,” Marion Grant focuses on the

entrepreneurial labor of artist Pamela Colman Smith, who arrived on the London publishing scene in the 1890s, and experienced tremendous difficulty publishing her work. As a transnational figure whose artistic interests primarily focused on the occult, Jamaican folklore, and women, Smith's work stood out from the Western and male-dominated work that saturated the late-Victorian mass publishing field. Following a brief period as co-editor of *A Broad Sheet* alongside Jack Yeats, Smith forged space for herself in the British periodical community by founding and editing *The Green Sheaf* (1903–1904). The aesthetic magazine, which was visually eye-catching with bright colors and playful compositions, utilized an arts-and-crafts mode of production, and featured the magical and marginalized within its pages. As was typical with periodicals of this time, the back of each issue of *The Green Sheaf* contained an advertisements section featuring forthcoming books, other magazines, and local businesses. The remarkable aspect about *The Green Sheaf*'s advertising section is how much of the advertising space is reserved for fellow women entrepreneurs. Although a good portion of the advertisement space was reserved for Smith and her various business ventures, many other businesswomen were showcased as well, sometimes with an illustration by Smith accompanying their advertisements. Grant argues here that Smith utilized the advertisements section within *The Green Sheaf* as a material method of advocating for the participation of women and gender non-conforming individuals within the public sphere of the late-Victorian marketplace.

<8>Harriet Kramer Linkin looks at three posthumous collections of Mary Tighe's lyric poetry in her article "The Posthumous Public and Private Printing of Mary Tighe's Poetry." Linkin observes that these posthumous collections evidence the collision of female public and private performances via three different print modes that present competing visions of Tighe's identity and her poetics. Tighe herself always circulated her manuscripts among the members of her coterie and expressed her aversion to presenting her work to the public. Fourteen months after her death, her husband Henry Tighe published a commercial edition of her work that highlighted Tighe's skill with genre and her classical taste. Two months after the edition appeared, he sold the copyright, which created a significant problem for Tighe's mother, Theodosia Blachford, who wanted to prepare a chronological collection of her daughter's poetry that countered Henry Tighe's edition by focusing on Tighe's spiritual and mental states. To solve the problem, Blachford privately printed a hybrid edition, using print for the poems Henry Tighe omitted, and manuscript for the poems he sold. Shortly thereafter, Tighe's friend E. I. Fox produced a bound manuscript collection of Tighe's poems that emphasized Tighe's Petrarchan sensibility. Husband, mother, friend: each editor, argues Linkin, embodies and recreates their relationship with Tighe in the print mode,

arrangements, and poems they select to pay tribute to Tighe, memorialize her, and, ultimately, monumentalize her as a projection of themselves.

<9>In “Veiled Transgression and Subversion: Dinah Maria Mulock Craik and Greek Female Translatorship in the 1800s”, Vasiliki Misiou argues that the nineteenth century saw the emergence of more (professional) women writers and translators than ever before, but they still had to face long-standing preconceptions and expectations that were bound to gender and social roles, which in turn were shaped by values and norms. Misiou draws links between Dinah Maria Mulock Craik and her almost entirely unknown contemporary, Calliope Kypriadou. Having identified the subversive, protofeminist overtones of their attitude towards the deeply patriarchal society of the 1800s, Misiou explores the author–translator relationship and lives of Craik and Kypriadou, and demonstrates how courageous women refused to live within the prescribed domestic roles, contesting prevailing beliefs of gender and the boundaries between private and public. The work produced and opinions shared by Craik and Kypriadou reflect late nineteenth-century women’s recognition that their subordination was not natural, and that domesticity was not biologically determined, while mirroring, at the same time, a rising awareness of the role they could play as mediators and agents of change. Within this context, Craik and Kypriadou willingly took on an uphill struggle and faced the challenges that arose from their determination to unlock their potential and effect change. Drawing on translator studies and inspired by feminist translation studies and feminist history, Misiou adopts a translator-based, socio-historical approach that serves to reassess nineteenth-century women’s creative labor, and to explore the significance of their agency as writers and translators in an era of protofeminist activism.

<10>Abigail Moreshead relates in “Gender and Para-Academic Labor: The Invisible Translators of Old English and their Intangible Legacy in Digital Humanities” how, in Walter William Skeat’s prefatory material to the Early English Text Society’s 1881 edition of *Ælfric’s Lives of the Saints*, he credits “Miss Gunning of Cambridge and Miss Wilkinson formerly of Dorking” with having translated the bulk of the book’s homilies from Old English to modern English. No credit for their labor as translators and scholars of Old English appear elsewhere on the physical book, and yet the work of Gunning and Wilkinson likely helped Skeat build a scholarly reputation which benefited his own career and the study of medieval texts and English literature more broadly. Moreshead examines this example of under-credited work by women in a space, she terms, the “para-academy,” arguing for how their work as philologists fits with broader trends of gendered labor around knowledge creation. Moreshead argues that the example of these two translators of Old English offer a cautionary tale for how credit and attribution are handled in the era of digital

humanities projects, whose existence is also often owing to precarious and under-credited labor.

<11>Lastly, in “The Band of American Ladies: Children’s Librarians and the Creation of Children’s Literature in the Long Nineteenth Century,” Susanne Stauffer observes that author John Rowe Townsend stated that “the children’s book world, the children’s literature industry, surely was the creation not of writers or publishers but of the band of American ladies in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries who built up library work with children,” while *Publisher’s Weekly* editor Frederic G. Melcher praised early children’s librarians for establishing “new standards of book selection” which “encouraged dealers to use the fine types of catalogs and book-lists” that “made it possible for them to carry a far more comprehensive book stock than they thought possible.” Stauffer argues that early women librarians created a new profession within librarianship which catered to the “undesirable” children of the poor, the working-class, and of immigrants. They also established children’s literature as a valid subject of literary criticism, set appropriate and strict standards for the appraisal of these works, and demonstrated the importance of such standards and criticism to the development of the genre. Stauffer focuses on the life and work of early librarians Minerva A. Sanders and Caroline M. Hewins, as well as their impact and influence on children’s literature, children’s librarianship, and the literary criticism of children’s books through the latter half of the long nineteenth century.

<12>The essays described above reveal therefore how interdisciplinary this special issue is, showcasing the scholarship of women from such diverse fields as art and book history, gender studies, literary criticism, library studies, translation studies, and digital humanities. This interdisciplinarity serves to provide, for authors and readers alike, poignant moments not only to embrace a richer understanding of female creative and technical labor in the long nineteenth century, but also to celebrate the contributions of once perceived, albeit no longer situated as, marginalised workers and artists who creatively and successfully challenged the material, sociocultural and political environments that sought to constrain them.

Notes

(1)Hoagwood, Terence and Kathryn Ledbetter. *Colour’d Shadows: Contexts in Publishing, Printing, and Reading Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 76.(^)

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