

life—Victoria the young monarch and wife, Victoria the young mother, Victoria the widow, Victoria the menopausal woman, Victoria the Empress, and so on. The chapters then move outwards to illustrate the ways in which certain iconic moments ramified their meanings throughout her life. Munich is thus able to look at Gilbert and Sullivan's many depictions of the excessive persona of the aging woman, the figures of Albert, John Brown and her Indian servant Karim as these fed the sexual imaginations of the people (not many people, for instance, seemed to see John Brown as "good, comfortable, indefatigable, resolute" which is Edith Sitwell's version in her very quirky biography of Victoria), what was seen as her endless fecundity, the myth of Scottish virility (was this the reason Albert took to wearing kilts?) and the creation of "Balmorality." Her texts range widely from street ballads to pornography, from popular art to photography, from Rider Haggard to Alice. The "accessible cultural vocabulary" thus generated was mobilised for both social and political ends, with the possibility of alternative readings which would serve different sections of the body politic.

This reading of Victoria really takes off (in the most aerial fashion—and that is a compliment) from Lytton Strachey's idea of the Queen as a mirror. She was a mirror into which all her subjects could look and find something which either fed their imagination or reflected their own lives. But Munich is also a fine historian, and she takes full account of the influence of certain figures on Victoria, such as her mother, Albert of course, Uncle Leopold King of the Belgians, John Brown, Disraeli. She looks particularly at both Leopold and Albert as queenmakers, at Leopold's inspired idea of the monarchy "in trade." There are occasional throwaway references to the present British Royal family, and there are delightful sections on her love of animals, particularly dogs, which dates from her early youth when she and her mother became patrons of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, later to become the RSPCA.

The book is copiously illustrated (many delights there too), and is furnished with a useful chronology and a very full bibliography. There are occasional editing oversights: that wandering apostrophe in Ruskin's title, Rider Haggard becomes a more elegant Ryder Haggard, but these are minimal, and the book is a handsome production. It's an important book, and it's also a thoroughly good read.

Barbara Garlick

***A Magazine of Her Own?: Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800-1914*, by Margaret Beetham. London: Routledge, 1996.**

A Magazine of Her Own?: Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800-1914 opens with two quotations from readers' correspondence to the contemporary magazines *Woman* and *Bella* which date from 1888 and 1990 respectively. Both are selected for their representation of the type of reader response cited by women's popular magazines during the late twentieth century; both fix the correspondents' relationships with the publications in the domestic realm (one is concerned with sewing, the other with

cooking) and both express the notion that they and the magazines are participants in an ongoing dialogue. This contemporary epigraph seems initially inappropriate, given that Beetham's survey of the woman's magazine covers the period 1800 to 1914. However, it rapidly becomes apparent that one of Beetham's main objectives is to demonstrate the clear links between the discourses utilised in women's magazines in both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. To that end, her arguments depend upon the clarification and identification of the shifting definitions which characterised popular discourses involving female attitudes and behaviour throughout the nineteenth century, and the subsequent identification of these discourses in the various woman's magazines available throughout that period. Her book becomes not only a chronological history of a particular type of periodical, but also seeks to establish the terms of the specific discourses with which magazine readers and producers constantly engaged and negotiated.

This constant shifting within debates concerning gender and class is emphasised in the relationships that Beetham deems to exist between readers, writers, and editors. Beetham observes that "popular print is too complex a phenomenon to be understood in the simplistic terms of 'patriarchy' or of 'class,'" and rejects notions of gender which perceive women solely as "victims of repression" (2). Building on this, she attempts to show that the dynamic devised between the reader as consumer and the writer/editor as producer (terms which have particular relevance to women's magazines from the 1880s) was more complex and flexible than was at first supposed. However, within this analysis, her individual case-studies of particular magazines as "representative or specific" (ix), a qualification which implies that conclusions drawn from these case-studies may not be as absolute as they first appear, causes a collapse in the complexity of the dynamic as represented (either specifically or by implication) by the magazine in question. The voice of the reader is present, but only on terms defined by the editor, usually as a correspondent, and frequently in the subordinate position of commentator or questioner. While Beetham's premise concerning the dynamic of the reader/editor/writer relationship is valid, the analyses of specific magazines tends to undermine her position.

Beetham positions her text as accessible to both an academic and a general audience, and the presentation of her material initially supports this strategy. The four sections of the book are structured chronologically, each dealing with a specific concept located in the period covered. Each separate chapter is divided into a number of sub-sections, the contents of which are clearly apparent from the various headings. However, this episodic use of material, a form which appears to be deliberately allusive towards that of the periodicals under discussion, can produce a sense of discontinuity on the part of the reader, and allows the subject as a whole to appear perhaps more contradictory and fragmented than was intended by the author—although it is also noticeable that the focus of the title is itself deliberately ambiguous. Furthermore, Beetham offers the reader an apparent choice between reading this text straight through or "as we read the magazines which are its subject, going to the chapters which look most interesting, skipping, reading from front to back" (ix). This choice (which is, of course, present in any text, although rarely utilised) exemplifies the ambivalences highlighted in this study, examining as it does a multiplicity of discourses and their representations and subsequent collisions/elisions in the developing magazine format.

The intertwining of content and structure in this study is nowhere more apparent than in a discussion of the sixpenny monthly *Woman at Home* (157-73). Throughout the

first part of the analysis, Beetham refers to the periodical in terms of the relationship established between readers of the magazine and Annie S. Swan, a major contributor and the assumed editor, emphasising the extent to which Swan is perceived to be identified with the magazine, and discussing the content and structure in terms of Swan's involvement with it. However, Beetham then reveals that *Woman at Home* was actually edited by Robertson Nicholl, who used Annie S. Swan (herself in reality Mrs Burnett Smith) as an editorial persona, while himself remaining invisible to the magazine's readership (165). While acknowledging that Beetham provides this account as a representation of the contrived way in which a magazine could appeal to its audience, this particular reader was initially somewhat confused and alienated by the process.

Another point of structural concern is the use of 1914 as a concluding date for the study, a date which is nowhere justified or explained; it could be assumed that the date was selected on account of its historical significance, and while this cannot be disputed, it is worthwhile asking whether 1914 did see a perceptual shift in the culture of popular magazines, or whether it merely represented a convenient stopping place. Given the links which Beetham constructs between nineteenth-century and contemporary magazines, the danger of using this unjustified date is that the reader can assume that the date was either selected for its historical convenience, or that little of major significance occurred after this point. Some clarification of the application of this date would have been helpful.

Beetham's survey demonstrates the extensive research which underpins a project of this nature. As in all projects which depend upon material which was deemed to be of transient worth, and may have been preserved by accident rather than design, Beetham acknowledges the difficulty of organising and assembling her resources. However, the most casual reading of the book discloses the mass of data which Beetham utilises, and it is apparent that extensive research of primary sources has been undertaken, together with careful consideration of secondary references. A particular strength of the project is its detailed presentation of relevant debates concerning gender and sexuality, and the attempts to trace their expression within the various magazines. However, it is unfortunate that such detail is marred by poor editing which has allowed the omission of a line at the bottom of page 115 to remain uncorrected; this carelessness benefits neither the author, nor the publisher.

To sum up: the main problem with *A Magazine of Her Own?* is that its scope is so large—so much time is covered, so much information is provided, so many discourses are analysed, so many ambivalences and dichotomies are identified that it becomes difficult for the reader to assess the project as a whole. However, the book is clearly a valuable introduction to the study of popular women's magazines of the nineteenth century and as such indicates that these magazines offer a fruitful area of future study.

Catharine Vaughan-Pow

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