

## INTRODUCTION

The title, “Journalism, Gender and the Periodical Press,” provides just the right kind of capacious catch-all to contain the varied articles published in this volume, most of which reflect on the way the journalism of the period influences our perception of the Victorians and their society. The only piece that doesn’t seem to fit into the over-arching journalistic scheme is Patrick Brantlinger’s thought-provoking—and apt from an Australian perspective at this time—contribution on the extinction of primitive races: a survey of the pre-Darwinian discourses of early social “scientists” which reveal how their often muddled, self-serving theories of race development could be used as a justification for racial imperialism. A link, however, can be quite easily made since these very arguments, of course, became the stuff of press propaganda and hysteria when, prompted by the wave of “New Imperialism” sweeping the country during the second half of the century, Britain found itself in conflict with “savage” races like the Zulus and the Afghans. Colourful reporting of these conflicts added a new kind of sensationalism to the press and contributed in no small measure to its growing popularity.

Perhaps the strongest and most popular historical view of nineteenth-century journalism is the positive role it played in the democratisation and empowerment of Victorian life on both the individual and social level—the logical result of an information rich society. The march of the press is depicted setting the pace for freer political and cultural debate, the emancipation of women, and the growing fluidity of class barriers. This broad generalisation, however, is challenged by many of the articles in the collection. Jock Macleod highlights the struggle between “high” culture, as defined by Matthew Arnold, and the encroaching popular culture Arnold saw as such a threat to civilised life. Macleod sets out to show that the “split-vision,” intrinsically anti-democratic view of culture—“high” versus “low”—presented by Arnold and later entrenched by F.R. Leavis was not necessarily inevitable. He posits the idea that “new” liberal contributors to newspapers and periodicals such as the *Speaker* and the *Nation* had the effect of challenging the “dumbing down” effect of the popular press foreseen by Arnold. But that they have, unfortunately, been ignored by histories of the period.

In a lighter vein Christopher Kent introduces another *bête noir* of Arnold’s: Bohemia of the British kind and especially to some of its literary denizens, an argumentative, hard-drinking lot many of whom were hack journalists masquerading as novelists or hack novelists trying hard to make ends meet in journalism. Definitely Philistines of the worst kind. Leanne Day counteracts their dubious Bohemian influence by setting before us the activities of the Young Men’s Christian Investigation and Improvement Society: a case study in the application of writing, specifically journalism, to improve the mind and the prospects of young colonials. Some altercations are noted within the group but it’s the higher life, not the low, that triumphs here.

Joanne Shattock, in her study of the development of the career of Eliza Lynn Linton, paints Lynn Linton as an opportunist who played on the conservatism of her readers to undermine the acceptance of women in the workplace, while paradoxically pursuing a career in professional journalism herself. The extraordinarily prolific and successful Lynn Linton was sometimes reviled by male contemporaries and described by one female admirer as having “a man’s brain.” The idea that a successful woman must really be a man is pursued in Valerie Sanders article “I’m your Man” in which she sets out with Harriet Martineau as her guide to

discover how career-minded Victorian women negotiated a male-dominated profession, in this case writing for the serious-minded *Edinburgh Review*. Martineau was well recognised as one of the best journalists of her era yet she lacked the confidence to write for the *Edinburgh* under a female name.

Juliet Peers introduces Violet Teague, artist, critic and social commentator, whose personality and work was for many years neglected by the Australian art world. Peers focuses on Teague's eclectic contribution to the history and performance of art in Australia, particularly on the way her unpublished writings document the impact of European and English influences on colonial art practices. Teague was an extraordinary woman whose talents are only just being recognised. Michelle Bonollo is another contributor who reveals the innate resistance within Victorian society to accept women on their own terms, and certainly not when they were competing with men in a professional way. Bonollo contends that the work of her protagonists, artists Rosa Bonheur and Henriette Brown, gained favourable critical and financial acceptance in England only because they were not English women, but French. And even so, the success of Bonheur's reception was influenced by the fact that both she and her work were perceived to be of a masculine nature. Browne's work was also described in suitably masculine terms. Clearly successful women were really successful men! Except, perhaps, if your name was Walter Pater. As the narrator of "A Prince of Court Painters," a study of Watteau acknowledged as one of his best works, the homosexual Pater chose to adopt a female persona. David Dolan suggests that Pater used this strategy in order to advance a moral point of view for which he did not want to be fully accountable at the time.

In Henry James's *The Tragic Muse* and George Moore's *Evelyn Innes*, George Hughes has discovered women who are actually represented as pursuing creative and productive lives. They are actresses who use their minds and their bodies as vehicles of expression, their performances transcending gender barriers because they exemplify artistic excellence. These women had their real-life counterparts in women like Rachel and Melba who acquired fame, fortune and respectability without sacrificing their femininity. However, as Hughes points out, danger lies in the fact that the masculine gaze tends to perceive these women as ideals, as abstractions that presumably do not threaten the masculine ego. Surprisingly the idea of abstraction and stasis is also applied to the "New Woman" in Lynn Pykett's documentation of the role played in her construction by periodicals and newspapers. Pykett questions just how "new" the "New Woman" really was by delving back into her origins, even as far back as Margaret Oliphant's description of *Jane Eyre* as instigating "the most alarming revolution of modern times." Pykett looks at the "New Woman" in all her manifestations, and at her critics, and finds in the reoccurring "newness" of her media representations a repetitive, unresolvable, rotation that does not augur well for modern feminists. Clair Hughes conflates Henry James's Daisy Miller and Pandora Day (with a touch of Eliza Lynn Linton) to examine the "New Woman" from another angle. In killing off Daisy, she suggests, James was paving the way for the real "New Woman," the American "self-made" girl who didn't give a damn for the moralising of the old world.