

Forum

Race, Class, and the Uncanny

TO THE EDITOR:

Brian McCuskey's witty exposé of ghostly class-marking is generally deft ("Not at Home: Servants, Scholars, and the Uncanny" [121 (2006): 421–36]). Yet his claim that "[a]ny discussion of servants and the uncanny must begin and end with Henry James" (421) is overstated for readers aware of Tituba, root work in Frederick Douglass's *Narrative*, the way Cassie tricks Simon Legree in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, variant meanings of the word *shade*, Pauline E. Hopkins's "Of One Blood," and the resonances of the sigh "Poor Tenie!"—particularly as Toni Morrison honored this line of commentary in *Beloved*. Not that waged and chattel attendance were, or are, identical, but rather that Webster's was right to teach, in 1828, that "[e]very slave is a servant," though "every servant is not a slave."

Reliance on Peter Stallybrass and Allon White and on even older work by Leonore Davidoff betrays unwarranted assumption—not because these fine scholars falter but because their time- and state-bound arguments do not illuminate the era-specific attendance James evokes in "The Jolly Corner." More helpful, I submit, to analysis of a furtive "crape" that begins with satisfaction in a contrast of black and white and ends with horror at "a black stranger" is notice of George Bagby's "Old Virginia Gentleman," who mourned in 1877, "The houses, indeed, are still there, little changed" after slaves were freed. But: "the light, the life, the charm are gone for ever. 'The soul is fled.'" During the Gilded Age (that is, the period James harks back to), writers as different as Harriet Spofford and "Zina" Peirce agreed, and they were echoed during the Progressive Era (that is, the period in which "Corner" was composed and takes place) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, I. M. Rubinow, and W. E. B. DuBois.

I applaud McCuskey's desire, and demonstrated ability, to unearth depoliticizing elisions. But he could probe more historically by acknowledging how deeply ideas about—hence representations of—post-Emancipation

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attendance were shaped by shifts as “exceptionalist” as those examined by Carole Shammass, Sarah Deutsch, and Elizabeth Clark-Lewis.

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Fostering Periodical Studies

TO THE EDITOR:

Regarding Sean Latham and Robert Scholes’s essay “The Rise of Periodical Studies” (121 [2006]: 517–31), I would like to note that the “minor press” (518) that published *American Periodicals* for twelve years was the University of North Texas Press; the journal’s stalwart editor was James T. F. Tanner; the president of its sponsoring organization, the Research Society for American Periodicals, at the time of the journal’s inception was Robert J. Scholnick; and the founder of the organization at whose convention the research society was created, the American Literature Association, is Alfred Bendixen.

Also warranting acknowledgment are those working at research libraries who have steadily and steadfastly acquired (and continue to acquire) the original—sometimes rare, even unique—magazines and newspapers in the first place. They make possible the digitizing Latham and Scholes mention—and have long made possible the scholarly pleasure of reading the actual artifact and thereby coming as close as possible to the experience of the periodical’s original readers.

Richard Kopley
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Reply:

Richard Kopley properly acknowledges the significant contributions of the scholars, editors, and researchers who built the intellectual institutions that have made possible “the rise of periodical studies.” As we note in our essay, *American Periodicals* (among other journals) is a vital part of this infrastructure, though its mission and its close association with the American Literature Association mean that its perspective is—quite rightly—limited to a particular sector of literary

studies. As our survey of digitizing projects makes clear, however, critical work on magazines now extends across national borders and intellectual disciplines, creating a space for new kinds of inquiry that significantly extend what was once considered a relatively narrow field of specialization.

This field is just now taking shape, largely because of the stunning changes in the reproduction and dissemination of archival materials made possible by digital technologies. It is only thanks to the efforts of rare book rooms and the librarians who staff them, however, that the fragile remnants of periodical culture survived into the digital age. What we call the “hole in the archive” (520) emerged primarily in general collections where magazines were stripped of advertising before being bound and assigned increasingly rare shelf space. This problem, by the way, was first reported by Ellen Gruber Garvey in 1999 (“What Happened to Ads in Turn-of-the-Century Bound Magazines, and Why” [*Serials Librarian* 37.1 (1999): 83–91]), though we learned of this only after our article was in print.

In many cases, the hole in the archive is visible only because rare book curators preserved intact issues of old magazines, allowing scholars to recognize the damage that had been done. Often, these surviving issues were part of private collections, such as the personal libraries and papers of writers, critics, and artists. Unfortunately, library catalogs almost never provide the information necessary to determine whether or not a number or a volume is genuinely complete, advertisements and all. Those involved in periodical studies should strongly encourage their libraries to undertake this urgent bibliographic task so that we can see how badly damaged our archives are, while gratefully acknowledging the diligent work of those who have fully preserved this crucial segment of print culture.

Sean Latham
University of Tulsa

Robert Scholes
Brown University

Shakespeare at Oxford?

TO THE EDITOR:

Is it not time now for more scholars of Renaissance literature to consider the possibility