

Introduction

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The eleventh issue of *The Albatross* features seven critical works that exemplify the diverse interests and insights of our contributors. While the texts studied in these essays cross centuries, continents, and genres, all of the essays are in some way concerned with the role of the individual within a larger system. Jocelyn Diemer considers the role of the medieval wife in Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Prologue;" Josiah Lamb examines Satan's position in the hierarchies of Heaven and Earth in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*; Allegra Stevenson-Kaplan illustrates the complex role of maternal desire in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*; Autumn Doucette investigates the evolving status of gender roles in Victorian society, which is reflected in Sarah Stickney Ellis's *The Women of England* and Caroline Norton's *A Letter to the Queen*; Emily Frampton explores the empowering role of storytelling in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; Scott Matthews studies the role of the domestic madwoman in establishing liminality in Gothic fiction, including Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women*; and Brayden Tate interprets a young man's relationship with both retribution and the environment in Alissa York's *Fauna*. These essays are arranged chronologically by primary text to showcase the progression of discourse surrounding identity over time.

Our first two authors note the importance of allusion in each of the works they analyze. Examining scriptural allusions in "The Wife of Bath's Prologue," Jocelyn Diemer re-frames Alison's character in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1387–1400). Diemer suggests that Alison's "view of wifehood as a priestly role is supported by an interpretation of scripture that is both biblically sound and culturally radical" (16). Also focusing on a biblically informed text, Josiah Lamb investigates *Paradise Lost* (1667) and argues that John Milton's "use of concurrent scientific and classical

allusions stresses the differences between Satan and mankind" (23). Specifically, Lamb's essay focuses on Satan's shield as a symbol of his hubris and how Milton's references to Galileo's *Sidereus Nuncius*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* illuminate this symbol.

Moving into the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, our next three essays explore how women's autonomy is affected by social discourse. Researching the stigmatization of maternal desire, Allegra Stevenson-Kaplan suggests that the protagonist Helen's "artwork comes to stand in metonymically for her desire and her sexuality" in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848) (30). Stevenson-Kaplan argues that the extra-linguistic mode of art production allows Brontë to subvert the traditional courtship plot and reveal the persistence of female sexuality after childbirth. Investigating Sarah Stickney Ellis's *The Women of England* (1839) and Caroline Norton's *A Letter to the Queen* (1855), Autumn Doucette argues that these works of non-fiction "reveal the stratification and glorification of women's roles" in the nineteenth century (40). Doucette examines each writer's rhetoric to demonstrate the complexity of addressing the Woman Question alongside Victorian ideologies of emotion. Emily Frampton's essay considers how race, gender, and class work against Janie, the protagonist of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). Ultimately, Frampton suggests that the novel's frame narrative allows Janie to escape these oppressive structures and form "an empathetic metafictional community bond" with the reader (49).

Our last two essays engage with literary and theological traditions to illuminate their texts. Scott Matthews considers the influence of American and British Gothic fiction on Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971). Matthews suggests that, through her use of the domestic madwoman trope and creation of a liminal setting, "Munro not only subtly informs her depiction of women but also differentiates the Southern Ontario Gothic genre from its American and British counterparts" (56). As Brayden Tate's essay suggests, Alissa York's *Fauna* (2010) "depicts the dangers

of understanding justice as retribution, personifying these dangers through the characters of Darius and his grandfather” (63). Engaging with the Christian conceptions of retribution—including their origins in Anselm of Canterbury’s *Cur Deus Homo*—Tate argues that the satisfaction theory of atonement contextualizes and “animates the form and thematic content of *Fauna*” (63).

This collection of articles explores how individuals are influenced by external forces. The pandemic, climate crisis, and political unrest that have shaped this year have also reframed conversations surrounding identity, intersectionality, and justice. The critical contributions of our authors speak to the importance of these conversations in the twenty-first century and the role that literature has had in shaping the discourses of the past.