

# Introduction

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Ava Ugolini

Every day  
we make our idle progress  
among tripwire. You have no idea  
of the pressure we're under.

—Karen Solie, "[University of Victoria] Bomb  
Threat Checklist," *Modern and Normal* (2005)

Each time we talk  
about poems written  
before any of us  
was born, that some of us  
love, and that none of us,  
I worry, understands.

—Nicholas Bradley, "On Being Archaic," *Before  
Combustion* (2023)

If criticism could ever be conceived as a coherent and  
systematic study, the elementary principles of which could  
be explained to any intelligent nineteen-year-old, then,  
from the point of view of such a conception, no critic now  
knows the first thing about criticism.

—Northrop Frye, "Polemical Introduction," *An  
Anatomy of Criticism* (1957)

This is why so many epigraphs appear undigested and  
attention-begging.

—Carmine Starnino, "A Notebook," *Lazy  
Bastardism: Essays & Reviews on Contemporary  
Poetry* (2012)

I wish I could present you, reader, with a pink ribbon-  
wrapped throughline encompassing all analyses to come.  
If possible, I'd platter-present the papers; lifting a silver  
*cloche* to reveal one conclusive tray of literary criticism. But I

can't. Volume 16 features a whopping ten papers, two more than *The Albatross* has ever published in a single issue. In total, our team this year spanned thirty-five dedicated editors and contributors, each with their own unique blend of research interests. Thus, I present you with the following: a mélange of essays listed by author last name, united most in their finesse of criticism and literary illumination.

Let us begin with the singular Alexandria Brooks and her paper on D.H. Lawrence's "Monkey Nuts." Brooks argues that Lawrence's story genre-bends, being read first as a romantic comedy and then as psychological horror. Unlike many papers published now or in previous editions of the bird book, Brooks tackles a larger question of genre in an atmosphere post-WWI, presenting the basis of Lawrence's text in an entirely new light. Maraya Cooper, thereafter, sets us off in a new direction, one of environmental stewardship in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Cooper examines how Milton's Adam and Eve's care for nature acts as a Socratic teaching method of God. In arguing so, Cooper highlights Milton's ideas upon eco-transcendence and reminds us of the importance of such in our own nearly postlapsarian world that is also "in constant need of tending" (25).

Next, Kristian Hovdebo begins the short yet fascinating path of film analysis within Volume 16. He contends that Mati Diop's film *Atlantics* is distinct in its ability to allow viewers to sit with unresolved discomfort. Drawing on Jacques Derrida and Mark Fisher, Hovdebo analyzes the film through a hauntological lens, arguing that Senegal's colonial past haunts the film by use of symbols such as the Atlantic Ocean and fictional Muejiza Tower; the spectre of colonialism persists. Jessica Jay, also confronting colonial memory, dissects sound in Claire Denis's *Chocolat* and *White Material*, using Leela Gandhi's ideas upon postcolonial "re-membering" (41). By examining the use of speech, silence, and music, Jay provides a fresh take on the role of white women's in Denis's films, arguing, against current critical analysis, that the films expose an instability of white colonial perception.

Soren Kim, our brave Shakespearean, here presents an analysis of the child characters within *King John*. In response to the critical status quo, Kim reads the play as a contemplation of the agency that Arthur and Henry III do possess, rather than that which they do not. By doing so, Kim disrupts the common analysis of Shakespeare's child characters as helpless, and thus invites us to look at the play's ending in a novel way. Switching from Elizabethan to Evangelical, Jude Lovell presents potentially the most topical paper in Volume 16; one that contrasts ancient apocalypticism with present-day televangelism. Lovell argues that Frank Peretti's novel *This Present Darkness* commandeers conventions from the Book of Daniel—a text written to comfort a violently persecuted Jewish readership—in order to soothe white American Evangelicals, a demographic who eagerly fabricated their own oppression in the face of declining popularity. In his conclusion, Lovell interestingly analyzes the spurious persecution of American Evangelicals presently, of which fuels an attempt to reassert white Christian supremacy.

Cella Pop invites a return to post-colonial theory with her paper on Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, an unofficial prologue to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* published nearly a hundred years prior. By referencing Margot Lauwers, a key figure in the ecofeminist movement, Pop maintains that Rhys's characters, Antoinette and Rochester, symbolically enact a dynamic of colonial domination within their marriage, specifically one of ecofeminist conjecture. Rochester ultimately sees Antoinette, later Bertha Mason in Brontë's novel, as an object to colonially conquer. Not entirely in contrast, Erin Slater presents a paper on persisting portrayals of women as "devoted, desirable, and unknowable figures" in both Alfred Tennyson's *Moxon Tennyson* and Arctic Monkeys' album *AM* (78). With a presentist lens, Slater states that despite a difference of 160 years, and a wealth of cultural difference, the two's lyrics both feature a focus upon feminine mystique, arguing that such analysis is "mutually illuminating" (84). Indeed, Tennyson's work becomes more tangible to audiences

today, and Arctic Monkeys are revealed to exist within a long-standing tradition, allowing for "richer understanding of both historical and contemporary artistic works" (84–85).

Penultimately, Becky Turner presents Volume 16 with a fascinating analysis of Victorian gift-giving culture, specifically within Christina Rossetti's oeuvre. With Rossetti having dedicated "nearly the entirety of her body of work to her mother," Turner illuminates a much-ignored phenomena: book dedications, and moreover, the archival research involved in such studies (87). Last but certainly not least, Amy Vitkauskas examines Heloise of *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* and Melaz of Orderic Vitalis's *Historia Ecclesiastica* in their rebellion against medieval Catholic Christianity, analyzing whether or not the women could assert meaningful agency within said religious framework. Vitkauskas concludes Volume 16 powerfully, noting that "the female body cannot, in fact, be conquered" (105).

I rest easy now, sending our bird baby to the printers at Island Blue, knowing that each paper in this journal demonstrates a commitment to write. *Yeah*. Write, edit, and read in a world where the choice to artificially summarize is a mere click away. The pride I feel in seeing my peers trudge up this hill alongside me—even as university-funded pro-A.I. talks are held and Humanities professors all but recreate *Ex Machina*—gives me a twinkle in my eye and a spring in my step. I can happily say that this cohort, like the albatross, will spend most of their lives wondering. Or is it wandering that it does? Well, I guess both apply. As Charles Baudelaire wrote in *Les Fleurs du Mal*'s "L'Albatros":

Le Poète est semblable au prince des nuées  
Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l'archer;  
Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,  
Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.

And indeed, our wings stop us from lowly step.

Here's to another issue of published authors and loving mothers, the latter being our most dedicated (as Rossetti knows) readership. Alright, here's *The Albatross* Volume 16. Fly safe!