

## Note from the Editors

Welcome to the twenty-third issue of 49<sup>th</sup> *Parallel*. This edition features a selection of articles based on papers delivered at the ‘New Perspectives on the American Nineteenth Century’ conference held at the University of Nottingham in October 2008. Featuring a keynote address by the University of Oxford’s Professor Paul Giles as well as a closing roundtable discussion with Dr. Tim Lustig (Keele University) and Professors Bridget Bennett (University of Leeds) and Judie Newman (University of Nottingham), the event brought together postgraduate students from universities around the United Kingdom to present work remarkable not only for its richness and diversity but for its attestation of the strength with which the American nineteenth century continues to exert its influence upon the modern imagination.

Unfortunately we are unable to bring you a full account of the event, but we are confident that the four papers offered to you in this issue are an indication of the breadth and quality of the proceedings. In ‘Selling Themselves,’ Ben Schiller intervenes in a traditional critical narrative which reads the survival strategies of African American slaves in terms of resistance, and argues instead for an interpretation reading which stresses performance, negotiation and cooperation.

In ‘Transatlantic *Little Women*,’ Louisa Hodgson compares Louisa May Alcott’s novel and Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Life of Charlotte Brontë* and argues that *Little Women*’s depiction of authorship can be understood as contributing to a larger transatlantic dialogue. Next, Penny Woollard’s ‘Derek Walcott and the Wild Frontier’ engages with the modern re-imagining of the nineteenth century, examining the ways in which Walcott’s articulation of Native American experience in *The Ghost Dance* and *Omeros* re-reads the myths of American exceptionalism from a Caribbean perspective.

Lastly, Matthew Tomiak’s essay ‘The Eradication of American Proto-Feminism’ charts the evolution of the Captivity Narrative both in terms of its conceptualisation of gender and its influence upon the predominantly male-centric narratives of nineteenth-century popular literature. The issue concludes with our customary book review section, which this time around – in accordance with our ongoing interdisciplinary commitment – assesses a selection of recent titles which deal with topics as varied as American foreign policy, the place of the ‘Epic’ in contemporary fiction, and the relationship between the nation and temporality.

We at 49<sup>th</sup> *Parallel* would like to express our gratitude to all those who have contributed to the production of this special edition – not only to the authors of our papers, but to all of the conference delegates, its organising committee, the staff and students of the School of American and Canadian Studies at the University of Nottingham, and, not least, to the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the British Association for American Studies, both of which helped fund this event.

And, of course, we thank you, the reader, for continuing to support the journal. We hope you enjoy the featured articles and reviews and we would, as always, be keen to hear your comments on the issue.

Chris Emery  
Euan Gallivan  
Joseph Roper