

Editors' Introduction: *Reception* Turns a Page

This issue of *Reception* marks a turning point in, even as it offers something of a departure from, the journal's future and past manifestations. Most notable is the fact that this will be the last issue of the journal to appear exclusively in an on-line form via the website of the Reception Study Society. While *Reception* will continue as the official journal of the RSS, its format and form will change significantly starting in 2013. Owing to an agreement reached earlier this year with the RSS, Penn State University Press will begin publishing the journal in print format, with web access to current and past issues available through the *JSTOR* database. This development resulted from the substantial efforts of several individuals, most notably Philip Goldstein, Director of the RSS, who initiated discussions with Penn State UP and oversaw the details of the agreement. Special recognition also goes to both the Klingler College of Arts and Sciences at Marquette University and the College of Arts and Sciences and Department of English at Kansas State University, who are providing institutional funding over the next three years that will make possible the journal's transition to print. As the journal's editors, we hope that both the members of the RSS and all readers of *Reception* are as excited and pleased as we are by this pivotal development in the journal's existence.

As part of this new turn, the 2013 issue of *Reception* will constitute a fresh iteration of a different sort by being the first issue devoted to a special topic. It's with substantial excitement that we are able to announce that Charles Johanningsmeier of the University of Nebraska-Omaha and Barbara Ryan of the National University of Singapore will be guest editing this special issue on the topic of reception study and fan mail. In addition to four articles addressing various dimensions of the topic, the issue

will include an introduction by professors Ryan and Johanningsmeier, which will frame the contributors' explorations of the diverse relations between fan mail and reception practices and highlight some of the key issues involved in the study of fan mail. Future plans are also in the works for a second special-topics issue for 2015 devoted to "Reception Study and Cultural Diversity," which will be guest edited by Patrocínio Schweickart of Purdue University and Philip Goldstein of the University of Delaware. We hope that these two special issues, and periodic special issues in the future, will continue to extend the profile of the journal and the RSS as a whole.

One feature of *Reception* that will not be changing, however, is the book review component that was inaugurated as part of the journal's offerings in 2011. As the only journal in reception and audience studies that includes reviews of important new books in the field, *Reception* will continue to publish between eight and twelve reviews in all future issues as part of an overview of the current state of the field, which we consider an important characteristic of the scholarly offerings the journal provides to its readers.

As we pause to reflect on the growth of reception studies in the years since the first issue of *Reception*, and in keeping with the motif of "turns," the editors have decided to turn this issue to a particular purpose: providing a microcosmic overview of the current state of reception studies. As part of the transition to the journal's new print format, this issue, in fact, serves as something of a "special" issue in its own right. Indeed, this focus was practically necessitated by the plethora of exciting, fresh scholarship in reception studies that has appeared in the last year and a half. The bulk of this year's issue of *Reception* is therefore comprised of twenty reviews of new books that deal wholly or in part with issues in audiencing and reception.

Besides this series of snapshots of recent work in the field, this issue's overview also includes a lead article by Ildiko Olasz and Genevieve West, President and Vice-President, respectively, of the RSS, which constitutes a guided tour of some of the most vibrant emergent subfields of reception study, and of the cross-disciplinary work that is now engaging with reception study to produce robust accounts of the ways people use texts to understand their lives and use their lives to interpret texts. Olasz and West highlight key new works in cross-cultural approaches to reception, note the centrality of reception studies to the work of digital humanities and the study of digital media (particularly the texts being generated in the participatory platforms that have been dubbed “web 2.0”), discuss the ongoing sustained significance of work in film and television reception, and promote the growing interest in reception studies of children’s and adolescent literature. As the editors of *Reception*, we are eagerly and actively pursuing work that explores these new directions in reception study and are particularly looking forward to the RSS conference at Marquette University in Milwaukee in September 2013 as a platform for generating even more cross-disciplinary conversations about these exciting subfields

The reviews that comprise the rest of the issue offer a composite window into many of the recent exciting and incisive books in reception study in a variety of disciplines. In literary studies these include probing analyses into several national literatures in various eras: Juliet John's *Dickens and Mass Culture* and CharlesMcParland's *Charles Dickens's American Audience*, both reviewed by Jennifer Phegley; Lauren Shohet's *Reading Masques: The English Masque and Public Culture in the Seventeenth Century*, reviewed by Michael Donnelly; Edgard Sankara's *Postcolonial*

*Francophone Autobiographies: From Africa to the Antilles*, reviewed by Olivier J. Tchouaffe; Gillian Roberts' *Prizing Literature: The Celebration and Circulation of National Culture*, reviewed by Molly Abel Travis ; and Joanne Wilkes' *Women Reviewing Women in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Critical Reception of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot*, reviewed by Charlotte Templin. Equally noteworthy are the new studies in book history and the history of reading, which include Barbara Sichertman's *Well-Read Lives: How Books Inspired a Generation of American Women*, reviewed by Rhonda Pettit; William A. Johnson's *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire: A Study of Elite Communities*, reviewed by Ika Willis; Thomas P. Anderson and Ryan Netzley's *Acts of Reading: Interpretation, Reading Practices, and the Idea of the Book in John Foxe's Acts and Monuments*, reviewed by Joseph Sullivan; P. Gabrielle Foreman's *Activist Sentiments: Reading Black Women in the Nineteenth Century*, reviewed by Jeremy Wells; and Shafquat Towheed, Rosiland Crone, and Katie Halsey's *The History of Reading*, reviewed by Patrocínio Schweickart. Readers interested in reception and audience scholarship in cultural and mass-media studies will want to turn to Yung-Hsing Wu's review of Megan Sweeney's *Reading Is My Window: Books and the Art of Reading in Women's Prisons*, Rhiannon Bury's review of Mirko Tobia Schäfer's *Bastard Culture!: How User Participation Transforms Cultural Production*, Kimberly A. Nance's review of Hector Amaya's, *Screening Cuba: Film Criticism as Political Performance During the Cold War*, John Hellmann's review of Michael Z. Newman's *Indie: An American Film Culture*; and Allison Fisher's review of Elena Razlogova's *The Listener's Voice: Early Radio and the American Public*. As is sometimes the case in reception studies, several of the new books that have appeared over

the last eighteen months do not fit easily into one of those categories, crossing instead, for example, between cultural studies and book history--e.g., Ted Striphas' *The Late Age of Print: Everyday Book Culture from Consumerism to Control*, reviewed by Emily Satterwhite--or between literary studies and the history of reading, as exemplified in Amy L. Blair's *Reading Up: Middle-Class Readers and the Culture of Success in the Early Twentieth-Century United States*, reviewed by Barbara Ryan; Emily Satterwhite's *Dear Appalachia: Readers, Identity, and Popular Fiction since 1878*, reviewed by Philip Goldstein; James L. Machor's *Reading Fiction in Antebellum America: Informed Response and Reception Histories, 1820-1865*, reviewed by Gillian Silverman; and Barbara Hochman's *Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Reading Revolution: Race, Literacy, Childhood, and Fiction, 1851-1911*, reviewed by Charles Johanningsmeier. As several of these titles indicate, moreover, reception studies scholars, irrespective of the field, are continuing to explore important questions about the relations between reading and gender (Sicherman, Wilkes, Sweeney), between reception and race (Foreman, Hochman), and between reception and class (Blair, Satterwhite), while extending investigations into new areas of cross-cultural reception (Amaya, Sankara).

One final note about new turns needs to be struck, particularly for *Reception*. Because of the bumper crop of new books in reception study that have appeared over the last several years, it simply has not been possible to review all of the book-length work in the field, and we anticipate this situation continuing in the future as reception-studies scholarship continues to expand into new areas and new disciplinary formations. To address this salutary dilemma, *Reception* will, beginning with this issue, add one additional feature to its yearly offerings: a bibliographical listing, following the book

review section, of other new book-length studies that may well be of interest to RSS members and journal subscribers, as well as to other readers who turn to *Reception* as a guidepost to the current and future shape of the field. Readers can find this year's listing at the end of the current volume. We hope that this wealth of new scholarship will spark even further expansion of the field, will generate conversations that will continue to swell these pages, and will spill over into a vibrant RSS conference in Milwaukee in September 2013.

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