From the Editors

For many years, Queen Anne was simply a convenient figurehead to mark the beginning of the period which interested the contributors to this series of volumes on eighteenth and nineteenth-century British literature, society and culture. Then in the second decade of the present century, Queen Anne began to move closer to centre stage, largery thanks to her emerging reputation for ambiguous sexual identity, a telling reminder of the way in which academic study of the past reflects contemporary cultural concerns. This trend is represented in the current volume by Dorota Babilas in an article ['From Britain's Most Unloved Queen to the Favourite? Film Representations of Queen Anne'] which focuses on the role of the 2018 Oscar-nominated film *The Favourite*. The author examines ways in which the film was preoccupied more with the symbolic and ironic cultural uses of the Queen, than with her real biography, and explores re-appreciation of Queen Anne in the light of currently prevailing cultural issues, such as feminism and LGBTQ inclusiveness. Katarzyna Strzyżowska in turn ['Political Plotters or Puppets? The Role of Women at the Court of Queen Anne'] scrutinises the views of contemporary commentators and historians about the true extent of female influence on affairs of state in Anne's reign.

Moving on chronologically through the long 18th century, the great social themes of industrialisation and urbanisation form the background to Paul Goring's discussion [' "I saw the Man, that saw the Man, that said he saw this wondrous Sight": Mediating the Spectacle of George III's Coronation in the Newspapers'] of the evolving role of the eighteenth-century press in mediating visual display, and replacing traditional spectatorship. Dealing with a slightly later period, Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga, writing of the rural rather than the urban scene ['The Semiotics of the Gothic Country House in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*'], discusses the domestication of the Gothic in Austen's novel, arguing that its dialogic form juxtaposes contrasting genres and codes that construct a multi-layered dialogue.

While interest in Queen Anne has grown, the figure of Queen Victoria has faded somewhat from the forefront of our contributors' attentions. This notwithstanding, Victorian British culture continues to attract significant attention. There is a particularly prominent and wide-ranging group of articles discussing Dickens. Michael Hollington ['Dickens the Vagabond and the Tradition of Nightwalking'] combines an in-depth analysis of chosen passages

in Dickens's novels with an illuminating presentation of the material culture of the 19th century, illustrating the importance for Dickens of the London cityscape and offering analysis of the anthropological aspects of night, darkness, fire. Dominic Rainsford ['1827: Real, Fictional, and Mythic Time in *The Pickwick Papers*'] engages with the problems of historicity, universality, and anachronism in fiction, discussing the novel's chronology in terms of Dickens's personal history; his sense of the social and political specifics of the 1820s; the amateur antiquarianism that is satirised within the novel; and its fictional placement in a literary no-man's-land between Romanticism and the Victorian. Sophia Jochen [' "We must marry 'em": Marriages and Endings in Charles Dickens's *Dombey and Son*'] addresses the question of whether marriage was really a happy ending for the women in Dickens's novels, demonstrating that in the case of *Dombey and Son*, it is presented as a frequently farcical tradition which does not introduce the life-enhancing changes that the protagonists desire. Magdalena Pypeć ['Dickens Writes Trauma: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*'] examines the depiction in *Edwin Drood* of a colonial other suffering from a pathological mental and emotional condition, and concludes that Dickens was describing PTSD symptoms, while at the same time indicating pathways to healing and recovery. Przemysław Uścinski ['Figures of Hypocrisy: Pity and Poverty in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*'] argues that in *Hard Times*, Dickens used parody and irony to expose utilitarianism as hypocritical, and examines the textual devices and intertextual references employed to this end; he also discusses the aesthetics of the novel.

Victorian poetry is appraised by Catherine Maxwell ['Cultivating the Imagination: Plants and Flowers in Later Victorian Poetry'] in an essay which discusses the representation of flora in the poetry of the period. She shows that poems usually invoke flowers impressionistically for an incidental atmospheric contribution or for symbolic or personal associations, before going on to analyse poems by Constance Naden, Laurence Binyon, Algernon Charles Swinburne and Katherine Bradley that look attentively at plants and flowers. Victorian fiction has attracted considerable attention. Ana Clara Birrento ['The Possible Worlds of Oliphant and Eliot in *Miss Marjoribanks* and *Middlemarch*'] evaluates the modes used by the two novelists to construct possible worlds for women characters, discussing the relationship between the private lives of men and women and the public issues of culture and society. Rebecca Warburton Boylan ['Saving Face: Respecting Nature's Inversions in Thomas Hardy's *A Pair of Blue Eyes*'] argues that in this 1873 novel Hardy uses photographic impressions of disrupted realism to show how a woman's rescue of a man momentarily promises a new regard for the woman, but eventually releases a torrent of destructive secrets and lies. Joanna Kokot ['The "(Un)fair Play" Method in Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes Tales'] examines the import of the

absence of the "fair play" method in Conan Doyle's stories, where Watson as a narrator who participated in the events reconstructs the misinterpretations, omissions and blunders which he committed as a character, making it impossible for the reader to act as a legitimate rival to the detective in unravelling the clues. Marta Komsta ['Progress and/as Utopia in James Hume Nisbet's *The Great Secret: A Tale of Tomorrow*'] examines the relationship between the generic paradigm of utopia and the notion of progress, arguing that by juxtaposing the post-mortem utopia with an implicitly dystopian depiction of late Victorian society, *The Great Secret* foregrounds the ideals of moral restoration and spiritual development.

Issues of religious affiliation and religious thought are examined in two articles, reflecting longer-standing interests of both authors and paralleling a reawakened general concern for the importance of religion to the Victorians. Grażyna Bystydzieńska [' "In religion all roads have their obstacles". *Loss and Gain* by John Henry Newman as a Conversion Narrative'] examines the poetics and structure of Newman's partly-autobiographical first novel (1848) in the context of the conversion of both the author and his protagonist, Charles Reding, which in each case was the product of rational, intellectual endeavour, even though emotional issues were frequently decisive in the process. Monika Mazurek ['Reviving the Anglican Confession in the Victorian novel'] deals with many of the same questions, in her examination of contemporary fictional depictions (Charlotte Brontë, Mrs Henry Wood, Emma Worboise, Charlotte Mary Yonge, Christina Rossetti) of the controversial revival in the Church of England of 'Roman Catholic' practices like auricular confession.

In this volume, conceived before the pandemic began, our authors have in many cases profitably re-visited old themes with fresh eyes, while others have moved on to new themes and problems. They have focused on the literature, culture, and political and social history of Britain in a period when the structures of industrial modernity were being created. They have examined Britain's imprint on the global cultural heritage, including class, gender and race-based hierarchies that persist in varying degrees into the present. In a post-pandemic landscape, a different style of academic attitude towards the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will perhaps inevitably take shape, entailing possible new perspectives on disciplinarity and divisions between fields of study, between aesthetics and politics, or between history and the present. We nevertheless hope that the exchange of ideas which has proved so fruitful over the last decade and a half in this Warsaw forum will still have relevance in the future.

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