

subjects' works were conceived, written, published, and received. The condition of women is central to her. Genteel, educated American women of this period were subject to the Victorian ideology of separate spheres. For wives, men, as in Emerson's and Hawthorne's case, chose stability over passion, a help-mate for their genius. Daughters, such as Louisa May Alcott, were pressed into similar service. Before her marriage to Hawthorne, Sophia Peabody, in Cheever's interpretation, chose a common alternative to the burdens of marriage or spinsterhood by making the most of her medically induced ailments and becoming a "bed case." Louisa May Alcott, also a life-long victim of bad medicine, served both her birth-family and friends all her life, directly and with her earnings. After a long career of potboilers, children's stories, articles, and editorial work, Alcott finally wrote her wishful woman's life into the best-selling and now canonical novel *Little Women* (1868-9). Cheever sees in *Little Women* and Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) "the foundation of the American memoir"; in *Little Women* "Alcott invented a new way to write about the ordinary lives of women," and Cheever pays back the debt in this biography.

But she also celebrates the unconventional life that the erudite and passionate Margaret Fuller insisted on creating for herself. The first woman to be admitted to the Harvard Library, she circumvented the law against women's public speaking for money by conducting "Conversations" in Boston. She edited Emerson's magazine *The Dial* until it became clear that he would not pay her for her "service," and, in tandem with her anti-slavery campaign, she published *Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), which originated in an essay in *The Dial*: "The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men, Woman versus Women," laying out "the foundations of modern feminism." After becoming the first female editor of the *New York Tribune*, she travelled

to Europe and reported on the British working classes and the Roman Revolution of 1848-9. In Rome, she nursed wounded soldiers, as Louisa May Alcott, inspired by Florence Nightingale, did during the American Civil War. In Italy Fuller acted on her regret that by avoiding the "trap" that marriage seemed to mean for women she was incurring a loss: "With the intellect I always have always shall overcome, but that is not half of the work. The life, the life Oh my God! Shall the life never be sweet?" George Eliot quoted this sentiment in a letter of 1852 as "inexpressibly touching." In need of earning a living for her new small family, including her baby son and his father Count Ossoli, who had been disinherited for his republican politics, Fuller sailed with them to America, but they perished in a spectacular shipwreck on the New England coast. The manuscript of her "History of the Late Italian Revolutions" was also lost. A new biography, Charles Capper's *Margaret Fuller: An American Romantic Life* (2 vols., 1992, 2007), aims at compensating for the relative neglect caused by her early death at forty and her small published record and at establishing her as a first-rank public intellectual.

Cheever's address throughout is exclusively American: from an American author to an American audience on American icons. This accounts for what in a larger historical and transnational context would be overstatements on her subjects' originality, achievements, and influence. For instance, she omits any reference to Mary Wollstonecraft in the case of Margaret Fuller and is silent on such European Romantic and proto-Romantic works as Rousseau's *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*, Goethe's *Sufferings of Young Werther*, and Wordsworth's *Prelude* when she claims that in *Walden* Thoreau "invented nature writing and memoir writing in one swift, brilliant stroke." What her engaging narrative shows is the Concord Transcendentalists' patriating and thereby adapting of crucial

principles of thought and action for America.

Gisela Argyle, Associate Professor of Humanities at York University in Toronto, has published Germany as Model and Monster: Allusions in English Fiction, 1830s-1930s (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), another book and articles on Victorian literature and comparative literature, as well as literary translations from German into English and the converse.

SISTERS IN TWO WORLDS: A VISUAL BIOGRAPHY OF SUSANNA MOODIE AND CATHARINE PARR TRAILL

Michael Peterman
Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2007

REVIEWED BY ALISON NORMAN

Sisters in Two Worlds is a beautiful book, one that will appeal to both specialists in Canadian women's history, and general readers interested in Canadiana. Susanna (Strickland) Moodie and Catharine Parr (Strickland) Traill are two of Canada's best-known pioneer "bush ladies," having immigrated to Upper Canada from England in 1832. Both were prolific writers, publishing short stories, novels, children's books, emigrant manuals, and poetry throughout their lives. Although Strickland scholar Michael Peterman has written a thoughtful narrative that tells the life stories of these two famous sisters, the star of the book is not the text, but the hundreds of images reproduced in colour on virtually every page. The text is there to support the images, and not the reverse. For this reason especially, the book is a valuable addition to the collection of publications on the Strickland family.

The book begins with an introduction by Charlotte Gray, author of the popular account of the lives of the Strickland sisters, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Lives of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill*. In the following eleven chapters, Peterman takes the reader from the birth of the Strickland children in Suffolk, England at the end of the eighteenth century, through their marriages, emigration, struggles in Upper Canada, and finally their deaths towards the end of the century. Throughout the chronological narrative of the women's lives, Peterman deftly contextualizes their experiences throughout the nineteenth century, fitting their personal stories into the larger narrative, including events such as the Napoleonic wars, the waves of immigration to British North America, and the rebellions of 1837. As the book is not geared towards an academic audience, the references are predictably lacking. Footnotes are few, and the bibliography is limited. An additional nuisance is that if a reader wants to know where a particular quotation comes from, Peterman has only provided general information as to which book or collection of letters it comes from, and not the page number. However, this type of referencing is common in books intended for a popular audience, and does not detract from the book as a whole. One useful addition is the inclusion of several family trees which make following the family history much easier.

In *Sisters in Two Worlds*, Peterman does an excellent job of literally painting a picture of life in the backwoods, and this is where its value lies. Readers of Traill and Moodie will have surely tried to visualize it before, but it is a pleasure to have so many images laid before our eyes. There are over 200 colour illustrations printed on only 176 pages, which makes for a visually pleasing and image-dense book. It is also well designed, at times having the feel of a scrapbook with quotations overlaid on images. Peterman and the designers at Doubleday have beautifully put together a variety of

images, as well as quotations from the women themselves, which tell the story of their lives. The book is clearly exceptionally well researched. For example, there are portraits and photographs of both women and many family members, newspaper articles, copies of documents, the frontispieces of their books, photos of gravestones, letters, and maps as well as paintings and photographs of homes and regions where they lived. Peterman seems to have collected images of every home that the sisters ever lived in, and to have published so many images (previously scattered in archives and libraries across the United Kingdom and Canada) in one place is surely an accomplishment, if not a source of delight for his readers.

Peterman is ideally suited to have put together this book, as he probably personally inspected many of the documents and images for his previous publications. He is certainly one of the most important Strickland scholars, publishing multiple books on these women, including edited collections of letters, short stories, and monographs. It is clear that Peterman has some affection for the Strickland sisters (as do many scholars familiar with their stories). The book is really a celebration of their lives, struggles, successes, and contributions to Canadian literature and history.

Sisters in Two Worlds is a book that will surely be enjoyed by its readers for Peterman's thoughtful biographies, but probably more so because it is a pleasure to view.

Alison Norman is a doctoral candidate in the history of education program at OISE/University of Toronto. Her thesis examines gender, race, and colonialism in early twentieth century Brant County, with a focus on the Six Nations at Grand River. She has been fascinated by the Strickland sisters for years.

A LITERARY HISTORY OF WOMEN'S WRITING IN BRITAIN, 1660-1789

Susan Staves
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006

REVIEWED BY JUDITH ANDERSON STUART

I spent many pleasant hours in airports and bus stations over the December holiday with Susan Staves' literary history. Her insistence on the critical evaluation of women's literary merit, her contextualization of women's writings with the historical movements from which they arose, and her cross-generic approach are interesting and useful. Her book will engage scholars of feminist literature and feminist literary history.

Faced with the wealth of writing by women in her hundred and twenty-nine year period of study, Staves made hard choices about the women authors and their works to be included in this volume. Her literary history privileges those texts that she finds to be the "most original, most intelligent, best written, and most significant." Such an assessment is necessarily rather subjective, but Staves seeks to be selective rather than exhaustive. This is not to say that her history is unduly limited, however: the very scope of this text (430-plus pages, not including a copious bibliography and extensive notes) allows for the consideration of a great range of literary performances. In examining her subject texts across genres and time, she emphasizes women's varying responses to social influences and restrictions, in the process discovering a "rise of the woman author [which] is...bittersweet."

Each of Staves' seven chapters focuses on a specific period which is hinged to political influences on women's writing: 1660-89 (the Restoration to Aphra Behn's death); 1689-1702 (the reign of William and