

SPECIAL CLUSTER: ESSAYS IN HONOR OF ELAINE FREEDGOOD

Introduction

MARY L. MULLEN AND CAROLYN BETENSKY

IN September 2018 New York University hosted a conference (“Elainefest”) to celebrate the many contributions of Elaine Freedgood to the field of Victorian studies. It was a rare event that focused as much on Freedgood’s groundbreaking scholarship as on her less tangible but no less important contributions to the profession: her teaching at the University of Pennsylvania, New York University, and Wallkill Correctional Facility; her mentorship of graduate students and junior scholars; her collaborations with other thinkers; her heartening and humorous emails that encouraged friends in difficult times. What emerged was a picture of a scholar who, as Alicia Mireles Christoff puts it in her essay in this cluster, “speak[s] across narrative frames” (“Metaleptic Mourning”). Freedgood’s research, teaching, mentorship, and advocacy exceed these very categories because both in and out of the classroom, on and off the page, she directs her attention toward real people and material conditions.

The essays included in this cluster represent just a few of the talks given by Freedgood’s colleagues and students at Elainefest. They have been lightly revised for print. Together they demonstrate, in the broadest way, Elaine Freedgood’s profound impact on the field of Victorian studies—its ideas, but also its things, texts, and people.

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