

## Notes on Contributors

GIANFRANCA BALESTRA teaches English and American Literature at the Catholic University of Milan. Besides several essays on contemporary American, Canadian, and Caribbean literature, she has published extensively on the literature of the fantastic, including a book on Edgar Allan Poe (*Geometrie visionarie. Composizione e decomposizione in Edgar Allan Poe*, 1990) and one on Edith Wharton's ghost stories (*I fantasmi di Edith Wharton*, 1993). She is the author of articles on Wharton published both in Italy and the United States, and of introductions to the Italian translations of *The Reef* and *The Touchstone*. The co-editor of *Benjamin Franklin: An American Genius* (1993), she is on the editing board of *Caribana*.

DAVIDA GAVIOLI is currently with the Department of Romance Languages at Oberlin College.

FEDORA GIORDANO, Associate Professor of American Literature at the University of Turin, has published essays on contemporary American poetry (G. Kinnell, N. Tarn, W. Rose), on archetypal criticism (London, Ciardi, Prokosch, P. Gunn Allen), on African American Literature (Toomer, Reed) and on exoticism and primitivism. She is the author of a book on American avant-gardes and Native American oral traditions, *Etnopoetica* (1988), and is associate editor of the *European Review Of Native American Studies*.

DONATELLA Izzo, Associate Professor at the Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples, has published books and essays on English and American authors (Bradford, Melville, Dickens, Howells, Fitzgerald) and edited volumes on literary theory (*Il racconto allo specchio. Mise en abyme e tradizione narrativa*, 1990; *Igitur*, special issue on "Gender, letteratura, cultura", 1993; *Teorie della letteratura negli Stati Uniti. Prospettive per gli anni Novanta*, forthcoming). Her work on H. James

includes several essays and two books (*Henry James*, 1981; *Quel mostro bizzarro: Henry James nella cultura italiana, 1887-1987*, 1988), as well as the editing and translation of two volumes of his writings (*I Giornali*, 1990; *Rose-Agathe e altre*, 1992). She is currently completing a full-length study on the representation of woman in James's short stories.

MICHELA VANON ALLIATA received her doctorate in English Studies from the University of Venice where she is now a researcher in American Literature. She has published *Camera Work* (Einaudi) and various essays on the relationship between literature and the visual arts. She has also edited the catalogue *Alle radici del sole. Forme e figure della scena giapponese* (Eri) and has recently completed a book on the art criticism of Henry James.

## Abstracts

GIANFRANCA BALESTRA, "A Backward Glance over Travelled Roads: Edith Wharton and Expatriation."

Known mainly for her portrayal of Old New York, Edith Wharton was an exile writing from the margin, an expatriate writer whose imagination was shaped by traveling and living in Europe. Expatriation not only gave her a better perspective on American society, but provided her with the artistic and professional stimuli she needed to become a writer. Cultural differences interplay throughout her work, which includes travel writing and novels featuring Europe, expatriates, and visions of America through the expatriate eye. This essay explores the complexities of expatriation both at the biographical and the literary level, in an attempt to trace Wharton's subtle variations on the theme and her articulation of a personal mythology.

DAVIDA GAVIOLI, "A Reversal of Perspective: The Mother's Voice in Edith Wharton's *The Mother's Recompense*."

Over the past decade, feminist scholars have shown how the mother-daughter bond falls outside of the accepted social context of men-women relationship and, for this reason, remains unsaid. Wharton's novel can be read as a text that suspends the cultural muteness of the mother, showing instead how disruptive a mother's voice can be when she speaks, like Kate Clephane, as a subject who shapes "herstory."

FEDORA GIORDANO, "The Anxiety of Discovery: The Italian Interest in Native American Studies."

This essay, which is part of a work in progress on the subject, outlines the

various views on Native Americans held by Italian explorers, missionaries, travelers, anthropologists, and writers in the past four centuries.

DONATELLA IZZO, "Women, Portraits, and Painters: 'The Madonna of the Future' and 'The Sweetheart of M. Briseux'."

Although traditionally interpreted as dealing with the problem of the artist, these early tales by Henry James can be read as powerful statements on the cultural and aesthetic construction of woman. Woman's beauty opens the way for her entrance into the aesthetic dimension, that is, her withdrawal from the existential and temporal sphere, thus virtually changing her from an actual person into an art object. In "The Madonna of the Future," the woman protagonist's explicit resistance to such an aestheticization and the male artist's failure to produce his masterpiece are a denunciation of the artist's idealization both of woman and of Renaissance art. In "The Sweetheart of M. Briseux," the woman protagonist's entrance into the aesthetic sphere, seen as a release from the strictures of life as a bourgeois wife, turns out to be a delusive alternative, equally involving self-denial and loss of identity.

MICHELA VANON ALLIATA, "A Caravan of Gypsies: James, Sargent, and the American Symptom."

This paper focuses on the affinities and differences between Henry James and his favorite portrait painter, John Singer Sargent. At first, a comparison between the two expatriates may seem inevitable. Continentalized from their earliest years, polyglots with a penchant for society, they were almost counterparts in their different media. But a closer look reveals their diverging attitudes toward questions of exile, dislocation, and expatriation. Sargent's refined style, bravura and precocious talent propelled him into the forefront of international society portraiture. From the very beginning his career was accompanied by public acclaim and his status as an exile was never an issue for him. James, instead, was keenly aware of the question of home and belonging; his choice of exile entailed renunciation and losses which remained painfully relevant to the very end.