

Editor's letter

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It is my pleasure to welcome you to the third edition of the *Humanities Directory*. This edition deals with feminist literature and criticism. The three articles and one essay that are presented in the current edition deal, in one way or another, with the perception of the female as artist, author, filmographer, and stereotype. When reading the selections, I was reminded of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's groundbreaking work on feminist literary criticism, *The Madwoman in the Attic*.

That Gilbert and Gubar had to make a case for feminist criticism may strike us as strange, some thirty-odd years after the publication of their book. Yet, as the authors point out in the Second Edition of their work, the reception they received was not universally positive. In fact, they discuss the attempts to marginalize their work, or dismiss it as one of the growing number of "isms" that seemed to proliferate in twentieth century literary landscape. Yet, for all the attempts to marginalize feminist literature and criticism, it has happily, continued to thrive, as our present articles attest.

In her article "The Indian Maiden on the American Stage, 1800s-1850s," Dr. Maria Staton grapples with the "Indian question" that plagued the United States at a time when the notion of "manifest destiny" was the accepted practice in that country. Against this backdrop of a nation struggling with what "to do" with Native Americans, the figure of the Indian Maiden was used on the stage, almost emblematically, to portray a new kind of patriotism which emphasized the civilizing forces of the new country in opposition to the uncivilized behavior of the Native Americans. The conflation of two marginalized sections of the country—the Native Americans, who needed to be "civilized"—and the women who attended these staged productions and were meant to be subservient to their husbands—adds a special sense of poignancy to the work.

Erna Cooper is a scholar, artist, and film director who resides in the Los Angeles area as well as in Paris. The current edition of the *Directory* includes two chapters from her book entitled *Chiaroscuro: Aesthetics, Values, and Autobiography in the Works of Willa Cather and Marguerite Duras*. The book explores the lives of these two women who experienced hardship and personal loss, yet in spite of their setbacks, attempted to maintain their artistic vision and integrity in a male dominated world. We hope to publish Erna's complete book, along with her artwork, in future editions of the *Directory*.

The final piece in the current edition is an essay by Lauren Molinaro entitled "The 'Her' of Browning and Yeats." Ms. Molinaro is an undergraduate student at the University of Wisconsin, Madison and is currently studying at the University of Westminster in London. Ms. Molinaro's essay is concerned with the treatment of the female subjects in each of these poems, a treatment

which results in emotional distancing and the objectification of the heroines. The *Directory* encourages the submission of select undergraduate essays to promote scholarship at all levels of academia.

Artistic vision, scholarship and criticism have long been thought to be the primary demesne of men. Thankfully, this notion is in decline; it cannot be banished too quickly. The muse inspires who she will; her song flows through us, and we record the words.