

# Colby



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## Announcements and Comments

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## *Announcements and Comments*

### SARAH ORNE JEWETT: A WRITER FOR OUR TIME

FROM June 16 to 19, 1985, at the Westbrook College campus in Portland, Maine, over 100 scholars and admirers of Sarah Orne Jewett gathered to celebrate the life, the writing, and the spirit of the Maine author. The diversity of the participants from over fifty institutions around the country and as far away as Japan and Hong Kong confirms that Jewett is “A Writer for Our Time.” Professors, graduate students, teachers, librarians, community people—old and young, female and male—all congregated in an atmosphere of academic inquiry and enthusiasm. The pleasure, joy, and delight so reminiscent of Jewett’s characters and their experiences permeated the conference and set its tone.

The spirited debate of literary interpretation during the sessions of the symposium was enriched by a journey to South Berwick, Maine, where we visited the Jewett House, so handsomely restored by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), and the Hamilton House, the eighteenth-century mansion which is the site of Jewett’s novel *The Tory Lover*. On the evening before this tour, the conference participants heard SPNEA trustee Sally W. Rand describe the recent restoration of the Jewett house, and viewed slides of the process. Art historian Roger Stein of SUNY at Binghamton presented a work in progress with slide illustrations on “Sarah Orne Jewett and the Visual Arts,” which explored Jewett’s relationships with artists and other major cultural figures of her time.

The conference was thus enriched far beyond purely academic discussion in its interdisciplinary approach. In addition, Dorothy Healy, curator of the unique Maine Women Writers Collection at Westbrook College, offered added perspectives by displaying items from the collection related to Jewett, including photographs, letters, and first editions of her books.

The papers delivered at the conference were given by 34 scholars from 27 colleges and universities. The seven essays in this special edition of the *Colby Library Quarterly* are by three of the invited speakers, and by four of the individuals who submitted papers to the conference. These selections are representative of the intellectual discourse of the conference with its exchange of creative ideas and presentation of original research.

Elizabeth Ammons' provocative essay on "A White Heron" examines the story in terms of Jewett's revisions of conventional fairy tale motifs. Josephine Donovan shows how Nan Prince in *A Country Doctor* experiences and overcomes the division between the mythic matriarchal world in which she grew up and the outer patriarchal world of professional opportunity that she enters as a doctor. Gwen Nagel's analysis exhibits the extensive imagery of the New England garden in Jewett's fiction as an expression of feminine territory.

Marti Hohmann's examination of unpublished letters by Sarah Orne Jewett in the University of Virginia library reveals the moral and spiritual influence of Jewett on a young friend, Lillian M. Munger. Marilyn Mobley presents imagery of flight and return in Jewett's fiction through the real and imaginary journeys of her female characters. Sarah Sherman has discovered the archetypal sources for the character of Elmira Todd in the Demeter myth as interpreted by Walter Pater in his essay on Demeter. And Carol Singley contrasts themes of female initiation and transformation in the works of Jewett and Dickinson with traditional male models of initiation in nineteenth-century fiction by men.

These essays offer rich interpretive material that expands the critical scope of Jewett scholarship. We are pleased to share these insights with a larger audience through the *Colby Library Quarterly*.

KARIN WOODRUFF JACKSON  
*Westbrook College*  
*Conference Director, Guest Editor*

THE photo of Sarah Orne Jewett which is reproduced on our front cover is from the archives of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. The picture of the Jewett house in South Berwick, Maine, on our back cover, is from a photo by J. David Bohl, SPNEA.

#### CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

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JOSEPHINE DONOVAN is the author of *Sarah Orne Jewett* (1980); *New England Local Color Literature: A Women's Tradition* (1983), which includes a chapter on Jewett; *Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions*

of *American Feminism* (1985); and numerous articles on Jewett and other women writers. She lives in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

MARTI HOHMANN is a candidate for the Ph.D. in English at the University of Virginia. She is a graduate of the University of Virginia.

MARILYN E. MOBLEY is a candidate for the Ph.D. in English at Case Western Reserve University. She has served as a graduate teaching assistant in English at Case Western Reserve, and as a part-time lecturer in English at Marygrove College and at Wayne State University. Her B.A. (1974) is from Barnard College of Columbia University, and her M.A. (1975) is from New York University. She is currently at work on her dissertation, which involves a study of folk aesthetic and mythic impulse in the fiction of Sarah Orne Jewett and Toni Morrison.

GWEN L. NAGEL is assistant professor of English at Bentley College, Waltham, Massachusetts. Previously she served as an associate in Communication at Harvard Business School. Her Ph.D. is from Tufts University. She is the author, with James Nagel, of *Sarah Orne Jewett: A Reference Guide* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1978). This *Guide* has been updated to 1983 in the Fall 1984 issue of *American Literary Realism*. She is the editor of *Critical Essays on Sarah Orne Jewett* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1984). Her work-in-progress includes both continued work on Jewett and an edition of Caroline Kirkland's *A New Home—Who'll Follow?*

SARAH W. SHERMAN is assistant professor of English at the University of New Hampshire. Previously she served as a visiting member of the faculty at Marlboro College, Marlboro, Vermont. She holds a Ph.D. in American Civilization from Brown University. She has published "The Great Goddess in New England: Mary Wilkins Freeman's 'Christmas Jenny,'" in *Studies in Short Fiction* (Spring 1980). She is at work on "American Persephone: Sarah Orne Jewett in Context," a full-length study based on her dissertation of the same name (Brown, 1983).

CAROL J. SINGLEY is a candidate for the Ph.D. in English at Brown University, and assistant editor of *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*. She has served previously as a teaching fellow at Brown and as a lecturer in Humanities at Johnson State College, Johnson, Vermont. Her B.A. (1972) and M.A. (1975) are both from The Pennsylvania State University. She is scheduled to receive her Ph.D. from Brown in May 1986. She has published a review of Zora Neale Hurston's *Collected Writings* in *Minority Voices* (Fall 1979) and was a contributor to "A Guide to Wharton Criticism, 1974-1983" in *Edith Wharton Newsletter* (Fall 1985). She is at work on her dissertation, "Faith, Desire, and Despair in Edith Wharton's Fiction," and on an article, "Sarah Orne Jewett as Source for Wharton's Ghost Fiction." She held a Brown University Fellowship (1981-82, 1984-85), and she is a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

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