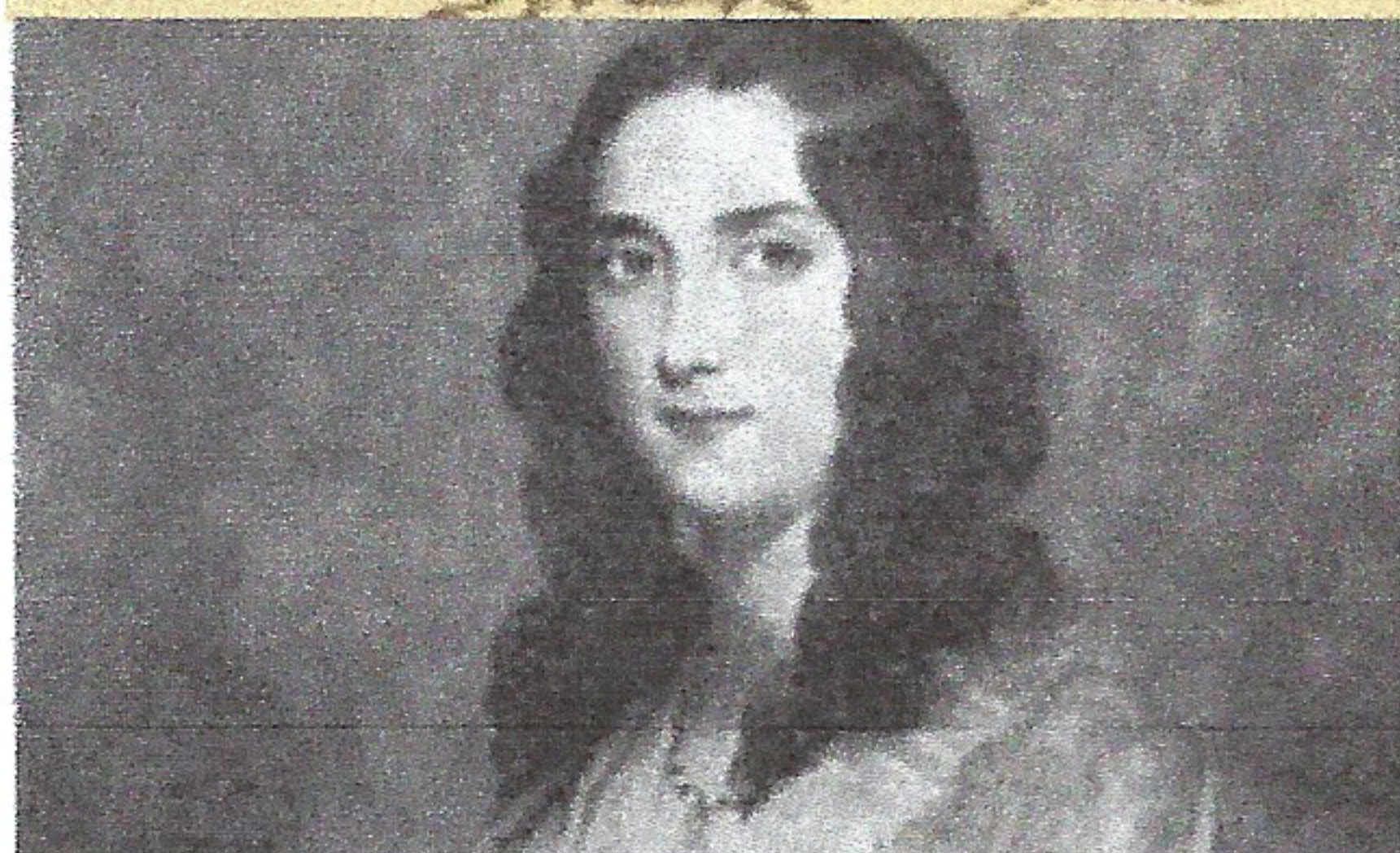


# The Elizabeth Oakes Smith Society Newsletter



## University of South Florida Scholar receives Oakes Smith fellowship



Congratulations to **Zabrina Shkurti**, doctoral candidate at the University of South Florida, who has been chosen as the first annual recipient of the \$1500 Elizabeth Oakes Smith research fellowship.

Shkurti's interest in Oakes Smith focuses particularly on the changing role of motherhood in the early nineteenth-century, which makes the Portland archives particularly useful, including as they do rare original copies of some of Oakes Smith's early columns on the subject (e.g. her "Hints to Parents" series, and "Parents Morally Accountable for the Health of Their Children"). Shkurti will also explore relations between Oakes Smith and Maine writer and editor John Neal, who was both an early mentor and supporter of woman's expanded role in American society.

An exciting aspect of Shkurti's background is her experience publishing in digital formats on the working mother in our own time, as well as her skill in translating work in "English" studies to social media.

### Resources for scholars...

## Three volumes of Oakes Smith's Selected Works to be Published by Mercer Press

When Mercer Press editor **Marc Jolley** wrote to Poe Studies Association President **Amy Branam Armiento** this fall, inquiring if any Poe Studies folks were doing work on Elizabeth Oakes Smith, it so happened that she'd been in recent touch with our President, **Tim Scherman**, so she passed the word along.

Scherman had been working on a "Selected Works" collection for some time, so he forwarded a proposal to Jolley, who accepted it on condition that the proposed volume, which would have run over 300,000 words, be broken up in three volumes. After some reorganization, Scherman signed Mercer's contract, which would bring the first two volumes to market in time for the ALA conference in spring of 2023. The third will appear a year later.

Credit for the idea of a volume or series of volumes that would make Oakes Smith's work available in a compact and modern, annotated and edited form goes to **David Little** and others who attended Scherman's seventy-minute talk for the Gorman Lecture Series at the Yarmouth History Center on June 10, 2014. The theme of the talk was that despite some remembrances included in Oakes Smith's unpublished autobiography written mostly later in life, her early life remains mostly undocumented—leaving anything more than a partial biography out of the question. Rather than wait for a full biography, Little and others suggested, scholars and educators need Oakes Smith's most significant and teachable work in a collected edition first.

The collection is intended to present not only signal texts in Oakes Smith's career but also writings previously read only by scholars with access to archives. Thus her poem "The

continued page 2

### Officers:

Timothy Scherman, President  
and newsletter editor  
Rebecca Jaroff, Secretary  
Mary O. Nichols, Treasurer

### Website:

[www.oakes-smith.org](http://www.oakes-smith.org)

### Membership and Donations:

email: [treasurer@oakes-smith.org](mailto:treasurer@oakes-smith.org)

## IN THIS ISSUE

*University of Florida doctoral student receives first annual Oakes Smith Travel Fellowship*

*Mercer University Press to publish three volumes of Oakes Smith Selected Works*

*Oakes Smith Panel at ALA finesses COVID, begins dialogue with Hawthorne scholars*

*New Book by Elissa Zellinger dedicates significant chapter to Oakes Smith*

*Broadview's new anthology includes EOS's "The Drowned Mariner"*

"Ideas do not go backward,  
but sometimes it is well to  
recover a neglected thread."

*The Queen of Tramps*



## Selected Works...cont'd

"Sinless Child" will be preceded by twenty-six letters between Oakes Smith and her husband during 1833, when Seba Smith traveled to Boston to see his *Letters of Jack Downing* through the press, and a series between 1836 and 1837, when Smith traveled to property he had invested in near Monson, Maine. This correspondence alone sheds new light on Oakes Smith's emergence as a writer and editor, even while it complicates later depictions of the couple's marriage with tones impossible to imagine from her manuscript autobiography. Along with two very teachable pieces of fiction Oakes Smith published as editor of *The Mayflower* in 1847 and 1848, volume one of the collection will end with a narrative and event completely omitted in the autobiography—Oakes Smith's account of her climb of Mt. Katahdin in 1849, along with correspondence with other writers in which she identifies the experience as transformative.

Volume two will be dedicated to Oakes Smith's public career as an activist on behalf of woman's rights, beginning with her treatise *Woman and Her Needs* (1851). Again, excerpts from published work such as *Hints on Dress and Beauty* will be accompanied by writings rarely seen—an early version of her lecture "The Dignity of Labor" and correspondence regarding her projected woman's rights journal, *The Egeria*, the title that preceded *The Una*.

The third volume will return chronologically to Oakes Smith's early novel, *The Western Captive* in a new full edition, with excerpts from other Oakes Smith novels involving representations of women in various historical and cultural contexts.



## Conferences....

### Oakes Smith Panel Draws New Interest from Hawthorne Scholars

The Oakes Smith Society's sponsored panel at the American Literature Association conference was one of our most successful to date, drawing new interest from the Hawthorne Society and other scholars who made the trip.

While masks, distance and hand sanitizer were familiar features, conference organizers and especially tech support at the Boston Copley hotel allowed for new-normal vibe, where almost every panel included some speakers in the room and others remote.

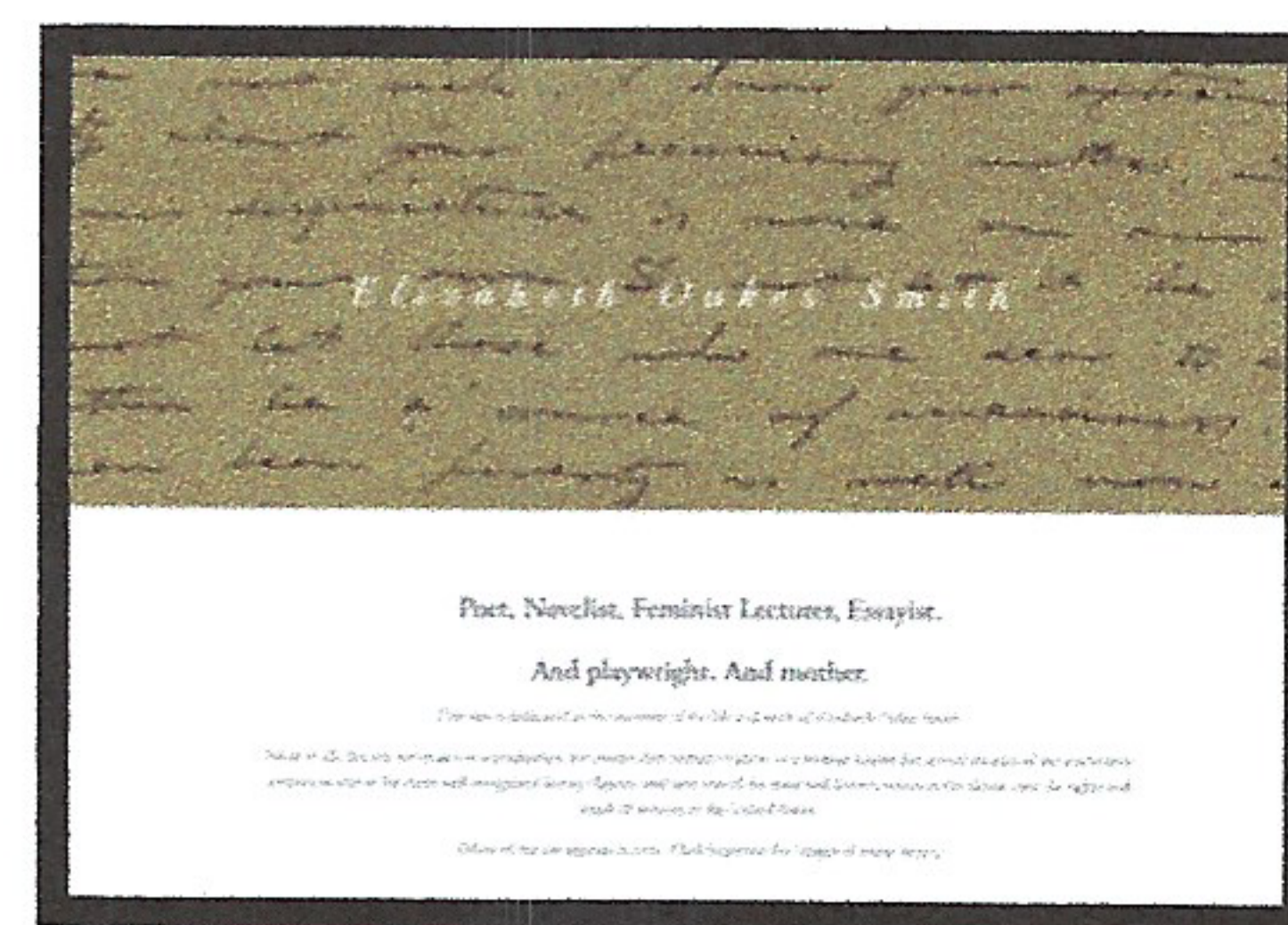
In our case, Chair Becky Jaroff introduced panelists from her vacation residence in Wisconsin, while panelists Tim Scherman and Kyle Fitzmyer presented in the room. Graduate student and panelist Heriberto Pelaez recorded his paper on a screencast-o-matic for us to view on the screen.

While the audience in attendance learned new things from all the papers, the fact that our panel and one of the Hawthorne Society panels were timed in sequence made Pelaez's paper the hit of the afternoon, arguing in several specific ways for Oakes Smith as a likely model for Hawthorne's *Zenobia* in *The Blithedale Romance*. Move over, Margaret.

All three papers are available to read (some with illustrations) on the Oakes Smith website under "Criticism"—"unpublished papers."

## Between Newsletters? Engage With Us!

[The Elizabeth Oakes Smith Page](http://www.oakes-smith.org) ([www.oakes-smith.org](http://www.oakes-smith.org)) continues to grow, providing links to original works and typescripts for classroom or scholarly use. Our [blogspace](#) is open to anyone with new and interesting comments or discoveries related to EOS!



Still on Facebook (for some reason?). Well, OK, the reason might be because we're still there, at [EOS 1806-1893](#). Again, our space is open to the public and especially friendly (as FB is) to new images featuring places, photos and works by EOS.



### New Scholarship...

## New Book Features Oakes Smith's Struggle for Woman's Liberal Selfhood



Elissa Zellinger's recent book *Lyrical Strains: Liberalism and Women's Poetry in Nineteenth-Century America* (2020) argues for four nineteenth-century women poets' use of lyric to contest their exclusion from the categories of liberal subjectivity reserved only for white men. It is not that these women were denied the imaginary "I" of all lyric poetry, but that their subjectivity was reduced to this lyric idealization—the figure of "The Poetess" that took the place of their social and political individuality.

Zellinger's reading of Oakes Smith in the second chapter of the book begins with a strong reading of Oakes Smith's unpublished autobiography, which opens precisely with a demand to be remembered—unlike so many women of her time—as an individual apart from the expectations, imaginary projections and figural embodiments that have circulated both in private and public in relation to her name—someone's wife, someone's mother, or the famous person who once lived in a house in Portland now owned by others. In an unexpected way, like the autobiography, Zellinger's own analysis of Oakes Smith's search for full recognition as a "subject" in US society focuses less on her overt political activism in the 1850s than on her earliest writings. Deftly reading in Oakes Smith's early poems "The Sinless Child," "The Acorn," and "The Drowned Mariner" the figure of an irreducible subjectivity separate from that of the female "I" that narrates or observes, Zellinger effectively completes the argument Oakes Smith never completed or published in her nineteenth-century manuscript autobiography.

More important for Oakes Smith criticism, in writing this chapter Zellinger manages to engage and advance a long legacy of work on "The Sinless Child"—from Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins's "Lyrical Studies" (1999) to Mary Louise Kete's "Gender Valences of Transcendentalism" (2000), Dorri Beam's "Fuller, Feminism, Pantheism" (2013) and more directly on the subject of liberalism, Adam Tuchinsky's "Elizabeth Oakes Smith and the Divorce Question" (2016)—demonstrating the centrality and power of Oakes Smith's contributions in ways we haven't seen since Cheryl Walker made Oakes Smith a "representative" figure of nineteenth-century American women's poetry in her anthology (Indiana, 1982).

### (More) New Resources...

## New Broadview Press Anthology of American Literature Promises Inclusion of Oakes Smith's "The Drowned Mariner"

When many received Broadview Press's announcement of their new anthology of American Literature last week, I'm sure a few of us checked the contents to see which Oakes Smith work might be included.

None, alas? ...Ach.

Oakes Smith's absence was especially strange given Broadview's investment in Caroline Woidat's edition of *The Western Captive* (2015), which made one of Oakes Smith's most readable and teachable novels available for classroom use, alongside a significant group of other short texts on Native Americans and editorial support.

An inquiry to Don LePan, founder and CEO of Broadview Press seemed a stretch, but as those of you who know the editor of this newsletter realize, the quixotic nature of an enterprise was never a curb to the attempt.

As it happened, Mr. LePan agreed with the oversight, and since an electronic supplement is planned along with the paperback edition, he offered to include Oakes Smith's "The Drowned Mariner" as a supplement to the anthology's "Popular Literature and Print Culture" section of Volume B, with this note: "When [my editor] passed your message along to me today, I had a careful read of "The Drowned Mariner"; it strikes me as an exceptionally fine poem, and one that I imagine is very teachable too (whether on its own, or perhaps in conjunction with a poem such as Longfellow's "The Wreck of the Hesperus")."

Within a day, their editors passed along a headnote for our perusal, and with a few careful edits, even in the eleventh hour, Oakes Smith's inclusion in this new, updated and exciting anthology was assured.