

Abstracts

- 285 **Barbara Fuchs**, *Empire Unmanned: Gender Trouble and Genoese Gold in Cervantes's "The Two Damsels"*
 This reevaluation of Cervantes's novella "The Two Damsels" argues that the generic hallmarks of romance disguise a minute engagement with pressing social and political concerns. The cross-dressed damsels' search for their truant love, significantly named Marco Antonio, evinces the fraught connection between the vagaries of masculinity in Spain and the potency of Spain's empire. Transformed from romance pageboys to epic Amazons, the damsels champion domestic commitments over imperial concerns, even as they impersonate masculinity. Yet their profound disruption of the gendered social order and the text's insistent references to the literal bankruptcy of Spain's Old World empire cannot be contained by a successful romance resolution, even if Marco Antonio is successfully diverted from his imperial excursion. (BF)
- 300 **Gert Buelens**, *Henry James's Oblique Possession: Plottings of Desire and Mastery in *The American Scene**
 The focus of this paper is on *The American Scene*, which is found to display a deep sensitivity to the spatiality of desire and to be motivated by a complex dynamic of erotic mastery and surrender: subjects assert their self-possession in the very act of submitting to the erotic power of another force—a force that may be human, non-human, or indeterminate. The desire for literal, physical mastery over the other is here rechanneled into an identification with the scene of desire that can dispense with the erotic object. This complex psychosexual mechanism, which I call oblique possession, thrives on a disruption of the dichotomies of sexuality and identity that queer theory has questioned. In tracing the circuits of oblique possession, the paper articulates a queer perspective on Henry James's work outside any necessary relationship between two individuals. (GB)
- 314 **Dawn Marlan**, *The Seducer as Friend: The Disappearance of Sex as a Sign of Conquest in *Les liaisons dangereuses**
Les liaisons dangereuses neither celebrates pure cynicism nor confirms Rousseau-esque sentiment. Instead, the problem that this novel traces takes the form of a question: how is it possible to reconcile the desire for power, in the form of seduction, with the desire to overcome power in friendship? The answer to this question is embedded in the relationship between Valmont and Merteuil, who develop a new model for friendship, one that is merged with seduction. Because sex does not turn out to be a sign of conquest in the relationship between seducers, conquest can begin to operate invisibly. *Les liaisons dangereuses* points toward the emergence of a new representational possibility—that of invisible conquest—in the literary history of seduction. (DM)
- 329 **Stacey Margolis**, *Huckleberry Finn; or, Consequences*
 A long-standing debate over Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* turns on the question of intention. While defenders of the novel say that Huck's change of heart toward Jim represents a critique of social conformity, recent detractors claim that the novel's celebration of this change of heart represents a form of liberal bad faith. This essay argues that both readings misunderstand the novel, which works not only to highlight Huck's good intentions but also to replace this sentimental model of responsibility with one drawn from the emergent law of negligence. Having effects rather than intentions be grounds of liability, this new legal paradigm made persons responsible for the inadvertent harms they caused others. From the perspective of negligence, *Huckleberry Finn* is an indictment of post-Reconstruction racism—not because it offers friendship as a model of reform but because it imagines accountability even in the absence of malice. (SM)