Editor's Column

WITH THIS ISSUE *PMLA* concludes two years of printing articles accepted under its revised editorial policy—eight issues, 71 articles in all. When the policy was announced some members feared (while others hoped) that, by stipulating that articles must be of significant interest to the entire membership, *PMLA* would become a journal devoted almost entirely to interdisciplinary, comparative, or theoretical criticism. This has not proved to be the case. Only 11 of the 71 articles published to date fit such a description; the other 60 all fall into the traditional categories within which we apparently still divide most of our literature courses—16 articles on authors writing in languages other than English, 21 on subjects involving British literature prior to 1800, and 23 on nineteenth- and twentieth-century British or American authors. The difference, or so those of us on the Editorial Board like to think, is that regardless of their subjects the articles now being selected for *PMLA* are important enough to warrant their being brought to the attention of all members. Since there is no master plan dictating proportional representation, all 71 articles could have centered on, say, Spanish authors of the fourteenth century. That has not happened and probably won't happen, for the number of submissions considered (several thousand) assures that, merely by doing what comes naturally, the Board accepts articles that reflect a range of current interests. We are what we do; what we do is what's appearing, for better or for worse, in the recent issues of *PMLA*.

The same kind of reasoning, and reality, applies to contributors. All of these first 71 articles could have been written by well-known senior professors, all by relatively unknown graduate students. In fact—and I think this bodes well for the future of our profession—22 were written by full professors, 20 by associate professors, 20 by assistant professors, and ten by members who, at the time their articles were accepted, were lecturers, graduate students, or without academic affiliation. I also consider it a healthy sign that these contributors teach at 52 different institutions, 25 at private colleges or universities, 22 at state colleges or universities, and five at foreign universities. It is good to receive articles from Yale (the only school represented by four contributors), but equally good to see articles from Kent State and Georgia State, Toledo and St. Olaf, Howard and Manhattanville, Manitoba and Malaya.

Although this issue does not include contributions from places as exotic as Malaya (the first two items come from Urbana, but Urbana only sounds exotic), it continues to reflect our wide range of interests—nine essays in criticism on topics as diverse as the Middle English ballad and nineteenth-century American humor. The first essay, by Cary Nelson, explores the character of critical activity itself, and appears as the lead article because it asks some important and perhaps disturbing questions about ourselves and our work as literary critics. Treating, among others, Northrop Frye, Harold Bloom, Stanley Fish, Susan Sontag, Hugh Kenner, Roland Barthes, Geoffrey Hartman, and J. Hillis Miller, Nelson questions both the organic conception of a literary career and the notion of the scholar as disinterested historian. One member of the Editorial Board considered this article to be "touchy-feely stuff," and, while I am not at all sure what that means, I do think the essay should be touched or felt and preferably read by all members of the profession; it contains some fascinating suggestions.

The next two essays also concern literary criticism, although in quite different ways and on quite different authors, Luther and Coleridge. H. G. Haile, treating Luther and literacy (and a good deal more) presents what I suspect will be to many of us a new Luther—popular polemicist and song-writer, self-conscious and many-sided man of letters. The essay is of special interest to German scholars and to those concerned with the relationship between literature and religion, but Haile's is a highly readable essay well worth reading by all of us. The same is true of Bishop Hunt's article on Coleridge, of special interest to Coleridgeans and to those concerned with literature and philosophy, but also worth reading by anyone interested in the history of ideas and the development of romanticism. Our specialist consultant summed it up this way: "I have read a vast amount of Coleridge criticism and scholarship in recent years—much of it mediocre, some of it good, little that I wanted to clip out and keep. This is one I will clip and keep."

The next three articles are grouped together because each involves reinterpretation of a major work, if one considers as major the earliest surviving ballad in Middle English. Major or not, *Judas* is prob-

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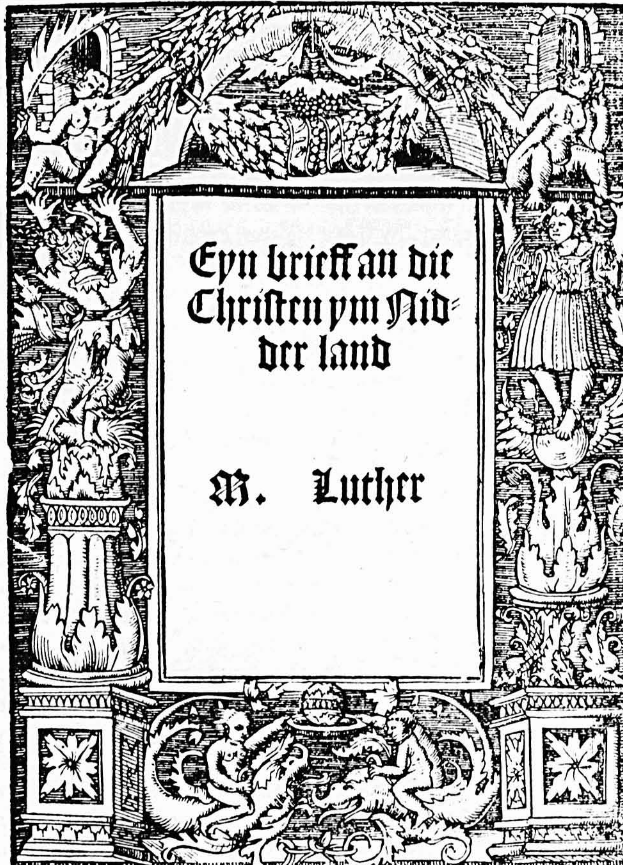
ably unknown to most nonspecialists and that's a pity; as revealed by Donald Schueler's interpretation, which goes a long way toward making sense of a puzzling and intriguing ballad, the poem has far more to offer than just historical interest. Book IV of *Gulliver's Travels* is of course major by any standards; in her article, Ann Cline Kelly approaches a number of its problems through comparing the Yahoos and the Irish in terms of Swift's views on "slavery," and in so doing leads us to see some familiar incidents in a very new light. Similarly, by drawing on the history of medicine, David Richards offers a radically new basis for interpreting Schiller's Joan; showing Mesmer's importance in a new context, Richards also extends our knowledge of the period of German classicism and European romanticism.

At first glance, the last three essays might appear to have nothing at all in common, treating as they do such apparently diverse topics as motherly love, humor, and hierogamy. Each, however, involves a study of human relationships in a social and literary context, mainly within the novel, and thus I feel they make interesting reading as a group. Robert Bledsoe's article has much that is fresh and revealing (and entertaining) to say about Thackeray and *Pendennis*, but his real subject is the "power of sentimentality" and his study goes beyond even Thackeray in its implications about the Victorian search for emotional security. Similarly, while Alfred Habegger's article treats many different aspects of American humor and has some intriguing suggestions on Penelope Lapham and Howells, much of his commentary centers on the distinctions between the sexes in nineteenth-century America. Finally, Evelyn Hinz's article, while primarily concerned with the generic distinction between romance and the novel, centers its attention on "marriage" within (wedlock) and outside of (hierogamy) a social frame of reference. While the article exposes a compelling pattern and a method of interest to anyone concerned with prose fiction, it also forces us to take a new look at patterns of expectation in works of fiction treating relations between the sexes.

WILLIAM D. SCHAEFER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M. Luther

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Reading Criticism. CARY NELSON 801

Abstract. Prefaces to critical books often display more self-consciousness and uneasiness than we usually associate with critical discourse. These moments when critics speak about their own work can undermine our assumptions about disinterested scholarship. Moreover, they can lead to a reexamination of the critical activity and a search for new ways of evaluating critical prose that take account of the critic's attitude toward his own work. We need to examine criticism's stylistic and formal properties, not just its paraphrasable content. Such analysis can reveal the way a critic's interests and commitments are woven into the texture of his language. That language, however, will always partly betray or suppress the critic's experience. Criticism, moreover, can neither wholly escape nor wholly dominate the texts it treats. Yet it can also never be entirely self-effacing. As a result, criticism is a particularly ambivalent and compromised form of writing. (CN)

Luther and Literacy. H. G. HAILE 816

Abstract. Luther studies have traditionally been confessionally oriented. Today, this author's significance is also secular, and it is most readily interpreted by disinterested literature teachers. Disputes about his writings radically increased European literacy rates. His songs and pamphlets engaged popular tradition in order to achieve broad, democratic appeal. Aside from the increase in readership after 1518, Luther as critic and interpreter brought about a more important qualitative change in literacy. In this way, he influenced writings of other lands and of later centuries. He treated the Bible as literature with great relevance to the individual life. Karl Holl and Heinrich Bornkamm give excellent accounts of his hermeneutics, but the literature student is most impressed by Luther's imaginative participation in the text. He took his contemporaries and countrymen into account, and their experiences, in order to achieve a meeting between their passions and those of the biblical authors. (HGH)

Coleridge and the Endeavor of Philosophy. BISHOP C. HUNT, JR. 829

Abstract. Platonism, in its eclecticism and hidden continuity, proved congenial to Coleridge, whose conception of the nature and role of philosophy differed profoundly from the empirical orthodoxy of his time (and ours). Coleridge's conception resembles the Greek ideal, found in Plotinus and others, of philosophy as less a purely rationalistic pursuit than a form of *gnosis* involving the whole man and leading toward ultimate perceptions. Platonism has important literary consequences: Coleridge's "philosophical" writings may be read as a complex (and often beautiful) form of prose poetry. Analysis suggests that the mode of argument in crucial chapters of the *Biographia* (XXI–XIV) is substantially poetic in nature and perhaps deliberately paralogical. Coleridge attempts certainty, without attaining it, and shows, astonishingly, an equivalent of Keats's "Negative Capability" in the disinterestedness of his symbolic investigations or "constructs" of reality. Literary form and style are more important in Coleridge's intellectual prose than has been thought. (BCH, Jr)

The Middle English *Judas*: An Interpretation. DONALD G. SCHUELER 840

Abstract. The Middle English *Judas* seems to pose more narrative problems than it solves. The sympathetic characterization of Judas; the shift in dramatic focus from Judas to Peter's denial of Christ; the implausible bargain Judas strikes with Pilate—all are perplexing elements. They can be resolved, however, once it is understood that *Judas* explains a biblical scene not presented in the work itself: the moment when Christ asks the apostles to share bread and wine, his body and blood. The sympathetic portrayal of Judas and the final emphasis on Peter's denial diminish the moral range between the two disciples and imply the universality of human sinfulness. But Judas' transaction, in which Christ is sold for the money to buy food for Passover, gives an even more specific and ironic meaning to the offstage lines "This is my body" since the bread and wine will cost Christ's body and blood. (DGS)

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Swift's Explorations of Slavery in Houyhnhnmland and Ireland. ANN CLINE KELLY 846

Abstract. Swift recognized that "slavery" was an ambivalent term: on one hand, slavery can be seen as a biological imperative a natural condition of the innately servile; on the other hand, slavery can be seen as a political accident a circumstance imposed from without by those with the will and power to oppress. Swift consistently characterized the Irish as "slaves" and called the relationship of Ireland to England "slavery." In the case of the Irish, Swift feared that their slavery, which may have begun as external oppression, would eventually become an intrinsic part of Irish character. If Swift's observations on slavery in Ireland are applied to the slavery of the Yahoos to the Houyhnhnms in Book IV of *Gulliver's Travels*, the question of whether slavery is a matter of nature or nurture also arises, for there is evidence in Book IV to suggest that the Yahoos were as rational as Gulliver when they arrived in Houyhnhnmland. (ACK)

Mesmerism in *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*. DAVID B. RICHARDS . 856

Abstract. Schiller, far from regarding the story of Joan of Arc as a web of medieval superstition, found a rational explanation for her peculiar behavior in Mesmer's theory of animal magnetism. It can be shown that Johanna starts out in a somnambulistic trance, is awakened gradually to normal consciousness by her encounters with Montgomery, the Black Knight, and Lionel, and finally regains a trance state in her apotheosis. The source of Johanna's control over persons and events is her possession of "active" (hypnotic) vision. Her enjoyment of this power coincides with her trance states, and she is bereft of it when conscious. This radical break between somnambulism and consciousness symbolizes the unbridgeable gulf between the aims and values of human life (represented by Thibault, Charles, and Agnes Sorel) and the exigencies of the historical and political process. (DBR)

Pendennis and the Power of Sentimentality: A Study of Motherly Love. ROBERT BLEDSOE 871

Abstract. In *Pendennis* Thackeray redefines the meaning of "maturity" in order to suit the unusual needs of Pendennis in his compulsive search for emotional security. The narrator's ability simultaneously to denigrate and to celebrate the sentimental purity of Pen's mother, Helen, is the paradox whose development gives esthetic coherence to an otherwise commonplace story. Both Helen's youthful disappointments and her later possessiveness elicit protective responses from the narrator, although he goes out of his way to make her destructive nature increasingly obvious to the reader and to Pen himself. Moreover, Pen's continued inability to break away from Helen's demands reinforces her insistence on total allegiance from him. The narrator presents his characters' problems within a framework of psychological reality, but solves them only on the level of pseudo-incestuous fantasy. Therefore, final freedom from the terrors of insecurity involves Pen's willing enslavement to the mindlessness of Helen's sentimentality. (RB)

Nineteenth-Century American Humor: Easygoing Males, Anxious Ladies, and Penelope Lapham. ALFRED HABEGGER . . . 884

Abstract. The basis of much nineteenth-century American humor was a certain male mask the easygoing, countrified sloven. Women played a complementary role in society and fiction the anxious manager of house and culture. Thus, Howells' and Mark Twain's couples often consist of a relaxed, humorous man and a tense woman. There was a tradition of female humor, however, best represented by Kate Sanborn's *The Wit of Women* (1886). The humor in this anthology has a genteel aplomb quite different from the male mask's incompetence. A few women writers, notably Marietta Holley, invented vernacular female humorists, but Howells created the finest of all in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*. Penelope, the first humorous female lead in an American novel, is a male impersonator, and her droll, unfashionable sensibility proves more attractive than the "gilded" femininity of beautiful, vapid Irene. Yet Howells rejects Penelope in the end. (AH)

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Hierogamy versus Wedlock: Types of Marriage Plots and Their Relationship to Genres of Prose Fiction. EVELYN J. HINZ . . 900

Abstract. Because we conventionally think of marriage in social and moral terms, we tend to regard it as a subject practically indigenous to the novel. Hence a work like *Wuthering Heights* poses problems for the traditional genre critic, since while this work is concerned with marriage its conventions are not those of the novel. The usual tactic is to call Brontë's work a "romance," but marriage is not compatible with the "romance" as the term is usually defined. It is thus important to recognize that there are two types of marriage plots in prose fiction: one indigenous to the novel, that might be called "wedlock"; another, indigenous to works like *Wuthering Heights*, that may be called "hierogamy." Thus, works like *Wuthering Heights* should not be classified as "displaced novels" but as examples of an autonomous genre which for the present might be designated "mythic narrative." (EJH)

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Only members of the Association may submit articles to *PMLA*. Each article submitted will be sent to at least one consultant reader and one member of the Advisory Committee. If recommended by these readers it will then be sent to the members of the Editorial Board, who meet every three months to discuss such articles and assist the Editor in making final decisions.

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