Abstracts

29 **Mike Chasar,** The Business of Rhyming: Burma-Shave Poetry and Popular Culture

This essay uses the example of the long-lived and popular Burma-Shave advertising campaign to argue that literary critics should extend their attention to the vast amounts of poetry written for advertising purposes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Burma-Shave campaign—which featured sequences of rhyming billboards erected along highways in the United States from 1926 to 1963—not only cultivated characteristics of literary and even avant-garde writing but effectively pressured that literariness into serving the commercial marketplace. At the same time, as the campaign's reception history shows, the spirit of linguistic play and innovation at the core of Burma-Shave's poetry unintentionally distracted consumers' attention away from the commercial message and toward the creative forces of reading and writing poetry. A striking example of popular reading practices at work, this history shows how poetry created even in the most commercial contexts might resist the commodification that many twentieth-century poets and critics feared. (MC)

48 **Seeta Chaganti,** Vestigial Signs: Inscription, Performance, and *The Dream of the Rood*

Anglo-Saxonists often explore connections between *The Dream of the Rood* and two ritual objects, the silver Brussels cross and the sandstone Ruthwell monument, inscribed with verses related to the poem. This essay offers a new perspective on these artifacts, elucidating not a historical narrative linking them but rather an Anglo-Saxon poetics made visible in their juxtaposition. It argues that these three manifestations reveal a dialectic of inscription and performance in Anglo-Saxon poetics. Reading the familiar Old English text through J. H. Prynne's "A Note on Metal" (1968), which imagines dialectics both of metal and stone and of inscription and performance, the essay also interrogates certain divisions between premodern and modern aesthetic traditions. Theories of media, performance, and inscriptionality help to stage an interdisciplinary analysis of *The Dream of the Rood* and to show that its poetics originate in the formal frameworks of Anglo-Saxon material culture. (SC)

73 **Jonathan Berliner,** Written in the Birch Bark: The Linguistic-Material Worldmaking of Simon Pokagon

Simon Pokagon's writings exemplify a complex process of linguistic-material worldmaking. His birch-bark booklets bring together multiple cultural traditions, including nineteenth-century tourist art, traditional Algonquian writing, and a long history of writing on bark that dates to the early history of writing itself. Neither purely things nor purely texts, these documents interweave nature and culture in such a way that Pokagon can be said to be engaging in a process of naturalization whereby the cultural is presented as a feature of nature. To promote his reformist agenda, Pokagon capitalizes on a rich cache

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of naturalist symbolism that was of particularly high cultural value in Victorian America. What is perhaps most notable about Pokagon's use of naturalization is that he makes this linguistic trope into a materialist discourse.   (JB)

92   **Paul Benzon,** Lost in Transcription: Postwar Typewriting Culture, Andy Warhol's Bad Book, and the Standardization of Error

This essay considers the instability of the typewriter as a writing machine and as an object within the media history of the twentieth century, examining how the typewriter keyboard and the transcriptive protocols of the modern office materially shape writing practice. The standardization of the typewriter system produces a textual aesthetics of error and uncertainty rather than of mechanized circumscription. Andy Warhol's *a* is a novel whose mode of production explores the limits of the typewriter's transcriptive uncertainty. Written by a distributed network of typists and inundated with errors and ambiguities, *a* offers a radically defamiliarizing representation of how the typewriter system opens new pathways of authorship, embodiment, and literary production. Drawing on *a*'s aesthetic experimentation, this essay argues that the localized, idiosyncratic, yet often suppressed disruptions produced by the typewriter suggest the possibility of an alternative to linear, teleological conceptions of media history.   (PB)

107   **Brooks E. Hefner,** "Any Chance to Be Unrefined": Film Narrative Modes in Anita Loos's Fiction

This essay examines the underappreciated work of the Hollywood scenarist and humor writer Anita Loos. In general, Loos is known separately to film scholars, as a prominent writer of silent films, and to historians of American culture, as an important twentieth-century humorist. However, her filmwriting career and her work in the theory of film writing influenced the narrative structure and assumptions of her fiction. Through readings of Loos's three early novels, the essay demonstrates how the humor and complex cinematic structure of these texts depend on a stark text-image divide that stems directly from her ideas about writing for silent film. Looking at Loos's fiction in the light of her intimate familiarity with the film industry provides new insight into dialogues about high and popular culture and into the engagement of modernism with cinema.   (BEH)