

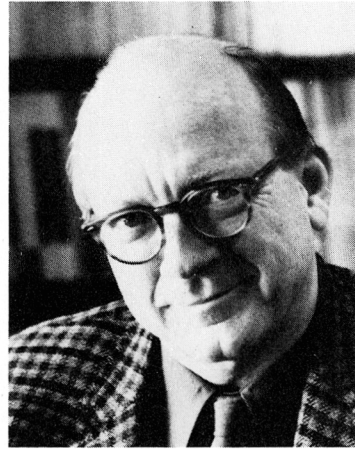
PMLA

Volume 92
Number 3

*Publications of the
Modern Language Association
of America*

May 1977

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Abstract. Overshadowed by "The Thorn" and "The Idiot Boy," Wordsworth's "Simon Lee" has attracted little attention. It is, however, a complex and ambitious poem, the product of a collision between narrative form and the demands of the imagination. "Simon Lee" does three things: it seeks to wean the reader from his low taste for stories; it displays a dramatic speaker learning to exchange narrative for lyric poetry; and, surprisingly, it undermines the whole proceeding, mourning for the very tales in verse that it abandons. Analysis of the poem from these three points of view sheds light on Wordsworth's ambivalence toward narrative. At the same time it helps us reassemble and relate three competing views of Wordsworth: as evangelist or moral teacher; as dramatist; and as the elegiac poet of the "Ode" and "Tintern Abbey," whose tendency toward self-involution underlies and influences even his attitudes toward audience and genre. (ALG)

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Abstract. A sound basis for interpreting the odes as a sequence, with unity of theme and progression of thought, may be found in the theme of mutability. It is generally acknowledged as central in the other odes but has been neglected in discussions of the "Ode to Psyche." Though this theme is dealt with defensively, it is evident in the tone, in the paradoxical conception of Psyche as a dying immortal, in the imaginative effort to restore her presence and rescue her from the "faint Olympians," and in the final act of internalization. As in the other odes, the answer to the problem of mutability lies in an acceptance of the natural process of which man's life is a part and in a will to adapt. Though Keats would make Psyche the presider over his soul, he is aware that in the end he must preside over his own growth and "Soul-making." (LW)

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Abstract. The visual focus in Tennyson's poetry moves between particularized objects and hazy vistas. His particularist bent, arising in part from myopia, coincided with the bias of an age that both exalted the Symbol and revered empirical observation. But Tennyson's fears of psychic entrapment within the object and of nature's uncontrollable prolixity inclined him alternatively toward the receding "past" and the distanced "picture." This tendency reinforces itself through the correlative temporal and spatial frames of his poetry: "modern frames" enclose his "pasts"; "casements" focus his "pictures." Tennyson thus exemplifies the Victorian attempt to reconcile particulars and universals, and the "telescopic dualism" of nineteenth-century painting and poetry, wherein detailed foregrounds and indefinite, receding backgrounds are discrete. In Tennyson such a division distinguishes a material world precisely apprehensible through sight and a spiritual one

that fades toward diaphaneity. The paradigm for Tennyson's unattainable goal of optical (and epistemological) inclusiveness is "The Eagle." (GJ)

King Lear and the Decline of Feudalism.

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Abstract. The moral problems that are explored in *King Lear* can be clarified by viewing them in the context of Shakespeare's history plays and of contemporary social conflicts. Lear and Gloucester share the values of a feudal aristocracy that is threatened by an acquisitive and irreverent bourgeois class; the argument over Lear's train reflects the Tudor monarchs' struggle against maintenance, the right of an aristocrat to keep an armed retinue. The Tudor crisis of the aristocracy had tragic connotations for Shakespeare, and the heroes of his later plays are usually figures of the "old regime." This is not inconsistent with Marx's concept of tragedy, but Shakespeare's humanism should be recognized as nostalgic rather than forward-looking. (PD)

God, Satan, and King Charles: Milton's Royal Portraits.

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Abstract. Between the interpretation in Milton's prose works of the monarchy of Charles I and the portrayal in *Paradise Lost* of the tyranny of Satan there exists an extensive and complex consistency based on the concept of the divine right of kings, a doctrine that informs the character and world view of Satan as well as of King Charles. In his effort to counteract the *Eikon Basilike's* picture of Charles as a Christlike martyr-king, Milton drew in *Eikonoklastes*—albeit in fragmentary form—his own essentially fictional characterization of Charles as a tyrant. This analysis, continued in the *Defences*, studies Charles's personal heroism, political behavior, delusions about himself, his followers, and his cause and is extensively paralleled in the depiction of Satan. These prose works thus serve as a valuable literary gloss on *Paradise Lost*—on certain details of imagery and characterization and on Milton's conception of true liberty and revolution. (JSB)

The Parenthetical Function in *A la recherche du temps perdu*.

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Abstract. This essay examines parentheses on the level of individual narrative sequences in *A la recherche du temps perdu*. A narrative sequence is a limited, linear series of events that can be subsumed under a single label. "Sequence-level parenthesis" may be defined as an independent textual segment inserted between two contiguous moments in the sequence, interrupting its forward movement. The unique feature of Proust's sequence-level parentheses is the multiplicity of functions they fulfill: narrative, interpretive, associative. (1) Parentheses fill in gaps in the story, announce, prepare, or generate events to come, remind us of past events, etc. (2) They qualify or explain specific facts or situations; they also formulate generalizations or laws. (3) Parenthetical associations play a role analogous to that of the metaphor and the phenomenon of involuntary memory: they establish connections (*rapprochements*) between widely separated textual fragments. To borrow a term used by Proust, Spitzer, and more recently Deleuze, parentheses are the *transversales* of textual multiplicity. (SS)

"Les Mithologies Pantagrueliques": Introduction to a Study of Rabelais's *Quart livre*. ALICE FIOLA BERRY 471

Abstract. The *Quart livre* is Rabelais's *Inferno*. To project his vision of universal catastrophe, Rabelais borrowed from all the voyage literature he knew, from Homer through Cartier, but he drew most from two Old Testament myths. Like

the story of Jonah, the *Quart livre* is a voyage down the digestive tract into the sick belly of the whale, of self, of the world—a voyage forecast in Chapter xxxii of the *Pantagruel*, where Alcofribas enters the giant’s mouth, and in Chapter xxxiii, where he descends into Pantagruel’s belly to cure him. Rabelais transforms Jonah’s story into an account of death and regeneration. He also confers medical value on the story of Moses, who healed the world with the Word of God. As a writer-physician, Rabelais is also a “logotherapist,” and his characters strive to emulate Moses’ achievement. They too seek the therapeutic word, “le mot de la dive Bouteille.” (AFB)

The Form of Carnival in *Under the Volcano*.

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Abstract. The variety of moods and techniques and the astonishing erudition of Malcolm Lowry’s *Under the Volcano* have frustrated critical attempts to grasp the work as a unified whole and have fostered instead an emphasis on decoding and explicating. The generic characteristics that Mikhail Bakhtin discerns in the tradition of Menippean Satire, however, provide a fresh and integral interpretation. Bakhtin’s description subsumes such formal and thematic aspects of the work as its suppressed comedy, variety of styles, topicality, wide adaptation of other genres, fantastic inventiveness, frequent sharp contrasts and abrupt transitions, scandalous eccentricity, intellectual seriousness, three-leveled world view, utopianism, and psychological abnormality. These apparently heterogeneous characteristics are organized and unified within both Bakhtin’s theory and the book’s world by the model of carnival festivity. As an annually recurring celebration of change, carnival allows us, furthermore, to understand Lowry’s spatializing sense of the book as “trochal,” like the regularly turning wheel of a machine. (JA)

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