

## Editor's Column

SEASONAL considerations are not normally a factor in the composition of an issue of *PMLA*. Readers in Anchorage and in Auckland will find in the October number no reflection of their meteorological disparities, and the Editorial Board resolves to bring to the members as much good cheer in any other of the journal's issues as it does in the one that coincides with the onset of a new year. Looking over the contents of *PMLA* for 1989, however, I notice that two of the January titles invoked politics just as Washington resounded with inaugural balls, while this March issue welcomes spring with a pair of articles on the sublime. Whether or not these are accidents into which the overeager analyst of texts can read symbolic significance, I confess that we could not resist scheduling for the May issue a piece of "summer pasta."

The pairings are not accidental either, for the juxtaposition in differing contexts of such charged terms as *politics* and *the sublime*, which R. Jahan Ramazani ultimately fuses into a *politics of the sublime*, reflects *PMLA*'s own politics of reception: to echo Ramazani, it is "neither right-wing nor left-wing but open to either articulation." In their respective examinations of Samuel Johnson and Walter Benjamin (Jan. 1989), Robert DeMaria and James L. Rolleston came at politics from entirely different directions. Politics as theme, politics according to the dictionary definition of "the art or science of government," and the cultural foundation of political order marked DeMaria's analysis of Johnson's *Dictionary*. The word *politics* appeared far less frequently in Rolleston's discussion, for, situated in the more abstract realm of contemporary thought, his essay confronted Benjamin's perception of the ontological operations that inhere in writing and bear on the formulation of historical images. Politics emerges in this issue in another guise with Margaret Waller's "*Cherchez la Femme: Male Malady and Narrative Politics in the French Romantic Novel*," an essay that challenges the canon and revises the concept of *mal du siècle*. Gender and narrative form in this instance are the centers where governing tensions are played out and where the empowered structures come under threat. Politics will surface yet again in forthcoming issues.

Readers will discover similar and equally productive counterpoints between Ramazani's "Yeats: Tragic Joy and the Sublime" and Marc W. Redfield's article, "Pynchon's Postmodern Sublime," which coincide in only four bibliographic entries. To breach the abyss between the psychology and rhetoric of the romantic sublime to which Yeats had recourse and the deceptive absolutes of Pynchon's technological sublime grounded in language requires considerable stamina. The reader who accepts the invitation to approach the essays in the reverse chronological order in which they are printed will be able to retrace common paths toward apocalypse in both writers and will witness in both the reconciliation of ostensible incompatibilities. The demonstration of the riches that varying critical positions can extract from a single conceptual point of departure could not be more dramatic.

Just as in recent years we had the opportunity to print articles on Joyce and on Woolf back to back, national and historical coincidence suggested the coupling of Alan C. Leidner's "A Titan in Extenuating Circumstances: Sturm und Drang and the *Kraftmensch*" with Robert Ellis Dye's "'Selige Sehnsucht' and Goethean Enlightenment." Leidner's broad exercise in cultural history questions hallowed assumptions about the Sturm und Drang period and ties his new understanding of the *Kraftmensch* to the German social scene. A quartet of important playwrights provides the raw material for his interpretation. Dye returns to the pages of *PMLA* with a fresh reading of one of Goethe's best-known poems. He ironically enriches all prior readings by undermining their certainty while providing a lesson in how to deal critically with poetic ambiguity.

Circumstantial clusters notwithstanding, volume 104 of *PMLA* promises an exceptionally fair representation of various (though not all) of the association's national constituencies (and an almost equal division between male and female contributors; women will be the authors of all but one of the articles in the May issue, including the Presidential Address, the executive director's report, and a piece by an honorary fellow). Yeats partnered with Pynchon in this number and Johnson alongside Robert McMahon's study of Kenneth Burke's *Rhetoric of Religion* in the January issue signal, for the moment, a relative balance between British and North American subjects. The trio of articles in the German field is a heartening development that I hope will set a pattern for the future. Joan Templeton, with her January essay, "The *Doll House* Backlash: Criticism, Feminism, and Ibsen," has again brought the Norwegian playwright into the pages of *PMLA*; and Christiane von Buelow launched this year's Latin American dimension with "Vallejo's *Venus de Milo* and the Ruins of Language." Two articles on Spanish literature are forthcoming, as are two on French in addition to Margaret Waller's piece in this number.

With this issue, *PMLA* initiates its new feature, announced last year, "Criticism in Translation." The first selection in this occasional series is a portion of Gérard Genette's book *Mimologiques: Voyage en Cratylie*, originally published in 1976. This translation belongs to the second category for which a call went out: "contemporary work of sufficient weight and potential influence to merit dissemination within the field as a whole." As the translator, Thaïs E. Morgan, puts it, Genette in this volume "introduces the reader to a new genre of discourse that cuts across disciplinary boundaries" as he explores the "desire for words that look, sound, or even smell like things." Jean-Paul Sartre and Roman Jakobson are the principals in the section of Genette's exposition of a theory of language that Morgan has chosen to present in *PMLA*. A further translation, now in preparation, belongs to the other category of solicited essays: "seminal scholarship from earlier periods that has not lost its forcefulness and whose retrieval in English in *PMLA* would be a noteworthy event for a broad body of readers." That noteworthy event will be an exchange among Emil Staiger, Martin Heidegger, and Leo Spitzer about the art of interpretation.

There is yet another first in this issue. To the best of my knowledge, *PMLA* has never printed an interview. When we approached Gabriel García Márquez with the suggestion that he might like to contribute an essay to the ongoing series by honorary fellows and members of the association, he countered with the proposal that we interview him instead, structuring the exchange to our liking. The result is this dialogue, in which the author of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, who recently spent many weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list for his *Love in the Time of Cholera*, speaks about the graphic inspiration for his writing, about historical rigor in fiction, about the United States Department of State, and about academic critics. We should like to thank García Márquez for his interest and for his generosity in giving us so much of his time. We also appreciate the special efforts that Raymond L. Williams of the University of Colorado invested in this enterprise as go-between and interviewer.

Some years ago *PMLA* published an article by Theodore Ziolkowski, entitled "Psychodontia to Sociodontia," that, in a manner of speaking, sank its teeth into the reader. Susan J. Leonardi's forthcoming "Recipes for Reading: Summer Pasta, Lobster à la Riseholme, and Key Lime Pie" invites readers to sink their teeth into it. Whatever the season, whatever the tactics of the contributors, each issue offers pleasures in its texts.

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