

PMMLA

PUBLICATIONS OF
THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION
OF AMERICA

Edited by
JOHN HURT FISHER
Secretary of the Association

May · 1968

VOLUME 83 · NUMBER 2

PAGES 257-518



The Art of Victorian Prose

Edited by GEORGE LEVINE *and* WILLIAM A. MADDEN, *both at Indiana University*

Based on the editorial assumption that much prose conventionally classified as non-fiction is artistically imaginative and creative, this collection of essays illustrates the development of an elementary and general poetics of prose through a literary study of Victorian non-fiction. The fifteen essays propose a method of analysis or examine specific Victorian works, writers or prose forms.

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This issue of *PMLA* is dedicated to the memory of

THE REVEREND MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.
1929-1968

“We were all involved in the death of John Kennedy. We tolerated hate; we tolerated the sick stimulation of violence in all walks of life; and we tolerated the differential application of law, which said that a man’s life was sacred only if we agreed with his views.”

Why We Can’t Wait, 1964

“These are the times for real choices and not false ones. We are at the moment when our lives must be placed on the line if our nation is to survive its own folly. Every man of humane convictions must decide on the protest that best suits his convictions, but we must all protest . . . ”

Speech at Riverside Chapel
New York City, 4 April 1967

“Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.”

“Letter from Birmingham Jail”
16 April 1963

Martin Luther King requires no testimonial except the words he spoke, the life he lived, the acts of courage which transformed him into symbol long before the magnetized, unreasoned violence of hate exploded the man into eloquent memory.

A scholar, he might have hid within the pulpit—there to mumble platitudes or sigh for better worlds. But, when humanity whimpered, the humanist descended from his perch; and, grasping the forgotten by the hand, he marshaled them non-violently through cordoned hate to seek a multi-colored land. He spoke of human dignity, of moral law, of peace that comes when reason guides the way—the truths that scholars cull from crinkled leaves and drone past unawakened ears. But he was heard. His words breathed hope into the hope-forsaken, burned conscience into the indifferent, and taught the many to be one.

I do not cry for Martin Luther King. He climbed his mountain dream and faced his God. I cry instead for us, the men of reason, scholars, humanists, who crouch behind our towered manuscripts—our eyes averted from the cities’ holocaust, our hearing deafened by our colleagues’ claps, our minds drugged with delusions of our own significance. We have yet to learn that we must make our voices heard for love and justice, peace and reason, unity of all, before mindless forces seal us with the other relics in our humanistic sepulchre. (Darwin T. Turner, North Carolina A and T State University, Greensboro)

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John Hurt Fisher
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Volume 83

Number 2

May 1968

Pages 257-518

Published Six Times in 1968 by the Association

Printed by the George Banta Company, Inc., Menasha, Wisconsin

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INCORPORATED 1900

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Issues for the current year are available from the MLA Materials Center. Claims for undelivered issues will be honored if they are received within one year of the publication date; thereafter the single issue price will be charged.

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EDITORIAL OFFICES

62 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10011

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Entered as second class matter at the post office at Menasha, Wis.

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 12-32040.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA BY THE GEORGE BANTA COMPANY, INC., MENASHA, WISCONSIN

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Abstract. Brant's Humanistic friends viewed the *Narrenschiff* (1494) as a satire in the Roman tradition which marked the beginning of a literary Renaissance in the German vernacular. That contemporary interpretation of the work justifies a comparison of the *Narrenschiff* with Erasmus' *Encomium Moriae*, "the most important remaining problem in Brant research" (Zeydel). The two works are formally comparable since both use rhetorical forms (e.g., *oratio*) as a structural basis for their satiric intent. Since the two satires also coincide on many points of content, the "Erasmian duplicity" seems the only obstacle to a complete juxtaposition. This duplicity, however, is a necessary consequence of Erasmus' use of *prosopopoiia* and is not characteristic of his frame of mind, as can be shown in his firm reliance on divine wisdom. In this he coincides again with Brant's attitude in the *Narrenschiff*. Thus, the difference between the two works is not one in kind or outlook but one mainly determined by the different audiences addressed. (UG)

"Rappaccini's Daughter": A Keatsian Analogue? By NORMAN A. ANDERSON..... 271

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Murder as a Fine Art: Basic Connections between Poe's Aesthetics, Psychology, and Moral Vision. By JOSEPH J. MOLDENHAUER..... 284

Abstract. The theories of art and the mind which Poe advances systematically in his criticism and elaborates into the cosmology of *Eureka* are also expressed in his literary works on all levels of theme and form, including recurrent actions, symbols, settings, patterns of characterization, and narrative stances. Despite his separation of beauty from truth and duty, and of the imaginative faculty from reason and conscience, Poe's aesthetic is a self-contained metaphysics and ethics. Unity, the essential condition and supreme value of art, is the condition likewise of death, as pursued by Poe's fictional characters through destructive acts which are vicariously and finally suicidal. Often literally artists or connoisseurs, these protagonists are motivated by a "perversity" indistinguishable in its goals and techniques from those of the divinely inspired imagination. In killing others, they impose unity upon the diverse and particular, assimilating into themselves identities which were tangible reflections of their own beings, and were, so to speak, imperfect art objects. When the hero is victim rather than aggressor, his passage into unconsciousness or mystic awareness is again governed by his longing for unity and attended by aesthetic insight. The relationship in Poe's essays between artist and critic illuminates the ratiocinative tales. Here, the detective's solutions arise from imaginative identification with the criminal and internal enactment of his deed. Obedient to the same intuitive forces, the critic-detective and the creator-criminal display a kinship which conforms to the doubling of aggres-

sive and passive figures in the tales of terror. Life, in Poe's value system, is inimical to an aesthetic bliss; and the didactic implications of his poetry and fiction are reversals of conventional humanistic judgments. (JJM)

L'Idéal de "l'honneste homme" est-il compatible avec la théorie évolutive des *Essais* de Montaigne? Par JEAN-PIERRE BOON 298

Abstract. While it is generally acknowledged that Montaigne introduced the concept of "honnêteté" into French cultural life, the significance of the phenomenon has not been fully realized, especially as it concerns our understanding of the *Essays*. It appears that one aspect of the psychological make-up of "l'honneste homme" has been largely neglected by critics: the fact that "l'honneste homme," like his precursor, Castiglione's Courtier, is by profession a man of arms. Such was the case with Montaigne himself and this factor should be given more weight in order to achieve a better-balanced interpretation of the *Essays*. The influence of Stoicism, particularly on Montaigne's thinking about death, has probably been exaggerated. In the early essays dealing with the subject, Montaigne evinces concerns typical of the nobility, the military caste of his age. These concerns will remain his for the rest of his life, though they are more apparent in the early essays than in the late ones. The "evolution" of Montaigne's thought may bear just as much, if not more, on changes of perspective as on changes in the essayist's convictions. It appears that the versatility of "l'honneste homme," the ability of this "universal" man to adapt to circumstances as the need dictates, may be more appropriate than the concept of "evolution" as a characterization of the development of Montaigne's thought in the *Essays*. (In French) (J-PB)

Verlaine's *opéra bouffe*. By C. H. MOORE 305

Abstract. Laughter, in Verlaine's early work, has a major function in the creative process, both as a means and an end in itself. In two uncompleted *opéra bouffe* librettos composed in collaboration with Emmanuel Chabrier, Verlaine satirizes Napoleon III's regime but, through laughter, replaces the Second Empire with a clown's world. His development of a comical "tyrant-clown" theme to effect this transformation parallels the sinister "clown-tyrant" theme of the early poetry. Whereas, in the latter, laughter resolves itself in silence and death, in the *opéra bouffe* it creates and animates a timeless life of innocence and freedom. Comparison with "tyrant-clown" passages in Hugo's *Châtiments* further reveals Verlaine's effort to convert the world against which he revolts into a sanctuary where a buffoon's laughter can reign absolutely. (CHM)

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Abstract. Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer's grotesque involves a bizarre distortion which is neither tragic nor comic but disquieting. He conceives of the imagination as having an abnormal region that produces absurdities and monstrous forms. Grotesque motifs draw upon two spheres of reality: a nether-world coexistent with Nature, and the everyday historical world. The "other side" of Nature, uncanny and capricious, is inhabited by deformed beings governed by different laws of harmony and dissonance. There, non-Ovidian metamorphoses produce admixtures of satanic beauty and monstrosity, with Bécquer's description of them eschewing Dantesque moralism and approaching gratuitous estheticism. In contrast, the historical world attracts the imagination by means of architecture and its fantastic motifs. Other links to social reality appear in the detached sensibility of the grotesque. For example, the carnival is described by a mood of hollow gaiety atypical of the ebullient Romantic carnival. Mannequin images also express disillusion and the advent of an anti-Romantic reaction, as does the presence of gratuitously induced incongruities. Thus, Bécquer stands between the Romantic grotesque, with its healthy distortions, and the self-destructive grotesquerie of the twentieth century. (PI)

A Moratória em processo. Por SILVIANO SANTIAGO 332

Abstract. The division of the stage into halves, one representing family conflicts in 1929 and the other representing the same family in 1932, is a device in the dramatic use of space which explains the originality of *A Moratória*, as shown by an Aristotelian analysis of its structure. The archetype which inspires the structure of this play is "the ant and the grasshopper," whose division implies different dramatic climates within the play. On the one hand, we have the tragedy of negligence (level of the parents and their son), and on the other hand, the apprenticeship of consciousness (level of the daughter). The simultaneous use of the divided stage reflects the period of transition lived by the family and the Brazilian society in the early thirties: there is the shift from the country to the city; the shift from patriarchal to matriarchal tendencies; and the transfer of power from the great families to the emerging middle class. If the play fails in part, it is because the author cannot give an objective interpretation of reality. He is too compassionate. (In Portuguese) (SS)

The History of the Third Nasal Phoneme of Modern German. By HERBERT PENZL 340

Abstract. The distributional environment of the nasal phoneme /ŋ/, compared to those of /n/ /m/, is restricted in Modern German but reflects its origin from an allophone (variant) of /n/ before velar consonants. The phoneme developed first in medial position through the loss of /g/ in the cluster /ng/; in final position the frequent replacement of /g/ by its fortis counterpart /k/ largely prevented this loss. Late Old High German *n*-spellings (e.g., *sinen*), particularly in the 11th-century *Physiologus*, are the first evidence for the /ŋ/-phoneme, which generally continues, however, to be written *ng* (*singen*). Middle High German assonances made medial /ŋŋ/ likely, which is still found in some Swiss dialects. Descriptive statements by Early New High German grammarians clearly reveal the phonemic status of /ŋ/. (HP)

Johann Heinrich Merck über den Roman. Von H. RUDOLF VAGET 347

Abstract. Merck's concept of the novel which emerges very clearly from his reviews and his essay "Über den Mangel des epischen Geistes in unserm lieben Vaterland" represents the only major contribution of Storm and Stress to the incipient discussion of the theory of the novel. In accordance with the realistic tendencies of Storm and Stress, he advocated a realistic novel which was to deal seriously with everyday life and contemporary society, excluding, however, political themes. Among the earliest critics of the novel, Merck was unique in paying particular attention to narrative technique. Whereas Blanckenburg propagated a character novel told by a personal narrator (*Tom Jones*, *Agathon*), Merck—long before Spielhagen—called for an objective narrative technique without intrusions from the narrator, his ideal being Homer. Characteristic is his attitude toward Sterne; he rejected Blanckenburg's and Wezel's imitation of Sterne's personal comments but admired the latter's gift for realistic scenes. In the history of the theory of the novel Merck occupies a significant place in the long line of critics who saw in the objectivity of the epic the ideal for the narrative technique of the modern novel. (In German) (HRV)

Elisabeth Langgässer and Juan Donoso Cortés: A Source of the "Turm-Kapitel" in *Das unauslöschliche Siegel*. By ANTHONY W. RILEY 357

Abstract. New documentary evidence throws light on the genesis of *Das unauslöschliche Siegel* and on Langgässer's narrative techniques. Her hitherto unpublished notes on Donoso prove that the extensive quotations from his works in the "Turm-Kapitel" derive from one source: L. Fischer's introduction to his translation of the *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo*. Further evidence supplied by her widower shows that she wrote the chapter before 1944, and that its *mise-en-scène* was prefigured in her visit to Senlis, France, in 1937. Thus,

the hypothesis is untenable that—as an attempt at self-justification in the face of charges of manichaeism—she inserted the chapter only after she had completed the rest of the novel. It seems probable that Langgässer considered Donoso's life exemplary from a Christian viewpoint, and that her *montage* of his writings stemmed from her desire to create a “new form” for the Christian novel. Donoso's religious beliefs and his hostility to the Enlightenment not only provide appropriate material for the chapter (the “counterpointing” of religious, cultural, and political events in Europe over a period of several centuries), but also reflect Langgässer's own religious attitudes, which any critical appreciation of the novel as a whole must take into account. (AWR)

Heroic Poetry and Sidney's Two *Arcadias*. By ALAN D. ISLER 368

Abstract. Both the old and the new *Arcadias* belong to a single literary genre, Elizabethan heroic poetry. Modern critics, by concentrating upon the theories of Sidney's Italian contemporaries, regularly distinguish generically between the two *Arcadias*, usually calling the new an (attempted) epic and the old “merely” a romance. But neither version responds well to a testing by Italian criteria, criteria whose essentials are structure and convention. However, an examination of representative Elizabethan writings on heroic poetry reveals that, although aware of Italian theories, such writers as Puttenham, Webbe, Harrington, and particularly Sidney are concerned not with formal but with functional aspects of the genre. The peculiar function of heroic poetry is to teach and inspire to virtue the gentleman, the Prince, and the commonwealth. From the various episodes and incidents of the heroic poem, the reader learns how to respond actively to any situation, whether it affect the body politic or the body natural, the flesh or the spirit. Tested by Elizabethan criteria, both versions of the *Arcadia* are successful heroic poems. (ADI)

The Ritual and Rhetoric of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. By JAMES E. ROBINSON 380

Abstract. Two comic ideas inform the artistry of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The traditions of festival and ritual help to explain the one idea of celebrating man's quest for renewal in communion with nature and divinity; the traditions of Roman comedy and rhetoric help to explain the other, the idea of understanding man's folly in his quest for order in society. Shakespeare creates two contexts, finite society with its mores and laws, and nature with its transcendent gods, and then assimilates the two in the action and language of the play. The action combines a dialectical sequence based on social conflict and a symbolic sequence based on magic and myth. The language ranges between debate and song, argument and incantation. The gods of nature become both measure and mirror of the absurdity of human love, and the result is both satiric and celebrative: folly is understood as folly and celebrated as myth. Shakespeare's amusement at the artist's power through language to comprehend the relation of nature and experience and translate the comprehension into comic myth is apparent throughout. Bottom's wedding to Titania is summary of the comprehension and the play-within-a-play is a burlesque of the power. (JER)

Milton and Self-Knowledge. By ALBERT W. FIELDS 392

Abstract. Milton's notion of self-knowledge places him in the Socratic-Christian tradition which distinguishes between man's rational part, or self-like-God, and his passionate nature, the aspect of self most easily subverted by Satan. Only the self-knowing man, by introspection and by seeing the reflection of self in the mirror of the world's stage, achieves a harmony between the two aspects of self. Milton's concept of self-examination, apparent in his prose and verse, is symbolically represented in *Paradise Lost*. The world of Adam-Eve mirrors both God's realm of pure truth and reason and Satan's realm of unreason and unrestrained passion. These realms represent those aspects of self that man must necessarily discover within. The Fall is inevitable

and irrevocable in the creation of self: in Adam's discovery of his obligation to know himself "aright," he understands that his rational self-like-God must rule the darker passionate self. *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* also represent man as achieving self-knowledge by the twofold means of introspection and viewing the reflection of himself in the external world. (AWF)

- Dryden's *The Hind and the Panther* and Roman Catholic Apologetics.
By VICTOR M. HAMM. 400

Abstract. A mass of now forgotten Roman Catholic apologetic and controversial writings appeared in English during Dryden's lifetime. Study reveals the fact that Dryden was acquainted with some of the most notable of these, particularly Hugh Cressy's *Exomologesis* (1647, 1653), Rushworth-White's *Dialogues* (1654), John Sergeant's *Schisme Dis-Arm'd* (1655) and *Sure-Footing in Christianity* (1665), Edward Worsley's *Protestancy Without Principles* (1668), and Abraham Woodhead's *Rational Account* (1673), as well as with the principal Anglican publications of the day (especially those of Stillingfleet and Tillotson). Dryden used the arguments, sometimes the very phraseology, of these and other writings in his poem. *The Hind and the Panther* thus justifies Charles E. Ward's judgment that the poet's conversion was "a result of long thought and long study of the problems of faith," and takes its place in the Catholic-Anglican controversy of the age. (VMH)

- The Composition of *Clarissa* and Its Revision Before Publication. By
T. C. DUNCAN EAVES and BEN D. KIMPEL. 416

Abstract. As a detailed chronology of the composition demonstrates, Richardson revised *Clarissa* carefully and thoroughly before its first publication and consulted several of his friends about it, but his correspondence does not show that he changed his basic plan or took advice from anyone on important matters. The first extant references to the novel are in letters from Edward Young and Aaron Hill in June and July 1744. By this time the general plan of the novel was fixed and a first version may have been already completed. It was certainly completed early in 1746. By that time Richardson had begun an extensive revision, and before publication he revised once again. A study of his revisions shows that he was especially concerned about reducing the length of his book, and he also blackened the character of Lovelace, tried to clarify the motives of his characters, and elevated his language. (TCDE and BDK)

- Burns's Comedy of Romantic Love. By FREDERICK L. BEATY. 429

Abstract. Though Burns enunciated no critical precepts on the comedy of love, he composed much of his best poetry not only within the eighteenth-century sanction of aggressive wit but also according to the tradition of humor as it later became associated with the distinctively Romantic expression of the comic spirit. Illustrative poems and letters reveal his mirthful delineation of human affection. With extraordinary insight into the realities of amatory experience, he treated a rich variety of subjects—the multifarious joys and problems of courtship, unrestrained passion, adultery, unwed parenthood, marriage, artificial conventions and morals, alcoholic stimulation, and defiance of social hypocrisy. His sympathy with the essential seriousness of love counterbalanced a perceptive awareness of human frailties; his basically empathic approach to the dilemmas of love often coalesced with portrayals of ludicrous situations or character traits that invited laughter. It was the fusion of these seemingly antithetical elements that impressed his nineteenth-century admirers, and this outstanding achievement has become increasingly significant in the light of more recent psychological analyses. (FLB)

- The Playboy as Poet. By JAMES F. KILROY. 439

Abstract. In *The Playboy of the Western World* Synge portrays the successive stages in the artistic growth of a poet. Christy Mahon develops markedly from

the time when he shyly and tersely answers questions on his crime. Gradually, his flat statements give way to more daring and assertive speech so that others remark on his poetic power. Their praise generates further poetic attempts, and Christy's speech becomes both more concrete in diction and more deliberately imaginative. But when he discovers that his poetry was not based on actual fact, his speech changes distinctly: it temporarily becomes self-conscious and hollow. Inevitably the crowd turns on him, but the playboy rises above them and their objections; the very audience which nurtured the growing poet eventually threatens him in his maturity, and must be disregarded by the poet, since it cannot understand the imaginative truth of his statements. The artistic growth of the main character is signified by a variety of styles; thus the play supplies examples of Synge's best poetry, but also deliberate exaggerations of poetic expression. (JFK)

The Humanization of Auden's Early Style. By ROBERT BLOOM. . . . 443

Abstract. The widespread feeling that Auden's poetic powers have declined steadily since the thirties, which is epitomized in an essay like Randall Jarrell's "Changes of Attitude and Rhetoric in Auden's Poetry," is based on a misunderstanding of both his intellectual and stylistic evolution. By taking adequate account of the important stylistic shift which moved Auden away from his early Anglo-Saxon and Hopkinsesque addictions and made it possible for him to express a more straightforward and centrally human concern in the poetry of his middle period, we can appraise his achievement more accurately. This crucial and beneficial shift, which owes something to Yeats, begins in *Look, Stranger!* (1936) and is characterized by Auden's new willingness to face the dangers and failures of the period directly in lucid, reflective, fully syntactic speech. The full-throated, implicated, moving human voice which emerges here, concerned not with extravagance or exaggeration but with facing the truth and accounting for it, is largely responsible for Auden's pre-eminence among English poets born in this century. (RB)

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PMLA

PUBLICATIONS OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Published six times in 1968, in March, May, June, September, October, and November

Indices: Vols. I-L, 1935, LI-LX, 1945, LI-LXXXIX, 1964

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