

# PMLA

Volume 99  
Number 1

*Publications of the  
Modern Language Association  
of America*

January 1984

# ***A Walk With Thoreau***

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*drawing by David Johnson*

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# Contents • January

Editor's Column: Policies and Procedures of <i>PMLA</i> . . . . .	3
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Notes on Contributors . . . . .	4
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“Errours Endlesse Traine”: On Turning Points and the Dialectical Imagination. MARSHALL BROWN. . . . .	9
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**Abstract.** As turning points occur, they are always moments of confusion, not moments of clarification. There is no “great temptation” in Eliot’s *Mill on the Floss*, no “balance” in Zola’s *Une Page d’amour*. “Revolution” means *aporia*, or disoriented turning, and it is intrinsic to Plato’s dialectic, as to Kant’s and Nietzsche’s. Dancing in Renaissance texts such as Davies’ *Orchestra* implies vertigo, not cosmic harmony. Spenser’s *Mutability Cantos* and poems of Keats, Yeats, and Stevens attempt responses to this universal turning; they suggest that we aim not at discovering the truth of outcomes but at comprehending historical processes in movement. (MB)

<i>Pearl</i> , Inexpressibility, and Poems of Human Loss. ANN CHALMERS WATTS . . . . .	26
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**Abstract.** Inexpressibility is an ancient and still lively topos that proclaims language inadequate to reality. Whatever the definition of reality, inexpressibility proclaims “no tongue can tell,” “no words can say.” In considering *Pearl*’s four inexpressibilities, its reiterated loss, and the way the poem ends, the essay alludes to historically relevant works and to other English poems of inexpressible human loss that help to distinguish the quiet, sad way *Pearl* ends. Whatever *Pearl*’s inexpressibilities owe to historical tradition, they participate also in the larger literary and experiential domain of worded poem for unutterable grief and in the more precise domain of poems whose speakers endure the grief of losing what they most desire and of losing too their visions of comfort, fed by that desire. (ACW)

Latin American Documentary Narrative. DAVID WILLIAM FOSTER . . . . .	41
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**Abstract.** Latin American fiction has historically been characterized by its testimony on sociopolitical issues, and the contemporary novel offers important examples of the documentary narrative. Indeed, Latin American authors appear to have made richer—and earlier—use of documentary narrative than have more commonly cited American writers. Through an examination of five representative narratives, by Rodolfo Walsh (Argentina), Elena Poniatowska (Mexico), Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia), Hernán Valdés (Chile), and Miguel Barnet (Cuba), this study examines such major features of Latin American documentary narrative as complementary and contrapuntal juxtaposition, irony, authorial editing and commentary, foreshadowing and echoing of events, and disjunctive interplay between various levels of the text. (DWF)

The Apocalypse of the Old Testament: *Daniel Deronda* and the Interpretation of Interpretation. MARY WILSON CARPENTER . . . . . 56

**Abstract.** Although critics have questioned the unity of *Daniel Deronda*, the double narrative structure of the novel has not been related to contemporary (Victorian) fictions of history. George Eliot’s “Oriental Memoranda” notebook documents her interest in current histories of the Jews and suggests a context of universal history based on critical interpretations of the Book of Daniel. This exegetical “key” to interpretation reveals both the significance of Eliot’s separation of the plot into two strands and the apocalyptic symbolism that links those strands together in a universal history of humanity in exile. Finally, this “key” suggests that circumcision, though never mentioned in the text, is nevertheless central to the vision uniting Jews with Christians. *Daniel Deronda* is George Eliot’s “Book of Origins,” in which she seeks to deconstruct conventions of history that separate past from present and Jew from Gentile and to reenvision how “everything [is] . . . related to everything else.” (MWC)

The Tame in Pursuit of the Savage: The Posthumous Fiction of E. M. Forster. JUNE PERRY LEVINE . . . . . 72

**Abstract.** The posthumous homosexual fiction of E. M. Forster indicates a marked impulse in all his work: the tame in pursuit of the savage. The connection is to be, in part, emotional but will have political meaning as well. In Forster’s situations, power—which resides in the world of the tame—is suspect because it rests on institutionalized force; in contrast, the sexual potency of the savage arises out of his being a “natural” man in the Rousseauian sense. This tension parallels the dynamics of Forster’s private life, but its manifestation in his art does not simply reflect a personal preoccupation: the literature of attempted liaison with the savage serves a public position—egalitarian, anti-imperialistic, and internationalist—as well as a romantic ideal. In *Maurice*, in “The Life to Come” and “The Other Boat,” and even in his first three novels, the sexual and political ideas reflect the intention, albeit somewhat disguised, to subvert the prevailing ethos. (JPL)

Faulkner and the Power of Sound. KARL F. ZENDER . . . . . 89

**Abstract.** Changes in Faulkner’s depictions of sound during the course of his career reflect changes in his understanding of his relation to the world and of himself as an artist. In his early work, he uses images of sound to express a highly romanticized yearning for reconciliation with the world. As his career advances, regret over the passing of the world of his youth and distaste for the modern world replacing it lead him to emphasize the idea of sound as a hostile force, intent on invading the mind. In the postwar period, as he senses that his creative power is declining, he comes to envision himself and the world as engaged in a struggle for dominance, and he devises a variety of ingenious fictional stratagems with which to annul the world’s sounds and to reaffirm his belief in the power of his artistic voice. (KFZ)

*Forum* . . . . . 109

*Forthcoming Meetings and Conferences of General Interest.* . . . . 113

*Professional Notes and Comment* . . . . . 122

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