

PMLA

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Modern Language Association
of America*

October 1977

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Repression's Rainbow: The Presence of Norman O. Brown in
Pynchon's Big Novel. LAWRENCE C. WOLFLEY 873

Abstract. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Thomas Pynchon shows his indebtedness to the school of psychoanalytic culture criticism best exhibited in the two major works of Norman O. Brown—*Life against Death* and *Love's Body*. Brown's neo-Freudian view of *repression* as the source of man's uniqueness in nature is mirrored in virtually every thematic aspect of *Gravity's Rainbow*. In one sense, the physical gravity of the title is a metaphor for the human repression that engages Pynchon on the psychological level. Pynchon's understanding of history, like Brown's, reflects "the slow return of the repressed." Other themes include the hypertrophy of the death instinct as manifested in weapons of destruction, the pernicious influence of Calvinist dualism opposing true dialectics, the interdependent abuses of sexuality and power, and the need for an antirational conception of art based in transcendental symbolism. The novel enacts the struggle of life against death, and its style affirms man's freedom. (LCW)

Nature and Self-Love: A Reinterpretation of Rousseau's
"Passion primitive." JULIET FLOWER MACCANNELL 890

Abstract. Rousseau opposed both traditional and modern (empiricist) thinking when he made self-love the cornerstone of his system. Other modes of thought treat self-consciousness as constituted primarily by temporal *desire*. Rousseau raises *love*, for him the suspension of desire, to a position of ontological primacy in regard to self-consciousness. Like Pascal, he throws the empirical existence of the self into radical question and finds it to be as insubstantial and empty a concept as the Western tradition has found it—from Ecclesiastes and Socrates on. Rousseau declines the moralistic reproof of the self, however, and emphasizes its insubstantiality as its *one* strength, although a fictional one. The self exists only in the mode of a hypothesis (the fictional "as if"); it is a failure at being. But to *amour* (and to *pitié*) it makes all the *difference* and is worthy of their support. (JFMACC)

Blake and the Artistic Machine: An Essay in Decorum and
Technology. MORRIS EAVES 903

Abstract. By describing arts as technologies we gain a new perspective on the shift from classic to Romantic esthetics that clarifies Blake's term "machine" in relation to art. Printing drove visual arts to systemize picture reproduction on a principle Blake called "intermeasurability," essentially atomism, by which art was adjusted to commercial technology. While efficient production requires division between conception and execution, in art conception *is* execution. Blake saw neoclassical artists divide them, then disguise the incoherent results with classical doctrines of generalization, harmony, and high finish adapted to the needs of systemization. Because the machine *is* execution and does not change, mechanical order becomes artistic order. (ME)

Coleridge's Marginal Method in the *Biographia Literaria*.

JEROME C. CHRISTENSEN 928

Abstract. Coleridge's mode of composition in the *Biographia Literaria* is best considered as marginal discourse, and here the chapters on Hartleian association are analyzed from this point of view. Coleridge's previous attempts to refute Hartley depended on a proof of the free will, a proof that he did not complete and that, for moral purposes, he does not hazard in the *Biographia*. Instead, Coleridge proffers a subsidiary criticism that he had formed years before, affixing his comments to borrowed arguments. Although Coleridge's marginal rhetoric persuades that Hartley's model is insufficient, it also illustrates that there is no coherent alternative principle. The text vanishes beneath the burden of its marginalia. Coleridge's criticism subverts a partial truth only to substitute a rhetoric partial to the demands of a desire too restless to abide in any principle or text. (JCC)

Literature and Law in Medieval England.

JOHN A. ALFORD 941

Abstract. The use of law in Middle English literature is not extraneous but grows naturally out of a profound faith in law as the tie that binds all things, in heaven and in earth: all law—divine, natural, and human—is, in essence, one law. Hence, Christ's victory over Satan is dramatized in the language of Westminster, the promise of salvation is seen in terms of the emerging law of contracts, and our place in heaven is treated as real estate. The process is seen most clearly in the *Château d'Amour*, *Piers Plowman*, *Pearl*, and "Quia Amore Languet." With the disintegration of the belief in a single, coherent law, however, the legal metaphor lost most of its force and economy. As heirs of that disintegration, we must be careful not to impose it unwittingly on Medieval literature and thus fragment a vision that was whole. (JAA)

Plato's Four Furors and the Real Structure of *Paradise Lost*.

MICHAEL FIXLER 952

Abstract. The four invocations to the Muse in *Paradise Lost* signal the stages of a compositional process coordinating the levels of the poem's inspiration and overall design. Using in downward sequence the four inspirational "furors" Neoplatonism derived from Plato's *Phaedrus*, Milton calibrated each narrative stage of his work to the thematic range governing that inspirational level, while the entire progression of the poem expresses the structural significance of this scalar paradigm. Such techniques were used by Dante and others and by Milton himself in *Lycidas*. But in *Paradise Lost* the inspirational pattern, as the spatial axis governing the poem's descending and ascending movements, combines with the narrative movements of the poem's temporal axis to shape a particular form that Milton considered essential to every art dedicated to the highest good and final end implicit in the divine scheme. It is this "universal form" that both metaphysically and structurally underlies *Paradise Lost*. (MF)

The Easter Cantata and the Idea of Mediation in Goethe's

Faust. ROBERT ELLIS DYE 963

Abstract. Goethe's Werther and his Faust respond divergently to the Resurrection. Whereas Werther reclassifies Christ from exclusive mediator to model in order

to emulate His death and rebirth, Faust is prevented by an Easter cantata from attempting self-translation. Faust's subsequent words and acts show that, although an unbeliever, he views Jesus as a mediator and has been reminded by the cantata of man's multifaceted dependence on mediation. The rainbow of "Anmutige Gegend" similarly affects a restored and newly hubristic Faust. Mediation underlies Goethe's concept of symbolism, and, like other Goethean mediators (e.g., the "Schleier" of the dedicatory poem to his collected works), the introductory symbols of Redeemer and rainbow in *Faust*, Parts I and II, symbolize symbolism itself, man's essential mode of relating to ultimates. Mediation helps explain such puzzling inclusions in *Faust* as the quarrel between Neptunists and Vulcanists and is the central concept in the finale by the *Chorus Mysticus*. (RED)

Hopkins' Linguistic Deviations. JACOB KORG 977

Abstract. Hopkins has recently been treated as a representational poet who aimed to praise God by imitating His creation, but his unconventional uses of language, which are related to his temperamental originality, introduce an autonomous quality into his poetry. His deviations, by their very nature, set reference aside to exhibit the inherent signifying capacity of language, a capacity that Hopkins' journals show he fully appreciated. His original methods, including his phonetic structures, his conception of inscape as it applies to poetry, and his unconventional syntax and imagery, give language dominance over experience and use it to reshape reality according to linguistic principles. (JK)

Old Testament Poetry: The Translatable Structure.
RUTH APROBERTS 987

Abstract. Translation is notoriously impossible, and yet people persist in doing it, perhaps nowhere so much as in the case of the Bible. And, while prose is generally more translatable than poetry, it is Old Testament poetry that survives the process with peculiar success, by reason of the peculiar poetic form of the original: a system of parallelism, or "rhyming" of ideas rather than sounds. The remarkable degree of overlap of form and content ensures a remarkable degree of accuracy, or transfer of meaning. The field is rich for structuralist studies, in that it offers an exemplary *combinatoire*, and the psalm structure is a model of totality, transformability, and self-regulation, an "instrument of coherence," which may in turn constitute a subunit of a larger structure. (RAPR)

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