

PMLA

Volume 93
Number 3

*Publications of the
Modern Language Association
of America*

May 1978

THE LIFE OF FICTION

Jerome Klinkowitz. Graphics by Roy R. Behrens



“‘SuperFiction,’ a modern literary form which shuns the mimetic tradition to create a life of its own, is the subject of this intriguing, unorthodox study of 12 contemporary writers, including Ronald Sukenick, Kurt Vonnegut, Donald Barthelme, and Ishmael Reed . . . The unique design of the book, which employs varying type styles and curious illustrations by Behrens, befits the imaginative, self-conscious style of the writers it describes. The book should spark discussion in academic circles, and provides a good introduction for students of contemporary literature.”—*Library Journal*. “He is convincing in his thesis that all the writers have fun with fiction; they push the conventional boundaries of cold, grey running type away in order to inject new life into literary forms.”—Doris Grumbach in *New York Times Book Review*. \$10.00.

PARACRITICISMS

Seven Speculations of the Times

Ihab Hassan

This is paracriticism: an attempt to recover the art of multivocation. Not the text and its letters but metaphors thereof. Not a form strictly imposed but the tentativeness between one form and another. In old dreams—the testament of our broken lives—begin our new responsibilities. Shatter the mirrors.—I.H.

“. . . an experimental work of high seriousness. Within its complexities, difficulties, and flashes of insight we can trace the growth of a critic who has responded with intelligence and integrity to the changing demands of contemporary literature. *Paracriticisms* is Hassan’s best work to date. It is provocative and raises crucial questions. We should all deal with these questions if we are to write about recent literature.”—Raymond M. Olderman in *Contemporary Literature*. “A brilliant and original effort—full of provocative insights reached by indirection, intuition, and sympathetic identification with postmodern literature.”—*Ohio Review* \$8.95

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS

Urbana, Illinois 61801

May 1978

PMIA

*Publications of the
Modern Language Association of America*

Volume 93

Number 3

PUBLISHED SIX TIMES A YEAR BY THE ASSOCIATION

The Modern Language Association of America

ORGANIZED 1883

INCORPORATED 1900

OFFICERS FOR THE YEAR 1978

President: WALTER J. ONG, *St. Louis University*
First Vice-President: JEAN A. PERKINS, *Swarthmore College*
Second Vice-President: HELEN VENDLER, *Boston University*
Executive Director: WILLIAM D. SCHAEFER
Deputy Executive Director: HANS RÜTIMANN

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

For the term ending 31 December 1978	For the term ending 31 December 1979
SIDONIE CASSIRER <i>Mount Holyoke College</i>	DAVID J. DELAURA <i>University of Pennsylvania</i>
RUTH S. EL SAFFAR <i>University of Illinois, Chicago Circle</i>	CAROLYN G. HEILBRUN <i>Columbia University</i>
EDWARD WASIOLEK <i>University of Chicago</i>	RONALD PAULSON <i>Yale University</i>
For the term ending 31 December 1980	For the term ending 31 December 1981
GEOFFREY H. HARTMAN <i>Yale University</i>	BARBARA BOWEN <i>University of Illinois</i>
WINFRED P. LEHMANN <i>University of Texas, Austin</i>	JAMES LAWLER <i>Dalhousie University</i>
MARILYN L. WILLIAMSON <i>Wayne State University</i>	MARJORIE G. PERLOFF <i>University of Southern California</i>

TRUSTEES OF INVESTED FUNDS

GORDON N. RAY <i>Guggenheim Foundation, Managing Trustee</i>	C. WALLER BARRETT <i>Charlottesville, Virginia</i>
ROBERT LUMIANSKY <i>American Council of Learned Societies</i>	

PMLA is issued six times a year, in January, March, May, September, October, and November, by the Modern Language Association of America, 62 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10011. Membership is open to those persons who are professionally interested in the modern languages and literatures. Annual dues, which include subscription to *PMLA*, are based on members' salaries and are graduated as follows: student members, \$10; unemployed regular members, \$10; regular members (first two years), \$20; regular members (salary under \$12,000), \$25; regular members (salary \$12,000–\$18,000), \$30; regular members (salary over \$18,000), \$35; joint members (with only one subscription to *PMLA*), \$45; foreign members, same as regular members.

The subscription price of *PMLA* for libraries and other institutions is \$35. A subscription including a bound volume at the end of the year is \$55, domestic and foreign. Agents deduct 10% as their fee. Single copies of the January, March, May, and October issues may be obtained for \$5 each; the November Program issue for \$10; the September Directory issue for \$15.

Issues for the current year are available from the MLA Publications 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.

For information about the availability of back issues, inquire of Kraus Reprint Co., Millwood, N.Y. 10546; (914) 762-2200. Early and current volumes may be obtained on microfilm from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106. Purchase of current volumes on film is restricted to subscribers of the journal.

OFFICE OF PUBLICATION AND EDITORIAL OFFICES

62 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011 *Tel.*: 212 741-5588

All communications, including notices of changes of address, should be sent to the Membership Office of the Association at 62 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011. If a change of address also involves a change of institutional affiliation, the Membership Office should be informed of this fact at the same time.

Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing office.

Copyright © 1978 by The Modern Language Association of America.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 12-32040.

Contents • May

Editor's Column	355
Presidential Address 1977. Resolved: That the Proper Study of Mankind Is Man. EDITH KERN	361
Patriarchal Poetry and Women Readers: Reflections on Milton's Bogey. SANDRA M. GILBERT	368

Abstract. Because the myth of origins that Milton articulates in *Paradise Lost* summarizes a long misogynistic tradition, literary women from Mary Wollstonecraft to Virginia Woolf have recorded anxieties about his paradigmatic patriarchal poetry. To these readers, the principal story that Milton seems to tell is the story of woman's secondness, her otherness, and how that otherness leads to her demonic anger, her sin, her fall, and her exclusion from that garden of the gods which is also the garden of poetry. Parallels and doublings implicit in this story, moreover, link Eve, the archetypal woman, with the unholy trinity of Satan, Sin, and Death. For female readers sensitive to such implications, Milton may be what Harold Bloom defines as a "great Inhibitor." From Wollstonecraft to Woolf, however, women writers have allayed anxieties aroused by this poet, whom Woolf called "the first of the masculinists," by rereading, misreading, and reinterpreting *Paradise Lost*. (SMG)

Dying into Life: Keats's Struggle with Milton in <i>Hyperion</i> . PAUL SHERWIN	383
--	-----

Abstract. A consideration of "Bright Star" and "Ode to a Nightingale" prepares for a reading of *Hyperion* as a poem of revisionary strife. Keats intends a progress poem that will put Milton, and secondarily Wordsworth, behind him. Entering the threatening ancestral space of Miltonic epic, Keats endeavors to make it his own by correcting Milton's errors in vision and thereby subduing the phantom he raises. Milton, however, will not maintain his place in the past; he returns, uncannily, to subvert Keats as powerfully as Keats subverts him. The impotence and anxiety of the Miltonic Titans are expressive of Keats's failure to write the poem he wishes. His surrogate, Apollo, is waiting to dawn but cannot. Engulfed by a knowledge that is equivalent to the Miltonic legacy, Apollo and Keats are halted at the threshold, in the dark passage that Keats explores in the great odes and in *The Fall of Hyperion*. (PS)

<i>La Vie de Saint Alexis</i> : Narrative Analysis and the Quest for the Sacred Subject. EVELYN BIRGE VITZ	396
---	-----

Abstract. This essay examines various aspects of the "Subject-Object" relation in narrative, with respect to *La Vie de Saint Alexis*. The model of this relation proposed by A. J. Greimas is contrasted with that of Bernard de Clairvaux. The two theorists, one secular, one Christian, have different understandings of the content and the structure of the Subject-Object relation: of desire, of narrative "transformation" and "closure." Bernard's model is more applicable to the *Alexis*. Alexis, God, the public, and Alexis' family must all be considered Subjects of this text, in that events must be viewed with respect to their desires, or Objects. The saint, God, and the faithful public are all necessary Subjects in hagiography, and their functions help define the genre. The importance of "transcendent" Subjects—of God (on the vertical axis) and the public (on the horizontal)—is characteristic of medieval narrative. (EBV)

- The Structure of Meaning in Lampedusa's *Il Gattopardo*.
 RICHARD H. LANSING 409
- Abstract.** When it first appeared Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's *Il Gattopardo* (*The Leopard*) was criticized for lacking structural coherence and for including digressive and superfluous narrative material. Such an appraisal, however, does not stand up under analysis. In arranging the individual episodes of the plot Lampedusa twice relies on a sophisticated pattern of chiasmic ordering to throw into prominence the novel's central themes and to reinforce symbolic associations. The patterns of concentric symmetry compensate for the effects of the intentionally static quality of a plot that consists more of a sequence of moods and meditations than of specific actions. Lampedusa plays down linear development and compels the reader to seek the novel's unity in its thematic and symbolic structures. Seen from this perspective, *Il Gattopardo* might well be celebrated rather than censured for the complexity of its structural coherence. (RHL)
- "A Loaded Gun": Dickinson and the Dialectic of Rage.
 SHARON CAMERON 423
- Abstract.** A comparison of narrative and lyric conceptions of temporality in Dickinson's poetry sheds light on that group of her poems in which a story is begun only to be violently broken into and disrupted. Defining life as a series of alternatives, the poems establish a dialectic, but seemingly for the sake of dismissing it as inadequate. The dismissal is frequently one of rage at all that is temporal, all that has a history whose requirement is sacrifice and choice. Such Dickinson poems can end in disorder, and they are examined here in the context of other lyrics that equally seem to pin their hopes on the belief that a verbal sabotage of sequence will trigger a temporal one, that, grown sufficiently desperate, the maneuvers of speech can stop time dead. (SC)
- Blake's Idea of Brotherhood. MICHAEL FERBER 438
- Abstract.** Despite its place in the French Revolutionary motto, fraternity lacks a literature. Blake, who makes an important contribution toward that literature, draws largely from the New Testament, which offers two grounds for brotherhood: we are sons of the Father, we are brothers in Christ. Suspicious of transcendent gods, Blake develops only the latter concept. We are in essence brotherly beings; unfraternal behavior is death. Brotherhood is not kindness, however, but "wars of love" for one another and willing self-sacrifice. "Atonement" only makes matters worse. The New Testament Christian fraternity rests on Paul's dualism; Blake agrees to the extent that "nature" (and woman) threatens brotherly love. Yet women can be brothers, too, despite the misogynist symbolism Blake chooses to inherit. (MF)
- Nation and Generation in *A Tale of Two Cities*.
 ALBERT D. HUTTER 448
- Abstract.** In *A Tale of Two Cities*, the French Revolution becomes a metaphor for the conflicts between generations and between classes that preoccupied Dickens throughout his career. Dickens uses a double plot and divided characters to express these conflicts; his exaggerated use of "splitting"—which the essay defines psychoanalytically—sometimes makes *A Tale of Two Cities*' language and structure appear strained and humorless. We need to locate *A Tale of Two Cities* within a framework of nineteenth-century attitudes toward revolution and generational conflict by using a combination of critical methods—literary, historical, psychoanalytic. This essay relates the reader's experience to the structure of the text; and it derives from Dickens' language, characterization, and construction a critical model that describes the individual reader's experience while explaining some of the contradictory assessments of the novel over the past hundred years. (ADH)

The Ideal Reader: A Critical Fiction. 463

ROBERT DEMARIA, JR. 463

Abstract. Critical writings may be seen as fictions about literature and reading and writing. One hero of these fictions is the ideal reader. The sort of ideal reader a critic creates indicates the literary form of his criticism. Dr. Johnson's ideal reader is an everyman, and Johnson's criticism imitates allegorical epic literature in its concern with mankind in general. Dryden's division of readers into classes, headed by "the most judicious," is an aspect of the dramatic form of his critical literature. Coleridge's lyrical mode of criticism centers on a reader so close to his author that he becomes his tautegorical representative. Northrop Frye's criticism is a kind of comic romance leading to an apocalypse in which his heroic ideal reader redeems cultural history and experiences it as part of his present life. The criticism of these four writers embodies and imitates, as it asserts, a vision of literature. (RDeM,Jr)

Forum 475

Report of the Executive Director 479

Forthcoming Meetings and Conferences of General Interest 486

Professional Notes and Comment 492

PUBLICATIONS OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Published Six Times a Year

Indexes: Vols. 1–50, 1935; 51–60, 1945; 51–79, 1964

EDITORIAL BOARD

HANS EICHNER, 1978
University of Toronto

ISABEL G. MACCAFFREY, 1978
Harvard University

PAUL R. OLSON, 1979
Johns Hopkins University

RICHARD POIRIER, 1979
Rutgers University

ROGER SHATTUCK, 1978
University of Virginia

BARBARA HERRNSTEIN SMITH, 1979
University of Pennsylvania

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

JONAS A. BARISH, 1980
University of California, Berkeley

PETER BROOKS, 1980
Yale University

DORRIT COHN, 1979
Harvard University

ANDREW DEBICKI, 1980
University of Kansas

PAUL DE MAN, 1978
Yale University

ANGUS S. FLETCHER, 1978
*Lehman College and Graduate Center
City University of New York*

JOHN G. GARRARD, 1979
University of Virginia

DONALD R. HOWARD, 1978
Stanford University

U. C. KNOEPFLMACHER, 1981
University of California, Berkeley

JOHN W. KRONIK, 1981
Cornell University

RICHARD L. LEVIN, 1978
State University of New York, Stony Brook

BARBARA K. LEWALSKI, 1981
Brown University

NEAL OXENHANDLER, 1980
Dartmouth College

ROY HARVEY PEARCE, 1979
University of California, San Diego

MARJORIE G. PERLOFF, 1981
University of Southern California

ROBERT SCHOLES, 1978
Brown University

PATRICIA SPACKS, 1980
Wellesley College

AILEEN WARD, 1978
New York University

CHRISTOF WEGELIN, 1978
University of Oregon

THOMAS WHITAKER, 1978
Yale University

Editor: WILLIAM D. SCHAEFER

Managing Editor: JUDY GOULDING

Promotion and Production Manager:

JEFFREY HOWITT

Copyeditor: CLAIRE COOK

Assistant Managing Editor:

MARGOT RABINER

Administrative Assistant: ROSLYN SCHLOSS

A STATEMENT OF EDITORIAL POLICY

PMLA publishes articles on the modern languages and literatures that are of significant interest to the entire membership of the Association. Articles should therefore normally: (1) employ a widely applicable approach or methodology; or (2) use an interdisciplinary approach of importance to the interpretation of literature; or (3) treat a broad subject or theme; or (4) treat a major author or work; or (5) discuss a minor author or work in such a way as to bring insight to a major author, work, genre, or critical method. Articles of fewer than 2,500 or more than 12,500 words are not normally considered for publication.

Only members of the Association may submit articles to *PMLA*. Each article submitted will be sent to at least one consultant reader and one member of the Advisory Committee. If recommended by these readers it will then be sent to the members of the Editorial Board, who meet every three months to discuss such articles and assist the Editor in making final decisions.

Submissions, prepared according to the second edition of the *MLA Style Sheet* (now incorporated in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*), should be addressed to the Editor of *PMLA*, 62 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10011. Only an original typescript, not a photocopy or carbon, should be submitted.