

either as an assumed power (Ecclesiastes) or as a problematic possibility (*Clarel*).

9. "Yet, always in the back of his mind . . . is the memory of his illegitimacy. In dreams he rails against his mother as a 'Fair Circe—Goddess of the sty!'" (p. 381).

Again, a misreading. The relevant passage runs as follows: "His moods he had, mad fitful ones, / Prolonged or brief, outbursts or moans; / And at such times would hiss or cry: 'Fair Circe—goddess of the sty!'" (II.iv.140–43). Moods are not dreams, and while "Circe" may refer to Mortmain's mother, the reference is not self-evident, as Mr. Brodwin seems to assume.

10. "Part Indian and part white, a victim of miscegenation in a racist society, Ungar sees not hybrid strength in his origins, but the infection of his very authenticity as a human being" (p. 381).

The implication that Ungar has been psychologically damaged by racial prejudice is a distortion. An ex-officer of the Southern Confederacy, embittered by the War and Reconstruction, Ungar chooses self-exile rather than participation in a dishonored, fallen democracy. As an apparently respected, aristocratic descendant of a Maryland Cavalier he is not a "victim of miscegenation in a racist society" in the stock sense which that phrase implies today.

11. "He [Rolfe] shocks Clarel when he tells him—approvingly—that the fire lit by the priest . . . , representing the manifestation of God and the resurrection at Easter (the Easter fire), is a defensible act on the part of the Church to keep the people believers (III.xvi). One must keep up a front, as it were, like 'The king a corpse in armour led / On a live horse' (III.xvi.211–12). Religion will always survive, then, on 'this star of tragedies, this orb of sins' (I.xxxi.183)" (p. 383).

Rolfe does not, as this passage implies, defend the priest's act; he calls it "cheatery" (III.xvi.110). One might note also the confused syntax of Mr. Brodwin's sentence, which calls the fire an act. As to the image of keeping up a front, this occurs some eighty lines after the discussion of the Easter fire and has reference to Derwent and other reconcilers of Faith and Science: "Astute ones be though, staid and grave / Who in the wars of Faith and Science / Remind one of old tactics brave— / Imposing front of false defiance: / The King a corpse in armor led / On a live horse" (III.xvi.207–12). Whether Clarel is shocked by Rolfe's musing admiration or by the image of Christ as a dead king riding on the live horse of the church is a matter of interpretation. But Mr. Brodwin's barely perceptible shift from Book III to Book I in support of his notion of Rolfe as a hypocrite is methodologically questionable.

12. "The merchant . . . takes him [Derwent] . . . higher and higher to where he can see at last, far below, a great bird carrying Mortmain's skullcap into the

ravine" (p. 383).

Another misreading. Actually Derwent sees only the bird above. Below, falling into the ravine, he sees the skullcap.

Most of the above citations involve either inaccurate reading, inaccurate writing, or both. I have not bothered to point out inaccuracies of spelling, capitalization, and punctuation in quoted material from *Clarel*, several of which may be observed in the passages cited above. In the face of such carelessness Mr. Brodwin's conclusions regarding Clarel as an existential "gospel" seem quite irrelevant. Melville, as well as the readership of *PMLA*, deserves better than this.

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<sup>1</sup> All citations from *Clarel* are from the same edition used by Mr. Brodwin, that edited by Walter Bezanson for Hendricks House.

A reply by Professor Brodwin will appear in the March *PMLA*.

### The Structure of *Wuthering Heights*

To the Editor:

David Sonstroem, in making his point that Emily Bronte is not endorsing the viewpoint of Heathcliff and Catherine, or of any of her other characters,<sup>1</sup> might well have made greater use of the structure of the novel as supporting evidence, for the structure clearly shows the failure of the Heathcliff-Catherine relationship to dominate the action.

My point stems from what I believe to be a mistaken view of the structure of *Wuthering Heights* on the part of Dorothy Van Ghent.<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Van Ghent logically divides the action of the novel into two parts, each part associated with one of the generations (p. 155). The first action, however, she sees as centered on the romance of Catherine and Heathcliff, with the second involving "two sets of young lives and two small 'romances,'" the Cathy-Linton and the Cathy-Hareton relationships (pp. 155–56).

Although Mrs. Van Ghent rightly sees the figure of Heathcliff and the narrative voices of Lockwood and Nelly Dean as binding the two actions into a neatly-structured whole, her diagram of the novel (p. 156) is obviously out of balance. It reflects her comments concerning the Catherine-Heathcliff romance in the first generation and the two "small" romances of the second. What is clearly missing is the Catherine-Edgar relationship of the first generation, a factor which balances the actions of the novel and Mrs. Van Ghent's diagram as well.

If the Van Ghent structural diagram were correct, the implication would be that the Catherine-Heathcliff relationship is structurally, and therefore probably

thematically, of greater consequence than the other pairings in the novel. Such a view would argue against Mr. Sonstroem's interpretation. But with the addition of Catherine and Edgar to their proper place in the structural scheme, we find that the two actions of the novel consist of two pairings per generation. Also observable is the fact that one pairing in each generation (Catherine-Edgar in the first and Cathy-Linton in the second) is weaker than the other. A possible conclusion—although it is not the only conceivable explanation—is that the Cathy-Hareton romance of the second generation is not only the structural parallel but also the thematic equivalent to the Catherine-Heathcliff romance of the first generation.

Such precision in structure, it seems, must have a relationship to what we make of the novel, and in this case the precision seems to support Mr. Sonstroem's point.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> "Wuthering Heights and the Limits of Vision," *PMLA*, 86 (Jan. 1971), 51–62.

<sup>2</sup> *The English Novel: Form and Function* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961).

A reply by Professor Sonstroem will appear in the March *PMLA*.

#### Liberal Humanism

To the Editor:

Maynard Mack's address to the MLA, printed in the May issue of *PMLA*, leaves me with mixed-up feelings. I share the premises, most of them anyway, of his kind of liberal humanism, and I respond deeply to what he says about our calling; yet I can't help feeling that humanism in education has had its day. He must know, surely, that the study of great literature, which is at the center of the educational process as he understands it, is peripheral to what actually goes on on most campuses. His specific recommendations for various forms of "outreach"—from the university to the schools, the disadvantaged, "the general community of educated men and women," etc.—make excellent sense. The trouble is, they ought to have been made and adopted as policy by the MLA long ago. Maybe if the MLA hadn't long ago averted its gaze from the teaching of English in the schools and high schools, leaving it to the schools of education, English wouldn't be a national disaster area now.

Where I stand, in a rather typically mediocre college, not just "down the road" but out in the middle of middle America, those quotations by John Comenius, Matthew Arnold, and Harold Taylor have a certain ironic flavor. (The line by Pogo, on the other hand, which Mack puts at the top of his list, tells the plain,

unvarnished truth: "We have met the enemy and he is us.") This college, a former "normal" school, is an American answer to that wish of John Comenius "that all men should be educated fully to full humanity"; only we don't say anything about full humanity. We call the process "general education," and funnel all our students willy-nilly into the usual run of introductory courses in the humanities, social sciences, behavioral sciences, and natural sciences. These courses are hugely unpopular, for a variety of reasons, and enrollment in them would shrink to almost nothing if the students could choose freely; which is why they are not allowed to choose freely. They deduce, correctly, that these courses, along with the distribution requirements which keep them full, exist first to protect jobs and secondarily for their education. But the chief reason for the futility of these courses (aside from the fact that they are often badly taught) is that most of these students—ordinary, white, middle-class kids from ordinary, white, middle-class high schools—do not belong in a liberal arts program at all—even in the poor imitation that we provide. Maybe later when they've grown up a little. They read poorly, they have no capacity for handling abstractions, and they have no particular interest in learning things which are of no immediate use to them. But here they are in college, the answer to Comenius' prayer, and what are we going to do with them? Just keep on running them through these cattle pens and call it liberal education? You bet.

The situation is especially bad in the humanities. Here the glut of semiliterate students forces all teaching down to the same dead level. "The very special bond that the teaching of literature almost inevitably engenders between teacher and student" rarely has a chance to form. Mack is mistaken: there is nothing inevitable about that bond. The motives of teachers and students are ordinarily too far apart. Many of our students want only one thing from us, a grade; and for most, grades are certainly a primary consideration. The rules of the game as it is ordinarily played make grades a primary consideration. Our students have learned these rules well, after twelve years of schooling, and they do not like it when a teacher says in effect that he is not going to play their game. Any teacher who puts himself on the line, as Mack says, is starting a new game with a new and puzzling set of rules. I do not know whether we ever put the "whole self . . . naked and frail, with all its embarrassing inadequacies" on the line, but obviously a teacher who tries to be honest about what he knows and feels and responsible for what he knows and feels is going to be doing something of the sort. Few students are prepared for honesty and responsibility or know how to respond to teaching that possesses these qualities. Few teachers can remain honest and responsible for long. For years