

PMLA

Volume 102
Number 3

*Publications of the
Modern Language Association
of America*

May 1987



The *Canterbury Tales* and the Good Society

Paul A. Olson

This work demonstrates how the *Canterbury Tales* reflect the political, social, and economic climate of late medieval Europe, specifically of Chaucer's contemporaries at the English court. Paul Olson argues that Chaucer's narratives emerge from his deep concern about the crises of late fourteenth-century England and his vision of the renewal of that troubled society through the ideal of *parlement*, the various orders of society speaking together, and through a perfective religious discipline. Serving his culture in various official capacities, the poet shared some views with other reformers, but he was almost alone among them in recognizing the new Epicureanism, or materialism, that was transforming his country. To attack what he saw as the dangers of this new attitude, he applied his most vigorous comic power and his genius for the manipulation of genre.

\$37.50

Language and Meaning in the Renaissance

Richard Waswo

"Waswo achieves a depth and precision rarely found in work on the development of the Renaissance concept of history. His book should interest not just students of Renaissance literature, but historians of the Renaissance and Reformation and the wide variety of scholars now interested in the history and theory of interpretation."

—Anthony Grafton, *Princeton University*
\$37.50

New limited Paperback Editions

Women Writers and Poetic Identity Dorothy Wordsworth, Emily Brontë, and Emily Dickinson Margaret Homans

"In perceiving the struggle to define an adequate persona and poetic voice, and linking this with the struggle for self discovery, Ms. Homans produces an absorbing thesis, and simultaneously articulates what amounts to a persuasive manifesto for feminist criticism *per se*."

—Judy Simons, *Review of English Studies*
LPE: \$13.50. C: \$28.00



Shakespeare's Revision of *King Lear* Steven Urkowitz

"...our editions of *King Lear*, if not all Shakespeare's two-text plays, will never be the same."

—S. W. Reid, *Shakespeare Studies*
LPE: \$11.50. C: \$22.50

On *King Lear*

Edited by Lawrence Danson

In their lectures on *King Lear*, the eight contributors to this volume fulfill Shakespeare's rigorous injunction to "Speak what we feel" about the playwright's amplest tragedy. Representing distinctive but complementary points of view, they cover theatrical history, verbal style, acting and actors, the playwright in his cultural context and in the light of enduring human concerns, and the Shakespearean view of history, tragedy, and psychology.
LPE: \$13.50. C: \$20.50

At your bookstore or

Princeton University Press

41 William Street, Princeton, NJ 08540

May 1987

PMIA

*Publications of the
Modern Language Association of America*

Volume 102

Number 3

PUBLISHED SIX TIMES A YEAR BY THE ASSOCIATION

The Modern Language Association of America

ORGANIZED 1883

INCORPORATED 1900

OFFICERS FOR THE YEAR 1987

President: WINFRED P. LEHMANN, *University of Texas, Austin*
First Vice President: BARBARA HERRNSTEIN SMITH, *University of Pennsylvania*
Second Vice President: VICTOR BROMBERT, *Princeton University*
Executive Director: PHYLLIS FRANKLIN
Deputy Executive Director and Treasurer: HANS RÜTIMANN

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

For the term ending 31 December 1987

HOUSTON A. BAKER, JR.
University of Pennsylvania
ELAINE MARKS
University of Wisconsin, Madison
JAMES OLNEY
Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge

For the term ending 31 December 1988

MARY LOUISE PRATT
Stanford University
FRANK J. WARNKE
University of Georgia
RUTH BERNARD YEAZELL
University of California, Los Angeles

For the term ending 31 December 1989

PETER ELBOW
State University of New York, Stony Brook
JOAN M. FERRANTE
Columbia University
PATRICIA M. SPACKS
Yale University

For the term ending 31 December 1990

THOMAS M. GREENE
Yale University
LAWRENCE LIPKING
Northwestern University
JUDITH RYAN
Harvard University

TRUSTEES OF INVESTED FUNDS

WILLIAM O. BAKER
Murray Hill, New Jersey

C. WALLER BARRETT
Charlottesville, Virginia

JOEL CONARROE
New York, New York

PMLA (ISSN 0030-8129) is issued six times a year, in January, March, May, September, October, and November, by the Modern Language Association of America. 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 (four years maximum), \$10; new regular members (first year), \$25; regular members (salary under \$12,000), \$10; regular members (salary \$12,000-\$15,000), \$35; regular members (salary \$15,000-\$20,000), \$45; regular members (salary \$20,000-\$25,000), \$50; regular members (salary \$25,000-\$30,000), \$55; regular members (salary \$30,000-\$35,000), \$60; regular members (salary \$35,000-\$40,000), \$65; regular members (salary \$40,000-\$45,000), \$70; regular members (salary \$45,000-\$50,000), \$75; regular members (salary \$50,000-\$55,000), \$80; regular members (salary \$55,000-\$60,000), \$85; regular members (salary \$60,000-\$65,000), \$90; regular members (salary \$65,000-\$70,000), \$95; regular members (salary \$70,000-\$75,000), \$100; regular members (salary \$75,000 and above), \$105; joint members (two individuals sharing the same household, who receive one subscription to *PMLA* but two copies of all other publications), add \$20 to dues category of higher-income member; foreign members, same as regular members (ascertain dues category based on American dollar equivalent). Membership applications are available on request.

The subscription price of *PMLA* for libraries and other institutions is \$80. A subscription including a bound volume at the end of the year is \$195, domestic and foreign. Agents deduct 4% as their fee. Single copies of the January, March, May, and October issues may be obtained for \$7.50 each; the November (Program) issue for \$20; the September (Directory) issue for \$35.

Issues for the current year are available from the MLA Member and Customer Services Office. 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, NY 10546; (914) 762-2200. Early and current volumes may be obtained on microfilm from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Purchase of current volumes on film is restricted to subscribers of the journal.

OFFICE OF PUBLICATION AND EDITORIAL OFFICES

10 Astor Place, New York, NY 10003

All communications including notices of changes of address should be sent to the Member and Customer Services Office of the Association. If a change of address also involves a change of institutional affiliation, that office should be informed of this fact at the same time.

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

Copyright © 1987 by The Modern Language Association of America.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 12-32040.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Member and Customer Services Office, Modern Language Association of America, 10 Astor Place, New York, NY 10003.

Contents • May

Editor's Column. Special Topics in <i>PMLA</i> : A Call for Articles	275
Notes on Contributors	277
Forthcoming in <i>PMLA</i>	277
Presidential Address 1986. The Triumph of Theory, the Resistance to Reading, and the Question of the Material Base. J. HILLIS MILLER	281
The New Historicism and Its Discontents: Politicizing Renaissance Drama. EDWARD PECHTER	292
<p>Abstract. This essay, while referring particularly to commentary about Renaissance drama, examines the new historicism more generally as one of the most powerful and interesting forms of criticism on the contemporary scene. How do new-historicist critics characterize the text? What do they mean by history? How do they understand the relation between the two? And finally, are there other, arguably more useful kinds of answers available to us than the ones the new historicists typically provide? (EP)</p>	
Rape versus Mans/laughter: Hitchcock's <i>Blackmail</i> and Feminist Interpretation. TANIA MODLESKI	304
<p>Abstract. In film studies the work of Alfred Hitchcock has often been considered misogynist, and feminist critics have assumed that the female spectator can enjoy the films only by adopting the position of a masochist or the perspective of a man. An analysis of <i>Blackmail</i>, however, reveals that women's relation to the text is much more complicated than has generally been supposed. The film is constructed as an elaborate joke on the heroine, who, as in the Freudian paradigm, is ultimately transformed into an object between two male subjects; nevertheless, because much of the film stresses her subjectivity, a reading that insists on woman's point of view and experience becomes possible. This reading, which activates the word <i>rape</i>—a term seldom used in analytical discussions of the film's central episode—has serious implications for feminist critics in their struggle for interpretive truth. (TM)</p>	
Garcilaso's Poetics of Subversion and the Orpheus Tapestry. MARY E. BARNARD	316

Abstract. The Orpheus tapestry in Garcilaso's third eclogue is an intertextual construct, a rewriting of the myth through a dismembering and reconstruction of classical and Italian models. Revisionary and corrective, Garcilaso's creative imitation of his antecedents involves a deliberate act of subversion; his text not only remakes its sources but seeks to overcome them. Thus Garcilaso's version of Orpheus and Eurydice rivals its predecessors by its own accuracy of presentation; it depicts exquisite, fragile beauty violently destroyed

and a brooding, solipsistic lover deprived of his lyric power. By subverting the ancient artist-magician, Garcilaso appropriates the Orphic power of song for the lyric speaker's self-presentation as poet, providing the speaker, in the process, with a rite of passage into the mythological world of the nymphs. Finally, an elaborate game of voices, anchored on the Orphic, reveals the text both as an artifact and as a product of an act of rewriting. (MEB)

“And I Mon Waxe Wod”: The Middle English “Foweles in the Frith.”
 THOMAS C. MOSER, JR. 326

Abstract. The tiny lyric “Foweles in the Frith” may be the oldest surviving love song written in English. Endlessly anthologized, this late thirteenth-century poem has in recent years become the object of intermittent academic debate between an old school that views it as a secular love song and some later critics who see it as some sort of religious complaint. Actually, it could have been understood variously by a medieval audience. It works well as a simple spring love poem sung by a man about a woman, but there is also evidence for reading it as a lament for postlapsarian humanity or as a specifically Christological complaint. As one critic has noted, for a medieval exegete the precise relation between a text’s *littera* and *sensus* was far from “automatic”; barring the discovery of an original poetic context for “Foweles,” any unitary solution to the lyric’s meaning will probably remain elusive. (TCM, Jr.)

Chaucer and the Silence of History: Situating the Canon’s Yeoman’s
 Tale. BRITTON J. HARWOOD 338

Abstract. Dissonances within texts may result from contradictions within ideology or the contradiction between ideology and history. The disjunctions between the two parts of the Canon’s Yeoman’s Tale, between both parts and the ending, and the gaps within each of the parts can be explained as arising with the contradiction between Chaucer’s ideological project in the tale—an attack on the emergence of productive capital—and the literary means for the attack. The result is a confession told without moral content and then a fabliau made to serve Christian morality. Productive capital, which is virtually unrepresented elsewhere in the Chaucerian canon, is both invisible and glaring in the tale; and it competed in Chaucer’s London with commercial capital, which reinforced the feudal aristocracy as well as depended on it. (BJH)

Forum 351

Report of the Executive Director 353

Forthcoming Meetings and Conferences of General Interest 361

Index of Advertisers 363

Professional Notes and Comment 374

Announcements 374 Journal Notes 378 Minutes of the MLA Delegate Assembly 380
 In Memoriam 384

EDITORIAL BOARD

BARBARA BECKER-CANTARINO, 1987
Ohio State University

MARGARET WILLIAMS FERGUSON, 1988
Columbia University

HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR., 1988
Cornell University

HERBERT S. LINDENBERGER, 1988
Stanford University

DOMNA STANTON, 1987
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

ALEXANDER WELSH, 1987
University of California, Los Angeles

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SUSAN HARDY AIKEN, 1989
University of Arizona

MARTHA BANTA, 1987
*University of California,
Los Angeles*

TERRY J. CASTLE, 1990
Stanford University

GIOVANNI CECCHETTI, 1987
*University of California,
Los Angeles*

CAROL T. CHRIST, 1987
*University of California,
Berkeley*

FREDERICK A. DE ARMAS, 1989
*Louisiana State University,
Baton Rouge*

HEATHER DUBROW, 1990
Carleton College

GEORGE D. ECONOMOU, 1990
University of Oklahoma

DANIEL MARK FOGEL, 1990
*Louisiana State University,
Baton Rouge*

JEAN FRANCO, 1988
Columbia University

RICHARD HELGERSON, 1988
*University of California,
Santa Barbara*

PETER UWE HOHENDAHL, 1987
Cornell University

JAMES M. HOLQUIST, 1987
Yale University

PEGGY KAMUF, 1989
Miami University

JULIA LESAGE, 1987
Jump Cut

MARJORIE BETH LEVINSON, 1990
University of Pennsylvania

DEBORAH E. MCDOWELL, 1989
Colby College

JAMES J. MURPHY, 1989
*University of California,
Davis*

MARGOT C. NORRIS, 1990
*University of Michigan,
Ann Arbor*

JONATHAN F. S. POST, 1989
*University of California,
Los Angeles*

MARY LOUISE PRATT, 1987
Stanford University

GERALD PRINCE, 1987
University of Pennsylvania

FRANÇOIS RIGOLOT, 1988
Princeton University

JUDITH L. RYAN, 1987
Harvard University

NAOMI SCHOR, 1988
Brown University

WENDY STEINER, 1990
University of Pennsylvania

EUGENE VANCE, 1990
Emory University

TILLY WARNOCK, 1989
University of Wyoming

THOMAS RUSSELL WHITAKER, 1990
Yale University

GEORGE T. WRIGHT, 1990
*University of Minnesota,
Minneapolis*

Editor: JOHN W. KRONIK, *Cornell University*
Editorial Supervisor: CLAIRE COOK
Assistant Editor: BONNIE V. LEVY

Managing Editor: JUDY GOULDING
Assistant Managing Editor: ROSLYN SCHLOSS
Assistant Editor: ELIZABETH HOLLAND

A STATEMENT OF EDITORIAL POLICY

PMLA welcomes essays of interest to those concerned with the study of language and literature. As the publication of a large and heterogeneous association, the journal is receptive to a variety of topics, whether general or specific, and to all scholarly methods and theoretical perspectives. The ideal *PMLA* essay exemplifies the best of its kind, whatever the kind; addresses a significant problem; draws out clearly the implications of its findings; and engages the attention of its audience through a concise, readable presentation. Articles of fewer than 2,500 words or more than 9,000 words, including notes, are not considered for publication. Translations should accompany foreign language quotations. The MLA urges its contributors to be sensitive to the social implications of language and to seek wording free of discriminatory overtones.

Only members of the association may submit articles to *PMLA*. Each article submitted is sent to at least one consultant reader and one member of the Advisory Committee. Articles recommended by these readers are then sent to the members of the Editorial Board, who meet periodically with the editor to make final decisions. Until a final decision is reached, the author's name is not made known to consultant readers, to members of the Advisory Committee and the Editorial Board, or to the editor.

Submissions, prepared according to *The MLA Style Manual*, should be addressed to the Editor of *PMLA*, 10 Astor Place, New York, NY 10003. An author's name should not appear on the manuscript; instead, a cover sheet, with the author's name, address, and the title of the article, should accompany the article. Authors should not refer to themselves in the first person in the submitted text or notes if such references would identify them; any necessary references to the author's previous work, for example, should be in the third person.