

PMLA

Volume 95
Number 3

*Publications of the
Modern Language Association
of America*

May 1980

Toward the Making of Thoreau's Modern Reputation

Selected Correspondence of S. A. Jones, A. W. Hosmer, H. S. Salt,
H. G. O. Blake, and D. Ricketson

edited by Fritz Oehlschlaeger and George Hendrick



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May 1980

PMILA

*Publications of the
Modern Language Association of America*

Volume 95

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PUBLISHED SIX TIMES A YEAR BY THE ASSOCIATION

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Second-class postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing office.
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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 12-32040.

Contents · May

Editor's Column	307
Presidential Address 1979. E Pluribus Unum. JEAN A. PERKINS .	312
Lying as Dying in <i>Heart of Darkness</i> . GARRETT STEWART . .	319

Abstract. As thematic actions, dying and lying divide up Conrad's narrative in *Heart of Darkness* between main story and controversial coda. Steeped in the formulas of literary fatality, including the symmetries of ironic reprisal and the summarizing retrospect of last words, Kurtz's death is modeled on fictional expectations so as to secure its dark transmissible import, only for that import to be betrayed by the supposedly beneficent mendacity of Marlow's lie in the final interview with Kurtz's Intended. Marlow as reader or interpreter of tragic meaning degenerates to Marlow as false author of a euphemizing fiction. The essay traces the complex preparation for Kurtz's death, including the suicide and murder of earlier surrogates for Marlow, as these scenes establish an interpretive framework by which to assess a coda that becomes, for a narrator repulsed by the "flavour of mortality in lies," yet another indirect but self-indicting death scene. (GS)

My Hideous Progeny: Mary Shelley and the Feminization of Romanticism. MARY POOVEY	332
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Abstract. As the daughter of two notorious Romantic rebels and as the wife of a third, Mary Shelley was encouraged from her youth to "enrol [herself] on the page of fame," to prove herself by her pen and her imagination. But since Shelley also wanted to conform to the more conventional feminine model—to be modest, self-effacing, and devoted to a family rather than to a career—she developed a prevalent ambivalence toward self-assertion. In the 1818 edition of *Frankenstein*, this ambivalence surfaces in her criticism of the egotistic imagination and in the grotesque but sympathetic monster that symbolizes its essence; the 1831 revision applies this judgment more forcefully to her own youthful "transgression." Nevertheless, by characterizing the artist as the victim of an uncontrollable destiny, Shelley also sanctions the very self-expression she professes to regret and elevates the dilemma of the female artist to the status of myth. (MP)

"Much Depends on the Acting": The Original Cast of <i>Le Misanthrope</i> . ROGER W. HERZEL	348
--	-----

Abstract. The printed text of *Le Misanthrope* is only a partial record of Molière's creation. Molière wrote his plays to be performed, not to be read, and he tailored each role in his plays to the individual talents of the particular actor who would play the role. In the original production of *Le Misanthrope*, each actor's performance was part of an intricate web of contrasts and balances. Molière himself played Alceste; as in all his plays, his acting style, while unmistakably comic, occupied a middle ground between the grotesque style of one group of actors and the elegant polish of the actor who played Philinte. (RWH)

The Context of Browning's Painter Poems: Aesthetics, Polemics, Historics. DAVID J. DELAURA	367
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Abstract. The neo-Catholic apologist Alexis Rio argued in 1836 that the idealism of medieval art was destroyed in the fifteenth century by a growing "paganism" and "naturalism." Browning's refutation in "Pictor Ignotus" of Rio's defense of the Italian Pre-Raphaelites involved a severe distortion of the historical record. Rio's thesis was widely debated in the late forties; above all, Charles Kingsley, whose definition of a "Protestant" realism was a direct response to the new ascetic theory, was a source of Browning's more complex views of the fifties. "Fra Lippo Lippi" answers Rio, though its sensualism is only one component of Browning's unstable doctrine. Browning's polemical designs, which led him to play fast and loose with historical fact, explain both the iconoclasm and the conformity of the poem. Elsewhere, Browning's endorsement of realism was limited by fear of an art that proclaims beauty to be its own self-sufficing end. (DJJ)

History, Fiction, and the Ground Between: The Uses of the Documentary Mode in Black Literature. BARBARA FOLEY	389
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Abstract. Although the so-called nonfiction novel is ordinarily seen as a distinctly post-World War II phenomenon, Afro-American literature has from its beginnings relied to a marked degree on the documentary mode. Close scrutiny of Afro-American prose narrative provides the basis not only for revising some common literary-historical generalizations but also for examining the nature of mimesis and historicity, since Afro-American writers have employed a wide range of techniques to persuade their readers of the truths proposed in their texts. A consideration of the uses of factuality in this body of literature enables us to make broader theoretical distinctions among the kinds of propositions conveyed by various types of fictional narratives and to illuminate the shady borderline between factual and fictive discourse. (BF)

Report of the Executive Director	404
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<i>Forthcoming Meetings and Conferences of General Interest</i>	414
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<i>Professional Notes and Comment</i>	424
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