

# PMLA

*Volume 99*  
*Number 5*

*Publications of the  
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October 1984

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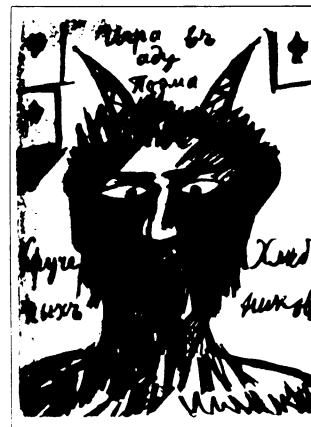
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**Princeton**  
University Press

41 William Street

Princeton, NJ 08540

October 1984

# PMILA

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*Publications of the  
Modern Language Association of America*

Volume 99

Number 5

PUBLISHED SIX TIMES A YEAR BY THE ASSOCIATION

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*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, 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 year), \$20; regular members (salary under \$12,000), \$25; regular members (salary \$12,000-\$15,000), \$30; regular members (salary \$15,000-\$20,000), \$35; regular members (salary \$20,000-\$25,000), \$40; regular members (salary \$25,000-\$30,000), \$45; regular members (salary \$30,000-\$35,000), \$50; regular members (salary over \$35,000), \$55; joint members (with only one subscription to *PMLA*), add \$10 to dues category of higher-paid member; foreign members, same as regular members. Membership applications are available on request.

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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  
62 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011 *Tel:* 212 741-5588

All communications including notices of changes of address should be sent to the Member and Customer Services Office of the Association at 62 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011. 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.

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 12-32040.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Member and Customer Services Office, Modern Language Association of America, 62 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011.

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**Abstract.** The Prologue to the twelfth-century collection of French narrative poems called the *Lais* presents a woman poet, now known as Marie de France, who appears to be preoccupied with the significance of origins and who takes a bold initiative while remaining elusive about the exact nature of her enterprise. A close reading of two of these tales—*Laüstic* and *Chievrefoil*—helps clarify the problematics of Marie's portrayal by showing that it rests on a deliberate poetics of silence. The poet-narrator stresses not what is heroic, public, and patriarchal; rather, she creates an alternative type of lineage rooted in silence, secrecy, and, above all, in a private exchange between two who love. The gradual revelation of the sign and its meaning, achieved by successive attempts to *gloser la lettre*, are intimately connected both to Marie's text and to her poetic persona: to gloss the one is to name the other. (MAF)

Lafayette's Ellipses: The Privileges of Anonymity.  
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mutability and ambiguity into the static world of eighteenth-century representation. Just as the real masquerade represented a carnivalesque disruption of the eighteenth-century symbolic order, the masquerade episode disturbs the prevailing decorum of eighteenth-century English fiction. (TC)

### The Illusion of Mastery: Wordsworth's Revisions of "The Drowned Man of Esthwaite," 1799, 1805, 1850.

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**Abstract.** In the continuing controversies over the value of the 1805 *Prelude* versus the 1850 text—to which some voices have added a case for the 1799 version—the importance of Wordsworth's character as a revising poet has been neglected. One episode present in all three versions, his boyhood discovery of a man drowned in Esthwaite's Lake, offers a productive case study—both for the play of Wordsworth's revisions and for a view of *The Prelude* as a poem constituted by its many texts, rather than by any one authoritative text. Wordsworth's most emphatic revision is the addition of a commentary that denies the boy's fear and converts the corpse into a figure of "ideal grace," like something in a literary "romance." Yet other revisions of both text and context reveal Wordsworth's ambivalence about the strategies of argumentative mastery with which he would govern the mysteries that inhabit his imagination. (SJW)

### The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination.

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**Abstract.** Women's hair, particularly when it is golden, has always been a preoccupation of Western artists and writers. But for the Victorians, who discovered complex totemic and symbolic significance in the image of women's hair, it became an obsession. The powerful woman mythologized in Victorian literature and art achieved her vitality partly through her hair, which both contributed to and expressed her magic power. She used her hair to weave her discourse and to spin her plots, to strangle her lovers and to shelter them, to build deadly snares and webs and to proclaim her own divinity and glory. (EGG)

### "Because a Fire Was in My Head": Eudora Welty and the Dialogic Imagination. PATRICIA S. YAEGER . . . . . 955

**Abstract.** Feminist theory has argued that in a literary tradition overburdened by patriarchal legends and signs, women writers who wish to develop authentic, autonomous voices must devote themselves to their feminine precursors and abandon a masculine canon. In *The Golden Apples*, however, Eudora Welty appropriates images and themes of several poems by Yeats to dramatize the concerns of her heroines. Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of dialogism and of heteroglossia suggest a critical framework for exploring Welty's expropriations, but Bakhtin's method fails to consider the category of gender as a potent source for the dialogic tension characteristic of the novel as genre. Viewed from this perspective Welty's writing is more subversive than many of her critics have perceived, while Bakhtin's insights into the nature of novelistic discourse are useful in describing the restructuring of traditions that occurs in women's texts. Bakhtin's ideas must be understood and amplified, however, in the light of recent feminist theory. (PSY)

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