

Editor's Column

IN STRIVING to accept articles of significant interest to the entire profession—and to do so without soliciting significant material on a significant theme or significant subject—the *PMLA* Editorial Board has long recognized that some issues of the journal would inevitably be, well, a bit strange (“eclectic” is, I believe, the respectable term). This issue is a case in point, and I am at a loss to know how to organize, much less relate, nine articles involving subjects as diverse as aphorism, war, psychopolitics, suffering and calm, reading, Weimar Germany, metaphor, providence, and a sled named Rosebud. Let's begin with Rosebud.

I do not know if Robert Carringer's study of *Citizen Kane* is the first article ever published in *PMLA* that is devoted entirely to analysis of a film; if so, I think we have made a happy beginning, for not only is Orson Welles's classic one of the best-known films ever made, but Carringer's treatment, in addition to offering a persuasive interpretation of *Kane*, involves comparison of written narrative and thus has implications for literary criticism. It also provides insight into the creative process of a complex art form, and would seem to be a model of the kind of film criticism appropriate for *PMLA*.

While Carringer takes a new approach to a successful and world-renowned film, Wayne Kvam treats a not very successful, totally obscure play through a very old-fashioned approach—literary history uncontaminated, as one member of our Editorial Board put it, by any theory of historiography. Illustrating a period of German culture through the perspective of the 1931 Zuckmayer and Hilpert stage adaptation of *A Farewell to Arms*, Kvam combines a theater history of Weimar Germany with a close analysis of the problems in, and the meaning of, adapting Hemingway's romantic novel about freedom during the time when Nazism was coming to power. It helps to have seen *Citizen Kane* before reading Carringer, but one need not have read *A Farewell to Arms* (or even have seen the movie) to return with Kvam to a critical point in world history.

Beverly Coyle's article on Wallace Stevens' poetry is of obvious interest to any scholar concerned with studying the complex modes of Stevens' thought and the lyric forms in which these modes may be discerned, but the article is also of interest to anyone who has ever felt that aphorism and “serious” poetry are incompatible. Coyle's stunning analysis takes us from “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” to almost that many ways in which aphorism became an “anchorage of thought” for Stevens throughout his career. It is a fresh approach to the work of an important poet, and its conclusions may have application to other poets (Hopkins, for instance) in other periods.

So too James Averill's analysis of suffering and calm in Wordsworth's early poetry, an article that attempts to come to terms with an aspect of Wordsworth's work that has often embarrassed even the most devoted Wordsworthians. Beginning with the sense of calm that pervades the concluding lines of *The Ruined Cottage*—a conclusion many critics have tended to view as “elegiac sleight-of-hand”—Averill leads us through this and other poems in an effort to show that the pattern of calm following suffering is not an evasion of troublesome questions evoked by an awareness of human misery, but a response, somewhat akin to the psychological mechanism of catharsis, which Wordsworth's imagination makes to the fictional representation of suffering. The problems involved, and the questions they raise, transcend the poetry and even Wordsworth himself, and thus, like Coyle's treatment of Stevens, Averill's article should be of interest even to readers unfamiliar with the works discussed.

Melvyn New's study begins with a question to which most of us would probably reply in the affirmative—“Is the world of eighteenth-century English fiction a providential world?” No, says New; not totally, not as many of us have assumed it to be. Considering the fiction of the entire century, treating the complexities of the movement from romance to novel, New synthesizes earlier criticism and suggests how the evolution of the novel was influenced by the transition from a Christian to a secular world view. An important comment on a genre and a century, New's article helps us make better sense out of some seemingly senseless episodes in the work of major eighteenth-century English authors.

The question of providential order is surely not as crucial today as it was in the eighteenth century, but the question of curing societal ills has not gone away. In her study of Doris Lessing's major novels, Marion Vlastos turns to the work of R. D. Laing in an attempt to explain how Lessing, like Laing, explores the idea that madness could be our potential salvation, that the mad person is our best means

of understanding the insanity of a supposedly sane society. Laing's theories are, to say the least, controversial; so, no doubt, is Vlastos' use of such theories to explain Lessing. But this is an area in which considerable interest has been expressed in recent years, and I think it is good for *PMLA* on occasion to publish articles—with all their hazards—that treat authors whose life work is still in progress.

In reporting on Max Byrd's article on "reading" in *Great Expectations*, our consultant specialist wrote: "Although one has supposed that there was not much new to be said about *Great Expectations*, Max Byrd has produced a genuinely original interpretation of an important thematic strand in the novel. All readers of Dickens will welcome these fresh insights, which are most persuasively, indeed elegantly, presented." I agree. *Great Expectations* is one work with which all readers are familiar, and "reading" is, of course, our stock in trade. I cannot imagine anyone not finding this essay to be of interest.

If our consultant on Byrd's essay was delighted to find an article that says something fresh about Dickens, equally so was the reader of Joyce Sparer Adler's essay on Melville's *Billy Budd*: "This is a very provocative piece of work which may well inaugurate a whole new line of interpretation not only of *Billy Budd* but of all the works leading up to it." Whether or not it inaugurates a whole new line of interpretation, I suspect that this article will provoke a long line of letters to the *PMLA* Forum, for Adler's approach is radical, presenting a *Billy Budd* that not many of us realized we had long been reading.

The issue concludes with Michael McCandles' analysis of the literal and the metaphorical. From his opening sentence ("A literalist could be described as one who both takes metaphors too seriously and does not take metaphors seriously enough") to his conclusion ("both fictive and nonfictive discourses, each in their different but reciprocal fashions, are enabled to make metaphorical statements, which we treat as if they were true, about worlds which we treat as if they were literal"), McCandles unravels a dazzling series of paradoxes in commenting on a critical problem with which all of us have no doubt wrestled. Since examples are drawn from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Don Quixote*, Shakespeare and Cervantes scholars will find the article to be of special interest, but in it, as with all of the material in this issue (from Rosebud to Billy Budd), I trust readers will find the kind of intellectual excitement that *PMLA* is attempting to generate.

William D. Schaefer



Frame enlargement from *Citizen Kane* courtesy of Janus Films.

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Citizen Kane. ROBERT L. CARRINGER 185

Abstract. Something more than the obvious psychological interpretation must be made of Rosebud, the object from the protagonist's childhood that is the focus of the plot activity in Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941). This essay applies traditional methods of literary criticism—interpretation of symbolic imagery, close reading of dramatic language and gesture, and source and influence study—toward a solution of this major critical problem in one of the most important films. To assume that Rosebud will provide a definitive explanation of Charles Foster Kane is to disregard the function of the film's complex narrative organization. The position that Rosebud will explain everything is maintained by a character who is an object of comedy; the film's symbolic imagery and dramatic organization pose the issue quite differently: not *Rosebud will explain everything!* but *Will Rosebud explain anything?* Far from being a sign of the film's intellectual shallowness, Rosebud is the surest guide into its undetected complexities. (RLC)

Zuckmayer, Hilpert, and Hemingway. WAYNE KVAM 194

Abstract. Carl Zuckmayer and Heinz Hilpert adapted Hemingway's novel *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) for the Berlin stage in 1931. The unpublished manuscript of the play "Kat" reveals that the German adaptors, while making several original contributions, relied heavily upon Annemarie Horschitz' translation of *A Farewell to Arms* (*In einem andern Land*, 1930). By participating in the dramatization, playwright Zuckmayer sought to win a wider audience for Hemingway; at the same time, he was responding to current trends in the Berlin theater and to the political situation facing the Weimar Republic. Zuckmayer's political consciousness, manifest in the earliest of his successful plays, reached a new level of seriousness in "Kat." Stepping out from behind his own humorous satire, he permitted Hemingway's endorsement of individual freedom to come to life in the Deutsches Theater at a time when the cause of freedom was being threatened as never before in Germany's history. (WK)

An Anchorage of Thought: Defining the Role of Aphorism in
Wallace Stevens' Poetry. BEVERLY COYLE 206

Abstract. Wallace Stevens noted in his journal that while aphorisms are never believed for very long they help us make brief, intensely felt discoveries about ourselves; there he made a connection between his love of aphoristic expression and his theory of human perception of reality as a perception of fragments, never the whole. Exploring the nature and variety of his aphorisms as a manifestation of this concept is important to the understanding of his poems. The tendency to experience life as fragments is, on the one hand, a *centripetal* tendency akin to aphoristic expression, since in each case one momentarily pulls experience into a self-contained unit. But such moments invariably give rise to a *centrifugal* tendency, an encompassing of the plenitude of experience in all its contradictory fullness. The juxtaposition of these opposing tendencies lies at the heart of Stevens' aphoristic technique and of the tension in much of his poetry. (BC)

Suffering and Calm in Wordsworth's Early Poetry. JAMES H.
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Abstract. In Wordsworth's early poetry, a description of natural tranquility often follows a narration of human suffering. The most notable instance of this is the Pedlar's spear grass vision at the conclusion of *The Ruined Cottage*. This pattern of calm following suffering is not an attempt to evade the metaphysical questions provoked by evil and human misery; rather it represents a bona fide response which Wordsworth's imagination makes to the fictional representation of suffering. The poet contemplates the pathetic, as he does images of nature and memory, in order to provide himself with the excitement necessary to achieve the transcendental state he calls "calm." This natural calm is Wordsworth's version of a significant and familiar response to fictive suffering, the psychological mechanism of catharsis. (JHA)

“The Grease of God”: The Form of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction. MELVYN NEW 235

Abstract. Recent criticism of the eighteenth-century English novel points to a providential world view as the “proper conceptual context” for these fictions, but it would be an error to see the fictions of Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett as uniformly or unhesitatingly committed to the providential order. These authors constructed fictions, characters, and structures in response to the historical actuality of the age, in transition from the Christian to the secular world view. It is this transition and its effect on the providential world view that provide the conceptual context for the fiction of this period. Critics, having recognized the novel as the fictional form of a secular age, must also recognize the significance of the romance as that fictional form best depicting the providential order. In eighteenth-century English fiction the romance is gingerly displaced from the theoretical center of narrative by elements of form now identified with the novel. (MN)

Doris Lessing and R. D. Laing: Psychopolitics and Prophecy. MARION VLASTOS 245

Abstract. Doris Lessing’s major novels dealing with madness show a striking similarity to the ideas of R. D. Laing. Novelist and psychiatrist share the belief that the primary ill of our society is self-division; both see the mad person as victim and revealer of what is wrong with normal society. Lessing shares Laing’s conviction that the therapist can help his patient best by transposing himself into the patient’s world view. *The Golden Notebook* portrays the progressive disintegration of Anna’s normally fragmented life to its culmination in madness with Saul, her fellow patient and unwitting therapist. In *The Four-Gated City* Martha helps the mad Lynda and eventually herself and the world by entering into Lynda’s view of reality. In *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* Charles goes on a Laingian cosmic journey; however, the hero’s vision of a fatally structured universe undercuts the force of Lessing’s final portrayal of madness as potential salvation for the world. (MV)

“Reading” in *Great Expectations*. MAX BYRD 259

Abstract. The theme of education pervades nineteenth-century novels, often particularized in the theme of learning to read and write. *Great Expectations* reveals the complex metaphorical nature of the terms “reading” and “reader,” deepening our sense of how Pip’s moral perceptions are related to his literal education. The novel begins with several scenes in which Pip learns to read and then goes on to show a wide range of characters reading rightly or wrongly, dramatically or narrowly, with self-deception or with charity. Dickens’ own reader comes to see that the stages of Pip’s expectations correspond to the growth in his powers of interpretation. (MB)

Billy Budd and Melville’s Philosophy of War. JOYCE SPARER ADLER 266

Abstract. *Billy Budd* concentrates Melville’s philosophy of war and lifts it to its highest point of development. The themes of the work extend ideas he had developed since his youth, and its poetic conceptions are the offspring of earlier ones expressive of his thought on “the greatest of evils.” In *Billy Budd* the philosophy is conveyed entirely by poetic means—conceptual imagery and form; symbolic characters, actions, questions, contrasts, and contradictions; interplay of sight and sound; and pictorial representations of social realities. The work conveys both the abhorrence of war underestimated by those who, in the classical argument about *Billy Budd*, interpret it as Melville’s “testament of acceptance” and the nonironic, even luminous, affirmation of man’s latent humanity overlooked by those who read the book as irony, rejection, or darkness alone. In the course of his last artistic exploration Melville discovered that within the most cruel contradictions of the world of war lies the potential for its metamorphosis. (JSA)

The Literal and the Metaphorical: Dialectic or Interchange. MICHAEL MCCANLES 279

Abstract. The opposition of fictive to nonfictive (i.e., scientific) discourse current during the last 350 years is linked here to the relations between metaphorical and literal discourse. The

problem is this: if metaphorical usage is somehow a “misuse” of the literal relation of words to things, what are we to make of the fact that all language is metaphorical? (A) Metaphorical usage retroactively affirms the “dictionary” meanings of its words as if they were literal. (B) Fictive and nonfictive discourses encompass a (literal) heterocosm and a (metaphorical) second world, between which there is a dialectical liaison. (C) *Langue* stands metaphorically for extralinguistic reality, but *parole* may become metaphorical by retroactively affirming its words’ meanings within its *langue* as if they were literal. (D) Fiction is discourse that makes metaphorical statements by defining these as if they were literal, and nonfiction makes literal statements by defining these as functions of metaphorical statements. (MMcC)

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