

PMLA

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*Publications of the
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of America*

March 1981

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Contents · March

Editor's Column	163
---------------------------	-----

Hendiadys and <i>Hamlet</i> . GEORGE T. WRIGHT	168
--	-----

Abstract. In all his plays Shakespeare uses the Vergilian figure hendiadys some three hundred times, most frequently in his middle plays and most of all in *Hamlet*. Rare in English speech or other English poetry, hendiadys joins nouns, or sometimes adjectives, in a false or specious union (e.g., “sound and fury” for “furious sound”). Its effect in *Hamlet*, where it appears perhaps sixty-six times, is often to elevate, estrange, and baffle; and this stylistic use of conjoined terms that are neither parallel nor complementary mirrors the play’s deepest themes—especially the suspect character of personal unions and metaphysical connections. Once aware that Shakespeare frequently combines terms this way, we can understand better many puzzling phrases, including some celebrated ones. Three appendixes list instances of hendiadys in *Hamlet*, tabulate its incidence in all the plays, and discuss some misleading definitions in the *OED*. (GTW)

Repetition and Excess in <i>Tiempo de silencio</i> . GUSTAVO PÉREZ FIRMAT	194
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Abstract. Luis Martín Santos’ *Tiempo de silencio* displays a peculiar vulnerability to commentary. The novel both invites interpretation and “thematizes” the invitation. In this essay I offer a reading of the novel that explores—and exploits—such vulnerability. More concretely, I offer a reading anchored in two related notions, repetition and excess, for in and through them the work discloses its hermeneutic complexity. Accordingly my discussion moves from substances to events; it moves, that is, from a consideration of how excess is embodied in certain emblematic substances (Secs. 1 and 2) to a consideration of the repetitiveness of the novel’s events (Secs. 3 and 4). Such an exercise should not only shed new light on one of the most significant Spanish novels of this century but also, implicitly, raise important questions about the relationship between a commented text and its commentary. (GPF)

Mortgaging One’s Work to the World: Publication and the Structure of Montaigne’s <i>Essais</i> . BARRY LYDGATE	210
--	-----

Abstract. In seeking to distill into a public image a consciousness that changes over time, Montaigne faced moral and rhetorical dilemmas that confront all autobiographers. Unlike most literary self-portraitists, however, he gives evidence of having consciously tailored his project to the powers and limitations of his medium, the printed word. Montaigne’s solution to the problem of imagining and addressing the reader reflects his perception of a new audience for printed books in the sixteenth century. Acknowledging that his public self-image has clarified and defined his private one, he reconciles the conflicting demands of a self in process and a book in print by making successive additions that temper the lapidary finality of the text. The deepest truth of Montaigne’s claim to have written a book “consubstantial with its author” lies in the dynamic equilibration of past and current consciousness manifested both in the labile self and on the printed page. (BL)

The Logic of Realism: A Hegelian Approach.

MARSHALL BROWN 224

Abstract. The many facets of the realism debate reflect the complexity of the subject. Realism was an accepted standard of value only during the romantic period; it became more prominent later as it became more problematic. Major senses of “real” in the nineteenth century are (1) universal essence, (2) irregular minute particular, and (3) causal regularity. Realist plotting typically juxtaposes background tableau and foreground coup de theatre; realist style typically consists of multiple silhouettings. Realism is a semiosis by silhouetting. Hegel’s analysis of reality in the *Science of Logic* explains the association of realism with silhouetting, shows the systematic and historical relationships among the various critical positions and the nineteenth-century senses of “real,” and finally locates them with respect to the trope of inversion. The realist or silhouetting style falls between the relational style of the eighteenth century and the dispersive style of the twentieth. (MB)

Necessity and the Role of the Hero in Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*. STUART M. SPERRY

242

Abstract. Critics generally have assumed that the millennial fulfillment Shelley’s masterpiece dramatizes takes its origin from the hero’s moral recognition and repentance at the opening of the play. Apparent shortcomings in Shelley’s dramatization of that realization suggest, however, that the traditional view is an oversimplification. Instead of viewing Prometheus’ change of heart as the determining cause of universal regeneration, we can better see it as the first manifestation of a greater change with which the hero sympathizes but that nevertheless exists beyond him and his control, the power of universal Necessity. The distinction, although difficult, is crucial to the metaphysical subtlety of the drama and of Shelley’s insight into the tenuousness of humankind’s existential situation. Despite the frequent contention that Shelley rejected the doctrine of Necessity early in his career, *Prometheus Unbound* evolves directly from the poet’s long and unresolved deliberation on the rival claims of free will and determinism in human affairs. (SMS)

The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel. EVE KOSOFSKY SEDGWICK

255

Abstract. Traditional criticism of the Gothic novel, following a topography of the self derived from Freud, has linked sexuality with depth, repression with surface. Gothic convention, however, especially as Ann Radcliffe and M. G. Lewis use it, links surfaces with sexuality and contagion. The Gothic view of character is a social one, and it is concerned with writing and reference. The tracing and retracing of quasi-linguistic markings on surfaces establish personal identity, but only from outside, ex post facto, and through a draining tension between the code and its material support. The repetitious, fixating process of ocular confrontation by which characters recognize themselves and one another is like the process by which readers recognize thematic conventions. (EKS)

Forum 271

Forthcoming Meetings and Conferences of General Interest 278*Professional Notes and Comment* 292

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