

# PMLA

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*Ekbert Faas*

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## Contents • March

Editor's Column . . . . .	125
Notes on Contributors . . . . .	127
Forthcoming in <i>PMLA</i> . . . . .	128
Special Topics . . . . .	129

The Visual Arts, the Poetization of Space and Writing: An Interview with Gabriel García Márquez. RAYMOND LESLIE WILLIAMS . . . . .	131
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Cherchez la Femme: Male Malady and Narrative Politics in the French Romantic Novel. MARGARET WALLER . . . . .	141
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**Abstract.** The malaise depicted in early nineteenth-century French novels is said to characterize the age but is in fact a malady of men. In these works male alienation takes the form of emasculation. Nevertheless, Chateaubriand's *René* illustrates how the male protagonist's feminization becomes a sign of moral superiority and poetic genius. Although the hero claims to tell a tale devoid of conventional intrigue, he makes his solipsistic discourse prurient and melodramatic by introducing a woman who suffers the consequences of desiring him despite his disablement. The *mal du siècle* strategy consists in creating interest in character through the feminine *in* the man while providing drama in plot through the man's fatal effect *on* the woman. While the early Romantic novel breaks down stereotypes of masculinity by feminizing the hero, its conventions of narrative causality and discursive empowerment draw on traditional ideologies of gender difference to reempower alienated postrevolutionary man. (MW)

Pynchon's Postmodern Sublime. MARC W. REDFIELD . . . . .	152
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**Abstract.** Theoretical accounts of the "postmodern" have recently invoked the aesthetic category of the sublime, but without attending to the rhetorical complexities that the category names and conceals. This essay opens by considering disturbances legible in Fredric Jameson's proposal of a postmodern sublime, then goes on to consider narratives by Thomas Pynchon that interrogate and allegorize the burdens of such a proposition. From the early short stories to *V.* and *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon's texts develop increasingly complex stagings of the sublime, putting into question the psychological and epistemological consolations that these scenarios exist to afford. (MWR)

Yeats: Tragic Joy and the Sublime. R. JAHAN RAMAZANI . . . . .	163
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**Abstract.** Critics have failed to grasp that Yeats's "tragic joy" is a version of the sublime. The phrase captures the affective dynamic of the sublime—the transformation of defeat and terror into joy—as do similar concepts in Longinus, Edmund Burke, Kant, and Schiller. Yeats can help us understand death as the ultimate occasion of the sublime. Through his

lyrics of tragic joy we can trace the psychic and rhetorical resemblances that connect diverse modes of the sublime: curse, prophecy, and apocalypse. These modes encode affirmative responses to destruction, so that the psycholinguistic violence in the poems may owe less to fascism than to the Romantic sublime. Although Yeats turns the sublime of Blake and Shelley in a reactionary direction, the politics of the sublime are inherently neither right-wing nor left-wing but open to either articulation. (RJR)

A Titan in Extenuating Circumstances: Sturm und Drang and the *Kraftmensch*. ALAN C. LEIDNER . . . . . 178

**Abstract.** Sturm und Drang's self-critique of its rebellious impulses resembles Kant's virtually contemporaneous struggle to formulate the principle of autonomy, for both involve the reconciliation of individual freedom with rules that can make such freedom accountable. Dramas of Goethe, Klingler, and Schiller acknowledge the need for principles of accountability by presenting the violent *Kraftmensch* within plots designed to justify the figure's actions. The frequent repetition of words and phrases in the drama of Sturm und Drang is part of the tradition's search for repeatable rules within the scope of its own impulsiveness. Among major writers of Sturm und Drang, only J. M. R. Lenz avoids depicting the *Kraftmensch*. Because Lenz will not mitigate the culpability of his characters, his drama can deal more honestly with problems of freedom and individuality. (ACL)

"Selige Sehnsucht" and Goethean Enlightenment. ROBERT ELLIS DYE . . . . . 190 ✓

**Abstract.** Goethe's poem "Selige Sehnsucht" has been variously interpreted in the light of different readers' notions of what is characteristically "Goethean." This essay examines syntactic, semantic, and rhetorical ambiguities in the poem and adds to the variety of interpretations by suggesting that the opening lines' elitist restriction of the message to "none but the wise" is, ironically, democratic and that the familiar closing maxim discriminates not between "us" and "them" but between "before" and "after"—between blessed, half-blind ("trübe") desire and a brilliant fulfillment potentially in store for everyone. Goethean enlightenment, like irony, is indirect. Temporarily obfuscating, it promises—beyond time and selfhood—a consummate unitary illumination. (RED)

Criticism in Translation . . . . . 201

Modern Mimology: The Dream of a Poetic Language. GERARD GENETTE (translated by Thais Morgan) . . . . . 202 ✓

*Forum* . . . . . 215

*Forthcoming Meetings and Conferences of General Interest* . . . . . 223

*Index of Advertisers* . . . . . 225

*Professional Notes and Comment* . . . . . 236

Announcements 234 Journal Notes 236 Meeting of the MLA Executive Council 238  
In Memoriam 242