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Victorian Oxford and the Science of Language.

LINDA DOWLING 160

Abstract. In the career of the once famous and now all but forgotten Oxford philologist F. Max Müller we may trace not only the changed assumptions about language brought about in the nineteenth century by comparative or scientific philology but also some of the subversive consequences of those assumptions for Victorian ideas of literature and culture. Müller succeeded with his audiences because he was able to reassure them that in the new linguistic order language remained unchanged in its power to guarantee human identity and value. His highly idiosyncratic and unstable blending of Romantic idealism, linguistics, religious humanism, and pulpit oratory, however, ultimately assured his failure as a linguistic scientist. (LD)

The Critic as Witness for the Prosecution: Making the Case
against *Lázaro de Tormes*. GEORGE A. SHIPLEY 179

Abstract. *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes* is a coherent and fully realized fiction. Its eccentric shape is craftily designed by its autobiographical narrator to serve his current needs by swelling the narration of his early years while masking the recent "Toledo Years" with wit, expedient renaming, and ellipses. By this apparently generous and certainly amusing "recontextualization" of his current involvement in a scandalous ménage-à-trois the narrator seeks to attenuate his culpability: his corruption merely represents Toledo's and his society's generally. The puzzling short chapters (iv–vii) are coded allusively to deceive innocent readers and amuse malicious readers in *Lázaro's* Toledo; these chapters are as detailed as they can and need be. The narrator exercises a freer hand in setting down his version of long-ago and far-away Salamanca; *Lázaro* exploits this advantage in the four fifths of the narrative that comprises Chapters i–iii. (GAS)

The House of the Seven Gables: Reading the Romance of
America. BROOK THOMAS 195

Abstract. *The House of the Seven Gables* contains a contradiction that seems inherent in the form of the romance as Hawthorne defined it. While Hawthorne uses the form to shape a vision of the future by treating the possible, not the probable, he acknowledges that vision as a product of his imagination and thus undercuts its authority to represent an actual world. The romance we call America seems to contain a similar contradiction. The American dream, to shape an alternative society based on the vision of a possible world, rests on documents that declare self-evident truths and claim the authority of natural law. But Hawthorne's romance suggests that the foundation of authority for both his romance and his country is not natural but rhetorical. To explore this contradiction and the possibility of transcending it, I propose a social reading of Hawthorne's romance and a rhetorical reading of the American social system. (BT)

Matriarchal Mirror: Women and Capital in <i>Moll Flanders</i> . LOIS A. CHABER	212
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Abstract. Ironic readings of *Moll Flanders* have illuminated the novel's psychological comedy at the expense of its social criticism and have elevated Defoe's art by lowering the moral status of its heroine. This essay defends and celebrates Moll as a character who co-opts the essentially criminal practices of a burgeoning capitalist patriarchy, thereby escaping the eternal feminine cycle of reproduction and entering the historical social cycle of production. Moll's anomie and anonymity reflect back on a disintegrating social order. Marriage, rendered newly insecure by the contradictions of waning patriarchal authority and of a market economy, proves a false haven for Moll; the novel's real quest is matriarchal—a search among three maternal figures for a viable economic model. Defoe eschews the myth of female purity, although Moll's finally successful but realistically compromised woman's estate is, by the standards of the myth, unacceptable to patriarchal critics. (LAC)

Providential Improvisation in <i>Measure for Measure</i> . LOUISE SCHLEINER	227
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Abstract. *Measure for Measure* has inspired widely divergent readings, in our century having been seen as either doctrinal (embodying Christian teachings) or "dark" and satiric. The play's prominent biblical and theological allusions do evoke a parallel between the duke and God, as testing master, redeemer, and judge; the parallel, however, is comic, not didactic, showing that the duke is not God but a ruler who makes a quixotic attempt in his government to imitate God (as rulers theoretically were obliged to and as King James had claimed he would), with mixed and humorous results. The duke is fallible, meddling, and laughable but beneficent, inventive, and in large measure successful in helping his subjects. (LS)

The Alternative Reading of <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> : Chaucer's Text and the Early Manuscripts. CHARLES A. OWEN, JR.	237
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Abstract. The evidence of the six earliest manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales* does not support the consensus among Chaucerians that the Ellesmere *a* ordering represents Chaucer's intentions. Marginalia indicate that Hengwrt preceded Ellesmere and was most closely associated with it. Hengwrt and Ellesmere influenced Cambridge Dd. A somewhat looser association binds Corpus, Harley⁴, and Lansdowne. In each of the groups editors tried to improve the arrangement and to make the resulting book appear complete. Three conclusions emerge. (1) Only the text derives from Chaucer. (2) Throughout the manuscript period, single tales and groups of tales continued to circulate in great numbers and to provide exemplars for the collected tales that survive. (3) *The Canterbury Tales* never existed as a neat pile of manuscript, an almost complete text. What we have instead is a collection of fragments reflecting the different stages of a developing plan. (CAO, Jr)

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