

Pictorial Capitals"; Anthony Burton, "Thackeray's Collaborations with Cruikshank, Doyle, and Walker"; John Sutherland, "A *Vanity Fair* Mystery: The Delay in Publication"; John Sutherland, "Thackeray's Notebook for *Henry Esmond*"; Edgar F. Harden, "The Growth of *The Virginians* as a Serial Novel: Parts 1-9"; Gerald C. Sorensen, "Thackeray Texts and Bibliographical Scholarship"; Peter L. Shillingsburg, "Thackeray Texts: A Guide to Inexpensive Editions"; Ruth apRoberts, "Thackeray Boom: A Review Essay"; Joseph Baker, "Reading Masterpieces in Isolation: A Review Essay"; "Thackeray's Manuscripts: A Preliminary Census of Library Locations" compiled by Robert A. Colby and John Sutherland.

## PAST

### MVSA Conference

MVSA president John Reed opened the Conference on *Victorian Humor*, April 30-May 1, 1982, at Ohio State Univ. Then Donald Gray (English, Indiana Univ.) moderated the first session, "Rustic Humor in Literature." In the first talk, "Laughter as Liberation: Tennyson's Lincolnshire Monologues," Linda Hughes (Humanities-Univ. of Missouri) discussed Tennyson's six dramatic monologues in Lincolnshire dialect and read parts of four in their original inflection: "The Northern Cobbler," "The Spinster's Sweet-Arts," "The Village Wife (or The Entail)," and "Northern Farmer, Old Style." She contrasted these poems with Tennyson's non-dialect monologues and commented on the characters' "earthiness, roughness, greed, and sensuality," as well as the poet's nostalgic sympathy with the lower-class rural life he had observed as a child.

In "The Rustic Sense of Humor in Shaw and Hardy, Barnes and Brown," Max Sutton (English, Univ. of Kansas) argued by contrast that middle-class authors (including Tennyson) condescended to the diction and humor of the rural poor. The rustics in Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, for example, are malicious and obtuse, and Shaw remarks in *John Bull's Other Island* after a scene which amuses country people, that "we laugh and exult in destruction, confusion and ruin." Mr. Sutton contrasted these writers with the Dorset poet William Barnes (1801-86) who provides sympathetic recreations of a rural hu-

mor, which is long on practical jokes, sometimes at the expense of outsiders. *Fo'c's'le Yarns*, by the Isle of Man poet T. E. Brown (1830-96), is more ambivalent: its middle-aged sailor, Tom Baynes, is well acquainted with violence, vice, and chicanery, but believes humor helps "to put a spirit in a man." Discussion after these talks dwelt on Tennyson's attitude toward his Lincolnshire characters and divergent patterns of lower- and middle-class humor.

The next session, "Humor in Victorian Periodicals," was moderated by Stephen Ellwell (English, Univ. of Cincinnati) and both panelists' talks were followed by slides. In "Vanity Fair: High Victorian Humor and Satire," Roy T. Matthews (Humanities, Michigan State Univ.) argued that *Vanity Fair* embodies Harold Nicolson's claim that a self-consciously English national humor evolved in the second half of the nineteenth century, "on the one hand [from ] a common and assured pattern of convention, and on the other [from] a strong individual desire to react against that convention." Founded by Thomas Bowles in 1868, *Vanity Fair* mixed literary and visual humor, satire, and irony. As time passed, the magazine evolved from satire to defense of upper-middle-class values. The slides of the weekly portrait caricatures illustrated common subjects and modes of treatment: among those caricatured were Disraeli, Gladstone, J. S. Mill, Trollope, Spencer, Bishop Colenso, Richard Owen (paleontologist and museum director), Wilde, Shaw, Beerbohm, Churchill, Fred Archer (jockey), and Queen Victoria.

In "A Victorian View: Mr. Punch on Outsiders at Home and Abroad," Julian R. McQuiston (History, SUNY-Fredonia) described *Punch* as a humorous illustrated periodical with a middle-class audience. Founded in 1841, *Punch's* social attitudes reflected those of its clientele. Until 1880 (when the Catholic Francis Burnand became editor), its religious bias was anti-Roman Catholic and anti-High Church, and its politics, with some exceptions, anti-Irish, anti-French, anti-Prussian, and anti-Russian. It was generally neutral during the Civil War, but belatedly acknowledged the justice of emancipation, at the war's conclusion. After 1870 it generally became more conservative and chiefly covered society and political news.

Alan Woods, director of the Ohio State

Univ. Theatre Research Institute, moderated Friday's last session, held jointly with the Theatre History Conference. Robert I. Patten (English, Rice Univ.) presented slides on "'All the World's a Stage': Cruikshank's Theatrical Humor" and described ways in which Cruikshank's Georgian caricatures influenced Victorian conventions. He showed studies of ten Cruikshank caricatures which illustrated not only their eclectic and politically contradictory nature but also the use of caricature in narrative illustration, fiction, and theatre. He concluded that this tradition of caricature encouraged a more complex, extensive "vocabulary and syntax" of visual art, which invigorated both Victorian fiction and the theatre.

In "Aristophanes on the Victorian Stage: J. R. Planché's Adaptation of *The Birds*," Kathy Fletcher (Theatre, Indiana Univ.) discussed Planché's adaptation of the classical fantasy to Victorian stage conventions: Planché reduced the chorus to a single actor, added a Victorian conclusion in rime couplets, and summarized, "Let wild theorists a lesson take." Planché's play was never popular but it was well reviewed, and he considered it one of his best experiments.

Roland N. Stromberg (History, Univ. of Wisconsin) moderated the first of Saturday four sessions, on "Humor in Victorian Sciences." In "The Darwinian Revolution and the Comedy of Darwin's *Autobiography* Eugene August (English, Univ. of Dayton) invoked A. Dwight Culler's claim that the theory of evolution provided "comic reversal" of earlier beliefs; he argued that Darwin's *Autobiography* deliberately presented a "humorous self-portrait of the young scientist as a bumbling noodle." Ultimately the "comic virtuoso" is of course transformed into great scientist, but he remains prone to foibles and aware of "the little joke which he had played on the world."

In "Herbert Spencer and the Study of Laughter," Michael S. Kearns (English, Ohio Wesleyan Univ.) presented a context for Spencer's reductive 1860 paper on "The Physiology of Laughter," which defined the latter as a "contraction of particular facial muscles and particular muscles of the chest and abdomen." Spencer was partly indebted to the theory of vibrations in *Observation on Man* (1749), in which David Hartley had noted the muscular effects of laughter, but cited no other physiological correlates. In his theory of "descending incongruity," Spencer argued that laughter is caused by

1 "excess of nervous energy," in which  
feelings are excited which are more  
vial than preceding mental states. Among  
ancer's contemporaries, Darwin later used  
ial photography to distinguish between  
ne (genuine emotion and artificial stimulation  
Alexander Bain analyzed the emotional  
ow) relates of laughter, among them "pleasure  
8, the degradation of some person or interest  
assessing dignity."

Helena Pycior (History, Univ. of Wisconsin-  
Milwaukee) then spoke on "Humor and  
Historian Mathematics: the Cases of William  
and Augustus de Morgan." She des-  
bed the use of new and allegedly counter-  
uitive mathematical abstraction in the  
Bmic writings of Frend (1757-1841), de  
ee, rrgan (1806-71), and Charles Dodgson.

The session on "Humor in the Novel"  
s moderated by Jane W. Stedman (Eng-  
ep, Roosevelt Univ.). In the opening paper,  
he Comic Victorian or Non-Hero": Sour-  
R; in the Lower Classes," Roger B. Henkle  
nglish, Brown Univ.) suggested Arthur  
 Morrison's novel, *A Child of the Jago* and  
 collection of tales, *Mean Streets*, as alter-  
te sources for the "non-hero" of H. G.  
 Wells' fiction. He found in Morrison's  
 Ge- ver-class comedy a "discontinuity, manic,  
el adom violence and rough-and-tumble  
ew- lorffulness for its own sake. . . all observed  
m a point of view that is curiously dead-  
ed to pity, . . . cool, and detached," and  
lced to Morrison's work several aspects of  
 Wells' novels. Subsequent discussion com-  
pered Roger Henkle's arguments with Max  
m- tton's of the previous day.

In "Mr. Dick's Kite and the Function of  
comedy in Victorian Fiction," Robert M.  
Polhemus (English, Stanford Univ.) described  
comedy as "comic faith," that is, "the tacit

belief that the world is both funny and poten-  
tially good." Mr. Polhemus read a passage  
from *David Copperfield* which describes  
David's encounter with Mr. Dick and com-  
pared the episode with "Thackeray's comedy  
of shifting perspectives, Trollope's seculari-  
zing comedy of corporate community, Mere-  
dith's comedy of egoism, and Lewis Carroll's  
of regression."

In "George Eliot and the Uses of Humor:  
The Comedy of Contrivance in *Felix Holt*,"  
John McRae (English, Univ. of Naples) ar-  
gued that chapter 12 of *Felix Holt* "creates  
the effect of an entire three-act comedy  
. . . which. . . presages much of the later de-  
velopment of the novel." It "serves not just  
as a comment on 'low' comedy but also as  
the first liberating step towards the new  
world that the Radical must create."

After lunch, we held the annual business  
meeting, at which John Reed (English,  
Wayne State Univ.) turned over the presi-  
dency to Nicolas Temperley (Music, Univ.  
of Illinois); Martha Vicinus (English, Univ.  
of Michigan) became President-Elect; and  
Linda Hughes (Humanities, Univ. Missouri),  
Peter Bailey (English, Univ. of Manitoba),  
and Susan Dean (Newberry Library) were  
added to the Executive Committee.

In the first talk after lunch, "Masonic  
Bawdy in Carroll and Tenniel," William  
Burgan (English, Univ. of Indiana) intro-  
duced sexual symbols common in nineteenth-  
century Masonic usage and illustrated their  
use in caricature for *Punch* and other nine-  
teenth-century publications. He compared  
their use in caricature of *Punch* and other  
nineteenth-century publications. He com-  
pared these in turn to similar allusions in Car-  
roll's text and Tenniel's drawings for *Alice*, in  
particular: ". . . the descent to a rose garden

(a Garden of Venus) from which there is a  
difficult but supremely desirable exit; the  
reiterated contrast of red and white, the  
Templar's colors; the pair of white gloves  
that Alice finds . . . the golden key; the Glass;  
and the royal arch. . . where Alice begins the  
final stage of her adventure." Brief discus-  
sion followed on Masonic symbolism in other  
art of the period, and the difficulty of separat-  
ing Freudian from Masonic imagery.

The final session on W. S. Gilbert was  
again co-sponsored by the Conference on  
Victorian Popular Entertainment. In "Wil-  
liam Gilbert: An Orgy of Fanciful Sadism,"  
Dominic J. Bisignano (English, Indiana  
Univ./Purdue Univ. at Indianapolis) argued  
that Gilbert's libretti abound in familiar  
themes of Victorian crime and "would-be  
crimes and would-be criminals run amuck  
to the delight of everyone." Robert G.  
Staggenborg (Speech, Louisiana State Univ.)  
then discussed Gilbert's indebtedness to  
Robertsonian drama, and in "The Perfect  
Autocrat: W. S. Gilbert in Rehearsal,"  
Robert D. Boyer (English, Otterbein Coll.)  
described Gilbert as the first musical direc-  
tor to control each aspect of performances.  
Exacting, prompt, patient, and extensively  
prepared for each rehearsal, he discouraged  
extraneous stage-business, and encouraged  
central actors to interpret their roles.

There seemed general agreement that the  
quality of individual papers was high and  
the topic an intriguing one—so much so that  
the conference might have benefited from a  
separate final session to integrate some of  
its conclusions. The conference presented  
a great deal in twenty-six hours.

Florence Boos  
Univ. of Iowa

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