

Nicholas Temperley, President (Music), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (1984); Martha Vicinus, Vice President and President-Elect (English), University of Michigan (1986); Frederick Kirchhoff, Executive Secretary (English), Indiana University-Purdue University at Fort Wayne.

Members-at-large of the Executive Committee: Joan Bassin (Art History), Kansas City Art Institute (1984); Patrick Brantlinger (English), Indiana University-Bloomington (1984); Susan Dean (Special Collections), The Newberry Library (1986); Linda K. Hughes (Humanities), University of Missouri-Rolla (1986); Lowell J. Satre (History), Youngstown State University (1986).

Honorary Member of the Association: Michael Wolff, University of Massachusetts, Amherst; Founding Member: Lawrence Poston, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle.

#### CALL FOR PAPERS

The topic of the 1983 meeting, to be held at the Chicago Public Library, 29-30 April, is Victorian Health and Victorian Disease. We welcome program proposals treating this topic from all perspectives, including Victorian attitudes toward, understanding of, institutional designs for, and artistic treatments of health and disease. Papers or 500-750 word abstracts should be sent no later than 30 November 1982 to Frederick Kirchhoff, Department of English and Linguistics, Indiana University-Purdue University at Fort Wayne, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46805.

In addition to the regular program, we are planning two concurrent pedagogical sessions for the 1983 meeting--one directed to the teaching of Victorian literature, the other to the teaching of Victorian history and cultural studies. Members who would like to make informal presentations of their experience in either area should notify Fred Kirchhoff by 30 November 1982. We are not only interested in approaches that have proven fruitful, but also in those which, for reasons it will be useful to discuss, have been less successful. The exact format of these sessions will be determined by the proposals received.

#### PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS

I have been told that the sixth annual conference at Columbus was a stunning success--according to Fred Kirchhoff, the best we have had so far. This was no doubt due in large part to Fred's organizing talent, and to the local arrangements supervised by William F. Smith. Our ability to mount a wide-ranging discourse on such a subject as Victorian humor is an encouraging sign of the health of Victorian scholarship in this region. The happy conjunction of the Theatre History Conference evidently added much pleasure and interest to the meeting.

My own experience, alas, was very different. I was sitting at home nursing a broken leg. I have thought many times lately of the great Victorian composer, Samuel Sebastian Wesley, who broke his leg while fishing in Yorkshire in 1847, and was laid up at Helmsley. Having nothing else to do, he composed an anthem on the ambiguous text "Cast me not away from thy presence"; and it is said that his pains can be clearly felt in a dissonant passage at the words "that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." As for me, I have occupied my time writing papers and reviews, but I have tried to keep the crunching sounds out of them.

The setting of bones is one branch of medicine that has probably changed little since Victorian times. Indeed, I can't help thinking it is one of the few in which early Victorian doctors really knew what they were doing. If that is too sweeping a statement, perhaps it will provoke more knowledgeable members into submitting informed papers on the subject for our next meeting.

I was sorry not to have the honor of proposing a vote of thanks to my predecessor, John Reed. His wise and imaginative guidance, especially in devising "themes" that have proved so successful at recent meetings, has been a boon to the Association.

Nicholas Temperley

#### REPORT OF MVSA CONFERENCE ON VICTORIAN HUMOR

(The Ohio State University, 30 April-1 May 1982)

Donald Gray (English-Indiana U-Bloomington) moderated the first session, "Rustic Humor in Literature." In the first talk, "Laughter as Liberation: Tennyson's Lincolnshire Monologues," Linda Hughes (Humanities-U Missouri-Rolla) 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-U 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 humor, 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 Elwell (English-Cincinnati), and both panelists' talks were followed by slides. In "Vanity Fair: High Victorian Humor and Satire," Roy T. Matthews (Humanities-Michigan State U) 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-SUC-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 University Theatre Research Institute, moderated Friday's last session, held jointly with the Theatre History Conference. Robert L. Patten (English-Rice U) 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 their eclectic and politically contradictory nature, and 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 U-Bloomington) 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 riming 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-U Wisconsin-Milwaukee), moderated the first of Saturday's four sessions, on "Humor in Victorian Science." In "The Darwinian Revolution and the Comedy of Darwin's Autobiography," Eugene August (English-U 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 U) 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 Observations 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 an "excess of nervous

energy," in which new feelings are excited which are more trivial than preceding mental states. Among Spencer's contemporaries, Darwin later used facial photography to distinguish between genuine emotion and artificial stimulation and Alexander Bain analyzed the emotional correlates of laughter, among them "pleasure at the degradation of some person or interest possessing dignity."

Helena Pycior (History-U Wisconsin-Milwaukee) then spoke on "Humor and Victorian Mathematics: the Cases of William Frend and Augustus de Morgan." She described the use of new and allegedly counter-intuitive mathematical abstraction in the comic writings of Frend (1757-1841), de Morgan (1806-71), and Charles Dodgson.

The session on "Humor in the Novel" was moderated by Jane W. Stedman (English-Roosevelt U). In the opening paper, "The Comic Victorian or Non-Hero": Sources in the Lower Classes," Roger B. Henkle (English-Brown U) suggested Arthur Morrison's novel, A Child of the Jago and his collection of tales, Mean Streets, as alternate sources for the "non-hero" of H. G. Wells' fiction. He found in Morrison's lower-class comedy a "discontinuity, manic, random violence and rough-and-tumble colorfulness for its own sake . . . all observed from a point of view that is curiously deadened to pity, . . . cool, and detached," and traced to Morrison's work several aspects of Wells' novels. Subsequent discussion compared Roger Henkle's arguments with Max Sutton's of the previous day.

In "Mr. Dick's Kite and the Function of Comedy in Victorian Fiction," Robert M. Polhemus (English-Stanford U) described comedy as "comic faith," that is, "the tacit belief that the world is both funny and potentially good." Mr. Polhemus read a passage from David Copperfield which describes David's encounter with Mr. Dick, and compared the episode with "Thackeray's comedy of shifting perspectives, Trollope's secularizing comedy of corporate community, Meredith'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-U Naples) argued that chapter 12 of Felix Holt "creates the effect of an entire three-act comedy . . . which . . . presages much of the later development 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 turned over the presidency to Nicholas Temperley; Martha Vicinus became President-Elect; and Linda Hughes, Susan Dean, and Lowell Satre were added to the Executive Committee. John Reed announced three forthcoming Victorian meetings, on Victorian Losers (NVSA), Authors and Publishers (Victorians Institute), and Victorian Editors (Browning Institute, New York City). We discussed the Executive Committee's suggestion of future session topics, including "health and infirmity"; "ethnic attitudes"; "masculine stereotypes"; "childhood and old age"; and "Great Britain and North America, parallels and cross-influences." Some members suggested that the Britain/North American topic should be arranged in conjunction with an Americanists' convention, perhaps for 1984-85. We then chose "health and infirmity" as the topic for the 1983 meeting, to be held at the Chicago Public Library at the end of April.

In the first talk after lunch, "Masonic Bawdy in Carroll and Tenniel," William Burgan (English-U Indiana-Bloomington) introduced sexual symbols common in 19th century Masonic usage, and illustrated their use in caricature for Punch and other nineteenth century publications. He compared these in turn to similar allusions in Carroll'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 discussion followed on Masonic symbolism in other art of the period, and the difficulty of separating Freudian from Masonic imagery.

The final session on W. S. Gilbert was sponsored by the Conference on Victorian Popular Entertainment. In "William Gilbert: An Orgy of Fanciful Sadism," Dominic J. Bisignano (English-Indiana U/Purdue U 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 U) then discussed Gilbert's indebtedness to Robertsonian drama. The conference's final paper, "The Perfect Autocrat: W. S. Gilbert in Rehearsal," Robert D. Boyer (English-Otterbein College) described Gilbert as the first musical director 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.

Florence Boos

#### REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

In his Presidential Remarks, Nicholas Temperley thanks John Reed for his four years of service as an officer of the Association. I would like to join him in that gesture and add to it thanks to our two out-going Members-at-Large, Florence Boos and James Cronin, who have both contributed many hours reviewing submissions for the 1979-1982 programs. I would also like to thank Florence for the fine summary of this year's conference in the current Newsletter.

In a concluding paragraph to that summary--cruelly deleted by the Executive Secretary--Florence suggests that we might consider including a final session in our programs in which we attempt to draw some sort of general conclusions from the specific papers. Not only does this seem an excellent suggestion; it also reminds me that many other members of the Association may have ideas about how we could improve the format of our conference. If you do, please pass them on to me and I will report them to the members of the Board.

The Treasurer's Report that follows indicates relative financial solvency. Indeed, we are nearly \$200 better off now than we were at the end of last year. However, because my university has not renewed its promise of a \$200 subsidy, we will need to maintain current income (assuming current expenses) to stay ahead this year. We need, in other words, your \$5 membership fees. (Of the roughly 300 members in the Directory, 108 paid dues during the past year.)

As last year, dues-paying members will receive a discount on the conference registration fee and an updated Directory. (Please use the attached blue sheet to correct your Directory entry, whether or not you pay 1982-1983 dues.)

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1982 MVSA TREASURER'S REPORT

Balance on Hand, 1 July 1981 \$ 379.41

Income

Membership dues and contributions	\$ 566.00
Contribution by IPFW	200.00
Interest on Bank Account	27.17
Registration fees	473.00
Other	<u>3.00</u>

Total Income 1,269.17

1,648.58

Expenditures

Computer supplies	\$ 22.32
Printing and duplication	298.93
Travel allowances for speakers	200.00
Lodging for speakers	74.46
Postage	58.10
Telephone	53.11
Luncheon	286.70
Per person convention fee	90.00
Stationery	4.44
Canadian exchange	1.13
Bank charges	<u>.90</u>

Total Expenditures 1090.09

Balance on Hand, 30 June 1982 \$ 558.49

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Pacific Coast Conference on British Studies meets at the end of March 1983 at the Huntington Library and at the end of March 1984 at Asilomar, Monterey. Proposals or inquiries can be sent to the President of the PCCBS: Diane Johnson, English Department, University of California, Davis, Davis, California 95616. (Generally the deadline is in January.)

### The Dickens Project of the University of California

The Dickens Project brings together scholars from the eight general campuses of the University of California for the study of Dickens and his era. In sharing our scholarly and pedagogical resources we hope to foster a cooperative spirit for the study of Dickens at the undergraduate and graduate levels as well as making available to the general public the full range of academic study of Dickens. We expect our research efforts as well to receive additional impetus from our collegial structure. Among our various projects, we provide a forum for scholarly exchange; we enable graduate students to work with faculty from throughout the university system through conferences, faculty exchanges, and special arrangements for dissertation advising; and we are working on a proposal to develop a curriculum for teaching Dickens in the secondary schools.

One of our major functions is an annual course offered through our university extension, The Dickens Universe. Last summer, ten faculty and sixteen graduate students from the University of California gathered at Kresge College on the Santa Cruz campus to present this course to seventy-five students. We provided lectures, workshops, and discussions on Great Expectations in the context of the conference theme, "Dickens & the Secret Life."

This summer we will repeat the course, this time concentrating on A Tale of Two Cities, and our theme is "Dickens and Revolution." The course will run from August 3-11, and will include lectures, workshops, and small group discussions as well as film showings of Dickens' novels and dramatic presentations.

In addition to the course, we will sponsor a scholarly conference, Carlyle and Dickens: A Victorian Friendship, over the weekend of August 7-8. Since Dickens drew heavily on Carlyle's The French Revolution, in writing A Tale of Two Cities, we hope that the issues raised in the course and the conference will complement one another.

We will also be holding an international conference on Dickens and the Fantastic, January 2-4, 1983, at the Riverside campus of the University of California and at the Huntington Library in nearby San Marino. This conference will explore not only the use of the fantastic in the fiction of Dickens' era, but in our own. We have invited the major writers of the fantastic, including Joyce Carol Oates, Garcia Gabriel Marquez, and Milan Kundera, to join us in our deliberations, and also expect scholars from France, England, Israel, and other countries.

For further information about The Dickens Project or the conferences, write to: Murray Baumgarten, Director, The Dickens Project, Kresge College, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA 95064. For further information on the course on A Tale of Two Cities: Dickens and Revolution, you may write directly to: University of California Extension, Carriage House, Santa Cruz, CA 95064.