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Announcements and Comments

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Announcements and Comments

All Sublimity is founded on Minute Discrimination

William Blake, Annotations to Reynolds

THE PRESENT special issue provides a survey of critical and historical approaches to regionalism. One question underlying all these essays seems to be that of relevance. At what point does regionalism transcend parochialism? Must a concern with regional subject matter be redeemed by examining the regional individual, or regionalist literary work, in the perspective of larger themes?

Alan Taylor illustrates one approach to regionalist history by describing details in the life of a Maine entrepreneur and politician in order to illustrate some of de Tocqueville's ideas about American democracy. In contrast, Linda M. Peake tells for its own sake the story—part history, part legend—of an actor's colony on Prince Edward Island. Anne-Marie Brumm (in some ways like Alan Taylor) is concerned with the extent to which individual literary works illustrate larger generalizations. She compares two regionalist poets from widely separated cultures, and compares, also, their reactions to some of the main themes of the Romantic movement. Edward J. Piacentino is concerned with identifying how "local-color" regionalist writing may transcend parochialism and take on larger literary values. Beth Wynne Fisker examines a local-color story, and shows that it has universal themes.

All literature and all history in a sense is regionalist, if it pays sufficient attention to what Blake called "minute particulars." Some works immediately transcend regionalism because their attention is elsewhere—they cite particulars of character and setting for other ends. (*Tom Jones* is not a regionalist study, but rather a feast of "human nature.") Other works emphasize regional particulars, and may be read primarily by lovers of the same region and its people. Both approaches, surely, must be of value. Literary works (and historical examples) lose relevance only when they cease to illuminate the human condition. They usually do this not by being too regional, but by being too conventional, too sentimental—that is, by falsifying their material. When regionalist writers try to tell the truth about specific regions and specific peoples, their themes must be as relevant as those of any other writers—for who can write truly about human nature and human society without examining "minute particulars"?

The cover illustrations for this issue were selected to be appropriate to the theme of regionalism. For information about them, see the museum notes, below.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

ALAN TAYLOR is a visiting instructor of History at Colby College. He is a graduate of Colby, and a candidate for the Ph.D. at Brandeis University. His dissertation is entitled *Liberty—Men and White Indians: The Frontier Pursuit of Property in the Wake of the American Revolution*; his dissertation defense is scheduled for June 1985. He has published “The Smuggling Career of William King” in the *Maine Historical Society Quarterly* (1977), and “Stopping the Progress of Rogues and Deceivers: A White Indian Recruiting Notice of 1808” in *The William and Mary Quarterly* (January 1985). He has been selected for a two-year fellowship at the Institute of Early American History and Culture in Williamsburg, Virginia, starting July 1. He will be engaged in preparing his dissertation for publication by the Institute.

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ANNE-MARIE BRUMM is a lecturer in American Literature at the Englisches Seminar, Albert-Ludwigs University, Freiburg, West Germany. She has taught previously at the University of Michigan, Rutgers University in Newark, and Ben Gurion University in Beersheva, Israel. Her M.A. and Ph.D. are both from the University of Michigan. She has published scholarly articles on Faulkner, Virginia Woolf, Sartre, Rilke, Sandburg, Ezra Pound, Henry James, Garcia-Lorca, Brodsky, and Moravia. She has also published poetry in many journals, and a book of poems entitled *Dance of Life*. She is at work on articles about Truman Capote and Yehuda Amichai, and on a second volume of poems, *The Gift*.

EDWARD J. PIACENTINO is professor of English and acting department head at High Point College, North Carolina. His M.A. is from Appalachian State University, and his Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has published articles on Sinclair Lewis, Twain, Cather, Faulkner, Steinbeck, Fitzgerald, T. S. Stribling, Stephen Crane, and Susanna Rowson. A book about T. S. Stribling is currently being reviewed for publication. His work in progress includes essays about Grace King, Mortimer Thomson, Henry Clay Lewis, John S. Robb, and Poe.

BETH WYNNE FISKEN is a lecturer in the English Department at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. Her M.A. and Ph.D. are both from Rutgers. Her essay, “Mary Sidney’s *Psalms*: Education and Wisdom,” is scheduled for publication in *Silent but for the Word*, edited by Margaret Han-

nay, and forthcoming from the Kent State University Press in the spring of 1985. Her work in progress includes two essays on Mary Wilkins Freeman's short fiction, and essays on the writings of Mary Sidney and of Philip Sidney.

JHS

NOTES FROM THE MUSEUM OF ART

AN IMPORTANT work by the late Bernard Langlais (1921–1977), the Maine-born artist closely associated with the state for most of his lifetime, was recently given to the Museum of Art by his widow, Helen Friend Langlais. The sculpture, illustrated on the front cover of the present issue, is entitled *Barn*, and was made during 1971–1972.

Langlais was born in Old Town, once a major lumbering center, which may have contributed to his eventual attraction to wood as a medium in which to work. He began his career as a commercial artist, but after three summers at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, Maine, he decided to become a painter. He studied at the Corcoran School of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Brooklyn Museum School of Art, Brooklyn, New York; the Grande Chaumière, Paris, France; and under a Fulbright Grant in Oslo, Norway. He later received, among other awards and grants, a Guggenheim Fellowship (1972), an award from the Maine State Commission on the Arts and Humanities (1972), the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture Maine Artist Award (1975), and the National Endowment for the Arts Artists' Award (1977–78). His work is included in many museum collections, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Chicago Art Institute.

When Langlais returned to this country from Oslo, he settled in New York as a young painter. In 1957 he spent a summer in Maine; it was this summer that he turned from painting to sculpture. During the renovation of a cottage he rebuilt a wall with scraps of wood, which resulted in his first abstract wall relief. This was the direction his work was to take for a number of years. These abstract reliefs, often cubist in nature, were well received by New York gallery visitors, critics, and collectors. An example of his work from this period is illustrated on the back cover; it is entitled *Spit in the Ocean*, and was a gift to the Museum from Mrs. Jill Kornblee.

In 1966 Langlais returned to Maine permanently. He soon acquired animals for his near one hundred acre farm. These were soon joined by other animals—lions, giraffes, elephants—that he made of old wood, which he referred to as “treasures that I find, greyed by the sun or darkened with age.” He placed the sculptures in the fields and woods surrounding his house and studios. These works are three-dimensional, but he also made reliefs using animals as subject matter. Although attracted to the exoticism of African animals, he also continued to look at the animals familiar to Maine which he had known since childhood.

The relief, *Barn*, which measures 127" high and 96" wide, shows a group

of farm animals in a barn, with a door in the background opening to the outside where there are two trees barely discernable in a relatively small photograph. The feeling of depth is achieved by the reduction in size of the animals, as well as by the placement of the timbers that form the frame of the interior of the barn. The mosaic-like quality of the horse in the center is reminiscent of the technique Langlais used in many of his abstract reliefs.

Langlais also did sculptures of athletes, political figures, and others who attract public attention, but he was particularly fond of portraying animals. In an interview (*Maine Sunday Telegram*, October 10, 1971) he said, "I couldn't do dozens of football players, but I've done hundreds of lions. I can change their form, change their shape, exaggerate it, and he's still a lion."

HUGH J. GOURLEY III
Director, Museum of Art