Abstracts

327 **Feisal G. Mohamed,** Confronting Religious Violence: Milton's *Samson Agonistes*

Milton's Samson has long been a character about whom readers are irreconcilably divided. Current anxiety over terrorism has made it all the more inviting to see Milton's dramatic poem as a criticism of Samson's slaughter of the Philistines, a sentiment emphatically expressed in John Carey's recent claim that "September 11 has changed *Samson Agonistes*, because it has changed the readings we can derive from it while still celebrating it as an achievement of the human imagination." This paper interrogates the association of Milton with present-day antipathy to religious violence and seeks to sophisticate the position of critics who now find terrorism an inescapable presence in the field of literary interpretation. The brand of reading most necessary in current discussion is one that avoids the reactionary temptation to cleanse literary texts of sympathy with religious violence and to view such violence as the province solely of the Other. (FGM)

341 **James Berger,** Falling Towers and Postmodern Wild Children: Oliver Sacks, Don DeLillo, and Turns against Language

We respond in language to catastrophic, or traumatic, shocks to symbolic systems, for which the fall of the Tower of Babel can be seen as a mythic model. One response is an exploration of new uncertainties; another is a fearful rigidity that seeks to return to an imagined Adamic wholeness of language; another is an effort to transcend language altogether. This essay examines two contemporary responses to a perceived "fall" of language—several case studies of Oliver Sacks's and two novels by Don DeLillo—and places them in the context of the twentieth-century "linguistic turn" in the humanities and social sciences and what I call a "counterlinguistic turn" that is contemporaneous with the linguistic turn and represents developments of some of its key assumptions. (JB)

362 **James Buckwalter-Arias,** Reinscribing the Aesthetic: Cuban Narrative and Post-Soviet Cultural Politics

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba's revolutionary paradigm encounters its greatest crisis to date. As the state's cultural institutions struggle to cope with severe material limitations and strive to square socialist ideology with world events, Cuban writers increasingly publish their work with foreign companies. Not uncommonly these authors reassert the aesthetic priorities that state institutions are said to have repressed or subordinated to political imperatives. It may appear, superficially, that Cuban writers are out to revive some notion of an autonomous literary art. In situating aesthetic discourse in profoundly dialogic, historically specific, and politically charged narrative contexts, however, these writings challenge traditional universalizing formulations of the aesthetic category. Such historico-narrative rearticulation of social

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practices and theories of art is prerequisite to a more progressive cultural politics than the socialist state has managed to implement and than an uncritical reengagement with the global market can bring about. (JB-A)

375 **Dean Franco,** Working Through the Archive: Trauma and History in Alejandro Morales's *The Rag Doll Plagues*

Alejandro Morales's *The Rag Doll Plagues* is a metafictional novel that comments on literary history. In its three books, Dr. Gregory Revueltas battles a mysterious and ravaging plague, during the 1780s, 1980s, and mid–twenty-first century. In each book he leaves a legacy of writing for the next Gregory to read. By reading and writing this archive, or library of cultural knowledge, the final Gregory develops a historical consciousness that helps him see beyond his episteme's limited science and derive a cure for the recurring plague. His confronting the plague by reading his own writing both intimately and critically is an allegory for the efficacy of literature as a response to historical trauma. Gregory does not gain agency over history, but through the self-conscious reading of his archive he is able to place himself in a cultural trajectory otherwise inaccessible in each book's bracketed historical moment. (DF)

388 **Susannah Young-ah Gottlieb,** Two Versions of Voltaire: W. H. Auden and the Dialectic of Enlightenment

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, W. H. Auden and the authors of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, ask themselves, in independent reflections, why attempts to free thought from oppressive schemata result in more-insidious forms of oppression: as clerical establishments go into decline, modernity creates new forms of mythological consciousness. For all three authors, the emergence of fascism in the early part of the twentieth century is proof of this and gives urgency to their inquiries into enlightenment. For all three, Voltaire is a pivotal figure, for his struggle against the unity of apologetic discourse and ruthless power allows them to discern an element of enlightenment that survives the most rigorous critique of its oppressive tendencies. This essay examines Horkheimer and Adorno's fragment "For Voltaire" alongside Auden's poem "Voltaire at Ferney" and shows how the latter both anticipates and reveals the limits of the former. (SYG)

404 **Alison Weber,** Lope de Vega's *Rimas sacras*: Conversion, Clientage, and the Performance of Masculinity

In 1614 Lope de Vega, recently ordained, published the *Rimas sacras*, a confessional *canzoniere* replete with allusions to his past promiscuity and recent religious conversion. I argue that Lope addressed his collection not only to a public of anonymous readers but also to a specific, private reader: his patron,

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the duke of Sessa. For the previous eight years, Lope had served as Sessa's erotic amanuensis, writing love letters and poems for the duke's various mistresses. I propose that the collection as a whole and several sonnets in particular constitute an implicit reproach to Sessa. Through his religious poetry, Lope sought to repudiate his degraded masculine identity as the duke's epistolary pimp (and reputed lover) and affirm his status as a priest who served a more exalted and loving patron. In the *Rimas sacras*, the discourses of clientage and Petrarchan love are imbricated in the dominant religious discourse, rendering it more available for contestatory practices than is often recognized. (AW)

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