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# Abstracts

**Donald W. Foster**, *A Funeral Elegy: W[illiam] S[hakespeare]'s "Best-Speaking Witnesses"* 1080

*A Funeral Elegy* was written in February 1612 by "W. S.," a poet of "name and credit" closely familiar with Shakespearean texts. The pamphlet was registered by a stationer, Thomas Thorp, whose livelihood depended chiefly on the Shakespeare-Jonson theatrical circle and who had published Shakespeare's *Sonnets* in 1609. Privately issued and surviving in just two copies, *A Funeral Elegy* received scant notice until 1989, when I first presented archival, statistical, and literary evidence that WS could be William Shakespeare. Focusing on intertextual evidence derived in part from new electronic resources, this essay addresses a vexing conundrum: the elegy is aesthetically disappointing and yet distinctively Shakespearean—a paradox that raises larger questions about attributional methodology and canonical theory. An emerging scholarly consensus supports a Shakespearean attribution for the elegy, though the poem challenges prevailing notions of what it is that makes Shakespeare "Shakespeare." (DWF)

**Rebecca Saunders**, *Shaking Down the Pillars: Lamentation, Purity, and Mallarmé's "Hommage" to Wagner* 1106

Mallarmé constructs a "crisis of verse" that mimes the circumstances of loss and the moment of lamentation to produce his celebrated poetic purity. Indeed, he constructs this purity out of the materials of ritual and philosophical defilement: not only does his poetic theory valorize death and danger, but his poetic practice largely relies on contact with the foreign, on semantic contagion, and on ambiguity. The significance of this defilement spreads in multiple directions: it is instrumental in producing newness and in mediating Mallarmé's professional rivalry with Wagner, it bears witness to the domestic crisis of the Third Republic, and it functions as a form of resistance to cultural assimilation. Moreover, because defilement is at once material and symbolic and because that "symbolism" is an obstinately obscure mode of referentiality, Mallarmé's cultivation of defilement is a recuperation of the scapegoats that "pure" philosophy necessarily exiles: the material and the hyperessential. (RS)

**Abigail S. Rischin**, *Beside the Reclining Statue: Ekphrasis, Narrative, and Desire in Middlemarch* 1121

Eliot's *Middlemarch* reveals the effective alliance among ekphrasis (a literary response to a visual work of art), narrative, and the portrayal of desire. The novel's richest example of this dynamic occurs in the Vatican Hall of Statues scene, when Will Ladislaw and his painter friend Naumann observe Dorothea poised beside a celebrated antique statue, "the reclining Ariadne, then called Cleopatra." Capitalizing on this statue's history of mistaken identity, Eliot affirms the power of visual art for literary representation by using the statue in three important ways: as a catalyst for the birth of desire, as a prefiguration of the novel's romance plot (through narrative references to the myth of Ariadne), and as a vehicle for representing female eroticism, which the statue's long-standing association with Cleopatra underscores. (ASR)

**John D. Schaeffer**, *The Dialectic of Orality and Literacy: The Case of Book 4 of Augustine's De doctrina christiana* 1133

Some critics cite book 4 of Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* as a source of the anti-rhetorical style of Renaissance English prose. However, such critics do not recognize that book 4 offers instruction in extemporaneous oral performance. Nor do contemporary critics note Augustine's pervasive orality, though a substantial critical literature addresses this fact. The relation of orality to literacy was complex in late antiquity, particularly as illiterates

converted to Christianity, a text-based religion. Augustine's prescriptions can be seen to illustrate the development of "innerness" among Christians. Book 4 shows how Scripture reading, prayer, and style can be marshaled to produce extemporaneous oral performances that provoke interior religious experiences. Modern criticism of book 4 that views orality and literacy as simple opposites and that privileges literacy can lead to misreading. As a document imbricated in the complex relation of literacy and orality, however, book 4 makes a different kind of sense. (JDS)