

# Abstracts

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## Henry Staten, *The Decomposing Form of Joyce's Ulysses* 380

Every aspect of organic life, including sexuality and death, is comprehended in *Ulysses* as a moment or aspect of a general circulation whose primary figure is eating and the digestive process. But the digestive process is a form of decomposition, and in one sense *Ulysses* is a stomach or tomb in which language breaks down into its constituent units—ultimately, letters, the elements of an onomatopoeic notation for human speech. *Ulysses* works between the figure of onomatopoeia (as the limit of mimesis) and that of infidelity (as an image for the undermining of all ontological security at the sexual-gastronomic level) to reconceive mimesis as the isomorphism between two decompositional series, one involving language and the other the body. (HS)

## Jaime Hovey, “Kissing a Negress in the Dark”: Englishness as a Masquerade in Woolf's *Orlando* 393

This essay questions the relation between national affiliation and other elements of identity, such as race, gender, and sexuality. Citing British newspaper stories and editorials of the 1920s that sexualized and pathologized the black man, I connect the fear these articles reflect to the fear of the white flapper. Joan Riviere's 1929 psychoanalytic study of femininity and masquerade, which explores the psychic parameters of gendered national belonging, frames my reading of Woolf's use of racial tropes in *Orlando* (1928), where they function within strategies for granting national belonging to the queerly gendered white Englishwoman. These strategies, which are part of the masquerade, include the narrator's satiric stance and the deployment of secret codes. Despite the text's ambivalences and ambiguities, *Orlando*'s sexuality is finally domesticated by the racial and sexual terms of national belonging. (JH)

## Jahan Ramazani, *The Wound of History: Walcott's Omeros and the Postcolonial Poetics of Affliction* 405

The figure of the wound is central to Derek Walcott's *Omeros*, one of the most ambitious works of postcolonial poetry. Walcott grants a European name to the primary bearer of the wound, the black fisherman Philoctete, who allegorizes African Caribbean suffering under European colonialism and slavery. This surprisingly hybrid character exemplifies the cross-cultural fabric of postcolonial poetry but contravenes the assumption that postcolonial literature develops by sloughing off Eurocentrism for indigeneity. Rejecting a separatist aesthetic of affliction, Walcott frees the metaphoric possibilities of the wound as a site of interethnic connection. By metaphorizing pain, he vivifies the black Caribbean inheritance of colonial injury and at the same time deconstructs the experiential uniqueness of suffering. Knitting together different histories of affliction, Walcott's polyvalent metaphor of the wound reveals the undervalued promise of postcolonial poetry. (JR)

## Pamela E. Barnett, *Figurations of Rape and the Supernatural in Beloved* 418

The title character in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* embodies the history and memory of rape. In fact, her supernatural form is the shape-shifting witch, derived by African Americans from the succubus, a female rapist and nightmare figure of European myth. *Beloved* functions like a traumatic, repetitive nightmare: in addition to representing characters' repressed memories of rape, she attacks Sethe and Paul D. Morrison also uses the succubus figure to represent the effects of institutionalized rape during slavery. *Beloved* drains Sethe of vitality and Paul D of semen, and these violations represent dehumanization and commodified reproduction. Finally, by portraying a female rapist figure and a male rape victim, Morrison foregrounds race, rather than gender, as the crucial category determining the domination or rape of her African American characters. (PEB)