

Abstracts

- 25 **Timothy Aubry**, *Afghanistan Meets the Amazon: Reading *The Kite Runner* in America*
 This essay considers the American reception of Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* in the context of the Bush administration's global war on terrorism by examining the customer reviews of the novel posted on *Amazon*. As many of the responses indicate, identification serves as a paradoxical means of negotiating with fictional representations of foreignness. The intense and painful empathy inspired by *The Kite Runner* serves a valorizing function for American readers, strengthening their sense of their own humanity—an effect that resists strict political categorization. Hosseini's ambivalent conception of what it means to be human, I argue, supports a diversity of competing attitudes toward the United States' military intervention in the Middle East and central Asia, while simultaneously catering to fantasies of escape from ideological and cultural divisions altogether. (TA)
- 44 **Paul Cefalu**, *What's So Funny about Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder?*
 During the past several decades, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) has been widely represented in novels, memoirs, film, television, and other genres and media. What distinguishes representations of OCD from depictions of other mental disorders is the frequency with which OCD is treated with humor and levity. Drawing on genre theory, disability studies, and philosophies of humor, this essay explains why OCD symptomatology evokes laughter and resonates with contemporary popular culture. The essay focuses on the ways in which popular portrayals of OCD distort the actual experience of the disorder. (PC)
- 59 **Enrique García Santo-Tomás**, *Fortunes of the *Occhiali Politici* in Early Modern Spain: Optics, Vision, Points of View*
 Popularized in Spain through the work of the Italian satirist Traiano Boccalini, the motif of the *occhiali politici*, or political lenses, is one of the most understudied conceits in early modern Spanish satire. This essay examines four early modern Spanish texts where *anteojos de larga vista* ("eyeglasses" or "telescopes") become central elements as the eye is given the ability to perceive the reality beyond deceptive appearances. But a capacity to see beyond reveals two parallel concerns: the adoption of spectacles as a mark of social distinction by a society suffering from the moral blindness these novels denounce and the increasing tensions between astronomy and religion stemming from the use of lenses as stargazing tools. Contextualizing these anxieties in the contemporary polemics regarding the divulgation of Galileo's Copernican theses, I illustrate how a simple corrective instrument triggered a fierce debate at the center of Spain's uneven modernity. (EGS-T)

76 **Elaine Yee Lin Ho**, “Imagination’s Commonwealth”: Edmund Blunden’s Hong Kong Dialogue

This essay posits that literary studies at the University of Hong Kong during the cold war 1950s exemplify how English as an academic subject is transmuted through the peripheral voices that engage with metropolitan literature. Focusing on the term “imagination’s commonwealth,” which the poet and critic Edmund Blunden (1896–1974) invented to denote transnational literary communion, I show how it departs from imperial literary diffusion and how Blunden’s poetry and professorial career at Hong Kong University enact the departure. As his interlocutors and partners, Blunden’s students played a crucial role in the emergence of a literary commonwealth. In their dialogue with Blunden, they not only query his conception but also push against the boundaries of their own colonial and cold war situation. (EYLH)

92 **Aaron Kunin**, Shakespeare’s Preservation Fantasy

This essay uses Shakespeare’s sonnets to test the implications of the fantasy that poems, although not living things, preserve human life. The most valuable object in the community of the sonnets is the face of a beautiful young man. The speaker in the poems argues that the young man should entrust his most valuable quality to some technology of preservation, such as sexual reproduction or poetry. In every scenario, his beauty is preserved in a form that will not allow him to enjoy it: he inevitably has to die while his beauty lives on. Preservation thus turns out to be an unattractive plan against the fact of mortality and the possibility of holocaust. The fantasy of preservation is compatible with and even encourages a holocaust fantasy: everyone else has to die to prove that the young man’s beautiful face is indestructible. (AK)

107 **Ayon Roy**, Hegel contra Schlegel; Kierkegaard contra de Man

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Friedrich Schlegel developed an influential theory of irony that anticipated some of the central concerns of postmodernity. His most vocal contemporary critic, the philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, sought to demonstrate that Schlegel’s theory of irony tacitly relied on certain problematic aspects of Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s philosophy. While Schlegel’s theory of irony has generated seemingly endless commentary in recent critical discourse, Hegel’s critique of Schlegelian irony has gone neglected. This essay’s primary aim is to defend Hegel’s critique of Schlegel by isolating irony’s underlying Fichtean epistemology. Drawing on Søren Kierkegaard’s *The Concept of Irony* in the final section of this essay, I argue that Hegel’s critique of irony can motivate a dialectical hermeneutics that offers a powerful alternative both to Paul de Man’s poststructuralist hermeneutics and to recent cultural-studies-oriented criticism that tends to reduce literary texts to sociohistorical epiphenomena. (AR)