

Abstracts

1026 **Ankhi Mukherjee**, “What Is a Classic?”: International Literary Criticism and the Classic Question

Starting with two twentieth-century lectures (both titled “What Is a Classic?”), delivered by T. S. Eliot and J. M. Coetzee forty-seven years apart, this essay looks at the ontology of the classic in particular and canon formation in general in the globalized and multicultural field of twenty-first-century English studies. It focuses on the agonistic process through which the classic assumes form and coherence and on the position of the critic making a claim about the classic. The essay evaluates the importance of this contestation of literary value for interlopers and latecomers to the Western canon, concluding that the “per-during” classic is, perhaps, the invention of the outsider. With close attention to the unstable relation between the classic as preeminently European or national and the classic as trans- or international, the essay seeks to reclaim the foundational concept of the classic for world literature, postcolonial studies, and literary criticism in an international frame. (AM)

1043 **John Bryant**, Rewriting *Moby-Dick*: Politics, Textual Identity, and the Revision Narrative

The study of textual evolution, or revision as a textual phenomenon, requires a form of fluid-text editing that not only gives readers access to the textual identities that constitute the versions of a work but also makes the revision process witnessable by generating revision sequences and revision narratives for every revision event. Traditional editorial approaches that mix versions in the editing of a work compromise the integrity of textual identities, and the problem of mixing versions is demonstrated in three examples of the way editors and critics (in the context of orientalist and colonialist discourses) have changed the text of, or rewritten, Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick*: Edward Said’s mistaking John Huston and Ray Bradbury’s film ending for Melville’s, the British expurgations that modulate Queequeg’s homosexuality to preclude the idea of homosexual domesticity and marriage, and the British editors’ conversion of Queequeg’s Christianity (and modern editors’ perpetuation of the unwanted conversion). These historical and modern cases show that readers, sometimes despite themselves, revise texts materially in ways that mirror their desire and the ways of power. Editing the rewriting of a text like *Moby-Dick* in a digital critical archive would preserve all versions and generate revision narratives that textualize the otherwise invisible dynamics of revision in a culture. With its capacity to edit fluid texts, digital humanities scholarship is well situated to expand the discourse on the dynamics of textual evolution into the literary and cultural criticism of the twenty-first century. (JB)

1061 **Nicholas Paige**, *Lafayette's Impossible Princess: On (Not) Making Literary History*

The branch of literary history occupied with generic evolution customarily views masterworks as the drivers of formal change: their success causes later writers to follow their innovations. This article considers the case of the comtesse de Lafayette's *La princesse de Clèves*, which broke from received Aristotelian ideas on the use of history by focusing on an invented heroine; because the princess was invented, she blocked traditional reading strategies and allowed instead for readerly identification. It is tempting to conclude from this that the novel's innovations made it a harbinger of the future, an ancestor of the nineteenth-century novel. Yet writers of Lafayette's time did not follow her cue, and no trail leads from the *princesse de Clèves* to later fictive protagonists. Theories of literary evolution must take into account that in many cases there may be no reassuring causal relation between masterworks and broader literary practice. (NP)

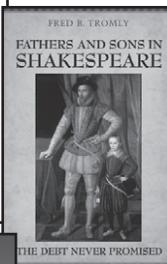
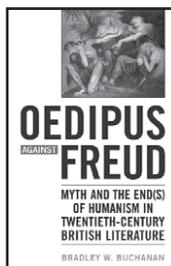
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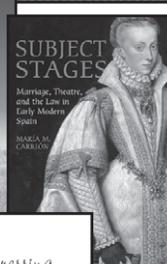
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