

Abstracts

- 19 **Joe Moshenska, Spenser at Play**
 Reading *The Faerie Queene* is like playing. This article develops an account of three relevant tendencies of play—to change through time, to animate its object, and to remain opaque in meaning—and distinguishes this account from other critical understandings of play. It then introduces a historical analogue to Spenser’s playfulness—the giving of formerly holy objects to children as toys during the Reformation—and uses it as a lens through which to read the ending of the first book of Spenser’s poem, where the vast dragon not only becomes a posthumous plaything but also displays surprisingly playful propensities of its own. Readers respond both to this moment and to their own responses to it, playing in the presence of the poem’s opaquely foregrounded meanings. (JM)
- 36 **Benjamin A. Saltzman, Secrecy and the Hermeneutic Potential in *Beowulf***
Beowulf confronts the limits of knowledge in various forms: the unknowability of death, the secretive behavior of the poem’s monsters, the epistemological distance of the past, and our inevitably fragmentary understanding of the poem itself. In the process, the poem also tells us something important about the methods and possibilities that it imagines for the work of discovery and literary interpretation more broadly. Scholars commonly address the poem as a text whose secrets need uncovering, but the poem’s engagement with the mechanics of secrecy can be a cue for thinking through our own methods as literary critics in encounters with texts of the past. If we take *Beowulf*’s treatment of secrecy as a guide for the poem’s hermeneutic potential, then we find that the poem invites a kind of reading that rigorously, yet humbly, acknowledges how little we can actually know. (BAS)
- 56 **Stephen Hequembourg, *Literally*: How to Speak like an Absolute Knave**
 A family of Shakespearean characters I call “the perverse literalists” takes the figurative language of their interlocutors in the most literal sense. While they make us laugh, these characters’ perversely literal interpretations also highlight the physical and experiential grounds of common figures of speech and prod their interlocutors and the reader into a deeper understanding of the conditions of embodiment. This inventive use of the literal is a trope in its own right, one that has already been useful to cognitive linguists, phenomenologists, and new materialists. Metaphors we consider dead are, as others have suggested, merely sleeping, and the act of waking them up can be not merely funny but profoundly insightful. We should reexamine the widespread aversion to the misuse of *literally* and think instead about what it can tell us about the physicality of such abstract experiences as love and luck, causality and cognition. (SH)

- 71 **Daniel L. Keegan**, *Indigested in the Scenes: Hamlet's Dramatic Theory and Ours*
 Discussions of the relation between drama and performance have been dominated by two symmetrical, emancipatory impulses. Performance scholars have, for the past half-century, sought to liberate performance from the authority of the drama. Literary scholars have, for centuries, if not millennia, sought to distinguish a "literary" dimension of the dramatic text free of the flux of performance. This essay diagnoses in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* an alternative story about the relation between drama and performance. Paying refreshed attention to the earlier and less famous of Hamlet's statements of dramatic theory—his blurb for the "excellent play" featuring Aeneas's speech to Dido—I find *Hamlet* bringing drama, especially in its "literary" dimension, crashing back into performance. This collision does not reinstitute the authority of the text; rather, it radically democratizes the scene of dramatic performance by "indigesting" the behaviors of the participants therein. (DLK)
- 88 **Patricia Jane Roylance**, *Winthrop's Journal in Manuscript and Print: The Temporalities of Early-Nineteenth-Century Transmedial Reproduction*
 In the early nineteenth century, the antiquarian James Savage produced a print edition of John Winthrop's seventeenth-century manuscript journal. This transmedial reproduction illustrates the differing affordances of print and manuscript as vehicles for connecting to the past. Manuscripts offer a tangible link to long-dead people, but manuscripts' rarity encourages their sequestration in archives. In contrast, print editions make historical content more broadly accessible but provide a less direct material link to earlier eras. Print facsimiles of manuscript, such as the reproduction of Winthrop's handwriting included in Savage's edition, seek to embody the best of both media. But print facsimiles' promise of access to manuscript materiality elides their nature as temporal hybrids and their tendency to distort and damage their originals. The way that nineteenth-century antiquarians negotiated manuscript's and print's temporal affordances and juggled the competing prerogatives of past, present, and future makes those antiquarians useful models for understanding the stakes of digitization projects today. (PJR)
- 107 **Alan Itkin**, *Bring Up the Bodies: The Classical Concept of Poetic Vividness and Its Reevaluation in Holocaust Literature*
 The scenario of someone gazing at corpses plays an important role in the work of three authors representing three generations of Holocaust literature: Peter Weiss, W. G. Sebald, and Jonathan Littell. Plato and Aristotle used this scenario to address a key question raised by the concept of poetic vividness, which they defined as putting a described scene before the reader's eyes: If literature shows us gruesome sights that we should not desire to see or enjoy seeing, does this make literature a form of voyeurism? Weiss, Sebald, and Littell evoke corpse gazing in the context of the Holocaust to answer this question and to articulate unique poetic philosophies that respond to the challenge to literature's validity constituted by the Holocaust. The different ways in which they use corpse gazing reveal how Holocaust literature has changed and continues to change as the era of survivor testimony wanes. (AI)