

Abstracts

- 224 **Anne Mallory, Burke, Boredom, and the Theater of Counterrevolution**
 A rich critical literature explores the relation between Edmund Burke's theatrical style and his counterrevolutionary argument. Redirecting this line of inquiry, the essay treats *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) as a histrionic literary performance, arguing that to appreciate its significance we must recover a neglected subtext: a preoccupation with boredom and restlessness. Burke's loyalties are divided: defending England, he counsels against extremes of torpor and excitement. He works to preserve England in a state of settled "repose," yet his rhetoric reveals a baseline of boredom. Indulging in fantasies of reform and utopia and deploying strategies of tragic hyperbole and self-parody, he mobilizes conventional associations of boredom and revolution to negotiate a new position from which to exercise cultural authority. Textual histrionics do more than contain a revolutionary threat; they establish an alternative theater of boredom. (AM)
- 239 **Thomas J. Otten, Jorie Graham's _____s**
 Jorie Graham's blanks offer the chance to see how lyric intersects with the historical vicissitudes of material culture. The word-length line segments in Graham's poems function as both a graphic representation of lyric and as a reflection of late-twentieth-century material culture, a way of writing the surfaces and textures of everyday life. While reducing to the simplest expression the alienating distance that gives the lyric I its definitive privacy, the blank also replicates the nebulous substances of late-century technology—latex, spray paint, Formica. Such substances become a material idiom of mediation, a repertoire of images that shape our understanding of interpersonal relationships, which in contemporary culture are both void of definition and thick with significance. While much lyric criticism defines the genre in terms of transhistorical rhetorical patterns, the example of Graham's blanks suggests that lyric must also be considered as an intimate material history. (TJO)
- 254 **Matthew Bailey, Oral Composition in the Medieval Spanish Epic**
 This essay addresses the question of whether the Spanish epic was composed orally or was a literary creation using the oral techniques of bards but composed in writing. Oral dictation played an important role in even the most literate works of the time. There was an important compositional aid employed by bards during performance, and its presence is evident in passages of the *Cantar de Mio Cid* and the *Mocedades de Rodrigo*. A new tool of analysis is introduced, the intonation unit, which leads to an understanding of Spanish epic narrative as orally composed and governed by the cognitive constraints of speech. Oral composition eventually included literate individuals whose contributions are linked to the social and political circumstances under which these poems were preserved on parchment. (MB)

- 270 **Kathryn Schwarz**, *Chastity, Militant and Married: Cavendish's Romance, Milton's Masque*

This essay takes up the issue of chaste intentionality in John Milton's *A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle* and Margaret Cavendish's *Assaulted and Pursued Chastity*. Each of these narratives presents a female protagonist who simultaneously embodies and theorizes sexual virtue, creating a problem of will: when women intentionally participate in the ideological structures that constrain their acts, whose agency is at stake? The essay locates this question in the context of early modern conduct manuals and other prescriptive codifications of feminine sexuality, in which the performance of chastity, even as it is idealized, often involves actual or potential acts of violence against patriarchal structures and the male subjects who inhabit them. Milton and Cavendish raise the stakes by creating characters whose chastity is militant even as it tends toward marriage, identifying intentional virtue as a profoundly social problem. (KS)

- 286 **Charlotte Sussman**, "Islanded in the World": Cultural Memory and Human Mobility in *The Last Man*

The Last Man, Mary Shelley's novel of 1826, describes the extinction of humanity by a plague that leaves only one man alive. The plague exerts pressure on the idea of national community by forcing a reevaluation of the number of people needed to continue a nation. It also increases human mobility, severing all local attachments as its survivors seek safety. By considering these issues, *The Last Man* engages with contemporary sociopolitical debates, reflects on the consequences of those debates for literary production and readership, and meditates on the possibilities for cultural memory in a peripatetic world. This essay introduces a neglected historical context for the novel: the debates over emigration, especially state-aided emigration, during the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Shelley's novel aligns itself, in a strikingly pessimistic way, with those who opposed any encouragement of emigration. (CS)