

Abstracts

- 22 **Daniel Shore, Why Milton Is Not an Iconoclast**
 For thirty years the scholarly consensus has been that John Milton was an iconoclast, an idol breaker. I argue that instead of destroying idols, Milton's poems capture and preserve them under judgment. By investing captured idols with poetic care even as he hollows them out from the inside, Milton refashions them as the instruments of their own disenchantment. This alternative response resembles what the theorist Bruno Latour calls "iconoclash." Even *Eikonoklastes*, which Milton wrote in refutation of Charles I's *Eikon Basilike*, is not an iconoclastic tract. I suggest that his late poems gain much of their aesthetic power from the idols they preserve, through a kind of Lucretian experience that I call the "idolatrous sublime." (DS)
- 38 **Andre Furlani, Beckett after Wittgenstein: The Literature of Exhausted Justification**
 Ludwig Wittgenstein's closely related critiques of language, Cartesian skepticism, inner criteria, and hermeneutics have instructive parallels in the work of Samuel Beckett, whose avowed interest in Wittgenstein's philosophy elucidates, for example, the treatment of expectation in *Waiting for Godot*, of solipsism in *Company*, and of rule following in *Endgame* and *What Where*. Wittgenstein's insistence that interpretation is not compulsory but remedial, resting on a primitive rule-following competence that permeates our "forms of life" and thus our language, endorses the antimetaphysical dramaturgy Beckett developed while directing stage and screen productions of his own writing. Adapting Wittgenstein's concept of "family resemblance" to an exemplary conjunction of philosophy and literature, this essay proposes that Beckett's works are less aporetic scenarios of deferral and undecidability than meticulous representations of the largely unarticulated convergent behaviors constituting forms of life. As a director, Beckett could draw from Wittgenstein clarifying confirmation of an aesthetic practice that, like the *Philosophical Investigations*, begins "where interpretation comes to an end." (AF)
- 58 **Laura E. Tanner, Holding On to 9/11: The Shifting Grounds of Materiality**
 Cultural theorists interrogating the appropriation of 9/11 through nationalist, capitalist, and media forces have tended to deauthorize the general public's embodied and affective responses to that event. Instead of disavowing claims of mourning unsupported by geographic proximity or material connection, this essay situates such responses in contemporary screen culture to consider how the shifting grounds of materiality complicate the experience of bodily location at every level from the perceptual to the political. Using photographs, fiction, museum exhibits, and survivor accounts, the essay explores how the transformed relation between subjects and objects defines our apprehension of 9/11 in material, technological, and phenomenological terms. The complex

dynamics of perception and embodiment unveiled through these representations suggest the need to rethink categories of experience and affect to accommodate new paradigms of proximity and connectedness increasingly liberated from the measures of geography and the borders of the body. (LET)

77 **Jonas Grethlein, Myth, Morals, and Metafiction in Jonathan Littell's *Les Bienveillantes***

Jonathan Littell's *Les Bienveillantes*, the fictional autobiography of an incestuous SS officer, is one of the most controversial novels published in the last decade: it received two prestigious French literary awards but was denounced as kitschy, pornographic, and revisionist. This essay explores the intertext of the *Oresteia*, which makes the book more complex than most critics have acknowledged. The references to Aeschylus permit the narrator to style himself a tragic hero and thereby to trivialize the Nazi crimes. At the same time, the mythical emplotment, together with other intertexts, indicates that Aue's account is a concoction. Far from simply propagating a revisionist ideology, *Les Bienveillantes* combines much factual information with a high degree of reflexivity, provoking readers to ponder the Shoah and how to do justice to it. (JG)