

Abstracts

749 **Brian Glavey, Dazzling Estrangement: Modernism, Queer Ekphrasis, and the Spatial Form of *Nightwood***

The reputation of Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* as a work of "marginal" modernism is complicated by its affinities with the aesthetics of high modernism, a fact signaled by its role as the inspiration of Joseph Frank's theory of spatial form. At once emblematic and eccentric, the novel is devoted to both recognition and obscurity. *Nightwood* enacts this paradox through a strategy of queer ekphrasis that aestheticizes moments of loss, giving aesthetic form to experiences of stigma in order to "dazzle" them. Attending to Barnes's spatial form will forward debates about modernism and queer theory, suggesting a more useful vocabulary for both: an account of the aesthetic that is neither wholly subversive nor wholly conservative and a nuanced account of queerness that does not subscribe to either total negation or total affirmation. (BG)

764 **Peter Howarth, Housman's Dirty Postcards: Poetry, Modernism, and Masochism**

Housman's bitter poems about fate, betrayal, and unhappiness were dismissed by many modernist critics and poets on account of their author's pathological self-division, both in content and form. As Housman's thwarted homosexuality became more widely known, it seemed the obvious source of his relentless oppositions between desire and a fateful law. But his newly recovered collection of pornography and sexology shows as much interest in sadomasochistic fantasy scenarios as in homosexuality, scenarios in which sufferer and torturer are covertly agreeing to play the same game. This interest means not only that the poems protesting against punishment might be covertly identifying with it but also that they might covertly ironize the aesthetic criteria of Housman's modernist opponents. Auden's, Richards's, and Leavis's organicist ideas about poetry's cultural mission, based on Schiller's model of the aesthetic state, are parodied by the unmediated, self-contained, and homeostatic relationships found in the masochistic fantasies of Housman's collection. (PH)

782 **Ernesto Javier Martínez, Dying to Know: Identity and Self-Knowledge in Baldwin's *Another Country***

This article examines the prevalence of confusion and incoherence in James Baldwin's 1962 novel *Another Country*, arguing that the novel should be read as an extended and theoretically rich meditation on the difficulty of gaining self-knowledge in oppressive social contexts. Its central thesis is that the novel is motivated less by the tragedy of Rufus Scott's suicide early in the novel than by the ethical imperative that compels all the characters to risk their sense of self (to figuratively commit suicide) in order to better understand the circumstances they face. Through this "suicidal" sensibility, Baldwin examines how self-knowledge in oppressive contexts frequently depends on people making

extreme shifts in their conception of self—of who they are in relation to their society. These shifts are often dreaded and appear self-menacing, but Baldwin ultimately implies that they hold liberatory promise. (EJM)

- 798 **Sam See**, “Spectacles in Color”: The Primitive Drag of Langston Hughes
 The chapter “Spectacles in Color” in Langston Hughes’s first autobiography, *The Big Sea* (1940), envisions modernist Harlem culture as a drag performance and offers a useful rubric for understanding Hughes’s *The Weary Blues* (1926), a lyric history of that culture whose poems characteristically cross gender, sexual, racial, and even formal lines. *The Weary Blues* employs a low-down, or nature-based, and down-low, or queer, aesthetic of racial and gender crossing that I term “primitive drag,” an aesthetic that ironically coincides with the stereotypes of African Americans and queers that were propagated by early-twentieth-century sexological science and degeneration theory: namely, that blacks and queers were unnatural and degenerate because they, unlike whites and heterosexuals, exhibited a *lack* of racial and gender differentiation. Dis-identifying with those stereotypes, the primitive drag in *The Weary Blues* depicts queer feeling as natural and nature as queer, thus offering a productive paradox for rethinking literary histories of modernism and theories of sexuality by the rather Darwinian notion that “the nature of the universe,” as Hughes calls it, is always subject to change, or queering. (SS)
- 817 **Martin G. Eisner and Marc D. Schachter**, *Libido Sciendi: Apuleius, Boccaccio, and the Study of the History of Sexuality*
 This essay contributes to recent debates in the study of the history of sexuality that have developed out of a comparison of a story from Apuleius’s *Golden Ass* and its transformation by Boccaccio in the *Decameron*. Addressing questions of book history, philology, and textual transmission, the article offers another perspective on the problems of identity, temporality, and epistemology that have been at the center of these debates and proposes reorienting considerations of Michel Foucault’s still-contested role in the field by drawing on the underappreciated later volumes of his landmark *History of Sexuality*. Instead of mining the stories of Apuleius and Boccaccio for exemplary social types or for information about the social meanings of past sex acts, this essay uses philological and paratextual materials to focalize these tales’ interpretive erotics, complicate the temporal relations between them, and model a way of studying the history of sexuality that is not tied to a history of social types, identities, or acts. (MGE and MDS)