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Front Matter

Criticism Editors

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A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts
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429 THE SENSIBILITY OF MICHAEL FRIED

Christa Noel Robbins

In a letter written to Phillip Leder, then editor of *Artforum*, before the 1967 publication of “Art and Objecthood” in that same journal, Michael Fried wrote: “I keep toying with the idea, crazy as it sounds, of having a section in this sculpture-theater essay on how corrupt sensibility is *par excellence* faggot sensibility[. . .].” This essay analyzes this statement in relation to Fried’s published theorization of “objecthood” and “theatricality” as “corrupted and perverted.” The essay asks what exactly constituted a “perverted” sensibility for Fried and what the implications are of aligning that perversion with homosexuality. The proposed answer is located in the manner by which the minimalist relation to viewers disrupts the “coherent” image of modernism—a relation that exits the clearly demarcated enclosures of serious aesthetic judgment and enters into the engaging and absorbing vagaries of desire.

455 HANDCRAFTING ARCHIVES: THE SOUNDS OF THE COCKETTES’ INTIMATE ARCHIVING PRACTICES

Ann M. Garascia

This essay uses the collections of two artists formerly associated with the Cockettes—a 1970s queer, handcrafting, theatrical troupe—to propose a method of critical archival research that explores the possibilities and limitations of queer archival recovery acts within institutional settings. Combining sound, performance, material, and visual studies, the author analyzes the “sonic materiality” of these collections. This practice demonstrates how close reading the material condition of documents sharpens the researcher’s receptivity to embedded traces of past sounds, making the documents capable of relaying histories of queer performance that would otherwise go unnoticed through archival research methods centering on visual empiricism. Resisting common narratives of synced archival bodies and the silencing imperatives of institutional accessioning, reading the sonic materiality of these collections alongside one another reveals archival remixes wherein persisting traces of the informal artist-archivists cut up and through the meanings that the documents and archives’ infrastructures generate. Traversing disciplinary borders between humanities and archival studies, this method of critical archival research provokes

ongoing collaborations among artists, archivists, and researchers to formulate new models of documentation and archiving that more fully account for queer histories within institutional repositories.

- 487 CAN YOU FEEL IT?: BEAUTY AND QUEER OF COLOR
POLITICS IN *LOOKING FOR LANGSTON*
Rachel Jane Carroll

This essay wonders what it means to make a beautiful work of art in a time of political crisis. In this case, the crisis is the state-sponsored violence proliferating in the racist and homophobic ferment of the 1980s. In Isaac Julien's luxurious film *Looking for Langston*, I read beauty as a part of Julien's queer black political imaginary and argue that beauty judgments are structures of political demand-making. This essay seeks to explain how the film mobilizes beauty against fetish and death by staging the moment of aesthetic judgment, calling attention to beauty judgments as sites of affective collectivity, political action, and spaces of survival.

- 511 THE DESIRE FOR FACT: ANTI-RACIST ETHICS IN
DISCOURSES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE
Hannah Manshel

In this paper, I consider the way Vanessa Place's book of experimental poetry *Statement of Facts* and Jana Leo's memoir *Rape New York* use flat language to resist the requirement that a victim of sexual violence produce affect as evidence of sexual assault. This paper engages with critical work in Black Feminist studies and on surface reading to argue that flat writing, in its turn toward a-subjectivity and away from compulsory wounded affect, might offer an anti-racist alternative to a liberal narrative of rape as a crime that happens to an individual, middle-class, white female victim.

- 533 MILTON'S PANORAMA: *PARADISE REGAINED* IN THE
AGE OF CRITIQUE
David Carroll Simon

This essay begins with a discussion of recent debates about the value of "critique" and other forms of adversarial reading, arguing that influential proposals for "post-critical" alternatives have privileged the role of fixed psychic states in the practice of interpretation rather than attending to the blur of emotional life. Turning to Roland Barthes's 1977–78 lecture course at the Collège de France, an understudied precursor to post-critical agitation, I argue that he offers us concepts, "the neutral" and "the panorama," that invite reflection on the affective conditions of reading. Yet here the "panorama" is no more than an intriguing sketch; Milton enriches our understanding of this concept by developing a detailed description of

wayward visual attention. Exploring this dimension of *Paradise Regained*, I depart from the near-consensus view among scholars that the poem should be understood as a celebration of self-mastery. Ultimately, I show how Milton's account of the wandering eye both anticipates and challenges recent "post-critical" perspectives by modeling a knowingly unpredictable version of irenic reading.

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