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## Front Matter

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# criticism

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147 MEDIUM THICKNESS: PHENOMENOLOGY,  
PLASTICITY, AND THE FUTURE OF FORM  
John Lurz

This article engages with the ongoing debate in literary studies around the “new formalism” by developing a novel conception of form as such through a consideration of its relationship to the physical materiality by which it is transmitted. It uses a reading of Rainer Maria Rilke's famous "Archaic Torso of Apollo" to weave the late phenomenological thinking of Maurice Merleau-Ponty together with Catherine Malabou's contemporary post-deconstructive work on plasticity. In doing so, it develops a concept of “thickness” that describes the constitution of form through divergence rather than consolidation. It ultimately offers a more precise and flexible critical vocabulary for describing the experience of literary form's spatial and temporal materialization.

167 BEYOND BAD FAITH: CULTURAL CRITICISM AND  
INSTRUMENTALITY  
Alastair Morrison

This essay argues for the role of instrumental thinking in cultural and literary criticism, practices sometimes thought of as naturally anti-instrumental. Focusing on the work of Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot, it shows a shared instrumental defense of Christianity but also how, for situational reasons, this defense has made instrumentalism harder to locate within the Anglophone critical tradition. Arnold promoted adherence to the national church on openly civic and functional grounds, though to do so he had to derogate the idea, widely held by British Christians, that the metaphysical truth of Christianity outweighed practical considerations. Eliot, in a career of apologetics that consciously emended Arnold's, offered a similarly effectual sense of Christianity's value but enfolded this valuation into a model of cultural holism that forbade individual acts of if/then calculation, avoiding the appearance of bad faith. Eliot's holism becomes part of Raymond Williams's conception of the agency of the cultural despite Williams's lack of interest in the specifically religious project. In brief, the rhetorical difficulty of instrumentalizing Christianity drives instrumental calculation underground, making it illegible against the larger backdrop of romantic anti-utilitarianism in cultural politics. This essay suggests that, when the object is not belief, instrumental approaches to culture present fewer contradictions than is often assumed and that it may be an opportune moment to reconsider them.

191 THE MISDIAGNOSIS OF CRITIQUE

Gila Ashtor

Eve Sedgwick's diagnosis of "theory" as "paranoid" has been utilized to authorize a range of critical interventions, including the most recent call by Rita Felski for a new era of "postcritique" (2015). The status of Sedgwick's essay in shaping contemporary discourse—"arguably the origin of the reading debates" (Love, 2017)—makes it a crucial site for exploring the current denunciations of "critique." In spite of the tremendous popularity of the "paranoid" diagnosis, there has been a total absence of any attention to the "queer" context of Sedgwick's essay. The disregard for this queer context is significant for how it facilitates the habitual misreading of Sedgwick's critique. However, rather than attributing strategic decontextualization to the agenda of contemporary "postcritical" readers alone, my own inquiry is interested in how *Sedgwick* misdiagnoses her own intervention and, specifically, the ways in which Sedgwick's particular framing of the problem—as between "paranoid" and non-"paranoid" reading—fatally constrains any useful hypostatization of critique's limitations. In addition to a close engagement with the terms of Sedgwick's "paranoid" diagnosis, this essay contextualizes Sedgwick's intervention in hermeneutics, and Queer Theory specifically, in order to challenge the two major avenues of Sedgwick's critical reception: in the reading debates, as "reparative" against "theory" *tout court*, and by Affect Theory, as *beyond* sexuality and therefore "post-psychological." In an effort to sharpen the terms of the current reading debates, this essay further locates Sedgwick's intervention in a broader tradition of "practical critiques," by which I mean interventions made by critics *against* a theoretical apparatus that seems, to them, to compromise the "quality" of *reading*. This essay maps contemporary critical discourse onto two categories, "sociological" and "speculative" reading, in order to explain the differences between interpretive paradigms.

219 CAPTION, SNAPSHOT, ARCHIVE: ON ALLEN GINSBERG'S PHOTO-POEMS

Megan Tusler

This article considers how Allen Ginsberg's process of photographing and captioning reveals a project of community formation that reconsiders the position of the social subject. For Ginsberg the documentarian, the image/caption mode is ideal for his documentary project of recording the self in relation to its community. He produces a version of the self that is relative to its community and displaces an atomized, stable self from the self-portrait. His photographs and writings show the formation of a loose cultural group and demonstrate a point of view that shows how the image/caption as medium serves as a particularly descriptive method

of documenting a community's emergence. In Ginsberg's work, portraiture and self-portraiture, in particular, work to describe a loose structure of affection and desire. Picture-poems open up the possibility of seeing the group's arrangements because the aesthetic practice of cross-reading shows the photographer's investment in mimesis. Ginsberg's version of documentational aesthetics, that insists on giving durability to a historical moment, shows that he prioritizes a relation of "among," enfolding the many, instead of a relation "between" two. His archival practice, furthermore, reiterates this insistence on a documentational viewpoint that speaks to the historical moment. Ginsberg's collection, writing, photography, and arrangement insist, in contrast to the way the Beats are perceived in the press, on durability and permanence: they demonstrate a future orientation, a drive to record history. The gestural possibility of the snapshot shows its fit to capturing the ordinary and organizing the emergence of a social form.

- 245 "IT'S NOT BLOOD, IT'S RED": COLOR AS CATEGORY,  
COLOR AS SENSATION IN JEAN-LUC GODARD'S *LE  
MÉPRIS*, *PIERROT LE FOU*, *WEEKEND*, AND *PASSION*  
Colin Gardner

Through a close Deleuzian reading of *Le Mépris*, *Pierrot le Fou*, *Weekend*, and *Passion*, this essay explores Jean-Luc Godard's use of color as the vehicle for a nomadic ballade/ballad (trans. excursion or road trip/song and dance), categorized by a weakness of motor-linkages that is capable of releasing huge forces of disintegration. Color thus acts as a powerful form of deterritorialization and re-territorialization, creating new conjunctions between and across genres and images, forming new categories in the interstices between series. The result is a logic of sensation that induces a *heteroglossia* of potential subjectivities, whereby the body is always its own other, always in search of the next series that will make it manifest as something incommensurable, as pure sensation.

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