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Shakespeare’s Mad Men
A Crisis of Authority
Richard van Oort

This book is about a mad king and a mad duke. With original and iconoclastic readings, Richard van Oort pioneers the reading of Shakespeare as an ethical thinker of the “originary scene,” the scene in which humans became conscious of themselves as symbol-using moral and narrative beings. Taking King Lear and Measure for Measure as case studies, van Oort shows how the minimal concept of an anthropological scene of origin—the “originary hypothesis”—provides the basis for a new understanding of every aspect of the plays, from the psychology of the characters to the ethical and dialogical conflicts upon which the drama is based. The result is a gripping commentary on the plays that makes Shakespeare feel new again.

“This is criticism of the highest order.”
—Blair Hoxby, Stanford University

Critique of Critique
Roy Ben-Shai

At a moment when popular discourse is saturated with voices confronting each other about not being critical enough, while academic discourses proclaim to have moved past critique, this provocative book reawakens the foundational question of what “critique” is in the first place. Ben-Shai inspects critique as an orientation of critical thinking, probing its structures and assumptions, its limits and its risks, its history and its possibilities. The book is a journey through a landscape of ideas, images, and texts from diverse sources—theological, psychological, etymological, and artistic, but mainly across the history of philosophy, from Plato and Saint Augustine, through Kant and Hegel, Marx and Heidegger, up to contemporary critical theory. Along the way, the reader is invited to examine their own orientation of thought; to question popular discourse; and to revisit the philosophical canon, setting the groundwork for an examination of alternative orientations of critical thinking.

“This is one hell of a book.”
—Anne O’Byrne, Stony Brook University

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The Future of Decline

Anglo-American Culture at Its Limits

The Socialist Patriot

George Orwell and War

Peter Stansky

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How to Live at the End of the World

Theory, Art, and Politics for the Anthropocene

Travis Holloway

**ASSESSING THE DAWN OF THE ANTHROPOCENE ERA, A POET AND PHILOSOPHER ASKS: HOW DO WE LIVE AT THE END OF THE WORLD?**

The irony of the Anthropocene era is that, in a neoliberal culture of the self, it is forcing us to consider ourselves as a collective again. *How to Live at the End of the World* is a hopeful exploration of how we might inherit the name “Anthropocene,” reframe it, and revise our way of life or thought in view of it. In his book on time, art, and politics in an era of escalating climate change, Holloway takes up difficult, unanswered questions in recent work by Donna Haraway, Kathryn Yusoff, Bruno Latour, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Isabelle Stengers, sketching a path toward a radical form of democracy—a *zoocracy*, or, a rule of all of the living.

“Beautifully written and of our time.”

—Peg Birmingham, editor of *Philosophy Today*

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The Future of Decline

*Anglo-American Culture at Its Limits*

Jed Esty

**AS THE US BECOMES A SECOND-PLACE NATION, CAN IT SHED THE SUPERPOWER NOSTALGIA THAT STILL HAUNTS THE UK?**

Drawing on the example of post-WWII Britain and looking ahead at 2020s America, Jed Esty suggests that becoming a second-place nation is neither disastrous, as alarmists claim, nor avoidable, as optimists insist. Contemporary declinism often masks white nostalgia and perpetuates a conservative longing for Cold War certainty. But the narcissistic lure of “lost greatness” appeals across the political spectrum. As Esty argues, it resonates so widely in mainstream media because Americans have lost access to a language of national purpose beyond global supremacy. It is time to shelve the shopworn fables of endless US dominance, to face the multipolar world of the future, and to tell new American stories. *The Future of Decline* is a guide to finding them.

“Esty’s book is a wise and even beautiful one.”

—Benjamin Kunkel, author of *Utopia or Bust*

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The Socialist Patriot

*George Orwell and War*

Peter Stansky

In this study, Stanford historian and lifelong Orwell scholar Peter Stansky incisively demonstrates how Orwell’s body of work was defined by the four major conflicts that punctuated his life: World War I, the Spanish Civil War, World War II, and the Cold War.

By carefully combing through Orwell’s published works, notably “My Country Right or Left,” *The Lion and the Unicorn, Animal Farm,* and his most dystopian and prescient novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* Stansky teases apart Orwell’s often paradoxical views on patriotism and socialism. *The Socialist Patriot* is ultimately an attempt to reconcile the apparent contradictions between Orwell’s commitment to socialist ideals and his sharp critique of totalitarianism by demonstrating the centrality of his wartime experiences, giving twenty-first century readers greater insight into the inner world of one of the most influential writers of the modern age.

“Stansky triumphs magnificently again.”

—John Rodden, author of *Becoming George Orwell*

**STANFORD BRIEFS**

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Moments of Capital
World Theory, World Literature
Eli Jelly-Schapiro

Moments of Capital sets out to grasp the unity and heterogeneity of global capital in the postcolonial present. Jelly-Schapiro argues that global capital is composed of three synchronous moments: primitive accumulation, expanded reproduction, and the “synthetic dispossession” facilitated by financialization and privatization. These moments correspond to distinct economic and political forms, and distinct strands of theory and fiction.

The book’s literary readings make vivid the uneven texture and experience of capitalist modernity at large. Analyzing formally and thematically diverse novels, Jelly-Schapiro evinces the different patterns of consciousness that register and hypothesize a way beyond the contradictions of capital. This book develops a new conceptual key for the mapping of contemporary theory, world literature, and global capital itself.

“A formidable achievement.”
—Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee, Oxford University

CURRENCIES: NEW THINKING FOR FINANCIAL TIMES
266 pages, March 2023
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Religion
Rereading What Is Bound Together
Michel Serres
Translated by Malcolm DeBevoise

With this profound final work, completed in the days leading up to his death, Michel Serres presents a vivid picture of his thinking about religion. Themes from Serres’s earlier writings—energy and information, the role of the media in modern society, the anthropological function of sacrifice, the role of scientific knowledge, the problem of evil—are reinterpreted here in the light of the Old Testament accounts of Isaac and Jonah and a variety of Gospel episodes. Monotheistic religion, Serres argues, resembles mathematical abstraction in its dazzling power to bring together the real and the virtual, the natural and the transcendent; but only in its Christian embodiment is it capable of binding together human beings in such a way that partisan attachments are dissolved and a new era of history, free for once of the lethal repetition of collective violence, can be entered into.

“A stunning book.”
—Jean-Pierre Dupuy, Stanford University

“Impressively incisive.”
—Timothy Melley, Miami University

216 pages, April 2022
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The Paranoid Chronotope
Power, Truth, Identity
Frida Beckman

This book identifies and illuminates paranoia as a significant feature of contemporary U.S. society and culture. Centering on three key dimensions—power, truth, and identity—in three different contexts—society, literature, and critique—the book explores the increasing influence of paranoid thinking in U.S. society during the second half of the twentieth century and first decades of the twenty-first, a period which has seen the rise of control systems and neoliberal ascendency. Inquiring about the predominance of white, male, American subjects in paranoid culture, Beckman recognizes an antagonistic maintenance and fortification of a conception of the autonomous individual that perceives itself as under threat. Identifying such paranoia as emerging from an increasingly disjunctive relation between this conception of the subject and the changing nature of the public sphere, she develops the concept of the paranoid chronotope as a tool for theoretical analysis of social, literary, and critical practices today.

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The Critique of Nonviolence
Martin Luther King, Jr., and Philosophy
Mark Christian Thompson

How does Martin Luther King, Jr., understand race philosophically and how did this understanding lead him to develop an ontological conception of racist police violence? Tracking the presence of twentieth-century German philosophy and theology in his thought, the book situates King’s ontology conceptually and socially in nonviolent protest. In so doing, *The Critique of Nonviolence* reads King’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (1963) with Walter Benjamin’s “Critique of Violence” (1921) to reveal the depth of King’s political-theological critique of police violence as the illegitimate appropriation of the racialized state of exception. As Thompson argues, it is in part through its appropriation of German philosophy and theology that King’s ontology condemns the perpetual American state of racial exception that permits unlimited police violence against Black lives.

“Essential for students of King, Black Power, and twentieth-century Africana and European philosophy.”
—Paul C. Taylor, Vanderbilt University

Overlooking Damage
Art, Display, and Loss in Times of Crisis
Jonah Siegel

Siegel makes the daring argument that a thoughtful reaction to images of damage need not stop at melancholy, but can lead us to a new reckoning. Would the objects we admire be more beautiful if they were not injured or displaced, if they did not remind us of unbearable violence? Siegel takes up writers from the time of the French Revolution to today who have reacted to the depredations of revolutionary iconoclasm, imperial looting, and industrial capitalism, and proposes that in these authors we may find resources with which to navigate our contemporary situation. Deftly bringing the methods of literary studies to bear on debates in the study of heritage, archaeology, and visual culture, *Overlooking Damage* reflects on the ways in which concepts of beauty intersect with periods of epochal violence.

“Dazzling and dizzying.”
—Elaine Scarry, Harvard University

What Pornography Knows
Sex and Social Protest since the Eighteenth Century
Kathleen Lubey

Lubey offers a new history of pornography based on forgotten bawdy fiction of the eighteenth century, its nineteenth-century republication, and its appearance in 1960s paperbacks. Through close textual study, Lubey shows how these texts were edited across time to become what we think pornography is—a genre focused primarily on sex. Originally, they were far more variable, joining speculative philosophy and feminist theory to sexual description. Lubey’s readings show that pornography always had a social consciousness—that it knew, long before anti-pornography feminists said it, that women and nonbinary people are disadvantaged by a society that grants sexual privilege to men. Rather than glorify this inequity, Lubey argues, the genre’s central task has historically been to expose its artifice and envision social reform.

“Nothing short of astonishing.”
—Frances Ferguson, University of Chicago
Climate Change, Interrupted
Representation and the Remaking of Time
Barbara Leckie
Spanning the long nineteenth century through our current moment, Leckie’s interdisciplinary treatment of climate change at once rethinks time and illustrates that the time for climate action is now. Climate Change, Interrupted argues that linear, progress-inflected temporalities are not adequate to a crisis that defies their terms. Instead, this book advances a theory and practice of interruption to rethink prevailing temporal frameworks. At the same time, it models the anachronistic, time-blending, and time-layering temporality it advances. In a series of experimental chapters informed by the unlikely trio of Walter Benjamin, Donna Haraway, and Virginia Woolf, Leckie reinflects and cowrites the traditions and knowledges of the long nineteenth century and the current period in the spirit of climate action collaboration.

“A moving and voracious experiment that inspires more than it alarms.”
—Maggie Nelson, author of On Freedom: Four Songs of Care and Constraint

274 pages, November 2022
9781503633988 Paper $30.00 $24.00 sale
Sociability and Society
Literature and the Symposium
K. Ludwig Pfeiffer

From medieval troubadours to Parisian salons and beyond, Pfeiffer conceptualizes the symposium as an institution of sociability with a central societal function. As such, he reinforces a programmatic theoretical move in the sociology of Georg Simmel and builds on theories of social interaction and communication characterized by Max Weber, George Herbert Mead, Jürgen Habermas, Niklas Luhmann, and others. To make his argument, Pfeiffer draws on the work of a range of writers, including Dr. Samuel Johnson and Diderot, Virginia Woolf and Marcel Proust, Dorothy Sayers, Joseph Conrad, and Stieg Larsson. Ultimately, Pfeiffer concludes that if modern societies do not find ways of reinstating elements of the Athenian symposium, especially those relating to its ritualized ease, decency and style of interaction, they will have to cope with increasing violence and decreasing social cohesion.

“The important and thought-provoking.”
—Peter Gilgen, Cornell University

The Philosophical Pathos of Susan Taubes
Between Nihilism and Hope
Elliot R. Wolfson

Drawing on close readings of Susan Taubes’s writings, Wolfson plumbs the depths of the tragic sensibility that shaped her worldview, hovering between the poles of nihilism and hope. Specifically, Wolfson illumines how she presciently explored the hypernomian status of Jewish ritual and belief after the Holocaust; the theopolitical challenges of Zionism and the dangers of ethnonationalism; the antitheological theology and gnostic repercussions of Heideggerian thought; the mystical atheism and apophaticism of tragedy in Simone Weil; and her understanding of poetry. Wolfson delves into the abyss that molded Susan Taubes’s mythological thinking, making a powerful case for the continued relevance of her work to the study of philosophy and religion today.

“Wolfson writes with a poetic lucidity—and a passion—worthy of his subject.”
—Vivian Liska, University of Antwerp

Utopia in the Age of Survival
Between Myth and Politics
S. D. Chrostowska

Vigilant and timely, Chrostowska issues an urgent report on the vitality of utopia, making the case that critical social theory needs to reinstate utopia as a speculative myth. At the same time, the left must reassume utopia as an action-guiding hypothesis. Chrostowska looks to the vibrant, visionary mid-century resurgence of embodied utopian longings and projections in Surrealism, the Situationist International, and critical theorists writing in their wake, reconstructing utopia’s link to survival through to the earliest, most radical phase of the French environmental movement. Survival emerges as the organizing concept for a variety of democratic political forms that center the corporeality of desire in social movements contesting the expanding management of life by state institutions across the globe.

“An elegant and bold ode to utopian thinking in the shadow of climate change and pandemics.”
—Banu Bargu, author of Starve and Immolate

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CRITICISM AND THEORY

STANFORD TEXT TECHNOLOGIES
Holy Digital Grail
*Medieval Book on the Internet*
Michelle R. Warren

Warren tells the story of an Arthurian romance with textual origins in twelfth century England now diffused across the twenty-first century internet. In the process, she uncovers a practice of “tech medievalism” that weaves through the history of computing since the mid-twentieth century; metaphors indebted to King Arthur and the Holy Grail are integral to some of the technologies that now sustain medieval books on the internet. This infrastructural approach to book history illuminates how the meaning of literature is made by many people besides canonical authors: translators, scribes, patrons, readers, collectors, librarians, cataloguers, editors, photographers, software programmers, and more. Situated at the intersections of digital humanities, library sciences, literary history, and book history, *Holy Digital Grail* offers new ways to conceptualize authorship, canon formation, and the definition of a “book.”

“Warren is among the most original, creative, and technologically alert medieval scholars of our time.”
—Paul Strohm, Columbia University

STANFORD TEXT TECHNOLOGIES
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Literary Mathematics
*Quantitative Theory for Textual Studies*
Michael Gavin

Across the humanities and social sciences, scholars increasingly use quantitative methods to study textual data. In *Literary Mathematics*, Michael Gavin grapples with this development, describing how quantitative methods for the study of textual data offer powerful tools for historical inquiry and sometimes unexpected perspectives on theoretical issues of concern to literary studies.

Student-friendly and accessible, the book advances this argument through case studies drawn from the *Early English Books Online* corpus. Across these case studies, Gavin challenges readers to consider why corpus-based methods work so effectively and asks whether the successes of formal modeling ought to inspire humanists to reconsider fundamental theoretical assumptions about textuality and meaning.

“The most ambitious, and practical, book I know on the computational revolution in literary studies.”
—Jonathan Hope, Arizona State University

STANFORD TEXT TECHNOLOGIES
280 pages, October 2022
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Digital Codicology
*Medieval Books and Modern Labor*
Bridget Whearty

Medieval manuscripts are our shared inheritance, and today they are more accessible than ever—thanks to digital copies online. Yet for all that widespread digitization has fundamentally transformed how we connect with the medieval past, we understand very little about what these digital objects really are. We rarely consider how they are made or who makes them. This case study—rich book demystifies digitization, revealing what it’s like to remake medieval books online and connecting modern digital manuscripts to their much longer media history, from print, to photography, to the rise of the internet.

Ultimately, this book argues that centering the modern labor and laborers at the heart of digital cultural heritage fosters a more just and more rigorous future for medieval, manuscript, and media studies.

“Deeply insightful and fiercely generous.”
—Matthew Fisher, University of California, Los Angeles

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338 pages, November 2022
9781503632752 Cloth $80.00 $64.00 sale
The Unknowable in Early Modern Thought
Natural Philosophy and the Poetics of the Ineffable

Kevin Killeen

Ranging from Paradise Lost to thinkers in and around the Royal Society and commentary on the Book of Job, Killeen explores how the era of the scientific revolution was in part paralyzed by and in part energized by the paradox it encountered in thinking about the elusive nature of God and the unfathomable nature of the natural world. Looking at writers with scientific, literary and theological interests, from the shoemaker mystic Jacob Boehme to John Milton, from Robert Boyle to Margaret Cavendish, and from Thomas Browne to the fiery prophet Anna Trapnel, the book shows how seventeenth-century writings redeployed the rich resources of the ineffable and the apophatic—to think about natural philosophy and the enigmas of the natural world.

“Brims with smart scholarship, sharp writing, and surprising discoveries.”
—Jess Keiser, Tufts University

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The Paradoxes of Ignorance in Early Modern England and France

Sandrine Parageau

With close textual analysis of hitherto neglected sources and a reassessment of canonical philosophical works by Montaigne, Bacon, Descartes, Locke, and others, Parageau examines the role of ignorance in the production of knowledge, identifying three common virtues of ignorance as a mode of wisdom, a principle of knowledge, and an epistemological instrument, in philosophical and theological works. How could an essentially negative notion be turned into something profitable and even desirable? Taken in the context of Renaissance humanism, the Reformation and the “Scientific Revolution”—which all called for a redefinition and reaffirmation of knowledge—ignorance, Parageau finds, was not dismissed in the early modern quest for renewed ways of thinking and knowing. On the contrary, it was assimilated into the philosophical and scientific discourses of the time.

“Parageau has assembled a rich set of texts, and she reads them with care and nuance.”
—Paula Findlen, Stanford University

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Love against Substitution
Seventeenth-Century English Literature and the Meaning of Marriage
Eric B. Song

The literary project of testing the meaning of marriage proved to be urgent work throughout the seventeenth century. Starting at the end of the sixteenth century with Edmund Spenser, and then exploring works by William Shakespeare, William Davenant, John Milton, Lucy Hutchinson, and Aphra Behn, Eric Song offers a new account of how notions of unique personhood became embedded in a literary way of thinking and feeling about marriage. The writings studied in this book elevate a love between two individuals who deem each other to be unique to the point of being irreplaceable, and this vocabulary allows writers to put affective pressure on the meaning of marriage as Pauline theology defines it. Stubbornly individual, love threatens to short-circuit marriage’s function in directing intimate feelings toward a communal experience of Christ’s love.

“Beautifully written and a joy to read.”
—Will Stockton, Clemson University

CULTURAL MEMORY IN THE PRESENT
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Reading John Milton
How to Persist in Troubled Times
Stephen B. Dobranski

A Captivating Biography that Celebrates the Audacious, Inspiring Life and Works of John Milton, Revealing How He Speaks to Our Times.

John Milton is unrivalled—for the music of his verse and the breadth of his learning. In a time of convulsive political turmoil, he justified the killing of a king, pioneered free speech, and publicly defended divorce. He was, in short, an iconoclast. Afflicted by blindness, illness, and political imprisonment, he also understood adversity. In this brisk, topical, and engaging biography, Stephen B. Dobranski brushes the scholarly dust from the portrait of the artist to reveal Milton’s essential humanity and his unwavering commitment to ideals—freedom of religion and the right and responsibility of all persons to think for themselves—that are still relevant and necessary in our times.

“Marvelous. Puts to rest the notion that Milton is just for academics.”
—Publishers Weekly

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Figures of Possibility
Aesthetic Experience, Mysticism, and the Play of the Senses
Niklaus Largier

Arguing for a new understanding of mystical experience, Largier foregrounds the ways in which devotion builds on experimental practices of figuration in order to shape perception, emotions, and thoughts anew. Specifically, Largier illuminates how devotional practices are invested in the creation of possibilities, and this investment has been a key element in a wide range of experimental engagements in literature and art from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, and most recently in forms of “new materialism.” Read as a history of the senses and emotions, the book argues that mystical and devotional practices have long been invested in the modulating and reconfiguring of sensation, affects, and thoughts. Read as a book about practices of figuration, it questions ordinary protocols of interpretation in the humanities, and the priority given to a hermeneutic understanding of texts and cultural artifacts.

“A singular achievement.”
—Eric Santner, University of Chicago

CULTURAL MEMORY IN THE PRESENT
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Badiou by Badiou
Alain Badiou,
Translated by Bruno Bosteels

In this brief, conversational book, the French philosopher Alain Badiou provides readers with a unique introduction to his system of thought, summed up in the trilogy of Being and Event, Logics of Worlds, and The Immanence of Truths. Taking the form of an interview and two talks and keeping in mind a broad audience, the book touches upon all the major concepts of Badiou’s philosophy and illustrates them with fitting examples. A veritable tour de force of pedagogical clarity, this is perhaps the single best general introduction to the work of this prolific and committed thinker. If, for Badiou, the task of philosophy consists in thinking through the truths of our time, the texts collected in this small volume could not be timelier.

"Captures the latest developments in Badiou’s thought, while providing an excellent introduction for new readers."
—Héctor Hoyos, author of Things with a History

The Afterlife of Moses
Exile, Democracy, Renewal
Michael P. Steinberg

In this elegant and personal new work, Steinberg reflects on the story of Moses and the Exodus as a foundational myth of politics—of the formation not of a nation but of a political community grounded in universal law. Motivated in part by recent reactionary insurgencies in the US, Europe, and Israel, this astute work of intellectual history posits the critique of myths of origin as a key principle of democratic government, affect, and citizenship, of their endurance as well as their fragility.

“A tour de force.”
—Omri Boehm, The New School for Social Research

Engaging Violence
Civility and the Reach of Literature
David Simpson

While it is widely acknowledged that civility works against violence, and that literature generates or accompanies civility and engenders tolerance, civility has also been understood as violence in disguise, and literature, which has only rarely sought to claim the power of violence, has often been accused of inciting it. This book sets out to describe the ways in which these words—violence, literature and civility—and the concepts they evoke are mutually entangled, and the uses to which these entanglements have been put.

Simpson’s argument follows a broadly historical trajectory from the Renaissance to the present, drawing on the work of historians, political scientists, literary scholars and philosophers. The result is a distinctly new argument about the complex entanglements between literature, civility, and violence in the anglophone Atlantic sphere.

“Among the most important literary historical considerations of violence and civility to emerge in recent decades.”
—Judith Butler, University of California, Berkeley
Ellermann undertakes a fundamental rethinking of the aesthetics and politics of nature, contending that the romantics tried to circumvent the domination of nature that is essential to modern capitalism. As he shows writers of the period such as Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, Mary Wollstonecraft, William Wordsworth, and Percy Shelley were attuned to nature's ephemeral, ungraspable forms. Further, he explains how nature's vanishing—its vulnerability and its flight from apprehension—became a philosophical and political problem. By trying to imagine what ultimately eludes capture, the romantics recognized the complicity between conceptual and economic domination, and they saw how thought itself could become a technology for control. This insight, Ellermann proposes, motivated romantic efforts to think past capitalist instrumentality and its devastation of the world.

"A vital, eloquent, and necessary book."
—Jonathan Sachs, Concordia University

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Poetic Form and Romantic Provocation
Carmen Faye Mathes

The question of what aesthetic experience can “do” grates against the fact that much Romantic writing represents subjects as not actually in charge of the feelings they feel, the dreams they dream, or the actions they take. In response to this dilemma, Mathes argues that being moved contrary to one’s will is itself an aesthetic phenomenon explored by Romantic poets, and shows the provocations that disturb and disrupt, invite and compel. Examining the formal tactics of Charlotte Smith, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, and Percy Bysshe Shelley, alongside their reactions to historical events such as Toussaint Louverture’s revolt, Mathes reveals that an aesthetics of radical openness is central to the development of literary theory and criticism in Romantic Britain.

“Elegant, sharply argued, and engaging.”
—Jacques Khalip, Brown University

264 pages, June 2022
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Thought’s Wilderness
Romanticism and the Apprehension of Nature
Greg Ellermann

Ellermann undertakes a fundamental rethinking of the aesthetics and politics of nature, contending that the romantics tried to circumvent the domination of nature that is essential to modern capitalism. As he shows writers of the period such as Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, Mary Wollstonecraft, William Wordsworth, and Percy Shelley were attuned to nature’s ephemeral, ungraspable forms. Further, he explains how nature’s vanishing—its vulnerability and its flight from apprehension—became a philosophical and political problem. By trying to imagine what ultimately eludes capture, the romantics recognized the complicity between conceptual and economic domination, and they saw how thought itself could become a technology for control. This insight, Ellermann proposes, motivated romantic efforts to think past capitalist instrumentality and its devastation of the world.

“A vital, eloquent, and necessary book.”
—Jonathan Sachs, Concordia University

200 pages, September 2022
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Literary Authority
An Eighteenth-Century Genealogy
Claude Willan

This book is the cultural history of an idea which now seems so self-evident as barely to be worth stating: through writing imaginative literature, an author can accrue significant and lasting economic and cultural power. We take for granted, now, that authority dwells in literature and in being its author. This state of affairs was not naturally occurring, but deliberately invented. This book tells the story of that invention, taking Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson as central figures.

Willan challenges the continued reign of the “Scriblerian” model of the period and shows how that reign was engineered. In so doing he historicizes the relationship between “good” and “bad” writing, and suggests how we might think about literature and beauty had Pope and Johnson not taken literary authority for themselves.

“An authoritative rethinking of the making of modern literary authority in the eighteenth century.”
—Joseph Roach, Yale University

304 pages, March 2023
9781503630864 Cloth $80.00 $64.00 sale
The Romantic Rhetoric of Accumulation
Lenora Hanson

Hanson argues that rhetorical language records histories of dispossession and the racialized, gendered distribution of the labor of subsistence. Examining work by S.T. Coleridge, Edmund Burke, Mary Robinson, William Wordsworth, Benjamin Moseley, Joseph Priestley, and Alexander von Humboldt, Hanson reads riots through apostrophe, enclosure through anachronism, superstition and witchcraft through tautology, and the paradoxical coincidence of subsistence living with industrialization. The result is to show the figural to be a material record of the survival of non-capitalist forms of life within capitalism. But this survival is not always-already resistant to capitalism, nor are the origins of capital accumulation confined to the Romantic past. Hanson reveals rhetorical figure as entwined in deeply ambivalent ways with the circuitous, ongoing process of dispossession.

“A work of massive and singular importance.”
—Fred Moten, New York University

302 pages, November 2022
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Against the Uprooted Word
Giving Language Time in Transatlantic Romanticism
Tristram Wolff

Wolff argues that well-known writers including Phillis Wheatley Peters, William Blake, William Wordsworth, and Henry David Thoreau offer a radical chronopolitics in reaction to the “uprooted word,” or the formal analytic used to classify languages in progressive time according to a primitivist timeline of history and a hierarchy of civilization. Before the bad naturalisms of nineteenth-century race science could harden language into place as a metric of social difference, writers tried to soften, thicken, deepen, and dissolve it. This naturalizing tendency made language more difficult to uproot from its active formation in the lives of its speakers. And its “gray romanticism” simultaneously gave language different kinds of time—most strikingly, the deep time of geologic form—to forestall the hardening of time into progress.

“A splendid piece of scholarship.”
—William Galperin, Rutgers University

338 pages, October 2022
9781503632769 Cloth $70.00 $56.00 sale

Feminine Singularity
The Politics of Subjectivity in Nineteenth-Century Literature
Ronjaune Chatterjee

Feminine Singularity offers a powerful feminist theory of the subject—and shows us paths to thinking subjectivity, race, and gender anew in literature and in our wider social world.

Through fresh, sophisticated readings of Lewis Carroll, Christina Rossetti, Charles Baudelaire, and Wilkie Collins in conversation with psychoanalysis, Black feminist and queer-of-color theory, and continental philosophy, Chatterjee uncovers a lexicon of feminine singularity that manifests across poetry and prose through likeness and minimal difference, rather than individuality and identity. Reading for singularity shows us the ways femininity is fundamentally entangled with racial difference in the nineteenth century and well into the contemporary, as well as how rigid categories can be unsettled and upended.

“A compelling and exhilaratingly learned call to think fearlessly.”
—Elaine Freedgood, New York University

224 pages, August 2022
9781503630802 Cloth $60.00 $48.00 sale
Refiguring Speech
Late Victorian Fictions of Empire and the Poetics of Talk
Amy R. Wong
In this book, Wong unravels the colonial and racial logic behind seemingly innocuous assumptions about “speech”: that our words belong to us, and that self-possession is a virtue. Through readings of late-Victorian fictions of empire, Wong revisits the scene of speech’s ideological foreclosures as articulated in postcolonial theory. Engaging Afro-Caribbean thinkers like Edouard Glissant and Sylvia Wynter and analyzing novels by Robert Louis Stevenson, Bram Stoker, George Meredith, Joseph Conrad, and Ford Madox Ford, Refiguring Speech reroutes attention away from speech and toward an anticolonial poetics of talk, which emphasizes communal ownership and embeddedness within the social world and material environment.

“Illuminating and eloquent.”
—Tanya Agathocleous, Hunter College

224 pages, July 2023
9781503615173 Cloth $70.00  $56.00 sale

Victorian Contingencies
Experiments in Literature, Science, and Play
Tina Young Choi
Contingency is not just a feature of modern politics, finance, and culture—by thinking contingently, nineteenth-century Britons rewrote familiar narratives and upended foregone conclusions. Victorian Contingencies shows how scientists, novelists, and consumers engaged in new formal and material experiments with cause and effect, past and present, that actively undermined routine certainties. Examining the reinvented geological and natural histories of Charles Lyell and Charles Darwin, Charles Babage’s designs for a machine capable of responding to a contingent future, and novelists George Eliot and Lewis Carroll alongside physicist James Clerk Maxwell, Choi traces contingency across materials and media. And she explores the popular board games and pre-cinematic visual entertainments that encouraged Victorians to navigate a world made newly uncertain.

“Smart, surprising and compelling.”
—Barri J. Gold, Muhlenberg College

264 pages, November 2021
9781503629288 Cloth $65.00  $52.00 sale

Auden and the Muse of History
Susannah Young-ah Gottlieb
Concentrating on W. H. Auden’s work from the late 1930s, when he seeks to understand the poet’s responsibility in the face of a triumphant fascism, to the late 1950s, when he discerns an irreconcilable “divorce” between poetry and history in light of industrialized murder, this new study reveals the intensity of the poet’s struggles with the meanings of history. Through meticulous readings and significant archival findings, Susannah Young-ah Gottlieb presents a new image and understanding of Auden’s achievement and reveals how his version of modernism illuminates urgent contemporary issues and theoretical paradigms: from the meaning of marriage equality to the persistence of fascism; from critical theory to psychoanalysis; from precarity to postcolonial studies.

“Gottlieb reveals her own integrity as an impeccable scholarly reader with a fine understanding of the give and take, the ebb and flow, of the performance of poetic justice.”
—Homi K. Bhabha, Harvard University

312 pages, December 2022
9781503633926 Paper $30.00  $24.00 sale
My Life as an Artificial Creative Intelligence  
Mark Amerika

Is it possible that creative artists have more in common with machines than we might think? Employing an improvisational call-and-response writing performance co-authored with an AI text generator, Amerika interrogates how his own “psychic automatism” is itself a nonhuman function strategically designed to reveal the poetic attributes of programmable worlds still unimagined. Through a series of intellectual provocations, Amerika critically reflects on whether creativity itself is, at root, a nonhuman information behavior that emerges from an onto-operational presence experiencing an otherworldly aesthetic sensibility.

Playful and provocative, My Life as an Artificial Creative Intelligence flips the script on contemporary AI research.

“This book is an expression of the truth that you’re a robot.”
—GPT-3

Communicology  
Mutations in Human Relations?  
Vilém Flusser
Edited by Rodrigo Maltez Novaes  
Foreword by N. Katherine Hayles

Communicology is Vilém Flusser’s first thesis on his concepts of technical images and technical imagination. In this foundational text he lays the groundwork for later work, offering a philosophical approach to communication as a phenomenon that permeates every aspect of human existence. Clearly organized around questions such as “What is Communication?,” “What are Codes?,” and “What is Technical Imagination?,” the work touches on theater, photography, film, television, and more. Originally written in 1978, but only posthumously published in German, the book is one of the clearest statements of Flusser’s theory of communication as involving a variably mediated relation between humans and the world.

“Refreshes, challenges and blasts open unexpected vistas.”
—Seán Cubitt, University of Melbourne

Malicious Deceivers  
Thinking Machines and Performative Objects  
Ioana B. Jucan

Jucan traces a genealogy of post-truth intimately tied to globalizing modernity and connects the production of repeatable fakeness with capitalism and Cartesian metaphysics. Through case studies, the book unpacks the notion of fakeness through the related logics of dissimulation (deception) and simulation (performativity) as seen with software/AI, television, plastics, and the internet. Specifically, Jucan shows how these (dis)simulation machines and performative objects construct impoverished pictures of the world, ensuring a repeatable sameness through processes of hollowing out embodied histories and lived experience.

“Beautifully argued.”
—Alexandra Juhasz, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Melville’s Democracy
Radical Figuration and Political Form
Jennifer Greiman

Across Melville’s five decades of writing, from his early Pacific novels to his late poetry, Greiman identifies a literary formalism that is radically political and carries the project of democratic theory in new directions. Recovering Melville’s readings in political philosophy and aesthetics, Greiman shows how he engaged with key problems in political theory—the paradox of foundations, the vicious circles of sovereign power, the fragility of the people—to produce a body of radical democratic art and thought. Scenes of green and growing life, circular structures, and images of a groundless world emerge as forms for understanding democracy as a collective project in flux. In Melville’s experimental aesthetics, Greiman finds a significant precursor to the tradition of radical democratic theory in the US and France that emphasizes transience and creativity over the foundations and forms prized by liberalism.

“Their excellent book, wonderfully written and researched.”
—Branka Arsic, Columbia University

Writing the Mind
Social Cognition in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction
Hannah Walser

Readers are believed to make use of “Theory of Mind,” the general human capacity to attribute mental states to other people. In many well-known nineteenth-century American novels, however, characters behave in ways that are opaque. Walser dives into these unintelligible moments to map the weaknesses of Theory of Mind and explore alternative frameworks for interpreting behavior. Walser explains how experimental models of cognition lead to some of the strangest formal features of canonical American texts by authors such as Charles Brockden Brown, Herman Melville, Martin Delany, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Charles Chesnutt, and Mark Twain. Walser invites us to reconsider not just our assumptions about the novel as a form, but contemporary concepts in social cognition, including gaslighting and learned helplessness, with greater rigor.

“A stunning reevaluation of the work fiction does to experiment with the problem of other people’s minds.”
—Sari Altschuler, Northeastern University

Reading the Obscene
Transgressive Editors and the Class Politics of US Literature
Jordan S. Carroll

Winner of the MLA Prize for Independent Scholars

Carroll reveals new insights about the editors who fought the most famous anti-censorship battles of the twentieth century. As Carroll argues, transgressive editors, such as Barney Rosset, Hugh Hefner, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, taught their readers to approach even the most scandalizing texts with the same professional reserve they employed in their occupations. Along the way, these editors kicked off a middle-class sexual revolution in which white-collar professionals imagined they could control sexuality through management science. With this provocative work, Carroll calls into question some of the most sensational claims about obscenity, suggesting that when transgression becomes a sign of class distinction, we must abandon the idea that obscenity always overturns hierarchies and disrupts social order.

“Thoroughly enjoyable.”
—Sarah Brouillette, Carleton University

POST’45
280 pages, November 2021
9781503639486 Paper $28.00 $22.40 sale
The Strange Career of Racial Liberalism
Joseph Darda

This book traces the rise of liberal antiracism, showing how reformers’ faith in the moral arc of the universe has undercut future movements with the insistence that racism constitutes a time-limited crisis to be solved with time-limited remedies. Most historians attribute the shortcomings of the civil rights era to a conservative backlash or to the fracturing of the liberal establishment in the late 1960s, but the civil rights movement also faced resistance from a liberal “frontlash” from antiredistributive allies who constrained what the movement could demand and how it could demand it. Telling the stories of Ruth Benedict, Kenneth Clark, W. E. B. Du Bois, John Howard Griffin, Paul Murray, Lillian Smith, Richard Wright, and others, Darda reveals how Americans learned to wait on time for racial change and the enduring harm of that trust in the clock.

“Provides essential bearings for our current moment.”
—Daniel Martinez HoSang, Yale University

Crisis Style
The Aesthetics of Repair
Michael Dango

Dango theorizes how aesthetic style manages crisis—and why taking crisis seriously means taking aesthetics seriously. Detoxing, filtering, binging, and ghosting: these are four actions that have come to define how people deal with living in a world apparently in permanent crisis. As Dango argues, these terms can also describe contemporary art and literature. The book discusses social media filters alongside the minimalism of Donald Judd and La Monte Young and the television shows *The West Wing* and *True Detective*. It reflects on the modernist cuisine of Ferran Adrià and the fashion design of Issey Miyake. And, it dissects writing by Barbara Browning, Raymond Carver, Mark Danielewski, Jennifer Egan, Tao Lin, David Mitchell, Zadie Smith, and others. *Crisis Style* is at once a taxonomy of contemporary cultural production and a theorization of action in a world always in need of repair.

“Irrepressibly illuminating.”
—Anna Kornbluh, University of Illinois, Chicago

Genres of Privacy in Postwar America
Palmer Rampell

Rampell reveals the surprising role genre fiction played in redefining the category of the private person in the postwar period. Triangulating novels and films with archival discoveries and historical and legal research, Rampell provides new readings of Patricia Highsmith, Dorothy B. Hughes, Philip K. Dick, Octavia Butler, Chester Himes, Stephen King, Cormac McCarthy, and others. The book pairs the right of privacy for heterosexual sex with queer and proto-feminist crime fiction; racialized police surveillance at midcentury with Black crime fiction; *Roe v. Wade* with science fiction; the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act with horror; and the right to die with westerns. While we are accustomed to defenses of fiction for its capacity to represent fully rendered private life, Rampell suggests that we might value genre fiction for its capacity to theorize the meaning of the protean concept of privacy.

“Crisp and lucid.”
—Sean McCann, author of *A Pinnacle of Feeling*
**American Graphic**

*Disgust and Data in Contemporary Literature*

Rebecca B. Clark

“Graphic” is a term tellingly at odds with itself. On the one hand, it seems to evoke the grotesque; on the other hand, it promises the geometrically streamlined in the form of graphs and diagrams. Clark’s innovation is to ask what happens when the same moment in a work of literature is graphic in both ways at once. Her answer suggests the graphic turn in contemporary literature is intimately implicated in the fraught dynamics of identification. Clark analyzes the contemporary graphic along three specific axes: the ethnographic, the pornographic, and the infographic. In each chapter, Clark’s explication of the double graphic reads a canonical author against literary, visual and/or performance works by Black and/or female creators, demonstrating how closely and uncomfortably yoked together disgust and data have become in our increasingly graph–ick world.

“Stylishly written.”

—Eugenie Brinkema, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

**Writing Our Extinction**

*Anthropocene Fiction and Vertical Science*

Patrick Whitmarsh

Revealing the ways that literature has engaged the history of vertical science and linked it to increasing environmental precarity, Whitmarsh examines works by writers such as Don DeLillo, Karen Tei Yamashita, Reza Negarestani, and Colson Whitehead alongside postwar scientific programs including the Space Race, atmospheric and underground nuclear testing, and geological expeditions such as Project Mohole (which attempted to drill to the earth’s mantle). As Whitmarsh argues, by focusing readers’ attention on the fragility of postwar life through a vertical lens, Anthropocene fiction highlights the interconnections between human behavior and planetary change. These fictions situate industrial history within the much longer narrative of geological time and reframe scientific progress as a story through which humankind writes itself out of existence.

“A crucial touchstone for current debates in ecocriticism.”

—Caren Irr, Brandeis University

**Reader’s Block**

*A History of Reading Differences*

Matthew Rubery

MATTHEW RUBERY’S EXPLORATION OF THE INFLUENCE NEURODIVERGENCE HAS ON THE WAYS INDIVIDUALS READ ASKS US TO CONSIDER THAT THERE MAY BE NO ONE DEFINITION OF READING.

Drawing on personal testimonies gathered from literature, film, life writing, social media, medical case studies, and other sources to express how cognitive differences—from dyslexia, hyperlexia, and alexia to synesthesia, hallucinations, and dementia—have shaped people’s experiences both on and off the page, Rubery contends that there is no single activity known as reading. Instead, there are multiple ways of reading (and, for that matter, not reading) despite the ease with which we use the term. Pushing us to rethink what it means to read, *Reader’s Block* moves toward an understanding of reading as a spectrum that is capacious enough to accommodate the full range of activities documented in this fascinating and highly original book.

“Rubery is one of the most sensitive and original scholars working with literature today.”

—Christina Lupton, author of *Love and the Novel*
The Persian Prince
The Rise and Resurrection of an Imperial Archetype
Hamid Dabashi

With a title borrowed from Machiavelli, Dabashi articulates a bold new idea of the Persian Prince—a metaphor of political authority, a figurative ideal deeply rooted in the collective memories of multiple nations, and a literary construct that connected Muslim empires across time and space. Drawing on works from Classical Antiquity and the vast Persianate worlds from India to the Mediterranean, as well as the Hebrew Bible and European medieval mirrors for princes, Dabashi reveals the construction of the Persian Prince as a potent archetype. He traces this archetype through its varied historic gestations and finds it resurfacing in postcolonial political thought as a rebel, a prophet, a poet, and a nomad.

“Disarmingly accessible.” —Laura U. Marks, Simon Fraser University

328 pages, June 2023
9781503636231 Paper $30.00 $24.00 sale

Outrage
The Arts and the Creation of Modernity
Katherine Giuffre

A cultural revolution in England, France, and the United States helped usher in modernity. Working alongside the better documented political and economic revolutions of the time, this cultural revolution also ushered in the modern era of continuous revolution. Focusing on the period between 1847 and 1937, Outrage examines in depth six of the cultural “battles” that were key parts of this revolution: the novels of the Brontë sisters, the paintings of the Impressionists, the poetry of Emily Dickinson, The Ballets Russes’s production of Le Sacre du printemps, James Joyce’s Ulysses, and Zora Neale Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God. Using contemporaneous reviews in the press as well as other historical material, we can see that these now canonical works provoked outrage at the time of their release because they addressed critical points of social upheaval and transformation in ways that engaged broad audiences with subversive messages.

208 pages, June 2023
9781503635821 Paper $26.00 $20.80 sale

The Shadow of the Empress
Fairy-Tale Opera and the End of the Habsburg Monarchy
Larry Wolff

A BEGUILING EXPLORATION OF THE LAST HABSBURG MONARCHS’ GRIP ON EUROPE’S HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL IMAGINATION.

The Shadow of the Empress explores how the changing circumstances of cultural production and reception before, during, and after World War I reshaped the political meanings of the fairy tale opera Die Frau ohne Schatten. Historian Larry Wolff interweaves the story of the opera’s composition and performance history with a personal narrative of his Habsburg and Viennese family. Reflecting on the seismic cultural shifts that rocked post-imperial Europe, Wolff follows the real-life Emperor and Empress through the rise of Nazism, World War II, and the Cold War up until Zita’s death in 1989, when she had herself become a fairy-tale figure.


432 pages, May 2023
9781503635647 Paper $26.00 $20.80 sale