

## Call for Abstracts for Issue #7 (Summer 2019)

### *Critique* *Meanings, Methods, Contexts*

Our current historical moment is full of urgent reasons to practice critique. But what kinds of critique are effective? It is difficult if not fully senseless to expose the contradictions within, for instance, U.S. President Trump's politics, when these politics programmatically flaunt such contradictions themselves. Critical methods of exposure and unmasking are rendered futile when the object of critique has built these mechanisms into its *modus operandi*. This conundrum, currently debated and tackled from many disciplinary angles within the study of culture, is the impetus for *On\_Culture's* next issue.

In his 2004 article "Why has critique run out of steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern," sociologist Bruno Latour argues that intellectual critique must stockpile a new arsenal in order to cope with a culture infused with relativist stances — a culture which allows a phenomenon like global warming to be framed as a debatable matter of opinion. Literary studies scholar Rita Felski presents a similar line of argumentation in *The Limits of Critique* (2015), in which she cautions against making critique an overriding method of textual analysis: "it seems increasingly evident that literary scholars are confusing a part of thought with the whole of thought, and that in doing so we are scanting a range of intellectual and expressive possibilities" (5). One such possibility has been advocated by Eve Sedgwick in *Touching Feeling* (2003), which outlines a "reparative" approach to reading that is non-critical in the sense that it does not reduce meaning to a purported essence or exposed ideology but rather operates within an "additive and accretive" mode "that wants to assemble and confer plenitude" to the text at hand (149). These scholars are all concerned with how critical practices can be supplemented by, or even exchanged with, alternative methods and modes of reading and analysis that open new potentials for scholarship that are perhaps more effective and no less political than well-worn forms of critique once had been.

At the same time, we encounter scholarship in various other academic fields where immanent critique is alive and well — for instance, in Rahel Jaeggi's work in social philosophy on 'forms of life' and 'alienation' (2018, 2014). In *Critics Not Caretakers* (2001), Russell T. McCutcheon urges fellow religious studies scholars to assume self-reflexive analytical standpoints rather than act as sympathetic caretakers of religious traditions, and historian Dominick LaCapra champions the use of critical-theoretical concepts and frameworks for understanding history. What is more, recent impulses from global intellectual history (e.g. Moyn & Sartari 2013) have led to a de-centering and de-Europeanization of the very idea of critique. These developments raise the question of how academic disciplines have been transformed by self-critique.

This issue of *On\_Culture* wishes to engage such debates and interventions (both past and present) related to critique across disciplines within the study of culture. It is to address the various meanings that critique has assumed at different points in history and amongst various disciplines and to explore the ways in which its efficacy is context-dependent. How has critique been criticized at various points in the history of ideas/intellectual history? What cultural climates and historical circumstances have motivated, and currently motivate, specific methods of critique as well as their revision? How have, for instance, climates of "cynical reason" — to borrow Peter Sloterdijk's phrase — enervated orthodox approaches to

ideology critique and demand new protocols? How do cultural artifacts (works of art, film, literature, pop-cultural phenomena, etc.) and social practices perform critique in and of themselves?

Further possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Kant's *Critique* and its influence on the study of culture
- The status of Marxist immanent critique in humanities disciplines today
- Critical Theory — its origins and evolution through to the present day
- Investigations into ways/climates in which critique has “run out of steam” (Latour 2004)
- Alternative approaches to reading literary and cultural texts — i.e. approaches that do something other than critique
- New critical methods and approaches for destabilizing orthodoxies and enabling socio-political change
- Teaching critical methods in today's university (and other) classrooms
- The role of critique in public humanities, citizen science and the positionality of the scholar
- Critical strategies performed by literary texts, films, art, theater, performance art, activists, new media, etc.
- Critiques of contemporary politics as apolitical or depoliticized, from a historical perspective (e.g. building on Reinhart Koselleck's *Critique and Crisis*)

If you are interested in having a peer reviewed academic article featured in the next issue, please submit an abstract of 300 words with the article title and a short biographical note to [content@on-culture.org](mailto:content@on-culture.org) (subject line “Abstract Submission Issue 7”) no later than September 15, 2018. You will be notified by September 30, 2018 whether your paper proposal has been accepted. The final date for full paper submissions is January 15, 2019.

Please note: *On\_Culture* also features a section devoted to shorter, creative pieces pertaining to each issue topic. These can be interviews, essays, opinion pieces, reviews of exhibitions, analyses of cultural artifacts and events, photo galleries, videos, works of art... and more! These contributions are uploaded on a rolling basis, also to previous issues. Interested in contributing? Send your ideas to the Editorial Team at any time: [content@on-culture.org](mailto:content@on-culture.org)

### **About *On\_Culture: The Open Journal for the Study of Culture***

*On\_Culture: The Open Journal for the Study of Culture* (ISSN: 2366-4142) is a biannual, peer-reviewed academic eJournal edited by post/doctoral researchers and professors working at the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC) Giessen. It provides a forum for reflecting on the study of culture. It investigates, problematizes, and develops key concepts and methods in the field by means of a collaborative and collective process. *On\_Culture* is dedicated to fostering such engagements as well as the cultural dynamics at work in thinking about and reflecting on culture.

The journal consists of three sections: peer-reviewed academic *\_Articles*, *\_Essays*, and the aforementioned *\_Perspectives*. *On\_Culture* brings new approaches and emerging topics to the (trans)national study of culture ‘on the line’ and, in so doing, fills the gap \_\_\_ between ‘on’ and ‘culture.’ There are numerous ways of filling the gap, and a plurality of approaches is something we always strive for.

Contributions to the *\_Perspective* Section are possible at any time. So if you're interested in contributing also to one of the previous issues, get in touch with our Editorial Team at [content@on-culture.org](mailto:content@on-culture.org). Find our Call for Abstracts Archive here: <https://www.on-culture.org/submission/call-for-abstracts-archive/>

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