

Abstracts

- 459 **Tatyana Gershkovich**, Suspicion on Trial: Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* and Nabokov's "Pozdnyshov's Address"

The postcritique debate tends to presuppose that reading suspiciously or restoratively is largely a matter of choosing to do so and that texts themselves do not incline us to read them one way or another. Drawing on works by Leo Tolstoy and Vladimir Nabokov, this essay contests these presumptions. Both authors regarded distrust as a state of mind to which we are ineluctably condemned; only by reading artworks designed to allay our suspicion can we hope to be briefly relieved of it. Tolstoy's famous *Kreutzer Sonata* and Nabokov's little-known variation on it, "Pozdnyshov's Address," explore strategies for disarming readerly distrust. If these authors are right that suspicion is our existential condition rather than a freely chosen interpretive stance, the project of prescribing the ways that readers ought to relate to texts is unlikely to succeed—or cease. We might instead set ourselves the task of investigating how particular texts shape the ways they are read. (TG)

- 475 **Kamran Javadizadeh**, The Atlantic Ocean Breaking on Our Heads: Claudia Rankine, Robert Lowell, and the Whiteness of the Lyric Subject

In *Citizen: An American Lyric*, Claudia Rankine discovers new forms of lyric subjectivity by rerouting the expressive lyric's investment in the singular self, recognized in well-established lines of American genealogy, into a sustained and historicizing attention to dispersed networks of black kinship. She does so in a revisionary allusion to Robert Lowell's *Life Studies* and thereby lays bare the fact that his landmark book, which she treats as a paradigm of the expressive lyric tradition, relies on the (usually unspoken) whiteness of its lyric subject for the force of its autobiographical disclosures. Rankine's *Citizen* thus not only helps us see confessional poetry—and the expressive lyric tradition for which it serves as apotheosis—in a radically new way but also develops an introspective lyric mode that remains alert, dispersed, and open to the political, social, and racialized formations that govern the lived experience of contemporary American life. (K)

- 491 **Austin Hetrick**, Hunger in the Garden: Shortage and Environmental Aesthetics in Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist*

This essay, a reading of Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist* (1974), seeks to reconcile the promise of global environmental aesthetics with postcolonial theories of difference. While the Anthropocene is often framed as universal and unprecedented, Gordimer's ironic presentation of an earlier discourse—centered on resource limits and population bombs—demonstrates that certain themes have existed in the global environmental imagination for decades. Read alongside the history of South African conservation and Judith Butler's theory of precarity, *The Conservationist* develops an alternative green aesthetic, one that considers

environmental problems to be produced by diverse and unequal social relations. Gordimer's dialectical response to apartheid-era conservation (an emphasis on utopianism and haunting) offers insight into South Africa's contemporary environmental politics and into ongoing debates in the environmental humanities about the value of the central analytic strategies of postcolonialism. (AH)

507 **Alicia Mireles Christoff, *Margaret* and the Victorians**

This essay examines Kenneth Lonergan's stunning and underviewed New York City film *Margaret* (2011), placing it in a larger corpus of post-9/11 artistic production while also drawing out its Victorian intertexts—most notably, the Gerard Manley Hopkins poem that gives the film its title. *Margaret* derives its organizing thematics and formal experiments with sound from the Victorian cultural trope of hyperesthesia: the drive to look beyond the self (the protagonist, the nation) and the answering anxiety that doing so would mean being overwhelmed by the frequency of human suffering. *Margaret* demonstrates the continued pull of Victorian aesthetics and politics of representation on contemporary literature and film and, I argue, the cost of this persistence. At once emphasizing and occluding the far-reaching and long-lasting violence of formal and informal empire, *Margaret* carefully attunes us to particular forms of suffering—but only by disattuning us to global catastrophe. (AMC)

524 **Christine A. Wooley, Held in Checks: Du Bois, Johnson, and the Figurative Work of Financial Forms**

This essay investigates the personal check as it appears in two novels, W. E. B. Du Bois's *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* and James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man*. In these novels, checks move money between a wealthy white individual and an African American; a close analysis of the check's form and function shows how Du Bois and Johnson revise mid-nineteenth-century connections among feeling, money, and social change by exploiting, rather than challenging, the abstraction of this financial form. The checks in Du Bois and Johnson present the logic of reparations. In doing so, the checks make a material difference in the lives of black beneficiaries, tying them to the flow of money made possible by finance capitalism, a flow from which most African Americans were excluded. At the same time, the check's figuration of the drawer's emotional motivations salvages the potential for progressive individual actions in those whose self-interest limits their willingness to act decisively for the benefit of others. (CAW)