**Textual Practice Virtual Special Issues**


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Introduction to Modernism and Postmodernism

This Virtual Special Issue offers a chronologically skewed history of the relationship between modernist and postmodernist thought, as it has unfolded in the Anglo-American academy, from 1987 to the present day.

Postmodern thinking was fashioned, to a not insignificant degree, in the pages of Textual Practice, and this collection bears witness to this fashioning. The collection includes influential essays by Linda Hutcheon, Christopher Norris, Terry Eagleton, Simon During and Denis Ekpo, and an interview with Kathy Acker which captures the mood of a postmodern feminist politics with some intensity. It is possible to feel, in these essays, some of the contradictory energy that went into the formulating of a postmodern sensibility, at the very moment that this was becoming culturally and politically possible. But alongside this emergence of a postmodern critical rhetoric, Textual Practice has also testified to the persistence of modernist thought forms through the period. Essays by thinkers from J. Hillis Miller and Peter Nicholls, to Rachel Potter and Paul Crosthwaite, have helped to maintain a sense of the contemporaneity of modernism, and to challenge the tendency, prevalent in postmodern discourse from the beginning, to caricature the modernist forms it appears to succeed. Indeed, the reverse chronology that is apparent in the collection is produced by the widespread sense, reflected here, that the energy of postmodern thinking over recent years has started to wane, to make way for a reassessment of the power of modernist thinking to capture the historical intricacies of the present.

This collection, then, suggests a historical narrative about the relationship between modernism and postmodernism as it has developed since the 1980s. But I hope that it does not partake in what Fredric Jameson has recently called the denial of the ‘great achievements of postmodernism’, the ‘return to and the re-establishment of all kinds of old things, rather than their wholesale liquidation’. In witnessing the passage of a postmodern thought experiment, from its inception to what looks like a certain kind of terminus, this collection seeks neither to bury postmodernism, nor to praise it; rather it suggests that the theoretical dissensus that the journal has nourished over the last twenty-five years, between modernist and postmodernist frames of reference, points towards a new critical language, only now coming to light. For this reason, a reminder of the intellectual and political energy of this dissensus is timely.
Previous Virtual Special Issues to read online:

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Frederic C. Stern
Volume 4, Issue 1, 1990

The Rhetoric of Remembrance: Derrida on de Man
Christopher Norris
Volume 1, Issue 2, 1987

Catherine Belsey
Volume 7, Issue 3, 1993

The Cultural Politics of Perversion: Augustine, Shakespeare, Freud, Foucault
Jonathan Dollimore
Volume 4, Issue 2, 1990

Translating Romanticism: Literary theory as the criticism of aesthetics in the work of Paul de Man
Cynthia Chase
Volume 4, Issue 3, 1990

Bhabha, Hybridity and Identity
Antony Easthope
Volume 12, Issue 2, 1998

Julia Kristeva interviewed by Vassiliki Kolocotroni
Julia Kristeva
Volume 5, Issue 3, 1991

Derrida and the Ethics of Criticism
Geoffrey Galt Harpham
Volume 5, Issue 3, 1991

History, Narrative and Responsibility: Speech acts in Henry James’s ‘The Aspern Papers’
J. Hillis Miller
Volume 9, Issue 2, 1995

Sad Hearts and Supermarkets
Rachel Bowlby
Volume 11, Issue 2, 1997

‘Scars of Separation’: Psychoanalysis, Marxism and the praxis of loss
Ramón E. Soto-Crespo
Volume 14, Issue 3, 2000

Thinking the Outside: Foucault, Derrida, and negative theory
Arthur Bradley
Volume 16, Issue 1, 2002

Obsessional Writing
Simon Morgan Wortham
Volume 18, Issue 1, 2004

The Deconstruction of Fundamental Christianity
Kamilla Elliott
Volume 20, Issue 4, 2006
The Textual Practice Virtual Special Issues offer a history of textual criticism over the last quarter of a century. Since the first issue in 1987, the journal has consistently produced work that has pushed the boundaries of critical thought, in a number of related disciplines. These special issues set out to trace some of the strands that run through the history of the journal, to offer an articulated picture of the way that thinking about texts has grown and mutated in the later twentieth century, and into the first decades of the twenty-first. Over the next year, we will publish virtual special issues on a range of the areas that have been central to the intellectual life of the journal – on poetics, on modernism, late modernism and postmodernism, on visual culture, on dissident sexualities, on Marxism, on contemporaneity. In bringing these issues together, it becomes possible to see a moving picture of the evolution of our thinking about textual practices; it also suggests how finely Textual Practice is woven into the emerging quilt of contemporary thought.

The first special issue, on Deconstruction and Psychoanalysis, tells a story of the development of the marriage between Derrida and Freud, as it plays out from 1987 to 2006. It offers a range of different formulations, both of deconstruction and psychoanalysis, and of the relationship between them, and gives a picture of these formulations in action, as they fashion variously inflected protocols of reading, seeing and thinking. This special issue begins with the controversy around the war time journalism of de Man, with which the early years of Textual Practice is closely associated, before following through a trajectory of work by some of the producers of the discourse, such as Slavoj Zizek, Julia Kristeva, J. Hillis Miller, Anthony Easthope, Jonathan Dollimore, Catherine Belsey, Chris Norris, and Rachel Bowlby. In doing so, the issue suggests a reading of one of the most productive theoretical dialogues in the last half century, psychoanalysing deconstruction, and deconstructing psychoanalysis.