

Editor's Note

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Behind this issue lies a question the editors hoped would provoke skillful writing: Does attention to language matter anymore? Since especially the 2008 financial crisis and increasingly over time, critical and cultural studies have moved away from the traditional literary focus of national and comparative literature departments, the textual and linguistic foci so important in the era of high theory, as well as the language- and reader-based modes important to affect studies, trauma studies, and so on. So, the “anymore” in the question marked a perceived change in critical emphasis, indeed, a movement away from the critical toward Distant Reading, Digital Humanities, and How to Do Things with Texts. The question also provoked attention to ways dealing with language now matters deeply. Philology, the oldest ground for the critical humanities in the modern knowledge systems, radicalized has value for a variety of scholar critics. At the same time, some critics treat language differently, with greater distance, than those who practice several types of close reading or intimate study as their ways for language to guide thinking and inspire imagination. The ques-

tion also repeated a worry voiced by Empson and others long ago about the abuse of language in civil society, in the mechanisms of consumption and the acquisition of power, and in propaganda. In a time when language aligned with power and mass interaction can level institutions and lives as easily as it contributes to them, the question of our attendance to language returns with a vengeance.