

***electronic book review* is currently seeking submissions for a new gathering on the theme of ‘Essayism’**

What is an essay? “A type of writing,” writes Brian Dillon, “so hard to define its very name means a trial, effort or attempt.” Little wonder, then, that its major theorists are among its most memorable practitioners. For Michel de Montaigne, the essay is not the writer’s teaching, but his study: the form thus binds writing to reading, thought to citation, invention to discovery. For Georg Lukacs, it straddles the realms of art and criticism: in the essay, as in the portrait, the distinction between known and knower, between reflection and creation, blurs. For Theodor Adorno, it is “the critical form par excellence”: precise but provisional, it is implicitly opposed to positivism; where the treatise would transcend, the essay ambulates, considering its object from multiple sides. For Joan Retallack, it is a wager on the merit of a mind thus in motion: “neither poetry nor philosophy but a mix of logics, dislogics, intuition, revulsion, wonder”...

On the other hand, the ambiguities that attend the essay’s definition have led some to doubt there is any such thing. It is instead, some aver, an attitude assumed within other genres (thus the essay invades the novel, the poem, the memoir, the play) and even other media (thus the essay as film, as website, as game). A millennial extension upon this view has been crucial to the ascent of the essay in recent years: the essay, insist some of its champions today, is what comes after genre—indeed, after literature. But if the essay is a post-literary genre, it is equally a pre-literary one. And not just in the sense that, in finding form, it often appears akin to the draft, the notebook, the journal, the jotting. If, with the rise of the essay, we reach the ragged right margin of literature, and of the modernity in whose pages it was written, we are prompted to ask what that era tried to leave behind or push aside. In the end, the essay returns us to the beginning.

With these matters in mind, *electronic book review* is requesting submissions that, in both form and content, extend the rich tradition of critical and creative engagement with the question of the essay in new directions. Above all, we aim to test the idea that a resurgence of interest in the essayistic today represents something more than the fashionable movement of a marginal form to a more privileged position within a stable cultural hierarchy; that it bespeaks, instead, a deep shift underway in the general conditions of writing, reading and thinking. Especially, but by no means exclusively, we invite contributions that assay the essay in the work of the following contemporary and modern authors:

John D’Agata	Yiyun Li	Gerald Murnane
Ali Smith	William T. Vollmann	Milan Kundera
Rachel Cusk	Roberto Bolaño	Nicholson Baker
Ben Lerner	Don DeLillo	Jorge-Luis Borges
David Shields	Joseph McElroy	Lyn Hejinian
Karl Ove Knausgaard	Michael Joyce	Gertrude Stein
Brian Dillon	Steve Erickson	Wallace Stevens
Julian Barnes	David Foster Wallace	Tomas Tranströmer
Rebecca Solnit	Diego Marani	Martin Harrison
Geoff Dyer	William Gass	Robert Musil
Claire Louise-Bennett	W.G. Sebald	Hermann Broch

Maggie Nelson	Alexander Kluge	Thomas Mann
Aden Rolfe	Joan Didion	Theodor Adorno
Maria Tumarkin	Paul Auster	Peter Weiss
David Markson	Chris Kraus	Karl Kraus
Tan Lin	Richard Powers	Claire de Obaldia
Teju Cole	John Berger	George Steiner
Matthias Énard	Sven Birkerts	Stefano Ercolino
Siri Hustvedt	Inga Clendinnen	Carl H. Klaus
Mark Z. Danielewski	John Ashbery	Mark M. Freed
Tao Lin	Harry Mathews	Hélène Cixous
Valeria Luiselli	Joshua Cohen	Jean-Luc Nancy
J.M. Coetzee	Joan Retallack	Jacques Derrida

We also encourage attempts to explore areas where critical questions about the essay and essayism overlap with those concerning:

- the novel/poem/short story/collection
- memoir/reportage/journalism/documentary
- the ontology of the literary work
- the poetics of prose
- cognition, mediation, experience, imagination
- the ethics of writing
- narratology and theories of reading
- metafiction/autofiction
- maximalism/minimalism
- the unfinished/the unfinishable
- realism
- post-truth politics
- ekphrasis and art criticism
- ecology
- digital and new media
- film/visual arts/multimedia
- modernity/postmodernity/post-postmodernity
- humanism/post-humanism
- pedagogy in literature and creative writing
- critical theory
- phenomenology
- interdisciplinarity
- theories of fictionality/non-fictionality/post-fictionality
- palimpsests and paratexts

‘Essayism’ will be edited by Joseph Tabbi (University of Illinois at Chicago) and Jason Childs (University of Technology, Sydney). Potential contributors are invited to send an abstract, along with a brief autobiographical note, to *ebr* Managing Editor Will Luers: wluers@gmail.com.

DEADLINE: 15 October, 2018