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Editor's Note

Are the days of negative – pernickety, paranoid, politically correct – criticism over? Is criticism finally taking an aesthetic turn? Will the renascence of style reform a discourse that has been notoriously – or famously, depending on where your feelings are – angry, moralising and jargon-packed? In a recent issue, *The Point Magazine* says, with guarded optimism, yes.

But what does an aesthetic turn, or return, mean today? Of course, the free tribe never succumbed to the temptations of angry, opaque writing that mushroomed under cover of criticism for decades (I can any day revisit Rita Felski, Amit Chaudhuri, James Wood, Peter Brooks, Joseph Epstein, Lydia Davis, Martin Amis, indeed anyone of the tribe, for pleasure and insight). And there are others who frequently off-roaded to write luminous essays, which were not always about books. But whenever they did criticism, they were producing literature.

But the story is not simple nor linear. Neither politics nor ethics have become redundant: indeed the world is in greater need of repair than ever before. Bullying, bullshit and carbon are piling up. Injustice and inequity haven't gone away. Freedom is precarious. Fear comes on a microchip.