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THEORY REMAINS LEFT


This collection of texts rounds off the annual conference bearing the same name organized by the English Institute in the USA. The authors find the motives for the choice of the conference subject in the debate going on in the past few years, on the politics of theory in terms of Literature Studies. However, the authors feel that basic terms, theory and politics have not been cleared yet. According to them, the theory oftentimes boils down to poststructuralism, which is too narrow a frame, and this is not a single phenomenon. On the other hand, there are opinions that theory is a plain formalistic guidebook, with which the text reveals its lore, usually autoreferentially. These opinions exclude the political nature of theory, for if there is no initiation into the context, there is no politics. Today authors like Ernesto Laclau, Homi Bhabha, Spivak, Drucilla Cornell, Theresa de Lauretis, are recontextualising the norms of the French poststructuralism with their research into the issues of race, colonialism, sexuality and gender. This situates them in the framework of the left academic discourse, although this is far from the roots of the Marxist tradition. According to the authors, the goal of this collection is to see how the issue of the political nature of (poststructuralistic) theory is posed and to present the ways in which literature studies continue to blend with left political thinking. They reject the contrary, pure viewpoints: one, that every text is autonomous and cannot be transposed in a different type of texts, and two, that referential and thematic criticism is all that theory should deal with. They use the ambivalence of the word “left” in posing the questions: does...
critique is the main point of departure for the theory. The two meanings of the word "left" (politicized and non-politicized) are being re-examined. Two questions are being asked: does politicized literary analysis leave theory behind and, with that, does literature remain what it is? However, it is not the ambition of the collection to give definite answers. They focus much more on presenting texts, many of them even with contrary positions, but always ones that use the terms "theory", "left" and "literature" in an unusual manner.

When editing the collection, the authors decided on a different strategy from the one at the symposium: Jonathan Caller’s introductory test “The Literary in Theory” is at the end of the collection. The readers may still want to start with that text because the indispensable historical dimensions of this issue are given there, which will make it easier to understand the positions of the other participants, since their texts are more explicative and less metatheoretical. Caller starts his review in the sixties when he was initiated into the area and governed by structuralism. At the time, compared to other scientific disciplines, literature was privileged. This is because it is the essence of language, and language, according to structuralists, is vital for expression, but also for the investigation of various aspects of life. Theory was the key to all other disciplines and was preoccupied with establishing literature, that pure, eternal amalgam, in every single text, or with what Jakobson calls the poetic function. Caller then shows the opposite tendency, the antitheory of Knapp and Benn Michaels who believed that theoretical arguments have no consequences in terms of literature and that theory should thus be abolished. Next is post-theory, which perceives the aporial nature of antitheory, being a theory itself — and yet it strives to abandon the teleology and totalitarianism of all Great theories. He further elaborates the value of literature for today’s identity theories (race, gender, class) since it is full of implicit models how to form and identify. He sees literature’s position today not only as a source of themes for theoretical contemplation but also as a theory in and of itself. Finally, Caller ends his essay agreeing with David Simpson’s opinion that although today literature is not central to sciences, its specifics, narration above all, anecdotes, subjectivization — are basic models in which sciences organize their scientific material.
дотноста, субјективацијата, денес се основни модели според кои науките го организираат својот научен матерijал.

Во текстот „Од станот на Хејверсток Хил до американската училишта“ Гајатри Чакраворти Сливак дава своевидување на современите текови на финансискиот капитал. Таа ги пронаоѓа апориите, заблудите и неодржливите позиции на теориските промислувања и практични дејствувања на одредени леви движења. Таа мощно детално укажува на појавата на т.н. западен марксизам, заради погрешната интерпретација на англискиот превод на Енгелс на Марк-совиот „Капиталот“, при што се изедначиле трудот и моќта на трудот, и во поимот на вредноста не се синтетизирале употребната и разменската вредност. Елaborирајќи ги карактеристиките на глобализацијата, создавадени финансискиот капитал и од несоодветноста на некои негови практики, таа објаснува како доаѓа до создавање површни промени во редистрибуцијата на добрата и заштитата на животната средина. Сливак смета дека на денешниот марксизам му треба многу повеќе на човекови права и економија, му треба етичка практика олицетворена во грижата за другот како грижа за себе. Приоритет треба да имаат онези што загубиле во капиталистичката битка, а капиталот на поефикасен и посушишен начин треба да се сврти кон социјалното. Тоза подразбира напуштање на телесолското и урбаното и свртување кон руралното, кон неделивоста на човек и земјата, на субјектот и објектот.

Џенет Хејли во својот текст „Исто како расните аргументи“ го разгледува судирот меѓу расните и сексуалните движења за човекови права. Обидот на гей активистите да ги остварат своите права повикувајќи се на расните права во Америка, кои во голема мерка се остварени, е во контраст со отпорот на црнечките водачи да се идентификуваат со хомосексуалците. Иако смета дека прашањата на расата и сексуалноста се испреплетени, дека треба да се биде претпазлив кон сите поистоветувања, таа се обидува да ги деконструира кохерентичките теории според кои, групата и идентитетот се компактни и униформни. Давајќи многуброjni примери кога

In her text “From Haverstock Hill Flat to Classroom”, Gayatri Chakrayorty Spivak gives her view on the contemporary flow of financial capital, finding the aporias, the misconceptions and the fallacies in theoretical contemplation and practical actions of certain left movements as well. At first, she points out in great detail to the wrong interpretation of Marx’s *Capital* in Engels’ English translation, which lead to the emergence of the so-called Western Marxism. It is characterized by equaling labour with power of labour and the failure to incorporate the terms *use value* and *exchange value* in the term *value*. Then, she further elaborates on the characteristics of globalization, caused by financial capital and the ineptitude of some of its practices. She said it created only superficial, not essential, changes in terms of the redistribution of goods or the protection of the environment. She feels that Marxism today needs more than a mix of human rights and economy – it needs ethical practices, embodied in caring for the other like for oneself. Priority should be given to those who have lost the capitalistic battle. Also, capital should focus on the social, but in a way that is more effective and fundamental – this will be the abandonment of the urban teleological and turning towards the rural, towards not making a division between man and earth, the subject and the object.

In “Like Race Arguments”, Janet Halley looks into the clash between racial and sexual human rights movements – the attempt of the gay activists to exercise their rights calling back the analogy with the largely exercised racial rights in America – and the resistance of the African-American leaders who refuse to be identified with the homosexuals. She supports the view that racial and sexual issues are interlaced, complex and that, for those reasons, one should beware of uniformity. Simultaneously she deconstructs theories of coherency that see the group and the identity as compact and uniform. She gives numerous examples when an individual, due to his specificity, gives up the loyalty to the group, touching upon the issue of talking in somebody else’s name.
Michael Warner, in his "Zones of Privacy", critically analyzes New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani's decision to close strip-tease bars, porno video stores, gay bookstores etc. in the name of protection of privacy. Warner thoroughly expounds that this policy is dictated by the market capital wishing to create uniformed buyers with standardizes norms. Those are the reasons to destroy the public sexual culture of the gay/lesbian movements, and force monogamous private life. Warner points out the importance public sexual culture has on any private sexual forming, and notes the many contradictions in the private/public relation. Although public, some sexual practices take place in strictly closed circles. He refutes the view that public sexual culture is at a great risk from HIV, since some of its forms (peep shows, cinemas, masturbation, striptease) involve no partner contact.

John Brenkman explores the relations between literary studies and politics in his "Extreme criticism". He thinks those relations have been fruitful in the past two centuries, but now are disconnected. He notes the unreasonable division in formalist and nonformalist criticism, claiming form is important for the material expression of the work, while the aesthetic experience of the form is important for the sociopolitical practices, which form the public sphere. Brenkman feels that current gender, race and class research neglects form.

In his "The Return to Realism and the Future of Contingency", Michael Bérubé elaborates that today antifundamentalist theory does not support the progressive political movements and that, for those reasons, more and more intellectuals are going back to the values of the Enlightenment.
William Connolly’s “Refashioning of the Secular” seeks a renewed animation of secularism, which has lost its Christian values in the face of the new religious, ethical, gender or sexual differences. With that in mind, he presents a review of the philosophical ideas that can serve the purpose.

In the text “The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Anorexia”, Jeff Nunokawa elaborates that Oscar Wilde’s homosexuality was not a result of his intimate preference but his rejection of the canons of Protestant ethics. He discusses Wilde’s attitudes in his utopian text “The Soul of Man Under Socialism”, convergent to the de-essentialist attitudes present in the novel “The Picture of Dorian Gray.”

Translation: Sase Tasev