

Call for Papers

Writing Literature, Reading Society.

Power, Politics and Economy in Contemporary Literary Production

Date: 28-29 October 2013

Host: Fundacja Korporacja Ha!art (as part of the "Pierre Bourdieu and Polish Literature after 1989" research grant number 2011/01/D/HS2/05129 founded by the National Science Center)

Place: Wojewódzka Biblioteka Publiczna w Krakowie, ul. Rajska 1, Cracow, Poland

Deadline for abstracts/proposals: 5 September 2013

Notification of acceptance: 15 September 2013

Maximum length of abstracts/proposals: 300 words

Please send abstracts/proposals to: conference@ha.art.pl

Conference language: English

Registration Fee:

- academics with affiliation – 75 euros
- PhD students and academics without affiliation – 50 euros
- students and non-academics – 25 euros

Registration Fee covers costs of catering during two days of conference.

Registration Fee do not covers accommodation but we will provide help in finding one if needed.

Description

If one were to identify a single trait distancing literary theory in the East of Europe from its international counterpart, it would be the almost complete lack of interest in social and economic issues among the mainstream literary theorists in East European countries. While on the international level such prominent scholars as Frederic Jameson, Gayatri Spivak, Jacques Rancière, Walter Benn Michaels, Judith Butler, Edward Said and Pierre Bourdieu have pointed out, in various ways, the bilateral intertwinement of literature, politics, economy and society, the literary theory in the East - with just a few exceptions - seems to remain blind to such issues as class struggle, material inequalities, emancipation, power relations, post-colonial dependencies, etc. This attitude is combined with an attempt to completely remove Marxism and Critical Theory from the mainstream of literary studies. It's an unfortunate stance, since the so-called post-communist countries have gone through a painful neoliberal transformation in the past two decades that has profoundly marked not only their societies, but their literatures as well. In the wake of neoliberal advancement in the core states of the capitalist economy and the social perturbation that it has caused (financial crisis, occupy movements, growing poverty, deepening inequality) there is, we believe, a lesson to be learned from the

East European experience. And this can be achieved by reading the literatures of the so-called post-communist countries.

The problem is, however, that literature is still too often defined as ‘the strange institution’ (as Jacques Derrida once put it) which aims at breaking social or political rules, deconstructing and reinventing them during the process of constant negotiation between the singular and the general. From this perspective, any literary text formulating a diagnosis of a certain social problem is perceived as an attempt at subjecting the idiom to an oppressive order of socio-political regulations. Literature has no essence, and as such it is free to change itself and adapt to new forms (not only literary but also social and political). The Writing Literature, Reading Society conference is conceived to radically challenge this kind of attitude. For us, literature does not adapt to new forms but actively changes them. It is the foundation of social order, and therefore any literary act is an intervention in the socio-political field. The question is: what kind of intervention is made by contemporary writers?

The conference will bring together literary scholars and social theorists from various countries in the hope of stimulating fruitful research into social, economic and political issues within the framework of literary studies. We would like to confront the most insightful inquiries into the literary production in the East with the most inspiring social and literary theory from the West. We believe it will be a fruitful and stimulating encounter for both parties.

Priority will be given to abstracts referring to the Keynote Speakers' topics that are going to serve as lead themes for respective panels.

The maximum duration of each presentation is 20 minutes.

Topics of keynote speakers' papers:

- **Jennifer Ashton:** Labor and the Lyric: The Politics of Self-Expression in Contemporary American Poetry
- **Przemysław Czapliński:** Reading Literature, Writing Society
- **Michał Paweł Markowski:** Who needs sociology of literature?
- **Walter Benn Michaels:** The Beauty of a Social Problem: beyond poststructuralism, post-modernism and even postcommunism
- **Dubravka Ugresic:** Writers, Endangered Species
- **Discussion panel on new media literature:** Writing new society with new media? Towards emancipatory potential of new literary forms:

Nick Montfort: Electronic Literature and Other Forms of Popular Creative Computing

About Keynote Speakers:

Jennifer Ashton is a professor of American literature at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her main fields of interest are 20th- and 21st-century American poetry and literary theory. She has published articles on modern and contemporary American poetry, with a particular interest in the history of the lyric and the theoretical, aesthetic, and political commitments that have sometimes attached to it. These concerns were in part the subject matter of her first book, *From Modernism to Postmodernism: American Poetry and Theory in the Twentieth Century* (2006).

Przemysław Czaplinski is a literary critic and professor of contemporary literature at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan. He is a jury member of many important literary awards, and one of the most important Polish researchers in the field of literary sociology. He is the author of *Ślady przelomu. O prozie polskiej 1976-1996* (1997), *Efekt bierności. Literatura w czasie normalnym* (2004), *Polska do wymiany. Późna nowoczesność i nasze wielkie narracje* (2009), and *Resztki nowoczesności* (2011).

Michał Paweł Markowski is a professor of Polish literature at the University of Illinois at Chicago and the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. He explores the fields of 20th-century literature, philosophy and literary theory, specializing in French poststructuralist thought. He is the author of *Efekt inskrypcji. Jacques Derrida i literatura* (1997), *Nietzsche. Filozofia interpretacji* (1997), *Identity and Interpretation* (2003), *Polska literatura nowoczesna. Leśmian, Schulz, Witkacy* (2008).

Dubravka Ugrešić is a professor of Russian literature, literary critic, writer, essayist, columnist, translator, and screenwriter. She is the author of *Fording the Stream of Consciousness* (1991), *Have A Nice Day: From the Balkan War to the American Dream* (1994), and *The Ministry of Pain* (2005). Her best known work is *The Culture of Lies* (1998), which is a collection of essays in which she examines Balkan nationalism.

Walter Benn Michaels is a professor of American literature at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is a literary theorist and the author of *Against Theory* (1982, with Steven Knapp), *Our America: Nativism, Modernism and Pluralism* (1995) and *The Shape of the Signifier: 1967 to the End of History* (2004). Michaels's work has generated a set of arguments and questions around issues central to literary studies: culture and race, national and personal identities, the difference between memory and history, disagreement and difference, and meaning and intention in interpretation.

Nick Montfort is a professor of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the creator, critic, and theorist of digital media particularly focused on the intersection of computing and writing practice; author and programmer of interactive fiction, poetry generators, and other digital literary systems. Author of *Twisty Little Passages: An Approach to Interactive Fiction* (2009), *Racing the Beam: The Atari Video Computer System* 2005, co-editor of *New Media Reader* (2005). He blogs about digital media and other topics, writes poems in unusual forms, and frequently collaborates with writer/programmers and others on online literary projects.