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Kacper Bartczak and Małgorzata Myk, eds. *Theory that Matters: What Practice After Theory*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013. 315 pages.

Kacper Bartczak and Małgorzata Myk's co-edited volume *Theory that Matters: What Practice After Theory* is divided into four parts: "Theory-Continuations," "Practices-Literature," "Practices-Film/Media," and "External Practices-Mixed Media." The first part consists of reflections about theory in general, explications of specific theoretical works, as well as polemical developments and contributions. The second and third parts consist of theory-heavy interpretations of texts; some essays examine texts which include much theoretical discussion, so the texts are presented as theoretical writings. The essays in the fourth part discuss external history of literary theory, that is they all seem to deal with reception and sociology of academic and artistic endeavors. As a whole, the book could be described as a report on the current state of knowledge in literary theory.

With some exceptions, the selection of authors and themes is limited to "theory" as it is understood at departments of English or American studies (which is perhaps a handy circular definition of the word "theory"). At the same time, the book reflects the sense of suspicion and irony about such notion of literary theory. Many authors, especially in the first part of the book, reflect on how "theory" can be (and has been) understood as a relatively closed body of writing shaped by relatively few star-professors (as in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's well known anthology), at a few leading universities in the United Kingdom and in the United States. This seems to be problematic, given the fact that so many essays condemn various forms of dominance, hegemony, and globalization: why

is struggle against hegemony so centralized? Is theory only written in English? Can the subaltern speak (and “get published”) without quoting from fashionable names? Is French theory American? What theory is being developed now in India, China, Middle-Eastern or African countries? In my opinion, any such arrogant question is a harbinger of the end, or of an absolute change, a revolution, which might be vital for future relevance of literary theory, or of humanities for that matter. The collection contains a number of essays that explore such questions, as well as a number of exercises in perpetuation of the theoretical canon, and this tension seems to be the current and undercurrent of the book.

The first essay, by Tadeusz Ślawek, is a reflection on functions of theory: it introduces the themes of the end of the world, constitutes a sort of therapeutic speech that goes on until it forgets its meaning, and a position of absolute distance from the world of meaning and force. One cannot but think of Jones Very, a theologian, philologist, and poet, who allegedly told his college class to flee to the woods (for the end is nigh), which they allegedly did; that was theory in action, and taken seriously. Are students and critics, today, prepared to take theory seriously, too? The essay seems to be a flowery Jeremiad cross-pollinated by fairy tale, and its subversive, religious impulse is illustrated with fantastic imagery from Edgar Allan Poe, Jonathan Swift, and Hans Christian Andersen.

Other essays in the first section, similarly, reflect on functions of theory, or on its historical development and contemporary state of the art. Thus, Leszek Drong proposes “Theory for Theory’s Sake,” which reflects the apparent emancipation of theory and its elevation to the “central and transcendental signified.” The author proposes Stanley Fish’s recent notion of academizing, which is “converting real-life issues into objects of intellectual inquiry” as the desired product of theory. The third essay, by Tymon Adamczewski, discusses “the critical aftermath” and is basically a brief history of theory. Agata Preiss-Smith revises “the political in what is now invariably called theory” and proposes Chela Sandoval’s appropriation of Barthes’s definition of myth. The fifth essay, by Tomasz Dobrogoszcz, is an informed historical discussion of the use of psychoanalysis in postcolonial theory, beginning with Franz Fanon’s psychiatry, and ending with discussion of sources of psychoanalytical terminology in Homi Bhabha’s work. In the next essay, Sumit Chakrabathya provides an explication of Bhabha’s reflection on postcolonial identity. Wojciech Majka, in his astute and conceptually dense contribution, proposes a way out of the homelessness of man, from Descartes, through Kant, Rorty, Heidegger, and Nietzsche, to acceptance of suffering as cognitive perspective on being. The final essay, by David Waterman, proposes a “zero theory,” which is a subversive and questioning form of social engagement.

The second section is called “Practices: Literature,” and it is a set of innovative, theory-heavy interpretations, and several critical discussions of texts as theory.

The first essay, by Antoine Cazé, is a model example, in that it discusses similarities between Rancière's remarks on aesthetics of democracy, and the poetical procedures of collective authorship in American LANGUAGE poetry. The following two essays, by Tomasz Basiuk and by Agnieszka Miksza, both reflect on life-writing, and the theoretical considerations in and about autobiographies and their relation to fiction. Both authors seem particularly interested in fragments of self-reflection in life-writing, comparing them to self-reflection and self-definition in life. Wit Pietrzak provides a similar discussion of Paul Celan's poetic and moral appeal to Martin Heidegger, discussing the text as theoretical debate and as object of theory (Bloom, Rorty) at the same time; the reflection is further illustrated with an very rich collection of references to T. S. Eliot, William Butler Yeats, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Wallace Stevens, John Ashberry, and John Banville. Somewhat similarly, Grzegorz Czemieli discusses Ciaran Carson's poetry as an essay on epistemology. Difficulties in classification of American nonfiction as an emerging genre are discussed in the essay by Olga Nesmelova and Zhanna Konovalova, who focus on the nonfiction authors' comments about their genre (including Norman Mailer, Truman Capote, and Tom Wolfe). In the last essay in this section, Aleksandra Bubiło discusses Samuel R. Delaney's pornographic texts, providing a comprehensive review of theories of pornography.

The third section is similar to the second, only it focuses on films and media. Marek M. Wojtaszek confronts the plight of *The Soloist* (a schizophrenic homeless musician genius) with various theoreticians who treated schizophrenia as topic (Laing), or applied it as intellectual concept to analysis of something else (Deleuze and Guattari). Katarzyna Poloczek addresses the anti-theory backlash, concurrent with the anti-feminist backlash in America, and discusses three films as examples. Nina Czarnecka-Pałka provides ways of saving psychoanalytical film theory for feminism; like Poloczek, and several others in the book, Czarnecka-Pałka addresses the contemporary negative attitude towards theory. Finally, Robert Westerfelhaus discusses a reality show, *Queer Eye*, and various contradictory critical reactions to it, and how those reactions apply various theoretical tools; the author presents the variety of contradicting views as a blossoming, good state of theory.

The last section, "External Practices," is not simply about mixed media, but more about situations which blur the traditional (or commonsensical, or naive) relation between theory as tool, its object as raw material, and life as external given to be represented by texts and theory. Thus, there are essays about life as theory, or theory materialized as artistic practice, or texts using theory as imagery etc. The first essay, by Rod Stoneman, ostensibly deals with the history of film and television theory, but it really is an autobiography of a person whose professional life was shaped by theoretical developments. Mark Tardi's essay, undoubtedly the most unusual one in the collection, combines objectified pieces of poetry and