

CALL FOR PAPERS

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Topics of a lesser grade. For a politics of the 'leftovers' in literature

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As literature becomes *Big Data* and the literary heritage becomes accessible in its overwhelming supply; as the extreme fascination of literary history with the 'noteworthy achievements' of 'great writers' lingers on; as peripheral literary cultures inter-relate and as their achievements contribute to world literature; and, finally, as the number of researches increases and the disciplinary niches addressed nowadays diversify, it is not our capacity to grasp the forms of literary activity that increases, but rather our 'guilty' awareness of *what gets left behind*. There is a close relation between the present day's democratization of knowledge and the visibility of 'leftovers.' The more we know about the quantity and the variety of literature, the better we understand how much has been missed, ignored, or has fallen into oblivion. The pool of 'leavings' broadens in direct ratio to the expansion of the field of literature: the feeling that there are (too) many books, many peripheral cultures, and many lines of research is designed to stir awareness towards the residual component of literature, towards what seems destined to be overlooked. The question we ask ourselves when confronted with this vast phenomenon cannot, however, envisage its satisfying resolution and integration into a totalizing horizon of knowledge. The challenges of the vast continent of *the Great Unread* that Franco Moretti would discover (*The Slaughterhouse of literature*, 2000), following in the steps of Margaret Cohen, are not those of mainstreaming, but rather those of settling into the notion of 'leftovers.' How do we position ourselves towards what we cannot fathom? How do we discuss these forms of 'overlooking' without entertaining the illusion that we might be able to devote the same level of attention to all things literary? How do we cope with the pessimism (or a new theoretical optimism?) over the overwhelming 'debt' that the field of literary studies has accumulated?

This issue of *Caietele Echinox / Echinox Journal* targets the expanding field of the residual in literature. It is not about a return to the multiple explorations of the 'secondary' that used to dominate the stage of literary studies in the '80s and the '90s, nor is it a militant

engagement on behalf of marginality that those political reactions would entail. By problematizing ‘leftovers’ we intend to reflect upon what the forces of time, the laws of cultural interaction, or simply the forms of human action transform into unimportant topics, ignored and condemned to a lesser destiny. We have in mind, for instance, the lack of attention that any major culture manifests towards minor cultures and their obsessions, and vice versa, the various forms of imperviousness that make minor cultures blind to the aesthetic and conceptual ingenuity of major cultures. It is also about the ways of not reading discussed by Giorgio Agamben in a recent essay (*Sur la difficulté de lire*, in *Le feu et le récit*, 2015) or about the instances of forgetfulness evoked by Judith Schlanger (*Présence des œuvres perdues*, 2010). Or it can be about the limits of collective attention (see Yves Citton, *Pour une écologie de l'attention*, 2014), about the limited attentional resources available in a literary area that, through the mechanisms of a specific ‘economy’, ceaselessly produce residue, i.e. dismissible objects and themes, implicitly deemed less important. We intend to acknowledge the variety of gestures and activities that generate ‘leftovers’ in literature and, equally, their meaning and ‘recycling’ for the current fate of literary studies. What interests us is a cross-cutting approach within which the various standpoints and concepts that facilitate our access to the residual area of literature should be brought together and seen in their heterogeneity. With this in mind, we welcome papers focusing on:

- (a) time, oblivion, and literary memory; on what becomes ‘leftovers’ by virtue of some forms of dismissal, in a dynamic of ‘traces’ (Carlo Ginzburg) and ruin.
- (b) cultural interactions and on what is usually overlooked by virtue of the distant perspective that national literatures have on one another; on the mechanisms of selectivity and marginalization that treat minor literatures as ‘characters’ in the story of major literatures.
- (c) the one-dimensional shapes that seem to define major literatures through the lenses of minor literatures; on various peripheral forms of the transnational and on the way in which the forms of the global become residual or are selectively recycled within national cultures.
- (d) the practice of reading and on what is left behind, by means of negligence (amateur reading or reading for pleasure), manipulation (extreme, ideologically biased, or instrumental readings), or underdevelopment (embryonic forms, as means of creating a text, discarded as latent ‘leftovers’ due to the reading habits of a particular historical period).

- (e) the overlooked methodological inventiveness; on the failed import of literary ideas and on the theoretical creativity condemned to a peripheral status.
- (f) the components of literary forms (themes, motifs, metric structures etc.), which are ignored by virtue of a specific perspective fashionable during a particular historical period, and which are unlikely to be (re)discovered by posterity.

We look forward to receiving your proposals in French, English, or Italian, together with a short bio-note, until 31 October 2016. You can send them to any of the following email addresses: ioanaboth@gmail.com, szabolevente@yahoo.com, adrian.tudurachi@gmail.com.

Each author will be notified of the decision of the editors until 10 November 2016.

The full paper has to be styled according to the *Echinox Journal* style sheet.

(<http://phantasma.lett.ubbcluj.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Feuille-de-style.pdf>).

It will be submitted until 20 January 2017, the latest.