
Abstracts

Nicholas Rand, The Political Truth of Heidegger's "Logos": Hiding in Translation 436

Since late 1987 there has been an energetic, at times impassioned international debate about the relation between Heidegger's political activities and the substance of his works. Putting aside references to the fact or circumstances of Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism, I interpret his 1951 commentary on Heraclitus. This indirect approach sketches an avenue of reading the philosopher's works politically without recourse to historical documents, an avenue that seeks to demonstrate the inherent possibility of a nationalistic stance in Heidegger's text. (NR)

Jacqueline Henkel, Linguistic Models and Recent Criticism: Transformational-Generative Grammar as Literary Metaphor 448

Because the stated focus of transformational-generative grammar was on speakers' "knowledge of language," early reader-oriented critics found this linguistic theory an attractive literary analogy. But as the generative model became a critical metaphor, both its internal, mental interests and its semantic aims were necessarily distorted to suit literary problems. The set-defining apparatus of generative grammar came to be read as a text-processing mechanism, its syntactic claims as a rudimentary theory of discourse. Yet recent critics have attacked, not the limitations of this model as revised for criticism, but the putative authoritarianism of linguistic study itself. This rhetorical strategy defines criticism against an outside field while masking the character of its own interdisciplinary efforts. (JH)

Victoria Kahn, Habermas, Machiavelli, and the Humanist Critique of Ideology 464

This essay takes Habermas's early work as a point of departure for considering the place of humanism in contemporary debates about ideology and interested critical judgment. I argue that from the Renaissance to the present the humanist tradition demonstrates a continuity of reflection on the relation between knowledge and human interests. Habermas can be seen as the inheritor of those Renaissance humanists who argue for the possibility of political consensus based on a shared faculty of critical judgment. Machiavelli's critique of this consensual strain of humanism can offer contemporary critics another model of judgment, in which conflict and dissent are of paramount importance. (VK)

Theodore B. Leinwand, Negotiation and New Historicism 477

The rhetoric and the models of social process that inform much of the work of new historicists and cultural materialists in the field of English Renaissance studies are governed by a subversion-containment binarism. While conceptualizations of the operations of power based on this binarism (and its underlying Foucauldian vocabulary) have generated important insights, it may prove useful to reconceive conflict as negotiation, exchange, and accommodation. The Elizabethan English constable, representing a flexible deployment of power, offers us an alternative to repressive masters and subversive peasants. His role in Shakespearean drama and his characteristic malapropisms suggest that aristocrats and common folk were together enmeshed in what Anthony Giddens calls a "dialectic of control." (TBL)

Richard Levin, The Poetics and Politics of Bardicide 491

The Death of the Author creates a hermeneutic vacuum that must be filled by some other determinant of meaning. For many of the new Marxist critics of Shakespeare,

this author surrogate is a universal law of textual behavior. The text becomes an enemy that adopts various strategies (displacing the real subject, concealing contradictions, offering an imaginary resolution, etc.) to trick us into accepting its hegemonic ideology, but it always manages to expose and defeat itself. This construction of the text serves the political professions of these critics, since it enables them to wage—and win—a war against the forces of evil represented by the textual project and thus to act out in this displaced arena their “commitment” to transform society. Many feminist neo-Freudian critics of Shakespeare use a similar universal law wherein the text’s masculine project (or fantasy) is always subverted by a feminine subtext, often embodied in an absent but omnipresent mother. (RL)

Susan Winnett, Coming Unstrung: Women, Men, Narrative, and Principles of Pleasure 505

Despite the last decade’s preoccupations with the pleasure of the text and sexual difference, few of the theories that have addressed the relation of narrative and pleasure have raised the issue of the difference between women’s and men’s reading pleasures. An oedipal model of narrative whose ideology of representation is derived from male sexuality not only places the female reader in the position of reading from a male point of view but also distorts our expectations for narratives written by women. Reconceiving such issues as incipience, repetition, and closure in terms of an experience of the female body helps to explain a “problematic” narrative such as *Frankenstein*. George Eliot’s *Romola* thematizes and thereby discredits the oedipal struggle that structures it. Both strategies remind us that the oedipal paradigm’s claim to universality depends on its either “forgetting” or actively discrediting issues that would expose its arbitrariness and mitigate its pleasures. (SW)

David Kaufmann, The Profession of Theory 519

The recent expansion of literary theory and the invocation of politics in this theory contribute and respond to the tensions sustaining literature departments. Though created and nourished by specialization, the profession bases its legitimation on a generalist ideology that opposes or denies the reification on which the profession depends. This justification claims an important political function for literature departments, but theory’s structures of self-presentation, as well as the exigencies of a bureaucratized academy, undermine these political ends. In literary theory, a misleading conflation of institutional and national politics is absolutely unavoidable. To maintain the all-important fiction of the general utility of literary study, one must elide the difference between the politics of the university and those of the republic. Theory is essential to the institutions sustaining literary study and necessarily more and less political than it might claim. (DK)
