

Literary Activism

ed. Amit Chaudhuri

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Dubravka Ugrešić

Laetitia Zecchini

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Literary Activism A Symposium

Derek Attridge, Swapan Chakravorty, Amit Chaudhuri, Rosinka Chaudhuri, Jon Cook, David Graham, Peter D. McDonald, Jamie McKendrick, Saikat Majumdar, Tim Parks, Dubravka Ugrešić, Laetitia Zecchini.

'Literary activism, as I see it, should be a useful corrector of mainstream literary values, a reminder and promoter of unknown literary territories. Literary activism is supposed to usurp our comfortable and rigid mainstream opinions, to shake up our literary tastes and standards, to promote unknown writers and neglected literary territories, to bring fresh knowledge about literature.' Dubravka Ugrešić on the Calcutta symposium, in *Verbivora*.

Ed. Amit Chaudhuri

"The system called literature is slowly falling apart. It seems that only the two strongest elements are holding the structure up: booksellers and readers."

– Dubravka Ugrešić

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Literary Activism is set against the backdrop of a radically altered landscape for both publishing and academia, where the pressures of the market have wrought changes – on language, on the measuring of value, on the concept of influence – we might now struggle to recognise.

Taking in the roles of the writer, critic, translator, academic and publisher, the essays in this volume follow no single line of enquiry. There emerges, nonetheless, shared attempts to find new freedoms of thought and questioning, offering the beginnings of an analysis of the literary world at a certain moment of globalization, while also questioning whether such a thing as a literary world exists and, if it does, where its boundaries lie.

The collection moves in many directions – from Arun Kolatkar, the unseen genius of Indian poetry, and his near-heroic refusal of both market place and reputation; to Derek Attridge, whose championing of the South African-Scottish writer, Zoë Wicomb, leads to an argument for a form of affirmative criticism which positions the critic as a 'lover of the text'; while, from Amsterdam, Dubravka Ugrešić reflects on life in a literary 'out of nation zone', away from home and mother tongue, adrift in a territory where the reasons for intellectual protest have been stripped of ideological impetus and subsumed by the voraciousness of the market.

Taken together, these often restless and urgent essays initiate a series of conversations about who reads what and why, about the practice of writing at this particular contemporary moment, and about the activities and institutions that shape an understanding of what literature is and what it can do.

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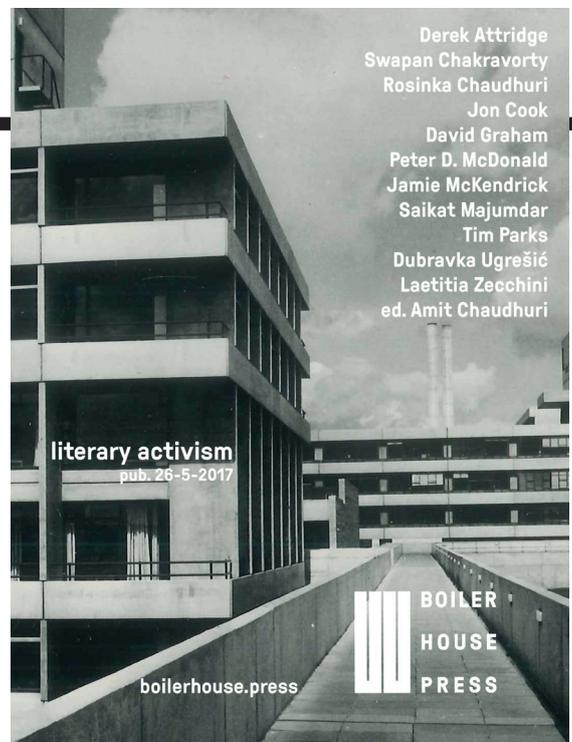
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