**English Department**

**Szczecin University, Szczecin, Poland**

**Southern Studies Forum Conference**

**SSF 2013**

**Performing South**

**12 – 14 September 2013, Szczecin, Poland**

**Call for Papers**

“I’m tired of everlastingly being unnatural and never doing anything I want to do….I’m tired of pretending I don’t know anything, so [they] can tell me things and feel important while they’re doing it….Some day I’m going to do and say everything I want to do and say and if people don’t like it I don’t care” – with these words Scarlett O’Hara, one of the most famous characters in the fictitious South summed up, unawares, what, in the eyes of an antebellum dweller of the region, seemed to constitute the essence of southernness, namely, the necessity of always playing a role, *ergo*, staging a performance.

As the above quotation from *GWTW* suggests, Scarlett thinks disdainfully of performance as a mere survival mechanism. Yet, a few lines later in the book she rethinks the notion and comes to the conclusion that “really, it t[akes] a lot of sense to cultivate and hold… a pose.” She then begins to perceive performance also as a conscious tactic one can utilize to obtain a goal. So understood, the southern performance, when assumed to be thus put to use in a variety of contexts, might be read as a clever way the South has been employing so as to make itself what Kurt Neumann, a German-born director of early science-fiction and horror movies called “one of the best subjects [to be had] for sustained interest” - and hence to sit (un)pretty in culture.

Accordingly, this (un)comfortable position of the South in the global culture would result from the very “inter-“ nature of performance. Contemporarily, this latter word connotes a space where countless practices, forces, and discourses, cultural and other, cross, clash or simply come face to face with one another. As Jon McKenzie believes, if one attempted at making a map of the “occurrence” of the term “performance,” they would have to fly high and for a very long time to be able to do it. Such a permeable quality of performance therefore makes the idea of southernness not merely a cultural actor, widely recognized because capable of transgressing – and transcending – the roles it has been playing. It also suggests the South to be one of the most formidable cultural challenges to be analytically undertaken, if only to establish, after Kurt Neumann, that “we are just beginning to understand what the South is.”

In an effort to respond to such a challenge and thus theoretically demarcate the performative *status quo* of the southern reality, past and present, we are looking for contributions which will approach southernness as a kind of a liminal paradigm enabling us to interpret southern cultural rituals as, broadly understood, “staged” phenomena and at the same time introducing “staging” as a southern cultural metaritual. The intention of this conference is to provide a forum for scholars in various disciplines, from literature to economics, to discuss as the performance in the above suggested sense one of the following southern themes:

* regional mythology
* sexuality
* gender
* class
* race
* media culture
* history
* politics
* economy and economics
* language
* religion
* social practices
* law

etc.

The paper abstracts of 200-300 words should be sent to the address: beatazaw@poczta.onet.pl by December 14, 2012.