

PAAS 2017 Conference: Performing America

University of Szczecin, 18-20 October 2017

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



KEYNOTE LECTURES:

Robert Brinkmeyer

University of South Carolina

Exclusion, Resistance, and Populism: Interpreting the Presidential Election of 2016 through Southern Literature

My admittedly speculative talk will attempt to provide some cultural context for understanding the election of Donald Trump, using two broad traditions in Southern literature. One tradition—that of Southwestern Humor—provides particular insight into Trump’s popularity among the working poor, a group that has traditionally been heavily Democratic. And the other tradition, one that I am designating as the literature of poor white trash, provides context for and insight into the dangers of American politicians dismissing and scapegoating America’s working poor, a problem that plagued Hillary Clinton. Writers that I will discuss in my talk include Mark Twain, William Alexander Percy, Cormac McCarthy, Robert Penn Warren, Will Campbell, and Dennis Covington.

Ruth Mayer

University of Hannover

Queer Modernity: Performances of Difference in the Modernist Little Magazines

Even though modernist movements in art and literature were more willing than the avantgardes of the nineteenth century to address and embrace features of difference, including sexual difference, modernism did by no means wholeheartedly excoriate same-sex love or non-normative sexual identifications. Apart from the alternately scandalizing and pathologizing approaches of sexology, the public discourses of modernism and modernity, even in their radical strains, tended to address sexual diversity indirectly. Negotiations of sexuality often took place at the margins of the public scenes, which is why this talk will focus on one such marginal sphere of discourse: the world of modernist little magazines.

In these venues, representations of sexual diversity often tend to steer clear of the sexological vocabulary of the day. Instead of writing about ‘sexual inversion’ or ‘hermaphroditism,’ narrative, poetic, journalistic or essayistic approaches to the subject matter make use of the semantic field of queerness. They evoke practices, desires, and performances that are ‘not straight’ or ‘weird,’ ‘grotesque’ or ‘freakish’: *queer*. I will use ‘queer’ along these lines— not as a clear-cut reference to non-normative sexualities, but

more vaguely as a gesture or signal of diversion. This chimes with the fact that in the 1910s, the term 'queer' had not yet acquired a (primarily) sexual connotation. The term communicated diffuse conditions of being "strange, curious, out of bounds, or suspiciously disreputable," as Melba Cuddy-Lane points out in *Modernism: Key Words*. 'Queer' is no fixed quality but rather an index – referential, indirect, tentative. It manifests in the margins of the modernist discourse, as a possibility rather than clear-cut characteristics.

To get a grip on ways in which queerness was articulated, instrumentalized, performed or denied, I will turn to a little magazine that presented itself as a paragon of sexual liberation: *The Masses*, published from 1911 to 1917. I will not look for manifestos of sexual difference or declarations of deviance, however, but rather investigate representations that play with the emerging notion of sexuality as a 'performative practice' with long-lasting, deep-going consequences, in order to get a grip on changing ideas of sexuality and normativity, and to reflect on modernist strategies of (self-)marginalization and performativity.

Jerzy Jarniewicz

University of Łódź

Bob Dylan and the American Counterculture of the 1960s

Bob Dylan's life and work seem tied to the American Counterculture, most conspicuously by his friendship with a number of leading figures of the movement, such as Allen Ginsberg, Joan Baez or The Beatles, but also by his countercultural life style, and his impact on the art and politics of the Sixties (cf. his influence on the SDS and The Weather Underground). More important, however, was his insistence on mutable identity and role playing, the concept which, as I will try to argue, was one of the Counterculture's defining features, as evidenced in the popularity of parody and in regarding the whole process of living as a creative act (Joseph Beuys). At the same time Dylan, in his works and public statements, would often voice his refusal to be identified with or coopted by any political or cultural movement. In the perspective of over fifty years, can Dylan's Countercultural credentials be still acknowledged?

PLENARY SESSIONS:

Paulina Ambroży

Adam Mickiewicz University

Audiences and Performances in the Short Fiction of Steven Millhauser

Audiences and performances figure prominently in Steven Millhauser's short stories whose plots are often structured around some form of public entertainment (e.g. magic or freak shows, museum displays or automaton dramas). "The Knife Thrower", "August Eschenberg", "The New Automaton Theater" or "The Dream of the Consortium", to name only a few of his numerous "theatrical" pieces, use performance to explore the relation between the figure of a charismatic artist and his spectators. As will be shown in the study,

the writer's representations of various performances are problematized through his frequent violations of theatrical conventions and scripts, but even more so by his choice of a plural narrative voice which creates a unique subject position for his fictional audiences. Another aspect of the theatrical mode in Millhauser's stories is that the narratives are informed by the tension between stage and offstage realities, with the dramas often contaminating the characters' everyday lives. Thus, the aim of my inquiry is to look into the aesthetic and moral implications of Millhauser's use and abuse of performative codes, with a special focus on the role of the collective narrator, the relation between production and reception of art and dramatizations of the porous boundaries between performance and life.

Ewa Antoszek

Maria Curie-Skłodowska University

Visions and Re-visions: Latina Artists Performing the U.S.–Mexico Border.

The question of the U.S.-Mexico border has been always important for Latinos/as living in the U.S. The changing role of the border – from the demarcation line to a more inclusive space of the borderlands zone has been reflected in numerous artistic productions by Latino/a authors and artists who create images of the U.S.-Mexico border, presenting different roles of the border as well as its influence on border crossers and the environment. Those artistic productions illustrate the transformations of the space and address the interplay between indigenous and immigrant paradigms that is often present in the discourse on the Mexican-American border.

The purpose of my presentation is to show how the space of the border is (re-)visioned by selected Latina artists – Yreina D. Cervantez, Consuelo Jiménez Underwood and Ana Teresa Fernández, who in their works address the aforementioned redefinitions of the border and its multiple roles. Their revisionist performances of the border both contribute to the ongoing debate on the still urgent and pressing problem of the U.S.-Mexico border and are also an apt reflection on the status quo of the borders in general.

Kacper Bartczak

University of Łódź

The Poetics of Plenitude and the Emergent Subjecthood in the Recent Poetry of Peter Gizzi

Peter Gizzi is a contemporary American poet who continues a rich mixture of American poetic traditions. His poetic utterance reworks the diction of Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens, Jack Spicer, among others, by placing the minimalisms characteristic of those poets in the poetic environments which absorb the languages of today. In this paper, I would like to discuss Gizzi's most recent poetics, by treating it as an example of a pragmatist poetics which I am calling "the poetics of plenitude". In such poetics, subjectivity is a flexible, contingent phenomenon, emerging in a series of interpretive responses to the stimuli offered by the environment. The poem itself is a kind of environment or device that modulates and filters such emergence through stimuli

reception, and Gizzi's form of the poem-as-environment is a specific minimalistic formula that departs from the minimalism found in the poetry of Wallace Stevens. The paper aims to demonstrate how Gizzi's minimalism, which, just like the poems of Stevens, confronts the concept of "the nothing", achieves a more private, individual, human subjectivity, in which the conceptual is inseparable from the bodily and the sentient.

Tomasz Basiuk

University of Warsaw

Performativity in Lyotard and Rancière

American postmodernism could not have arisen as a concept without the influence of French theory. Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, among others, have seen their work assimilated and relaunched on American soil, especially so in the last two decades of the last century. This tendency has not disappeared, although the currency of the term postmodern has dissipated noticeably as the term began to seem too sweeping in its cross-disciplinary ambition and simultaneously too fastidious in the distinction from the modern which it sought to delineate. My paper takes up a more recent borrowing from French theory, Jacques Rancière's concept of *partition du sensible* (distribution of the perceptible), and reads it against Jean-François Lyotard's discussion of the postmodern sublime ("An Answer to the Question: What Is Postmodernism?"). Emphasis is placed on an element of similarity between these thinkers' seemingly distinct positions as rooted in their shared, and partly implicit, notion of performativity. On the face of it, the two stand apart because Lyotard treats postmodernism with due seriousness while Rancière appears to dismiss it. However, Lyotard's sense of the postmodern is far removed from mere playfulness sometimes ascribed to the postmodern and, moreover, he resists a historicizing approach. Rancière, on the other hand, insists on the political import of aesthetics without reducing such import to a thematizing of political issues, thus giving aesthetics its due as an autonomous domain; moreover, his historicizing approach is more indebted to the French Annales School concept of *longue durée* than to "evental" history or the kind of periodizing characteristic of literary histories. The opposites thus intersect and complement each other, pointing to a similarity of approach.

Anna Bendrat

Maria Curie-Skłodowska University

Performance versus Narrative in online expressions of American multiculturalism

Performativity has become a buzz word in the context of online communications. Authors analyzing various outlets of online activity use the terms such as "Performances of the Self" when analyzing Twitter (Papacharissi 2011), "Performative enactment of identity and embodiment" in the case of the online game Final Fantasy XIV (Hutchinson 2013) or "Performing and undoing identity online" in the framework of social networking sites (Cover 2012). This paper explores the performative character of one of the most "performative" social networking websites, which is a microblogging platform called

Tumblr. The analysis will be focused on the notion of multiculturalism and hybrid identity as they are expressed in multiple forms by the Tumblr authors. The applied methodological framework will be Kenneth Burke's rhetorical concept of dramatism. One of the assumptions in dramatism is that individuals are both "joined and separated" (Burke 1950). This statement correlates with the paper's main hypothesis positing that the individual experience of hybrid identity mediated through online visual narratives is not consistent with the parallel theoretical discourse on the subject. The discrepancy may result from the immediacy of online rhetoric in which the dominant mode of expression is pathos (emotions) as opposed to theoretical form of logos (argumentation).

Kornelia Boczkowska

Adam Mickiewicz University

In pursuit of cinematic transcendence: Elements of ciné-transe and film-performance in Ben Russell's *the quarry* (2002) and *Trypps #7* (2010)

In this paper I present and analyze various ways in which Ben Russell's experimental films, *the quarry* (2002) and *Trypps #7* (2010), tend to draw on and challenge the concept of travel through the use of cinematic conventions traditionally associated with ciné-transe and film-performance. Originally developed by Rouch and based on the process of participatory filming, the theory of ciné-transe combined a cinematic ontology with the phenomenon of trance by means of an active, embodied and hand-held camera to induce a creative possession-like state involving the filmmaker as well as their subjects and audiences (Yakir 1978). Taking this line of reasoning, it might be argued that Russell's works incorporate elements of ciné-transe and film-performance through their reliance on fictive space and time or recomposing the participants' personalities (C. Russell 2004), which aims to reinterpret the idea of travel, movement, trance and hallucination by way of a romantic vision. While both pictures dwell on "the presence of the sublime", they seem to differ in the extent to which they borrow from experimental ethnography (Maya Deren, Jean Rouch, etc.) and the avant-garde ideas of altered perception (Stan Brakhage, Paul Sharits, etc.) (Yue 2013). Particularly, whereas *the quarry* "serves as a testament both to cinema's failure to reproduce the lived moment and to its success in replacing that moment with one that is equally wondrous", *Trypps #7* seeks inspiration from phenomenological experience and secular spiritualism by juxtaposing an individual psychedelic experience with the formal abstraction of the Badlands National Park desert landscape (B. Russell). To achieve the desired effect, the filmmaker creates an atmosphere of sublimity and transcendence by means of both static and kinetic montage, sensory devices, multiple perspectives, hand-held and rotating camera movements, intimate long takes or fixed shots of extended duration.

Barbara Braid

University of Szczecin

Performing palimpsestic New York in Caleb Carr's *The Alienist* (1994) and Jed Rubenfeld's *The Interpretation of Murder* (2006)

In his book *Palimpsests* Gerard Genette defines the titular phenomenon as “a relationship of co-presence between two texts or among several texts; (...) the actual presence of one text within another,” pointing at such postmodern practices as intertextuality, plagiarism or allusion as its examples. Recently the renaissance of the term has been observed, as it had been used by Linda Hutcheon to discuss adaptation in her 2006 book *Theory of Adaptation*. An adaptation, she argues, is an experience of a number of texts which co-exist, mutually influencing each other’s reading. Thus, if neo-Victorian novel is one instance of a postmodern adaptation, it represents both the Victorian and the contemporary period – it is a palimpsest of two temporal plains, and constitutes an adaptation of Victorianism and its performance for contemporary consumption. The paper proposes a discussion of two neo-Victorian crime novels set in late nineteenth-century New York – Caleb Carr’s *The Alienist* (1994) and Jed Rubenfeld’s *The Interpretation of Murder* (2006) – where double fin de siècle is experienced, as the novels were written a hundred years after their respective temporal settings. The paper shows how the nineteenth-century setting is confounded by contemporary anachronisms and meta-fictional references, creating a text which is neither fully historical nor contemporary, but palimpsestically both.

Maciej Czerniakowski

John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

Different shades of rape in *Westworld*

Already at the beginning of *Westworld*, the viewers can see that there is something “wrong” with the “hosts”. They start acting up. They freeze, mumble, clients do not find them entertaining. What initially seems to be a mere technical error related to the latest system update turns out to be something much more significant—much less humanoid, much more human. The viewers witness the dawn of artificial consciousness. Host are beginning to have flashback. Somehow, even though nobody seems to know how exactly, they are able to recollect their memories. They are becoming more and more complex psychologically and emotionally, as a result of which they are being transformed from androids into human beings. They are gradually getting more and more aware that they might be abused all the time. The world order according to which they have “lived” so far is in danger. Rebellion is about to begin.

It never ceases to amaze me how the creators of the series were able to reflect upon issues present in the academic world but which are still fairly obscure or even unwelcome by many members of the academia, let alone the general public. Let me state a question which is the most baffling from an ethical point of view: if human beings create robots, artificial intelligence, etc. from scratch in their own image, is it morally acceptable not to provide them with the idea of what rape is? Are human beings allowed to create sex robots that would not be capable of understanding that they are taken advantage of. Almost two years after the discussion I participated in during the 7th Beyond Humanism Conference “From Humanism to Post- and Transhumanism,” held at EWHA Womans University in Seoul, South Korea in 2015, which was related to the question whether one can rape a robot, the necessity to address these such is being widely recognized. As psychologist Alex Gillespie

states in an interview for BBC Future, “We want to know whether we’ll treat it [artificial intelligence] like another human being. Whether we will at some point in the future care what that artificial intelligence thinks about us.”

These and other similar questions and doubts of a moral nature drew my attention to the concept of rape, its present understanding, and amendments which perhaps should be made in order to better reflect on the posthuman development of the world. It is the purpose of this presentation to outline the posthuman understanding of rape on a robot.

Aneta Dybska

University of Warsaw

DNA tests and African Americans’ diasporic identities

In my presentation I will discuss the transformative potential of recreational genetics for African American self-identifications. DNA ethnic lineage tests, which have been widely popularized in the last decade, enable amateur “root seekers” to trace their ancestry to distinct tribes and cultures in West Africa. Relying on Alondra Nelson’s 2016 (auto)ethnography of recreational uses of DNA testing and genetics among African Americans today, I will discuss the ways in which commercial ancestry testing taps into Black Americans’ personal and collective desire to reconcile with their racial past, when faced with limited knowledge of family genealogy. Despite the provisional nature of DNA testing, root seekers frequently rely on genetically inferred ethnic affiliation to retrieve a long-lost connection to their ancestral homelands and tribal communities across Africa. These cultural uses of genetic information, though tinged with a wad of biological determinism, have spun transnational webs of genetic kinship that, among others, rely on heritage tourism to build a sense of place and forge diasporic identities, to reconcile the African past with the American present.

Dominika Ferens

University of Wrocław

Narrating Chaos in Korean American Writings

In *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*, sociologist Arthur Frank uses narratology to typologize the stories people tell about illness. Next to teleological stories of survival, which “reassure the listener that however bad things look, a happy ending is possible,” Frank discusses “the chaos narrative” in which “events are told as the storyteller experiences life: without sequence or discernible causality” (97). While the narrators in Frank’s study suffered from a wide range of illnesses, I would argue that the chaotic mode of telling also characterizes texts that explore other kinds of traumas, including those related to displacement and shaming experienced by several generations of Koreans and Korean Americans. Drawing on Frank and other scholars engaged in affect studies, I intend to analyze three Korean American narratives, including Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Dictée* (1982), that use the collage form to challenge the expectation that “in life as in story, one event [leads] to another” (97). The speech act is foregrounded in all three texts:

it is de-naturalized, deformed, shown as a recitation of prescribed language, and repeatedly interrupted. Nonetheless, as Frank suggests, "the physical act becomes the ethical act," because "to tell one's life is to assume responsibility for that life." It also allows others to "begin to speak through that story" (xx-xxi).

Iwona Filipczak

University of Zielona Góra

Identity performance in Bharati Mukherjee's selected works

In the presentation I would like to discuss the performance of American identity by various characters from Bharati Mukherjee's works (*Jasmine*, *Desirable Daughters*, "Orbiting"). Mukherjee herself is a well-known proponent of assimilation, similarly her fictional characters demonstrate an assumption that the welfare and success of an immigrant in the United States is a result of creating a new consciousness and, moreover, of performing in a particular way (different appearance, new gait, posture, gestures, American language). In other words, especially the first-generation immigrants should discard the markers of ethnic identity, and at the same time adopt certain "American" habits. Thus the transformation of the immigrant subjects, the process of their assimilation will be the object of analysis. *Desirable Daughters* makes the conflict between performing ethnic and American identity peculiarly vivid: the Bengali sisters for whom the United States becomes their new homeland choose to perform differently (Padma maintains her Indian self while Tara gradually Americanizes), I will be interested in the effects of these disparate performances.

Additionally, in the analysis of *Jasmine* I would like to point out how the significance of the bodily marks (scars) may depend on the character's performance (changing its function from memory space, testimony of experienced trauma which becomes visible on the skin, to a factor enabling formation of a new identity).

Edyta Frelik

Maria Curie-Skłodowska University

Frank Lloyd Wright's Words of Action and Design

In his 2014 study *Frank Lloyd Wright and His Manner of Thought* Jerome Klinkowitz posits that Wright, arguably the best-known and written about American architect, can be approached from an altogether new perspective – as an intellectual whose thought and action are two sides of the same coin. Viewing the architect's ideas through the lens of literary and cultural criticism, and not in terms of architectural design or urban planning, Klinkowitz comes to the conclusion that Wright, who was "uncomfortable with Victorianism, at odds with modernism," is best understood as a precursor of postmodern thought. His innovative design principle, which he called "organic," privileged experience over presentation thus foreshadowing tendencies in twentieth-century literature, art, aesthetics, and philosophy which led to the postmodern turn.

Building on Klinkowitz's argument, the paper takes the investigation of Wright's thought a step further by focusing on the architect's unique handling of language in his performance-oriented writing which, rather than merely describing preexisting ideas seeks to produce a new experience in its own right. Although Wright said that he would rather say things "with a hod of mortar and some bricks, or with a concrete mixer and a gang of workmen, than by speaking or writing," his disclaimer reveals a communicative strategy which was intended to engage his audiences in discovering how his verbal constructs reflect (on) his innovative architectural designs. Instances of self-reflexiveness and playfulness will be presented as ways of foregrounding language as "construction material," strategies which are insufficiently highlighted by readers and interpreters of Wright's texts.

Brygida Gasztold

Koszalin Polytechnic

The Performance of Becoming an American: School Life in *Girl in Translation* (2010) by Jean Kwok and *The Secret Side of Empty* (2014) by Maria E. Andreu

Jean Kwok and Maria E. Andreu are contemporary American writers who explore the problems of immigration, assimilation, and acculturation through the story of school-age girls who engage in the process of substituting racial and ethnic identities for an American identity. Both writers loosely draw from their own experiences as recent immigrants, Jean Kwok from Honk-Kong and Maria E. Andreu from Spain. The aim of my presentation is to capture the cross-cultural adaptation process and the subsequent formation of a new cultural identity. The performance illustrates what it is like for immigrants to go between their original and new culture. The lives of most immigrants are a dialectic between the memories of the world left behind and the day-to-day struggles of learning the ropes of a new society. The school is presented both as a site for assimilation, acculturation and socialization of immigrant teenagers, providing a setting for the usual struggles of adolescence, such as first love, and the place where the problems of physical and emotional abuse, the fear of not belonging and the constant threat of being deported allow a glimpse into frustration and, ultimately, the strength that comes from being undocumented. The protagonists of both novels live secret, double lives, private and public – represented by two locations: home and school, which highlight the wide gap between their resources and opportunities and those of their American peers. Both coming-of-age stories talk about the gaps created by cultural and linguistic barriers, but also reveal the new thoughts and perspectives the characters have developed for their existence. Bringing new insights, knowledge, and perspectives to the mainstream population, the authors increase a cultural sharing and fight stereotypes.

Urszula Gołębiowska

University of Zielona Góra

"It's a complex fate, being an American." Performing Americanness in Henry James's late writings

Despite his expatriation, or perhaps because of it, Henry James was centrally preoccupied with the question of American identity confronted by cultural otherness. His writings repeatedly engage with national identity as narrowly defined or cosmopolitan, echoing the writer's early vision of American letters as, potentially, a synthesis of various influences. Being an American was, for James, "an excellent preparation for culture" since it allows to "deal freely with forms of civilization not our own, [...] pick and choose and assimilate and in short [...] claim our property wherever we find it," promoting "a vast intellectual fusion and synthesis of the various national tendencies of the world."¹ However, what appeared fairly unproblematic in the literary sphere continued to pose a challenge for his characters struggling to reconcile local and universal loyalties. James's subsequent enactments of American values put into perspective by a spatial and cultural detachment illustrate the difficulty of being cosmopolitan while remaining rooted in American culture. I will argue that rather than offering, as sometimes claimed, a resolution to the conflict, James's twentieth-century works contain a complex response to the possibility of cosmopolitan Americanness through the figure of the repatriated American. Embodying alternative national (and gender) identities, constructed against Theodore Roosevelt's narrowly nationalistic rhetoric, the autobiographical narrator of *The American Scene* (1907) and the fictional returnees featured in 1908 and 1910 tales engage critically with their country of origin, at the same time unwittingly performing the Americanness they question. What the works stage is an interplay of attraction and repulsion, acceptance and disavowal, confirming that "[i]t's a complex fate, being an American."²

Constante González

University of Santiago

A World of Marionettes in Search of a Master Puppeteer: McCullers' *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and Kosinski's *Being There*

In a literary tradition meaning is never essential but relational, and texts disclose meaning through dialogue with other texts. Comparison and contrast is a fundamental part of the reading process. My paper elaborates on the confluences between Carson McCullers' *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940) and Jerzy Kosinski's *Being There* (1971). These two novels can be considered to be variations on the same theme: the tendency of the modern individual, confined to the prison of his own subjectivity, to constitute his self by projecting on other individuals. The two central characters, the deaf mute John Singer and the mentally retarded Chance Gardiner, respectively, are made into idols and "leaders" by the other characters, who become their admiring satellites. They function as blank canvases on which lonely dreamers draw their lives, and their inaccessibility, due to deaf muteness and mental retardation respectively, makes them all the more prone to mystification.

McCullers' statement that *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* is "an ironic parable of fascism . . . presenting the spiritual rather than the political side of the phenomenon" has always

¹ Henry James, Letter to Thomas Sergeant Perry of 20 September 1867, *A Life in Letters*, ed. Philip Horne (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 17.

² Henry James, Letter to Charles Eliot Norton of 4 February 1872, *A Life in Letters*, 48.

puzzled critics. Kosinski said that Mussolini, Hitler, and Franco were like Chance, in that the wishful thinking of the masses was ascribed to them. It may be that both McCullers and Kosinski are tapping into the phenomenon of the lonely individual with "authoritarian personality" who in his search for structure and security irrationally elevates another human to a charismatic man of wisdom. If liberal democracy stresses individual decision and responsibility and requires a degree of maturity, in both *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* and *Being There* the individual escapes into the irresponsibility of following a false god of his own creation, very much like the marionettes of fascist societies characterized by the susceptibility to be dominated by dogmatic ideologies in which messiness and contradictions are avoided. John Singer and Chance Gardiner become unwilling "performers" whose individual reality remains nebulous and is covered with a mask that prevents their audience from seeing a reality they prefer to mystify.

Sylwia Gryciuk

University of Wrocław

Public Mourning and Memorialization in the YouTube Era: The Case of JonBenét Ramsey

The impact the social media have on the way both society and individuals experience death and mourning has become undeniable. Rituals and processes once restrained by the context of location and degree of familiarity are now being reinterpreted to suit the digital world in which said boundaries are construed differently. The participatory culture that the new media facilitate has proven to be a particularly fertile ground for the flourishing of a phenomenon of public mourning for high-profile strangers. This paper will attempt to briefly examine this phenomenon on the example of subgenre of user-created YouTube videos memorializing life and death of JonBenét Ramsey, the most famous child murder victim in American history. On the one hand, the paper's aim will be an overview of the processes by means of which a consumer of the narratives presented by the conventional media becomes their co-producer thanks to the platform that YouTube provides. On the other hand – considering the cultural complexity inscribed in the notoriety of the Ramsey case – the paper will analyze the themes of the memorial videos which collectively reveal them to be not only superficial performances of public grief for a murdered child but also various attempts to reenact and reinterpret this unresolved tragedy which shocked and divided the nation, prompting introspective analyses of the state of the contemporary American society ever since.

Tomasz Jacheć

Warmia and Mazury University in Olsztyn

“He rapes, but he saves”: American paradoxes as performed in 2017 Netflix stand-up specials by Noah, Schummer, Chappelle and C.K.

In the first four months of 2017, Netflix released a number of stand-up specials that included comedy A-listers such as Trevor Noah, Amy Schummer, Dave Chappelle, and Louis C.K.. These five (two by Chappelle) specials follow a period of heightened social, political, and racial turmoil in America. They were recorded in late 2016, and released on

Netflix in early 2017, which places them in a very specific, cultural context of transition. That context is a “post-Obama/what-will-Trump-do? America”, which makes these performances an interesting object of a cultural study in terms of Whannel’s “reflecting the Zeitgeist”.

The four comedians were selected by the author due to their popularity (i.e. reach) and the fact that they represent various genders and ethnic groups of American citizens/residents. Chappelle is an African-American male, Louis C.K. is a Caucasian male, Schummer is a Caucasian female, and Noah is an African who resides in the US. The diversity of the comedians’ backgrounds and identities allows to simultaneously study their unique insights, as well as to reflect on recurring motifs found in all of their performances.

Żygulski states that “Comedy [...] is intellectual weapon, often used as a substitute of a different weapon that one does not possess. Since its function is critical and not constructive, comedy is used to point out flaws, deficiencies, shortcomings, and incompetence and ridiculing them.”

The aim of the paper is to juxtapose the recurring motifs that can be found in the comedians’ in question performances in order to analyze how American comedy deals with the “flaws, deficiencies, shortcomings, and incompetence” of American society of 2010s.

Gabriela Jeleńska

University of Warsaw

Performing History – Performing Justice. Storytelling in Sherman Alexie’s „The Trial of Thomas-Builds-the-Fire”

Notorious storyteller Thomas Builds-the-Fire breaks silence after 20 years, causing upheaval. 20 years ago he “held the postmaster hostage with an idea of a gun and threatened to make changes in the tribal vision” in protest against Bureau of Indian Affairs policies. Misunderstood by his community Thomas stopped communicating. Resuming communication becomes a threat to BIA and US officials and so Thomas is arrested and charged with crimes that are never presented to him. Thomas decides to be his own defender and only witness, and uses the opportunity to tell three different stories of injustice done to Indians by whites. His testimony becomes an oral performance – Thomas tells the stories in 1st person assuming the personalities of those he speaks for. He collapses time and becomes a conduit for their stories. Suddenly it is the three victims who symbolically get to incriminate Whites for crimes that went unpunished.

Discussing “The Trial of Thomas-Builds-the-Fire” critics stress that the importance of Thomas’ performance lies in exposing “white crimes” in white a “white institution” of court and thus subverting the hitherto assumed roles of prosecutor – defendant. Thomas changes the nature of law and courtroom proceedings when it is HIM who accuses whites of crimes that were never repented for.

My paper addresses the cultural aspect of the short story. Punishment is “white” kind of justice, aimed at vengeance and retribution. Instead, Thomas tells his stories to make peace, to restore balance (“Indian justice”). He acknowledges the bravery of the white

soldiers, admits regret at the necessity of killing them. He creates a new space where the victims and the oppressors can symbolically reconcile.

Aleksandra Kamińska

University of Warsaw

Performing Girlhood, Exposing America

The persona of a girl and portrayals of young women can serve a specific role in American culture and society. Some scholars argue that the position of girls is extremely susceptible to broader socio-economic and cultural changes, therefore studying American discourses of girlhood can offer new and original perspectives of American culture. In *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-First Century* Anita Harris argues that “the appropriate ways to embrace and manage the political, economic, and social conditions of contemporary societies are demonstrated in the example of young women” (2004: 2). In my paper I examine how girl culture carries out and performs doubts, questions, and promises of present-day American reality. In recent years there has been an abundance of narratives created by young women. Those narratives – from memoirs, through TV series, to digital mediums – have led to important changes in the portrayal of a girl in American culture, and allowed for the emergence of recent representations of girlhood. I focus on the performativity of girlhood, and the variety of girls' voices, examining both independent and mainstream works of culture. I trace an archive of contemporary young women's self-expression, emphasizing emerging diversity in portrayals of girlhood in terms of race, yet immense disregard of class. My paper is an analysis of how representations of girlhood intersect and connect with visions of America.

Jerzy Kamionowski

University of Bialystok

Performing black anger: Rankine, Sanchez, and Trethewey

Hennesy Youngman aka Jayson Musson in *Art Thoughtz*, a series of his tutorials presented on YouTube, prompts African American artists how to become successful by cultivating “an angry nigger exterior.” Cynically making use of the fact that anger can be performed and marketable, he implies that blackness, and more generally race, itself is performable and thus always performed, for good and bad. Musson's own performance becomes a springboard for reflection on black anger in Claudia Rankine's *Citizen. An American Lyric*. She digs the issue and demonstrates how blackness becomes a 'predictable' behavior of a person (externalized and internalized, public and personal, carnal and cerebral etc.), a 'social routine,' as well as artistic and semi-artistic undertaking; she apparently agrees with and probes into the concept of performativity of race (analogous with Judith Butler's notion of 'performativity of gender,' although the gender issue is absent in Rankine's work), which questions any biological (i.e. natural) dimensions of race / blackness. Rankine's book provides here both a theoretical framework and an exemplification of the phenomenon, yet does not exhaust the issue. It can be extended by brief analyses of two other cases to be touched upon: Sonia Sanchez's poem entitled

“Improvisation,” originally performed live in a trance-like manner in collaboration with a percussionist, and Natasha Trethewey's public poetry readings together with her father Eric, a white poet and a boxer. In both these cases gender plays a fundamental role, modifying - in performance – the issue of race / blackness. Sanchez's poem attempts to revive pain and anger of African women transported to America in the Middle Passage. Trethewey's public strategy of acting out her personal hurt and anger by answering back to her father's personal-cum-historical (un)intentional blindness (especially concerning Thomas Jefferson) and his instinctual racism in poems about his daughter, demonstrates that performance has a great potential for revealing the truth and speaking it to power.

Ewa Klęczaj-Siara

University of Technology and Humanities in Radom

Child performance versus child innocence – the construction of child characters in Jacqueline Woodson’s picture books *Show Way* and *This is the Rope*

African American children’s literature frequently features young characters as political agents of change. They overcome barriers imposed on them by older generations and look at the historical past from a different perspective.

The paper will explore Jacqueline Woodson’s children’s picture books *Show Way* and *This is the Rope*, in which young girls are brought to their family’s past by means of the material objects they inherited, the quilt and the rope. The children’s performance with the object detaches them from one context and moves into another. Playing with the objects they make sense of the past and find their place in the family history.

The paper will also discuss the concept of child innocence and explain how it relates to the issue of building intergenerational relations.

It will analyze the verbal and the visual narratives of the books focusing on the relations between the text and the illustrations of the book, as well as on the ways these elements convey the meaning of the story.

Elżbieta Klimek-Dominiak

University of Wrocław

Performing Traumics: Transformational Shame and Creative Resistance in Phoebe Gloeckner’s Graphic Narrative and Its Film Adaptation

Comics narratives of trauma, or traumics, an offshoot of the underground comix revolution, have gained increased critical attention since the publication of auto/biographical works by Art Spiegelman, Marjane Satrapi and Allison Bechdel and republishing of the expanded editions by other graphic artists engaged in non-commercial exploration of the taboo subjects. One of these comics artists, Phoebe Gloeckner explicitly depicts sexual violence, public shaming, and creative resistance in her experimental, visual/verbal coming-of-age narrative *The Diary of a Teenage Girl: An Account in Words and Pictures*. Drawing on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s notion of “transformational shame,” proposed in her *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, the present paper

examines how Gloeckner subverts the shaming practices through her graphic representation and transforms the humiliating stigma into compelling art.

Inspired by Gloeckner's hybrid narrative, Marielle Heller adapted it for theatre and independent film featuring sexual assaults, drugs, life on the streets and highlighting creative aspirations of a budding cartoon artist through the hand-drawn animated sequences. The film's stunning visual staging of the San Francisco underground comix scene, represented for instance by the animated interactions of its icon Aline Kominsky with the adolescent protagonist and the rendering of her powerful, raw drawing demonstrate the potential of alternative comics to transform the shameful traumas into resonant public performances of American artistic self-redefinitions.

Lidia Kniaz

Maria Curie-Skłodowska University

Performing Racialized Gender: Janelle Monáe, Erykah Badu, Grace Jones, and their visions of Black Female Cyborgs

The representations of female cyborgs across a range of science fiction media are largely dominated by hypersexualized, phallic fantasies of passive and obedient human-machines. Presented from a White-centric perspective, Black female post-humans are even more likely to be symbolically oppressed and exploited. On the other hand, female cyborgs created by African-American women artists repeatedly reinvent their own identities rather than perform what has been "programed" for them. In their lyrics, music videos, and stage image, Black female artists create visions of rebel cyborgs who at the same time obey and violate the established norms and rules, particularly concerning gender performativity and blackness. Interestingly, Black female musicians often reject the media-fueled images of perfect women, artists, and wives. Playing with the femininity-masculinity polarity, they redefine the roles attributed to women in the world which, in the 21st century, is still regulated by the patriarchal normativity. Cyborgs become the symbol of female empowerment as Black post-human divas not only take advantage of their physicality but also seem to go beyond the roles they have been ascribed to perform.

The presentation aims to analyze Janelle Monáe's, Erykah Badu's, and Grace Jones' audiovisual art, including their lyrics, music videos, album covers, and stage performances, and focus on the ways in which they employ the image of the Black female cyborg. Whether it is a series of concept albums accompanied by imaginative music videos, album cover art playing on the distinction between the natural and the robotic, or the stage image of an Afrofuturistic masculine diva, the three American artists consciously juxtapose the understanding of femininity as seen through a black female lens with the pop-cultural expectations favoring perfection, almost impossible to be achieved by an average non-White woman.

Zofia Kolbuszewska

University of Wrocław

The Jenkin's Ear Museum: Performing Cryptophoria in *Mason & Dixon*

The Jenkin's ear and the museum that houses it, play an important role in Thomas Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon* by presenting in miniature the mechanisms of functioning of the global capitalist world fueled by the slave trade. Hosting a commercial historical show, an enactment of the Jenkin's Ear War, the Jenkin's Ear Museum presented in the chapter 17 of Pynchon's novel can be considered a model of the (non)transmission of the secret of modernity's complex of power and knowledge shaped by the circumstances of the colonial expansion in the New World(s). The site of the Museum emerges as a palimpsest conjoining the sacred space of an oracle, a shrine holding relics, the early-modern anatomy theater, a curiosity cabinet, and a baroque whispering gallery, while an object on display, Jenkin's Ear, functions as a cryptophore that carries the secret of the dissociation, dispersion, degeneration, ruin, and death. In addition within the space of the Museum the visual epistemological regime of modernity undergoes defamiliarization by simultaneous separation from and inflection through aurality and embodiment: "The Walls are markedly higher in here than he remembers them from the Street,—whose ev'ry audible Nuance now comes clear to him, near and far, all of equal Loudness, from ev'ry part of the Town,—but invisible" (*M&D* 180). The Museum space constitutes a melancholy heterotopia: "In its suggestion of Transition between Two Worlds, the space offers an invitation to look into his Soul for a moment, before passing back to the Port-Town he has stopped from..." (180). As a heterotopic space of both excess and lack, a site of both the critique and the celebration of the visual regime of modernity, Jenkin's Ear Museum, as politically compromised as it is, also enables the performance of solidarity of the preterite where the ear functions as a means of alternative communication.

Grzegorz Kość

University of Warsaw

Living on Words: Robert Lowell's New Economy of the Poetic Vocation

For most of *The Dolphin* (1973) Robert Lowell still wants to lock up in his pages truth which he often represents through the metaphor of precious stones. There is an economic flavor to this imagery, as there was to his favorite derogatory remark on the writings of other modernists as "million-dollar-worded." A truthful book would really conquer the market, procure him royalties greater than anything he'd made so far and proportionate to the value of such stones.

And yet *The Dolphin* allows glimpses of an alternative economic exchange. By marrying Caroline Blackwood of the Guinness clan he felt that in a way he had married into big money, and he did so partly as a poet, even though he never offered truth or facts in his poetry. Usually it made him feel "fraudulent," but sometimes the material comforts he acquired seemed to him well-earned. He had deservedly earned the riches by offering, in the same proportion, "wealth" in the traditional sense of spiritual, if not physical, "well being." Thus he comes close to Pound's project of re-associating the economies, the project

of redefining the notion of value so as to re-acknowledge artists' work as truly valuable. In short, in the mid-1970s he began to argue that through poetry he created real value which should be appropriately remunerated.

Beauty, not truth, has earned him the charming accouterments of the Guinness fortune. Eventually he inscribes himself into the tradition of the pastoral poetry of Ben Jonson and Thomas Carew, whose imagery Raymond Williams famously dissected around the time when Lowell wrote *The Dolphin* in a highly perceptive Marxist critique of English seventeenth-century pastoralism as heavily ideological. For Williams these poets engaged in "a magical recreation of what can be seen as natural bounty" through the "extraction" of the "curse" of labor. Like Jonson and Carew, Lowell strongly resymbolizes rural life to create the fictional landscape of luxury and ease which he muses should have a substantial market value. Lowell earns luxury because he himself is a producer of the same.

Christopher Koy

University of South Bohemia

Performing Black and White in New Orleans: Chesnutt's Paul Marchand

It is Chesnutt's lesser-known New Orleans novel, *Paul Marchand, F.M.C.*, completed in 1922 but rejected for publication during the early phase of the Harlem Renaissance by three different book publishers, which owes a substantial debt to and to a large extent plays off of the themes and motifs in the fiction of George Washington Cable (1844-1925), particularly themes relating *gens de couleur libre* or the free people of color and their conflicts with only nominally "white" relations who usually lived in opulence in New Orleans. Especially Cable's most famous novel, *The Grandissimes, a Story of Creole Life* (1880) and his story of an enslaved German immigrant child, "Salome Müller, the White Slave" (1890) are of significance to Chesnutt's *Paul Marchand, F.M.C.* After a preliminary discussion of Cable's influence on Chesnutt, particularly in the area of nonfictional polemics on race, this contribution will be dedicated to an analysis of these two novels, with a side reference to other fiction Cable wrote which Chesnutt revises in representing the performance of "mulattoes" in New Orleans.

Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska

Warmia and Mazury University in Olsztyn

Sampling for Taste: The Americanization of Europhilia, Or There and Back Again

Almost two decades ago, in *Energy Flash: A Journey Through Rave Music and Dance Culture*, Simon Reynolds argued that house music in the United States "assembled itself from disregarded and degraded pop-culture detritus that the mainstream considered passé, disposable, *un-American*" (the emphasis is mine). Michaelangelo Matos even opts for the word "conquest" in order to explain the impact of floor-friendly electronic music imported from Europe on the mainstream DJ culture in the United States. Working at the intersection of nostalgia-driven remix culture, genre, race and class, and using examples of old school electronica as well as the tracks by Philip George and Steve Aoki, I will

address the complex, “looped-up” quality of musical flows between USA and the old continent.

Irina Kudriavtseva

Minsk State Linguistic University

“Willing to Play the Role”: Resistance and Conformity in the Fiction of Peter Taylor

The starting point for this paper was a phrase said by Peter Taylor about Grandfather Manley (*In the Miro District*) in one of his interviews: “Then he just didn’t care and he was just willing to play the role that they had set up for him...” (*Conversations with Peter Taylor*, 1987, p. 90). In fact, Taylor’s fictional world seems to be populated by characters whose identity is defined by their rejecting or accepting social norms, cultural traditions or figures of authority. This tension between resistance and conformity is indicative of Taylor’s basic aesthetic and ideological concerns, but it also has a broader cultural significance: the history of the American South and the development of the southern literary discourse have been shaped by the impulse to resist pressure from the outside and reactionary social and political forces from within, and by the necessity to conform – to preserve stability and continuity. In my paper I take a closer look at a number of Taylor’s short stories (*Miss Leonora When Last Seen*, *Cookie*, *In the Miro District*, *The Old Forest*, *The Oracle at Stoneleigh Court* and others) and focus on the characters’ specific behavioral, psychological, and discursive patterns as expressing resistance or conformity, as well as on the categories of otherness and gender.

Zuzanna Ładyga

University of Warsaw

Performing Resistance to the Literary Market: Ernest Hemingway’s *The Garden of Eden*

The paper examines the trope of unproductivity in Ernest Hemingway’s novel *The Garden of Eden*, which is interpreted as the writer’s commentary on the newly emergent laws of the literary publishing market in the U.S. I consider Hemingway’s novel as an important literary performance of protest towards the norms of publishing, which Hemingway performs by his use of the trope of idleness. I start with modernist fascination with vitality and movement to show how this “vitalocentric” tendency is matched by a cultural countercurrent of the aesthetics of cessation. Using Raymond Williams’s concept of emergent cultural value, I argue that the poetic uses of the trope of laziness by Ernest Hemingway, one finds the embryonic form of the sensibility of exhaustion, traditionally associated with modernism’s successor, postmodernism. My argument is counter-Rancièrian, in the sense that, contrary to Jacques Rancièrè’s view on modernism as naively unaware of art’s usurpation by the market, I insist on its recognition of art’s cooptation by the capitalist norm of productivity, and highlight the concepts and aesthetic modes by means of which this awareness is communicated.

Karolina Majkowska

Maria Curie-Skłodowska University

Performing Dominican-Americans: Dominican American experience in selected texts by Junot Díaz, Angie Cruz and Nelly Rosario

As stated by Richard Schechner in the introduction to *Performance Studies*:

Performance studies is unsettled, open, diverse, and multiple in its methods, themes, objects of study, and persons. It is “inter” – interdisciplinary, intercultural, and (I hope) interesting. To be “inter” is to exist between, on the way from something toward something else. Being “inter” is exploring the liminal – participating in an ongoing workshop. (x).

The characteristics offered by Schechner may be well applied to the migrants in the United States. Consequently, this paper seeks to analyze the presentation of Dominican Americans – a nation in-between – in selected works by Dominican American writers: Junot Díaz’s *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, Angie Cruz’s *Soledad* and Nelly Rosario’s *Song of the Water Saints*. Since the performance is also part of the neobaroque esthetics, the analysis will employ tools offered by the neobaroque to better illustrate the migrant condition in the texts in question.

Krystyna Mazur

University of Warsaw

Performing the lesbian possibility: Barbara Hammer’s Double Strength

Made in 1978, *Double Strength* is, to use Hammer’s own words “a poetic study of a lesbian relationship.” Filmed by Hammer and Terry Sendgraff, a trapeze artist and Hammer’s lover at the time, the film is a montage of clips of the two women flying on Sendgraff’s suspended aerial apparatus, of Sendgraff performing acrobatic movements indoors and climbing a tree, combined with photographs of both and fragments of footage from the women’s private archive. As the film attempts to define the nature of their intimacy, they are both authors and objects of scrutiny, performers and viewers. The complexity of the process is perhaps most succinctly captured by Hammer in her commentary on the film when she speaks of the two artists “reclaiming [their] mutual projections” (*Hammer* 129).

The immediacy of Sendgraff’s performance which comes from working with her own body is thus clearly something Hammer’s early work aspires to. Coming, no doubt, out of the deep sense of misrepresentation, out of the awareness of the pervasive, indelible heteropatriarchal coding of all media based on language or image, Hammer seeks a more immediate access to the self and self-representation. The body is the obvious locus.

As Jean-Luc Nancy observes in relation to dance, the performing body produces meaning independent of any medium, free of the effects of signification of the medium itself. The body is the dancer’s *means* of expression. Therefore, “[t]he means and the end get closer, even overlap each other. . . . [T]he dancer is an artist who is, if I may say, particularly self-referentiated [*autoréférencié*]. Giorgio Agamben, understanding the body as the dancer’s medium, argues that dance can be thought of as a “means without end”: “*it is the*

process of making a means visible as such. It allows the emergence of the being-in-the-medium of human beings and thus it opens the ethical dimension for them.” In dance, perceived as a means without end, as pure mediality, an aesthetics opens out into an ethics (and a politics).

Zbigniew Mazur

Maria Curie-Skłodowska University

Performance and cultural translation of transnational TV drama: American adaptations of European crime shows

In relation to television, performance can be understood in the narrow sense as the action of representing a character, but, in a wider meaning, TV shows are also performative texts, as they are used, when audiences interact with them, for active construction of reality through both the visual and narrative levels.

The present paper studies the casting and performance in three American crime shows, *The Bridge* (2013-2014), *The Killing* (2011-2014), and *Gracepoint* (2014), and assesses their importance for the shows’ rendering of the cultural issues to which the European originals on which they were based (*Broen/Bron*, *Forbrydelsen*, and *Broadchurch*, respectively) referred. The process of the cultural re-inscription of TV drama points towards inherent cultural norms and stereotypes. Specifically, it is assumed here that performance is a factor which has a powerful impact on the shows’ discussion of such broad cultural concepts as the nature of evil, morality, justice, punishment/retribution, family, professional ethics, and, importantly, construction of modern femininities.

Bearing in mind the commercial success and the high entertainment potential of the original European series, it may be rewarding to explore the question how the popularity of Europe-to-US TV drama is affected by the re-enactment of the original characters by the new actors. Assuming that viewing TV shows leads viewers to actions of the performative character, the paper further analyzes the audience’s response to the new representations of the shows’ protagonists in the TV drama translations. Selected fan pages, fanzines, fan scholarship, reviews and web blogs are studied from this perspective.

Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis

John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

“Bigger Than a Hamburger”: Food and Social Drama in the Civil Rights South

Anthony Grooms’s “Food that Pleases, Food to Take Home” depicts social drama of individual characters in a broader socio-historical context of the Civil Rights Movement. Annie McPhee and Mary Taliferro, two African-American heroines, decide to demand their rights at the lunch counter in a local store in Louisa, Virginia. Their lunch counter demonstration is concerned with what Ella J Baker, the executive director of the SCLC in 1960, famously described as “something much bigger than a hamburger or even a giant-sized Coke.” The purpose of my presentation is to apply Victor Turner’s concept of social drama (cultural anthropology), along with the issue of commensality (foodways studies)

and the issue of black (in)visibility (race studies) to analyze the order of a hamburger and some fries as the symbol of acknowledging the racial wound, the act which offers an opportunity to the characters not only to confront and/or upset the racial status quo but also to reevaluate their own beliefs. It is also my intention to demonstrate how Annie and Mary's demand to be served at the lunch counter reverberates with Ella Baker's assumption that such direct protests "are seeking to rid America of the scourge of racial segregation and discrimination – not only at lunch counters, but in every aspect of life."

Anna Oleszczuk

Maria Curie-Sklodowska University

Modes of Consciousness in Jennifer Marie Brisett's *Elysium* (2014)

Science fiction has long been interested in the nature of consciousness and explored it by using such tropes as digitized consciousness in virtual realities or constructs, juxtapositions of human and artificial consciousness, evolution of robotic/machinic consciousness, and search for various forms of alien consciousness. However, science fiction texts have predominantly viewed consciousness as a Cartesian "object" that can be coded, decoded, stored, and transferred.

In my analysis of Jennifer Marie Brisett's debut sf novel *Elysium* (2014) I would like to analyze what I perceive as a different approach and demonstrate that Brisett's vision of consciousness is closer to its perception as a "process." This conception can be traced back to the early 20th century and Alfred North Whitehead's proposition that "consciousness, like all biological functions, is a physiological process" (Poznanski, Tuszynski, Feinberg 14). From this perspective, the novel challenges the traditional manner of depicting consciousness in science fiction. By presenting multiple and fluid personalities living in a virtual environment, the novel abandons the notion of the "object" consciousness and envisions a program-like consciousness based on computing.

Piotr Podemski

University of Warsaw

***Fiorello!* The Image of New York and its Mayor La Guardia in a Broadway Pulitzer Musical**

Fiorello! is a widely acclaimed Broadway musical launched in 1959, with new versions produced in 1962, 1994 and 2013. A cultural phenomenon, authored by Sheldon Harnick (even more famous for *Fiddler on the Roof*), it came down in history as one of nine musicals to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Drama (1960).

One reason for its success was the myth surrounding its main character – New York City Mayor, Fiorello La Guardia. Descending from a mixed Italian-Jewish family La Guardia can be considered an incarnation of the ethnic minority experience in the first half of the 20th century. Having suffered discrimination and contempt, "the Little Flower" of New York gradually climbed up the social ladder becoming a lawyer, an Ellis Island interpreter, then a congressman and the mayor.

An analysis of the musical aims to identify the crucial topics in 1920s-1940s New York City politics as well as their pop culture re-interpretation twenty years later. Among these are the tenements, corruption and the Tammany Hall political machine, the ethnic ghettos and prejudice, crime and gangs. *Fiorello!* can thus be judged a typical expression of “performing America” or re-elaborating former problems into successful entertainment.

Krzysztof Rowiński

University of Massachusetts, Amherst

“I Wanted to Make a Dance About Ecstasy”: Folk Memory and Performed Failure In the Works of Ralph Lemon

Jon McKenzie’s *Perform, Or Else*, by positing a continuity between artistic, professional, and technological performance, presents the opportunity to discuss failure in all three performative dimensions at the same time. After all, the “Or Else” can be seen as a threat or, alternatively, a radical opening to the field of potentiality brought by various “infelicitous performatives” (Austin, 1962). In my paper, I examine the work of Ralph Lemon, an African American dance performance artist, whose recent artworks deal with issues of memory and folk culture, especially in the context of the African American community in the Mississippi Delta. Lemon’s performances such as *Come Home Charley Patton* (2004), or *How Can You Stay in the House All Day and Not Go Anywhere* (2010) feature, alongside images invoking police brutality, dancers performing seemingly random, jerky movements, allowing their bodies to clash and wander aimlessly across the stage. These non-teleological forms of movement, by resisting straightforward narrative arcs and a progressive interpretation, could be seen as examples of “minor moves,” a category proposed by Allison Curseen to describe truancy and fugitivity in nineteenth-century African American literature (2014). Opposed to grand narratives of redemption, liberation and social development, minor moves reimagine the “or else” of anti-slavery literature, portraying those whose social performance is independent of, and sometimes at odds with, the abolitionist and civil rights movements. I argue that performed failure, as seen in Lemon’s works, has a double structure: the failure of sustained physical movement is also a form of failure of the linear narrative and, as a consequence, a form of erosion of the concept of progress. At the same time, because of the clear social grounding of his work, Lemon’s dance is not apolitical: it represents an alternative to the opposition between narratives of progress and a nihilist rejection of politics.

Michał Różycki

University of Warsaw

Radicals, Believers, Prosumers: Conspiracy theory narratives as a performance

During a trial to retain custody of his children, taking place this April, the lawyers of Alex Jones, the owner of the conspiracy theory news site *Infowars.com*, argued that their client plays a persona on air. Off camera, they implied, he does not believe in the various theories presented on the site, including that 9/11 and the Sandy Hook school massacre were

“inside job”. Curiously, Jones was very quick to denounce these claims on air, assuring his loyal audience that “I 110-percent believe what I stand for”.

In similar vein, Jared Kushner, Donald Trump’s son-in-law, reportedly claimed that the current US president does not believe in the so-called “birther” conspiracy theories, suggesting that president Barack Obama was not born on US soil, and hence could not serve as president. Kushner claimed, that Trump peddled such theories to gain support, especially among the more hardline Republicans.

These two examples demonstrate the disparity between the claims of a conspiracy theorist and their more private beliefs. Both examples, and more could be found, suggest that the act of creating and propagating conspiracy theories is often simply a performance meant to beguile and win over support of susceptible voters. It is not, as Richard Hofstadter famously claimed, a product of a deranged mind, or a dangerous radical, but of a calculating politician or businessman.

The goal of my paper will be to delineate the border between performance and belief in conspiracy theory narratives, based on their propagators, including those who, like Donald Trump, do so to gain political favor, and those who make a living of it, including Alex Jones. It will attempt to show the difference, if any, between believers in and prosumers of conspiratorial and paranoid claims.

Paweł Stachura

Adam Mickiewicz University

Performance of Women’s Fiction in mid-19th Century: The Case of Susan Warner

The paper will present a short theoretical survey on the distinction between performance and structure in social sciences, and the role of performance as vehicle of social change. With reference to social theory, the paper will discuss functions of performance on various levels of the literary text, viz. A. the use of performative language in text, B. images of performance in text, C. Embodied book and the culture of reading, and D. public reading of the text. These functions were operative in most major 19th-century authors, e.g. there were the well-known performance careers of Mark Twain and Washington Cable, who gave tours as “twins of genius”. However, the selected historical material presented in this paper is related to Susan Warner’s fiction and performance, as biographical evidence suggests that performance in and of Warner’s fiction was related to the rapid historical transformations in the 1850s, that is to Abolitionism and the advent of the Civil War, and the performative dimension of her work can be thus interpreted as contribution to the contemporary historical change.

Justyna Stepień

University of Szczecin

***OUT OF HERE*: Affective Encounters and the Virtual in Krzysztof Wodiczko's Un-war Projects**

This paper aims to consider Krzysztof Wodiczko's War Veteran Projects in the context of the main tenants of the ethicoaesthetics and the concept of virtual proposed by Deleuze and Guattari, which emerge from their discussions on the representation processes. The installation *OUT OF HERE*, which metaphorically refers to the plight of traumatised American war veterans, triggers a trans-mediated dialogue with spectators, reworking the passive attitudes towards the position of the socially and culturally invisible. In fact, Wodiczko has been utilising American institutional spaces and media discourse to prove that they both alienate the central debates on the ambivalent position of military groups in the global conflicts. Hence, the aim of this paper is to prove that Wodiczko's project becomes an affective space, an assemblage of different affects and raptures, that organizes a productive encounter, an intensive event, that allows spectators not only to experience the records of the traumatic events but primarily increase their capacities to act in the world and to produce new modes of their socio-cultural "becoming".

Klara Szymańko

University of Opole

Staging Chinese American Identity in Maxine Hong Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey*

In Maxine Hong Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey* (published in 1989) a theatrical performance becomes a tool in the Chinese American struggle against invisibility. Staging a play, the protagonist of *Tripmaster Monkey*, Wittman Ah Sing, tries to dismantle white stereotypes of Chinese Americans. The very medium that he employs – theatre – reverses the condition of visibility and invisibility. Those who are usually invisible enter the stage to claim spotlight and their visibility, while the audience remains largely invisible. The narrator informs us that "Whenever Chinese Americans performed, they wanted to be seen" – literally and figuratively (13). Producing their own plays, they had an opportunity to tell the American public about themselves by themselves. All along the American society conspired to render Chinese Americans invisible – either by physically barring them from the United States, expelling them, confining to the ghettos or in the end by trying to completely assimilate them and make them as indistinguishable as possible. Being no longer distinguishable, they would no longer be a threat. Their presence on the American stage at least partly counterbalanced white attempts to render them invisible and absent from American society. Wittman's goal is to "spook out prejudice" (324), "to awaken the audience" (277) and wrench it out of its false dreams about his people.

Before choosing theatre as an artistic medium, he contemplates fiction. Yet in the end he settles for theatre among others to avoid "racinated descriptions:" "The actors will walk out on the stage and their looks will be self-evident. They will speak dialects and accents, which the audience will get upon hearing" (34). The play allows Chinese Americans the maximum of self-representation. In his predilection for theatre Wittman mirrors Asian

American artists of the 1960s and the 1970s – Philip Gotanda, Wakako Yamauchi and Frank Chin. Wittman himself bears a striking resemblance to Frank Chin, a point on which I am going to elaborate later. The choice of theatre was not random but a shrewd and calculated move, enabling Asian American artists to make the most of their limited resources. Karen Shimakawa points out in *Asian American Body on Stage* that by staging theatrical productions, Asian American activists could access large numbers of people in a relatively short time and with minimum expense (67). Participating in a live performance, spectators share in the process of creation, being to a greater extent involved in an artistic venture. Hence they identify more closely with characters impersonated on stage. Because of the immediacy of the theatrical experience the artists found it much easier to win over the hearts and minds of the broader audience. Karen Shimakawa highlights the moment of recognition which should happen in theatre (68). Watching the spectacle unfold and discriminating between the persona of an actor and that of a character, spectators ideally should become aware that all identities are performed and socially constructed.

Magdalena Szuster

University of Łódź

Improvising America – how the avant-garde theater reshaped the popular stage in America

The early avant-garde theater welcomed improvisation as a means in the process of developing plays and productions, or as a component of actor training, yet an independent improvisational format was devised much later. In the mid-twentieth century, the use of improvisation in theater was redesigned and refocused through the experiments of Viola Spolin and Keith Johnstone to eventually emerge as an autonomous theatrical form known now as improvisational/improvised theater, *impro* or *improv*.

Despite playing an important part in the history of American theater, improvised theater still lacks sufficient academic interest and research. Therefore, this paper aims to systematize the genre, as well as place improvisational theater within the broad context of American theater and performing arts. Its subsequent goal is to clearly distinguish and define the term(s), in order to depict improvised theater as a separate, independent theatrical entity in contrast with improvisation *per se*, which is merely an artistic tool.

Lastly, I will also try to explain the phenomenon of *impro* and *improv*, the two very similar improvisational formats that were developed independently by Spolin/Sills/Shepherd in Chicago and almost concurrently by Johnstone in London. The analysis may not provide straightforward answers as to how the people in different parts of the globe, unaware of each other's work, arrived at very uniform yet greatly innovative and highly experimental theatrical formats; it may, however, explain the factors that inspired their experiments and show the European avant-garde influences on American (pop) theater.

Justyna Wierzchowska

University of Warsaw

Performing in America: Marina Abramović's Performative Persona as a Site of Symptomatic Readings

In my presentation I want to discuss several recent pieces by Marina Abramović, an internationally recognized Yugoslavia-born and New York-based performative artist. Focusing on the performances she has executed in the post-2000 United States - among them *The House with the Ocean View* (Sean Kelly Gallery, NYC, 2002), *Seven Easy Pieces* (Guggenheim Museum, NYC, 2005) and *The Artists is Present* (MoMA, NYC, 2010) – I want to argue that the reception they have generated is tied to the way in which the artist fashions her performative persona. In her performances, Abramović capitalizes on her European background, mixing a Tito-communist discipline with the iconic tradition of the Orthodox church (which she additionally mixes with Buddhist tropes). At the same time, in the interviews and writings, Abramović markets herself as burdened by her past, approachable and, in a way, Americanized. In my presentation, I will maintain that Abramović, with her “exotic” origin and skillful application of religious poetics, who claims to understand and unconditionally love her audience, stages a powerful projective screen for her viewers. Her performative persona, constructed through such oppositions as distant/familiar, available/denied and vulnerable/potent, proves highly seductive, producing in her audience an effect of idealization and an almost cultic veneration for the artist. I will argue that, by fashioning herself through such oppositions, Abramović taps into the very construction of Western subjectivity, founded on the phantasm of self-reliance, emotional containment and individuality (Benjamin 1988, Ruddick 1989, Brennan 2004). I want to suggest that the massive response to Abramović's art, as well as her solidified celebrity status, is rooted in her performative (yet, possibly, unacknowledged) stirring of the reason-based Western subjectivity, which, however, does not cognitively disrupt the divide between the knowledge of the mind and the knowledge of the body (Brennan 2004).

Elżbieta Wilczyńska

Adam Mickiewicz University

#NoDAPL as a Performance of Ingenuity

Framed as the largest gathering of Native Americans in the past hundred years, the Sacred Stone Camp in the Standing Rock Reservation was built to protest the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. It was a site of active resistance since April 2016 to February 2017 and it received a very large support of not only Native American tribes in the United States or Canada but also climate activists and indigenous activists from all around the world. The battle in the short run has been lost, for oil is already flowing through the pipeline by the virtue of President Trump's executive order of January February 2017, but they are still waiting for the summary verdict of the yet not solved legal battle. For almost a year Standing Rock Reservation was looked on as a stage of a performance, in which the roles were accorded a long time ago: those of ruthless white capitalists investing in progress and mounted warriors defending their way of life, water,

land and sovereignty. Both sides appealed to divergent solidarity groups, and undertook many steps, applied various protests techniques and voiced their rights very often drawing from the repertoires of past experiences. It seems interesting to apply the concept of performances as “contextually situated embodied speech and actions, as well as the products of speech and actions that are anchored in the past performances, local traditions and ideologies” (*Performing Indigeneity* ed. Lura Graham and H. Glenn Penny 2016) to analyze the behavior and statements of made near and in relations to the Standing Rock Protest. The aim of the analysis will be to describe the performance of indigeneity, a “restored behavior” as Richard Schechner defined performance: what are the past actions (i.e. performances) and memories Native Americans have been drawing from, how much new agency, self-conscious practice and reflexivity they display in the new context (the globalized and multicultural world interconnected through modern technologies) to which they are trying to adjust to realize their objective, and what are their expectations for the future in relation to the (lost or won) battle over the DAPL.

Justyna Włodarczyk

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The Pointer as a Work of Art in the Age of Biopolitical Reproduction: the Hunt as Performance in US Dog Training Manuals, 1850-1900

This presentation looks at nineteenth-century US training manuals for hunting dogs; using these texts to examine how the activities of breeding and training were inseparable and entangled in debates about race in the United States: in other words, how dog training was both an integral part of the biopolitical enterprise and a tool for measuring its effectiveness. Through an analysis of the discussion preceding the establishment of field trials in the United States (1870s), I argue that effectiveness of the dog’s hunting technique was not a primary criterion for evaluating a dog’s performance in the field. Certain behaviors, a certain style of hunting, was preferred over others in a way that reflected the primary values associated with white “genteel” masculinity. Within the world of sportsmen, trainability, understood as the ability to control one’s “animal” impulses, was a benchmark for evaluating the quality of dogs; for associating dogs with the “right” people; and, sometimes, for deciding about their life or death. Among sportsmen, dogs capable of performing self-control, such as the pointer or the setter, were valued more highly than dogs that were as effective in pursuing prey but that exhibited qualities associated with a less civilized version of masculinity. In fact, the coding of the training of sports hunting in the 1850s as an upper-class white male activity went hand in hand with restrictions on ownership of dogs by slaves in the American south.

Patryk Zieliniewicz

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Nostalgic stories and faded polaroids: Thomas Pynchon's *Inherent Vice* as a study of the past

The thesis is devoted to the question of time perception presented in *Inherent Vice* by Thomas Pynchon. Underneath the layer of pastiche, the author explores the problematic notions of time and history. Pynchon defines history as a mere selection, a compilation of selected moments from the past. Such interpretation assumes parallel versions of history. In order to convey Pynchon's statement about history, I analyze the conflicting notions of nostalgia and irony in the novel. The second chapter offers a review of various conceptions of time, and the third one focuses on the image of history seen through the lens of a still camera since it is the medium of photography that most aptly renders the time mechanisms. I also propose my own subjective definition of history.