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Performativity – Politics – Community

In 1963, during his BBC radio lecture, John L. Austin assured his listeners that they had the right not to know what the word “performative” means (Austin, 1993, p. 220). Today, more than half a century later, it would be difficult to find an excuse for such ignorance in the humanities. Terms such as performative, performativity, performance studies, and performance have taken root in scientific discourse, thus becoming the key to the analysis of various aspects of culture, art and social life: rituals, architecture, literature, the city, art, theater, catastrophes, social campaigns, political resistance, emotions, and identity. The research stream of performance studies has been institutionalized and interdisciplinary studies on this topic can be undertaken not only in New York or Los Angeles, but also in Bremen, Warwick and Krakow.

The growing popularity of these issues is evidenced by the blossoming literature on performativity; this literature presents new development directions of this research stream, which is a hybrid of various disciplines. Performance

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studies that are undertaken in different languages and in various local and historical contexts cover a broad spectrum of cultural and social life phenomena. Although new methodological suggestions are emerging, one of the fundamental starting points is still the findings of John L. Austin (*How to Do Things with Words*, 1962), subsequently supplemented by John Searle (*Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, 1969). They are complemented by concepts contained in the classic works of Richard Schechner (*Essays on Performance Theory*, 1970–1976, 1977 and *Performance Theory*, 1988) and Victor Turner (such as *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, 1969 or *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, 1974). Research on performative aspects of culture has thus crossed the boundaries of purely linguistic practices. Studies in this current have been developed in the field of ethnology (Dwight Conquergood, *Cultural Struggles. Performance, Ethnography, Praxis*, 2013), sociology (Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 1956), art sciences (Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen*, 2004) and literature studies (Shoshana Felman, *The Scandal of the Speaking Body*, 2002 and Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 1990). The performative perspective made it possible to shift the boundaries of interpretation and go beyond the widely held patterns. In the field of literature, for example, this perspective has become an original impetus for looking at literature as a “discursive machine” by which identities are constructed (Sedgwick, 1990). Identity that is recognized as a dynamic phenomenon – as a verb rather than a noun – turned out to be a satisfying area for research in the performative perspective. This was the approach taken by Tim Edensor, who explored national identities and the ways in which they were constructed and reconstructed (*National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, 2002). Most of the works mentioned here, however, are a correction, supplement, modification and extension of the field of research in which Judith Butler almost carried out the Copernican revolution in 1988. In a text that was a breakthrough in the area of performativity research, entitled *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory*, this researcher analyzed gender identity as a construction that results from repetitive performative acts, namely the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names.

Such a broad interest in this phenomenon inevitably led to the announcement of a new turn in the humanities and social sciences – this time the performative turn. Like the previously announced turns (the linguistic or pic-

torial turns), this breakthrough resulted from the conviction that a certain fundamental metaphor which was used to analyze the world had been scientifically exhausted or had become epistemologically insufficient. In this particular case, it is primarily about the exhaustion of the metaphor of the world as a text. Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska writes that performative studies expose those aspects that were obscured by the “domination of semiotic, hermeneutical and textual orientation” (Zeidler-Janiszewska, 2007, p. 34). Therefore, the performative turn would draw scientific attention to the perception of culture as a process and an event. Undoubtedly, a change is an immanent feature of processuality and eventfulness. As Ewa Domańska emphasizes, “the performative turn manifests a shift of the point of focus from contemplation, reflection on the world and a person (...) towards a rebellion which is against the existing reality and causes its change” (Domańska, 2007, p. 52). Therefore, staticity and referentiality are replaced by dynamism, activity, agency and the creation of meanings in the process of change. Obviously, scientific attention is directed to the subject of this change: the agent (both individual and collective) that is the creator of this dynamism. Actually, Domańska also notes that the performative turn is not a phenomenon separated from other turns and she associates this turn with the “agentive turn” of both people and things “because performativity becomes an object of interest as a specific kind of agency, and performance – as a specific way of expressing it and carrying it out” (Domańska, 2007, p. 52).

The performative turn is thus linked to the changes that take place in various communities and their cultures; it draws our attention to the new subjectivities that emerge and the practices that contribute to marking their boundaries, but this performative turn also allows us to see movements (sometimes of a tectonic nature) that take place within seemingly ossified communities. Domańska rightly notes that constructivism, poststructuralism and narrativism – by proclaiming the death of the subject, the death of the author, anti-essentialism, and by affirming the “weak subject” – have deprived the subject of agency. Meanwhile, the performative turn restores this agency in a way and becomes a “return of a strong subject” (Domańska, 2007, p. 56). The performative perspective opens a space for change and rebellion; it frees from stagnation, forces abandonment of a melancholic attitude, and becomes an imperative of action or perhaps even of revolution.

Bearing the above in mind, in the presented 19th volume of “*Slavia Meridionalis*” we have decided to look at the issue of performativity in the southern

Slavic cultures. Our goal was to look through a performative magnifying glass at artistic activities and practices of social life that have subversive potential and protest energy. These activities lead to the transformation of social, institutional and political structures and to the construction of various kinds of new political subjects. This was the case with the phenomenon called “dogadanje naroda” (happening of the nation), namely the political meetings of supporters of Slobodan Milošević that took place at the end of 1980s, during which new cultural senses were created not only by means of language but also thanks to activities that involved bodies and objects.

Erika Fischer-Lichte draws our attention to the etymology of the German word “performance” (Aufführung) and points to the source performativity of the act of “introducing oneself to someone” (Fischer-Lichte, 2012). In this light we would like to initiate a discussion on the various ways of “introducing oneself” and thus ways of forming various types of social groups and communities that exist in the South Slavic cultures. In addition, we are interested in the answer to the question that concerns who the addressee of these practices is and whether the presence of certain performative patterns can be observed. Therefore, we are consciously moving away from the study of the performativity of language (although we are not abandoning this task completely) towards reflection on social activities and processes that are often linked to a language – processes in which the human body is involved. In the course of various performative acts during which this body creates networks of relationships with other subjects that perform their messages, it thus becomes the political body.

The cultures that we explore also seem to be an ideal area for reflection on the performative turn and the agentive turn because after years of political “freezing” of various social groups, the new lineup that was emerging after 1990 opened up a space for reconstruction of various kinds of communities as well as the possibility of reshufflings within them. New subjects that enter the political scene redefine old hierarchies or, for instance, they establish new orders through performative practices.

The concept of community also merits attention. We understand it as a phenomenon strongly related to the sphere of politics, but we are looking for new definitions of it. Because it is necessary to perceive the southern Slavic cultures from the angle of national categories, such a perspective impoverishes research. The aim is therefore to show the process of establishing new subjectivities and new communities. It is a well-known fact that a community is not everlasting but has to be played, brought back and performed, otherwise it

becomes a fossil. The same applies to the long-term process of the establishment of a community; this process takes place within different social, political and institutional frameworks. In addition, it is worth paying attention to the fact emphasized by Didier Eribon that every person is a part of many groups, either consecutively or simultaneously. These groups sometimes correspond with one another – constantly evolving and changing. They develop themselves in various heterogeneous spaces and temporalities that cannot be reduced to unity or hierarchized; some cannot be considered more or less important than others (Eribon, 2019, p. 214).

Our intention was to look at three phenomena – performativity, community and politics – not separately but in their relations and interpenetration. The texts we publish in this volume are presented in four thematic blocks: *Spaces of Performativity*, *Performing of Memory*, *Performing of Power*, *Performative Subject*.

In the first part, which is devoted to the issues of spaces of performativity, the text *Performing a difficult past in a museum: History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina* by Barbora Chrzová is published, in which the author, on the example of a museum institution in Sarajevo, presents the consequences of the performative turn (and also the experiential turn) in a museum institution. The transformation of the exhibition paradigm enables the recipient to become involved in the creation of meanings of the presented artifacts and in the narration that reconstructs them, and thus in the co-creation of memory of the past. The author analyzes how a historical museum, whose task is to interpret the past and historical trajectories, copes with the memory of very divided Bosnia, where, in fact, we deal with three different memories. Art exhibitions or smaller temporary exhibitions that are focused on the multidirectional character of memory turn out to be a lifesaver. Suzana Marjanić, in turn, in the text *Performance of Resistance in Croatia: A Chronotopic Review from the 1990s Onwards* reviews Croatian activism (art + activism) and treats it as an expression of resistance. In her analysis, she adopts a chronotopic perspective and establishes both the time and the place in which the resistance performance is played as a relevant reference point of this performance. Adopting such a perspective makes it possible to compare changes in performative practices over time (indication of turning points), also taking into consideration the geographical context. Marjanić begins her story with Split, then takes the reader to Rijeka and Dubrovnik, but she does not omit such peripheries as Labin, Slavonski Brod, Varaždin or Osijek and creates an individual map of

Croatian activism. In the article *Facebook Posts as Performatives in Bulgarian Political Life: A Sociolinguistic Investigation*, Nelly Tincheva focuses on the performativity of Facebook posts from a sociolinguistic perspective; at the same time, she analyzes concepts such as “action” or “reality”. Facebook posts are perceived not only as an effective tool for building a mental community or participation in political discourse, but also as a way for real political action. In her article, Angelika Kosieradzka shows the activities around the Monument to the Soviet Army in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria. The author analyzes performative practices as alternating forces of destruction and creation that result not only in a revision of the existing order, remembrance of the past, and the establishment of a new type of community, but also in an attempt to model urban space and transform its semiotic system. In this light, the city and its tissue are not only a motionless scenery of performative acts, but also their object, or perhaps even the subject of such acts.

The second part of the volume is devoted to performative activities focused on memory. In the text *Memory in Action – Performative Practices in a Dispute about the Past. Serbia and Croatia at the Turn of the 20th and 21st Century*, Sabina Giergiel and Katarzyna Taczyńska test mutual relations between discursiveness and performativity and show different strategies for renegotiating historical memory in Serbia and Croatia that use grass-roots performative actions. The authors analyze a wide spectrum of practices that unseal official narratives (walks, publishing activities and artistic actions) as responses to imposed regimes of remembrance that are aimed at shifting the dominant way of speaking about the past. In his article *Space and Imagined Communities in After-War Rituals in Vukovar (1992–2015)*, Mateo Žanić analyzes post-war rituals that commemorated the Battle of Vukovar and draws the reader’s attention to the fact that the phenomenon of the routinization and dramatization of performative acts determines whether or not they are included in the official memory of Croats. In the text *Dynamics of particular and common. Monuments and patriotic tourism in Socialist Yugoslavia – a case study of Kosovo*, Agata Rogoś takes us to Kosovo, where, on the example of two case studies of monuments, she analyzes the performative function of monuments and shows the process of creating memorial sites by means of top-down programmed practices in space. Spaces managed by the state thus become spaces of engagement, both at individual and community levels.

The next part, entitled *Performing of Power*, begins with the text *From Icon to Punk Portrait. The Iconicity of the Ruler Image in the Context of the Transfor-*

mation of the Idea of the Serbian State, by Magdalena Bogusławska, who analyzes the process of performing meanings through artistic interventions in culturally established ways of representing icons of power. The researcher discusses the iconicity of portrayals as a special variation of performativity that is rooted in visual experience. For reflections on the agentivity of iconographic forms and the relationship between an image and power in the process of expressing and dealing with political subjectivity, the text is a perfect starting point for thinking about iconicity as the causative presence of power in an image. In turn, in his article *Rupture. Integration. Renewal. The Gathering in Dalma and the Creation of a Political Community in the Chronicle of the Priest of Dioclea*, Wawrzyniec Kowalski examines the performativity of power in the source material of *Chronicle of the Priest of Dioclea*. The author clarifies how Svetopelek's authority was established by means of performative acts that include marking the spatial, religious and mental boundaries of a community. Leo Rafolt analyzes authorities-to-individual relations in a completely different context in his text *Queer Immanence in Who is? Woyzeck – Technocentric Utopia of the Master and the Slave*. The performance, which is broken down into its constituent parts, shows the main character as a victim of a cruel and heartless society that throws any non-normativity to its margins. Rafolt interprets the Montażstroj group's performance from the perspective of the theory of biopower and biopolitics.

The last part concerns the performative subject. In the texts in this part, the authors look at the processes of self-creation of a political subject or examine renegotiations within existing subjectivities; they follow in a way the words of Didier Eribon, who says that it is not easy for a man to reject a political affiliation in which he has been mentally settled for a long time (even if in an unstable and uncertain way), and he does not create for himself a new affiliation from one day to the next, namely a new attitude to himself and others, a new view of the world, a new view of life (Eribon, 2019, p. 214). In her article *The construction of a political community – Croatian political emigrants after 1945 as performative actors*, Angelika Zanki looks at the process of (self-)constructing a political community on the example of the performative dimension of Croatian political emigrants in *Hrvatska revija* magazine from the beginning of the 1950s to 1966. She interprets the language and discursive practices in this group as action to change reality and at the same time as acts oriented to establishing one's own subjectivity and marking the area of activity. Focusing on two important ideologemes (Bleiburg victims and

Alojzije Stepinac), the author analyzes the ways of creating a coherent axiological system of Croatian political emigrants by means of practices that are repetitive in time and space. In turn, Agata Domachowska's article "*The Yellow Duck*" Attacks – An Analysis of the Activities of the "Ne da(vi)mo Beograd" Initiative in the Serbian Public Space shows the activities of the "Ne da(vi)mo Beograd" Initiative that was created initially as an urban movement in Belgrade. The author analyzes verbal and non-verbal practices of expressing resistance, as well as strategies for building a sense of community among participants of meetings organized by the Initiative. The political situation here is an ideal space for the appearance of complex performative acts which become the dominant manner of constructing knowledge and power and shaping social discourse. Domachowska focuses on the management of civic opposition and the creation of new kinds of civic communities that are affiliated with the city. A civic community is a new kind of a performative subject that is an alternative to the national community. Finally, in her article *People against Oliver Frlić or Poland after "The Curse"*, Dominika Kaniecka reflects on the reactions and activities that accompany the stage adaptation at Teatr Powszechny of "The Curse", a play directed by Oliver Frlić, a Croatian artist. The author follows the ways of expressing public anger and shows that not only protesters but also all those who produce discourse concerning this play are incorporated into the message of art. Dramatic events that happened in front of the theater, caused by those protesting against the controversial performance, become a performative extension of what is happening on stage and a significant – or even the most significant – context. There is also reflection on the collective performance of emotions – in this case the striking power is stronger than the power of individual acts.

In our opinion, the last two texts which we present in the section on performativity are an interesting supplement to the main texts. Małgorzata Kasner takes us to Vilnius, where she looks at the phenomenon of performative walks around the city and thus at the phenomenon of interpreting and establishing its new meanings. Ana Kodrić, in turn, analyzes the system of financing of Croatian theaters – institutions that at their roots are inseparably associated with playing and performing.

All the collected and presented texts perfectly illustrate the new social phenomena in our research area, but they also show new trends in humanities research and certainly in Slavic studies. The common thread of both levels is the transition from the paradigm of contemplation to the paradigm

of change, the transition from cataloging and reflecting on social systems towards understanding societies in their dynamics. We are convinced that we are witnessing a transformation within the humanities, which clearly declare their involvement in this process and set themselves the goal of provoking changes and determining the directions of these changes. Scientific works on political activism and works on social practices that are oriented at changing the established order emphasize the agency of the researched actors in political life, through which these actors realize their own strength.

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Performatywność – Polityka – Wspólnota

Tekst jest wprowadzeniem do 19. tomu czasopisma „Slavii Meridionalis”, poświęconego zagadnieniu performatywności w kulturach południowej Słowiańszczyzny. Autorka daje przegląd najważniejszych prac poświęconych performatywności, a następnie omawia teksty zawarte w czasopiśmie.

Słowa kluczowe: performatywność, polityka, wspólnota, od redakcji, wprowadzenie

Performativity – Politics – Community

The paper is an introduction to 19th volume of “Slavia Meridionalis” which discusses the issue of performativity in the southern Slavic cultures. The author gives a review of the most important literature concerning the phenomenon of performativity and then presents the articles published in the journal.

Keywords: performativity, politics, community, editorial, introduction

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