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Postmodern Performativity of the Global World

[Postmodernistyczna performatywność w globalnym świecie]

Streszczenie: Postmodernistyczna performatywność współczesnego zglobalizowanego świata polega przede wszystkim na tym, że stanowi ona optymalny sposób odtworzenia rzeczywistości społecznej. To właśnie dzięki postmodernistycznym środkom performatywnie tworzone są nowe procesy, które natychmiast zostają wprowadzone w obieg. Postmodernistyczna fragmentacja, pluralizm, decentralizacja podmiotu, ekonomia znaku, nieufność wobec metanarracji oraz deterytorializacja przyczyniają się do tego, że nowa performatywna normatywność, a co za tym idzie – jej dalsza legitymizacja – kształtują się na podstawie przejrzystości oraz dzięki autentycznej zgodności z rzeczywistością. Świat performatywny nieustannie formuje się poprzez działania, które go konstruuja i jednocześnie opisują. Właśnie to odpowiada logice świata globalnego i czyni możliwym przetrwanie w jego strukturze. Głównym celem niniejszego badania jest rekonstrukcja mechanizmów i zasad, według których funkcjonuje postmodernistyczna performatywność w świecie globalnym, a także wykazanie błędności jej potocznego postrzegania i użycia, kiedy to performatywność sprowadza się głównie do „scenicznego odgrywania” spektaklu na arenie społecznej.

Summary: The postmodern performativity of the contemporary globalized world primarily manifests in its role as the optimal mechanism for the reproduction of social reality. Conversely, it is precisely through postmodern approaches that new processes are performatively constructed and immediately integrated into circulatory systems. Postmodern characteristics – including fragmentation, pluralism, the decentralization of the subject, the economy of the sign, skepticism toward metanarratives, and deterritorialization – contribute to the formation of new performative normativity, and by extension legitimacy, grounded in transparency and precise correspondence to reality. The performative world is continuously constituted through actions that simultaneously construct and delineate it; this duality both aligns with the global world and enables survival within it. The core objective of this research is to delineate the mechanisms and principles governing the operation of postmodern performativity in the global world, as well as to refute the fallacy inherent in its everyday perception

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and application – where performativity is largely reduced to a “stage performance» of spectacle within the social arena.

Słowa kluczowe: postmodernizm, performatywność, globalizacja, postkolonializm, legitymizacja, „prowincjonalizacja Europy”.

Keywords: postmodern, performativity, globalization, postcolonialism, legitimacy, “provincializing of Europe”.

Introduction

Since the linguistic turn and the formulation of the speech act theory, it has become evident that any utterance not only asserts propositions but also materializes specific phenomena and processes within the global context. Gradually, within the global landscape of networks and platforms, this principle has transcended linguistic boundaries to become a governing framework for all domains, including economics and politics.

The inherent logic of globality renders audiences instantly receptive and distributed, ensuring that every act and action is nearly automatically publicized and subjected to regimes of public scrutiny and feedback. Consequently, the agent of utterance and the subject matter become integrated with the normativity of the sphere and plane of action, evolving into a new form of normativity that enacts the content specifically created in the “here-and-now” context.

If performativity is conceptualized as a mechanism for constructing and reproducing the modern world as spectacle, it eliminates the necessity for dedicated stage performances. It no longer requires a separately designated stage, such as that in a theater; instead, the stage for performativity is superimposed onto work processes and embedded within the operational logic of institutions. Whether referring to a ministry, a university, or an ordinary neighborhood communication group, these entities operate within a unified interface where trust is calibrated by the frequency of updates and the capacity to construct and sustain narrative coherence.

At the purely technical level, the attention economy algorithmizes unambiguous gestures, concise narratives, and recognizable emotional expressions – all of which are instantly perceivable by audiences distributed through the same technical and algorithmic mechanisms. On this basis, an algorithmic canon of global interaction is formed, relying on a spectrum of techniques that ensure visibility. This canon gradually becomes normative in politics, marketing, and even social activism.

Geopolitics is transforming into performative chains, woven from sanctions, official statements, memes, and symbolic gestures. These chains exhibit dynamism, characterized by constantly fluctuating prices, routes, public sentiment, and investments rooted in direct causality. The

global market interprets these signals and immediately incorporates them into risk valuation frameworks. This explains why financial models do not merely describe markets but rather shape markets to align with their parameters, establishing the trajectory for the architecture of expectations.

Within this logical framework, scientific visualizations function as instruments, and news operates as a lever for the redistribution of power and influence. Legal systems and governance structures also adopt this performative mode of operation; their frequently emphasized procedures of transparency and accountability evolve into rituals that not only demonstrate legitimacy but also accumulate it through the public disclosure of data and audit processes. Globality, while stratifying audiences, also ensures that all published data is automatically subjected to public scrutiny and elicits feedback.

At the level of subjectivity, postmodern performativity intensifies and accentuates the obligation of constant self-presentation. Identity becomes concentrated in repeated acts of gender, cultural, professional, or civic performativity – reinforced by metrics such as likes, recommendations, or ratings. In online environments, this repetitiveness is accelerated and multiplied by every gesture executed in a “repeat order” mode, wherein individuals not only perform actions but do so under conditions of observation and in anticipation of algorithmic responses. Under such circumstances, authenticity becomes a stylistic objective, and the “backstage” – elements that ought to remain concealed – permeates narrative content.

Symbolic competition is now inseparable from material competition. Digital boycotts, solidarity flash mobs, the dissemination of disinformation, and ubiquitous exposés constitute a persistent foundation for altering the material trajectories of individuals and resources. The infrastructure of public space is deeply intertwined with and dependent on these signals, necessitating constant responsiveness to them.

The World as a Stage, the Stage as the World

To comprehend the stage upon which performative action unfolds and its distinction from spectacle or theatrical performance, it is instructive to engage with Guy Debord’s concept of the “spectacle”. Such an analysis enables the identification of differences between these phenomena, the clarification of their fundamental principles, and the recognition that performativity can serve as an appropriate framework within the context of globalization processes.

In his work “The Society of the Spectacle”, Guy Debord (Debord G., 2014) commences with the premise of the tyrannical nature of power – power speaks and commands, while individuals are compelled to listen

and obey. Through the spectacle, power stages discrete acts for each individual; these acts are perceived in isolation, further exacerbating the alienation of individuals from one another. G. Debord, a member of the letterist circle, was not averse to organizing mini-performances himself. For instance, letterists engaged in prolonged, unstructured urban walks termed “derive”, during which they sought to transcend the monotony of everyday life and reinterpret the city and their positionalities within it. Another radical method practiced by the group, “détournement”, involved repurposing literary, artistic, or cinematic works for entirely alternative objectives, with comics frequently selected as the medium for this practice.

Returning to the concept of the spectacle: a close examination of Debord’s definition reveals that the spectacle symbolizes a shift from “having” to “seeming”. Instead of a holistic perception of existence, fragmentation of individual aspects of life occurs; these fragmented elements do not coalesce into a unified whole but manifest as isolated, disconnected images. The sense of deprivation of genuine experiences, which emerges within individuals, is what the spectacle – analogous to a conveyor belt – seeks to compensate for by generating a continuous flow of distracting stimuli. A notable example is the constant production of “stars” in film, music, or politics; these figures embody idealized human qualities and lead lifestyles that are practically inaccessible to others in reality. The mass of “spectators” within the society of the spectacle is condemned to alienation and disconnection; as atomized individuals, their only avenue to unity is through the spectacle. “The spectacle is the bad dream of modern society in chains, a dream that expresses nothing more than its wish to sleep. The spectacle is the guardian of this sleep” (Debord G., 2014, p. 21). The illusion of reality generates an endless stream of images that bear no greater resemblance to reality than hallucinations. Individuals establish connections with one another solely through the ultimate separation enforced by the spectacle.

The spectacle constitutes the ontology of theatrical performance, wherein the image replaces life and is sustained by a centralized media apparatus. “...the spectacle is a specialized activity which speaks for all the rest” (Debord G., 2014, p. 23). Performativity, by contrast, represents the ontology of execution: life is assembled through a multitude of decentralized acts, yet their stage is governed by platform protocols and partially predictable models, with behavior subjected to capitalization.

Within Debord’s theoretical framework, the “one-to-many” topology reinforces hierarchical structures and renders mass audience passive. In the context of performativity, however, spectators are transformed into semi-engaged co-performers; their agency is authentic but mediated by the

invisible direction of recommendation algorithms. This transformation is enabled by the postmodern nature of performativity, which continuously decenters and fosters resonance within a pluralistic world. In theatrical performance, the ideology of the image and a singular metanarrative predominate; in contrast, the postmodern stage is inherently pluralistic, intertextual, and multi-narrative. Memes, remixes, and pastiche emerge as operational languages within politics and the market, and “plausibility” is constructed through processes of public scrutiny and the reproduction of forms – rather than by the authority of a centralized information producer.

Temporally, the spectacle is a long-term phenomenon built on stable symbols of advertising and mass culture; performativity, however, operates within the “eternal present” of streams and live modes, where stability is ensured not by depth but by the regularity of execution and continuous feedback. Politically, the spectacle masks power through contemplation, while performativity renders power procedural: the rules of moderation, ranking, and verification assume the role of the new “law of the stage”, and the locus of struggle shifts from exposing power to competing for the right to dominate public space: “The spectacle indicates what society is permitted, yet what is permitted is absolutely contrary to what is possible. Within the spectacle, everything is permitted, but nothing is possible. The spectacle allows only an unconscious reaction to the practical change in the conditions of existence. The spectacle is a product of itself, an end in itself” (Debord G., 2014, p. 25). Despite these fundamental differences, both logics share the risks of simulation and alienation. Debord warned of the replacement of lived experience with image-based relations; postmodernism, with its tendency toward performativization, has introduced an additional compulsion for constant self-presentation. In this context, the individual is no longer merely a spectator but an actor in their own biography – “always on stage” and vulnerable to algorithmic selection and emotional burnout.

The Postcolonial Stage Act

The postcolonial stage constitutes the plane of existence for groups that were not only subjected to the oppression of a regime (e.g., the Soviet Union) but also found themselves categorized as marginalized communities against the backdrop of global transformations. In this study, postcoloniality functions as a metaphor, whose essence is to illuminate the mechanisms and algorithms of action employed by underrepresented communities. It is precisely through the performativity of their actions that these communities seek to mitigate the extremities of globalization.

Within the global postcolonial framework, performativity introduces an additional dimension wherein representation ceases to be a “banal reflection” and becomes enmeshed in the struggle for the right “to speak”. The languages of minority groups, bodily practices, memory rituals, and the reconstruction of canons no longer merely accompany political processes; they become political in themselves, as they alter the distribution of visibility and, in turn, redistribute power.

These opportunities are not without risks. Performative pressure manifests as “impression management” – a form of theatricalization driven, from the perspective of citizens, by a preoccupation with immediate effects. This preoccupation undermines long-term mechanisms of social change.

On the one hand, this contributes to the fact that the established rules, laws, and regulations in society not only undergo verification but also, due to their inherent efficiency, have the opportunity to take root and acquire all attributes of validity. Additionally, there exists the possibility of the periphery being represented, which gains the opportunity to collectively construct political subjectivity (to the greatest extent possible against the backdrop of the constant expansion of globality). Alternatively, a tendency toward the “provincialization of Europe” emerges, as correctly argued by Dipesh Chakrabarty (Chakrabarty D., 2008). Drawing on his own biographical experience, Chakrabarty identifies a stage in which he underwent both metaphorical and physical mobility from a community of high – level professionals to a middle – class circle. He states, “One could say that Europe has already been provincialized by history itself. Historians have long recognized that the so – called ‘European Age’ in modern history began to give way to other regional and global configurations. Europe is no longer regarded as embodying the essence of universal human history” (Chakrabarty D., 2008, p. 3). In contrast to the highly developed Europe and its transition to a state of “provinciality”, both Europe and, metaphorically speaking, post – colonial India can draw insights from any local community or cultural tradition. With regard to a body of thought on which one’s intellectual development largely depends, European thought is simultaneously indispensable and insufficient for helping us analyze the experience of political modernity in non-Western nations. This body of thought – now part of the shared heritage of all and influencing each of us – can be revitalized from and for the marginalized regions (Chakrabarty D., 2008, p. 16).

The postcolonial context can also be conceptualized as a framework that focuses on human beings and their identities, which are deconstructed in a procedural manner (Butler J., 1988). Postmodern performance intensifies the process of identity formation and, consequently, facilitates

the adoption of diverse hybrid forms of tradition. Each such performative act serves as a form of resistance, where performance functions as a link between the past and the present within the framework of spatial dialogue. Postmodern reinforces this through a multi – layered narrative form that incorporates folklore motifs, memory archives, or media references. In this context, the postmodern aesthetics of fragmentation and pluralism prioritize local cultural codes over the hegemony of global narratives. Conversely, there is an inherent risk, as this creates a space characterized by persistent temporal instability and uncertainty, which tends to escalate. Therefore, it is imperative that the execution of political, economic, or social actions maintains a balance between freedom and responsibility. This ensures that, in line with the core principles of globalization, the formerly oppressed do not become the new oppressors. Such a balance is crucial for sustaining political liberation, enabling the expression of voices, and establishing a distinct position.

Postmodernism as a Countermeasure to the Algorithmicization of Performativity

Protest culture in the global world exhibits the same performative characteristics as power itself. Street dances, artistic actions, self-expression in digital streams, and hybrid forms of documentation – all these activities capture attention and translate it into a form of pressure. Yet, through this same logic, protest becomes vulnerable to simulation: at the content level, every gesture of protest can be reduced to the status of a brand slogan, with no deeper significance.

Algorithmic performativity tends to amplify extremism and penalize dissent. Artistic, scientific, legal, and educational discourses increasingly adopt the format of clips and “case studies”, and the world is reduced to the scope of an instruction manual. Ethical fatigue also emerges: constant media exposure transforms the subject into a contracted actor in their own biography, and the capacity for empathy is depleted under the pressure of endless narratives of tragedy and heroism.

The pathway to transcending this mode of existence does not lie in escaping publicness but in the continuous diversification of genres and the presentation of “content”. In contexts where infrastructure can be projected instead of spectacles, performativity ceases to function as a manipulative tool and becomes a mechanism for collective world-building.

Global postmodernism does not negate truth or materiality; instead, it alters the pathway to accessing them. Rather than “reflecting reality”, multiple stages emerge where value is validated solely as an effect of sustained performance. Consequently, the key competency for existence in

this world is the ability to differentiate between productions that advance the common good and those that exploit it. Performativity, therefore, is inevitable in this context; the critical question is whether it operates as a factory of simulacra or, alternatively, as a mechanism for the construction of the contemporary world.

In reality, when discussing postmodernism in the context of overcoming the algorithmization and normalization of performative actions, it ceases to be merely an ironic style. Instead, it transforms into a set of epistemological and political strategies that restore the diversity and uncertainty of actions, without which freedom would deteriorate. An algorithmized environment converts any statement or gesture into a standardized performance with a predictable outcome. The forms of these actions and gestures are normalized and subject to procedural classification. Owing to its skepticism and rejection of metanarratives, postmodernism recognizes that the sole criteria for truth and the validation of values lie in the diversity of linguistic games. This orientation is reinforced by Derrida's deconstruction method, which provides tools for implementing this dynamic set of strategies: citation, repetition, imitation, variation in intonation, the amplification or, conversely, attenuation of rituals, and the identification of a diverse range of emotional effects, among others. Collectively, these strategies generate micro – level reproductions, states of “being in the process of formation”, and other manifestations of actions that originate from the periphery. However, the strategies offered by postmodernism are not limited to these. Michel Foucault points out that normalization is a technique of power. To disrupt the logic of norms, it is essential to question and be skeptical of the very procedure of validity, rather than merely challenging its content. For instance, in a digital environment, this manifests not only in challenging the content but also in reinterpreting the way it is perceived. Similarly, this is achieved through the reevaluation of decisions and the recognition of differences, which transform a rule from a closed regulation into a publicly debated convention. This also safeguards local entities from being absorbed by global forces.

Admittedly, postmodern is also prone to cooptation: its irony is commercialized, its distinctive features are capitalized on, and “consciousness – raising” is transformed into a marketing strategy. Even aesthetics, to avoid falling into the trap of normativity, needs to be combined with legal or technical frameworks. Nevertheless, it is the guiding principles of postmodern – with its diverse set of rules, skepticism toward “ultimate authorities”, emphasis on priorities, and critique of dogmatism – that formulate a series of requirements to overcome the usurpation of power by global forces. Within this framework, performance cannot be reduced

to a standardized, assembly – line – like regulation of gestures. Instead, it constantly engages with various forces, such as politics and economics, through the creation of regular scenes of action. It is in this context that the ultimate goal of performance is not reduced to monetization, and the distinctiveness of its procedural nature is not confined to a single predictable template.

Conclusions

With the acceleration of globalization processes, there is an urgent need to develop new models for constructing and describing social reality that are effective in addressing complex, fragmented, and unstable processes. Cultural pluralism, digital flows, the information explosion, crises, migration processes, and numerous other phenomena often do not conform to the rigidity of cause and effect logic. Traditional approaches frequently overlook subjectivity, contextuality, or blur the boundaries between facts and their narrative representations. After all, they fail to consider that global phenomena are constructed through discourses and practices that simplify interpretations, omit details, and more. Against this backdrop, postmodern performance – built on the theoretical frameworks of J.-F. Lyotard, G. Deleuze, J. Butler, M. Foucault, and J. Derrida – emerges as a critical tool. Postmodern performance in itself constitutes a series of acts and actions that strive to prioritize authenticity over simulation and manipulation. For the study of the global world, postmodern performance can serve as a methodology that enables the analysis of how power, economy, identity, and social structures are performed (created and formed) in everyday practices. For example, global events such as migration crises can be examined through the analysis of performative gestures, narratives, and rituals involved in the construction of meaning. Postmodern performance, which also focuses on fragmentation and irony, is capable of highlighting local, hybrid narratives – narratives that are ideal for deconstructing dominant discourses. Consequently, it becomes a key element in transforming, constructing, and facilitating the understanding of reality, as well as bringing to the forefront the “uncertain voices” that embody better values in the global present.

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