

Editorial



The present volume of *Text Matters*, dedicated for the most part to North American literatures and arts, has been put together thanks to the efforts of numerous people. It was our former colleague from the Department of American Literature at the University of Łódź, Matthew Chambers, who suggested the topic “Collecting, Archiving, Publishing North America.” Inspired by Jeremy Braddock’s 2012 book *Collecting as a Modernist Practice*, Chambers wrote the Call for Papers for *Text Matters* #5. His aim was to draw the prospective contributors’ attention to the growing significance, throughout the twentieth century and up to the present, of collecting, archiving, and publishing as ways of “framing of how literary and cultural materials are received.” Steady increase in the production of literary texts and cultural objects, since the beginning of the twentieth century to the present, has greatly strengthened the role of publishers, editors, librarians, and exhibition curators responsible for the reception and preservation of textual and cultural objects. As Jeremy Braddock points out, modernism introduced us to the idea of a “collecting aesthetics,” recognizing that the role of the collection became central in the art world of the first decades of the twentieth century. The idea of “collecting aesthetics” has considerably influenced the artistic sensibility not only of that period but of our times as well.

The fifth issue of *Text Matters*, prepared by members of the Department of American Literature in cooperation with the journal’s permanent editorial staff, is organized, for the most part, around the themes of collecting, anthologizing and publishing in American and Canadian literature and visual arts. The volume is divided into four sections: “Collecting and Archiving,” “Publishing North America,” “Exhibitions,” and “Reviews and Interviews.” The first section consists of four articles dealing strictly with museum collections, anthologies, and archiving. The second one, larger than the first, presents articles concerning American and Canadian literature and culture. “Exhibitions” is a special section of *Text Matters*’ current volume. Although the art exhibits discussed there were both held in Europe, featuring European visual artists, we have decided to include them

because each of the articles is in some way connected with Łódź. Rod Mengham, Fellow in English and Curator of Works of Art at Cambridge University's Jesus College, taught at the University of Łódź as British Council lecturer in the years 1984–1988, while the installation *Madame B* which Dorota Filipczak is concerned with in her text, created by a Dutch cultural and literary theorist Mieke Bal, together with a British video artist Michelle Williams Gamaker, was shown for the first time at the Museum of Modern Art in Łódź between December 2013 and February 2014. In the fourth section, readers will find texts of a more personal nature, recollections, and records of conversations.

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Aaron Angello addresses the problem of archiving digital poetry in the context of archiving literary works published in ephemeral digital media. Angello considers the question he poses in the title of his text not only from the point of view of digital poetry's ephemerality but also from the broader perspective of curation and preservation of contemporary art. In her article Brygida Gasztold writes about the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, Massachusetts, created in the 1980s by Aaron Lansky with the intention of bringing together Yiddish and American cultures, presenting the experience of the Holocaust as it exists in the memories of survivors and in the reflections of the survivors' descendants. Anne Lovering Rounds's "Anthology and Absence: The Post-9/11 Anthologizing Impulse" focuses on the numerous poems and poetry collections dedicated to New York City after the tragedy of 9/11. The author points to the frequently recurring themes of absence and presence in the anthologies, relating them to what she terms "a discourse of memorialization."

Norman Ravvin's article, presenting two unconventional Canadian publishing presses, opens the second section of *Text Matters* #5. Ravvin argues that the Coach House Press from the 1960s and the more recent Gaspereau Press, dedicated to the idea of bookmaking as artisanal work performed by a cultural community, have influenced the Canadian literary scene. In her extensive essay, Paulina Ambroży analyzes two post-apocalyptic novels, David Markson's *Wittgenstein's Mistress* and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, focusing on the relationship between language and the dehumanized post-apocalyptic reality, as well as on the ability of language to resist the apocalypse. Krzysztof Majer discusses the Coen brothers' film *A Serious Man* in the light of its dedication entirely to Jewish issues in the United States, a Jewish community in the Midwest and the character of *schlemiel*, the eternal loser, who in the film becomes a post-modern figure confronting the insecurities of our times and thus turning into a symbol of the present human condition. A monumental painting by Charles Willson Peale, *The Exhumation of the Mastodon*, a self-portrait

and a historical image reflecting early nineteenth-century American views on science and religion, is the subject matter of Bryan J. Zygmunt's article. In Alicja Piechucka's text, a somewhat forgotten novel by Gladys Huntington, *Madame Solario*, is given a new reading. The author concentrates on the concept of *femme fatale*, represented in Huntington's book by the eponymous character. Piechucka shows Madame Solario as simultaneously a victim and a victimizer, caught in "an interplay between innocence and experience." Jacek Partyka's article takes us back to the turbulent 1930s. The author studies W. H. Auden's involvement in the politics of that decade from the perspective of the "English" and "American" periods of the poet's creative evolution. In her article dealing with the Puritan times in New England, Justyna Fruzińska analyzes the early immigrants' process of construction of their new identity in America; the author also discusses representations of the New World in their texts. Kacper Bartczak undertakes the task of juxtaposing the poetry of Wallace Stevens with that of John Ashbery, referring their works to the concept of "plurality of reality, the plurality that is concentrated in the phenomenon of change." Zbigniew Maszewski's article deals with Carl Gustav Jung's brief 1925 visit to the Indian Taos Pueblo in New Mexico. Maszewski discusses Jung's rendering of the experience of confrontation between the "European consciousness" and the Indian "unconscious" in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. Slacker films, and specifically Richard Linklater's *Slacker* and Kevin Smith's *Clerks*, are the topic of Katarzyna Małecka's essay. She considers the films to be good examples of independent American cinema. In his essay Adam Sumera compares Graham Swift's novel *Waterland* with its film adaptation. Sumera analyzes the changes introduced for the purpose of the adaptation made by Stephen Gyllenhaal.

Rod Mengham's article, one of two in the third section, presents and discusses museum installations of paintings by Agnès Thurnauer, a French-Swiss artist, which were set up in Angers and Nantes in 2014. In Mengham's opinion, Thurnauer's experimental paintings create "a new space for critical viewers," particularly women, who may find themselves reflected in Thurnauer's works, described by Mengham as "territory without maps, in the uncertain borderland between the first and the second persons, that strangely familiar no-man's-land, a female *terra nullius*." In her article about the video installation *Madame B*, Dorota Filipczak argues that the already mentioned installation provides an innovative audiovisual interpretation of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, which she relates to the Polish context via Bolesław Prus's novel *Lalka* (*The Doll*), referring, like Flaubert's novel, to the dependencies between capitalism and romance. Filipczak's article creates a connection, a bridge of sorts, between the previous

volume of *Text Matters, Re-visioning Ricoeur and Kristeva*, and the present one. Mieke Bal, a visual artist and a critic in visual studies, was a special guest of *Text Matters* #4, which opened with Dorota Filipczak's conversation with her, "Mieke Bal: 'Writing with Images.'"

The volume's closing section contains Norman Ravvin's recollections and comments on the Canadian-Jewish conference held by the Department of American Literature at the University of Łódź in April 2014, as well as two interviews. In the first one, Krzysztof Majer and Justyna Fruzińska, organizers of the Canadian-Jewish conference, talk to one of the event's distinguished participants, a writer and translator, Sherry Simon from Concordia University in Montreal. In the second interview, Agnieszka Salska, the founder of the Department of American Literature in Łódź and a co-founder of the Polish Association for American Studies, answers Jadwiga Maszewska and Zbigniew Maszewski's questions about the development of American Studies in Poland in the past few decades.

Jadwiga Maszewska