Suzanne Conklin Akbari (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ):
The Virtual Spaces of Literature: Three Pathways, Three Rooms

Suzanne Conklin Akbari's paper considers the different ways in which literary texts can be grouped, and what kinds of communities are called into being – whether implicitly or explicitly – by these groupings. Anthologies, canon formation and conceptions of 'World Literature,' 'Great Books' and 'Literary History' share a tendency to organise or to cluster works on the basis of certain shared phenomena. What kind of community is imagined in each of these approaches, and what kind of reader is understood as the addressee? And what might be the role of oral modalities – oral story, spoken commentary, conversation as performance and oratory – in the emergence of a more dynamic mode of literary experience?

Gur Zak (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem):
Petrarchan Bonds: Virtue, Vulnerability, and Community in Petrarch's Letter Collections

One of the celebrated features of Petrarch's textual practices is his use of letter-writing as a means of fashioning deep connections across the barriers of both space and time. Through letters, Petrarch established a bond with ancient authors long dead, with devoted friends living across Europe, as well as with us, readers of posterity. Yet while fashioning a trans-cultural and trans-historical community through letter-writing, Petrarch's letter collections are dominated by an ongoing tension over the precise nature of this epistolary community: is it a communion of like-minded men, sharing in similar universal ideals of reason and virtue, or is it rather a coming together based on the recognition of – and sharing in – common human vulnerabilities? While Petrarch's epistolography is primarily identified nowadays with the former option, Gur Zak's paper will highlight the way in which these two competing notions continually collide and interact within Petrarch's letter collections – an oscillation which becomes in itself a defining feature of his humanist outlook.

Caroline Heim (Queensland University of Technology):
Audiences as Performers and Re-performers in Temporal Communities

Caroline Heim's paper explores audience as performer and re-performer. At the theatrical event there are two troupes of performers: actors and audience. Audience performance includes the gestural, verbal and paralingual responses to the actors in the reciprocity of co-creation. After the event, in various temporal communities, audience members often, 're-perform' their memories of the performance they have seen. Their re-performance can be embodied, written, spoken, sung and painted, often creating an entirely new artefact to be shared on social media or re-performed amongst friends, family members or fellow-fans. This will be illustrated through a discussion of a case study of a temporal community of audience performers who perform and re-perform before, during and after each new production staged by the Broadway theatre company Manhattan Theatre Club (MTC). MTC conduct pre- and post-performance audience workshops that not only extend their plays' conversations, but contain performative elements that work to create temporal audience communities. The discussion draws from in-depth interviews undertaken with twelve highly articulate audience performers that regularly attend these New York workshops. Caroline Heim also cites her own participant-observations of workshop performances centred around the MTC staging of Simon Stephen's Heisenberg. This paper argues that while re-performance is not always contiguous with the theatrical event and often occurs in a different spatiotemporal dimension, part of the performance remains through the audience's re-performance. While the re-produced performance does not contain Benjamin's aura or Böhme's ekstaces, it emerges as a unique and enduring palimpsest of the original artefact: an audience text.

Bilal Orfali (American University of Beirut):
Walking in the Steps of Poets: Secular Arabic Poetry in Sufi Anthologies

It is common practice in modern times to read mystical poetry and relate it to our own mundane lives and loves. Early Sufi poets did the opposite: their mystical hymns often spun out of the courtly poetic ghazal, panegyric and wine songs. Bilal Orfali's paper highlights the relationship between the Arabic courtly poetic canon and early Sufism. Sufi anecdotes, reports and poetry evoke past poets and their poetic heritage; they tend to quote or refer to eminent poets whose poetry must have been widely circulated and memorised. Yet, Sufism places this readily recognisable poetry in a new context that deliberately changes the past. It is a process of a metaphorization in which the reality of the pre-Islamic, Umayyad and Abbasid models now acts as a device or metaphor for Sufi poetics.

Heribert Tommek (Universität Regensburg):

Literary Import and Export. (Ex)changing Literary Values in the Early Stages of the Literarische Colloquium Berlin's Programme to Promote Literary Translation Projects

Heribert Tommek's lecture argues that global networks of literary translation produce nodes that enable us to study long-term changes in the literary field such as modernisation, professionalisation and internationalisation. The lecture focusses on the beginnings of the Literarische Colloquium Berlin's (LCB) programme to promote literary translation. Under the direction of Walter Höllerer, the LCB evolved into a novel type of network, going beyond the Group 47 to become a new venue that uniquely facilitated the negotiation of literary values. The lecture illustrates this history through two case studies: the first translators' meeting in 1966 and the resumption of the translator talks in the run-up to the 'Wende' in 1988/89. The lecture draws from Tommek's research in the LCB's archive and from sociological approaches to translation studies, as developed in particular by Pascale Casanova through her concept of a République mondiale des lettres. First, the case studies show that the self-confidence of the translators as authors was bolstered at the first workshop of 1966; this can be seen as a continuation of the modernisation of German literature initiated by Höllerer, Enzensberger and other actors of the literary field, such as the Suhrkamp Verlag. Second, the case studies reveal how, at the end of the 1980s, these translators devoted themselves to the 'fashions of translation' and had already imported a notion of literature which decisively shaped the successful, internationally integrated 'new storytelling' in the second half of the 1990s.

Katherine Bode (Australian National University): Reading (as) Data:
Modelling Transnational Literary Entanglements

In the 19th century, newspapers were the main publishers of fiction in Australia; in the 21st century, the National Library of Australia's Trove database offers the world's largest open-access collection of mass-digitised historical newspapers. This fortunate confluence of two technological systems enables the discovery of thousands of publications of 19th-century novels, novellas and short stories in 21st-century digitised pages. Katherine Bode's paper reflects on this project, moving from practical to critical to conceptual considerations. After briefly outlining how this fiction was found, the paperexplores ways of using modelling to expand transnational literary history. The paper will concludewith some provocations relating to how we use data to re/construct literary communities and cultures, especially the role and limitations of representation as a conceptual framework for this exercise.