

Brand new narratives? Dialogues with the literary past in contemporary Anglophone fiction

Literary creation has always involved borrowing from and relying on previous texts. “The true artist,” Oscar Wilde maintains, “is known by what he annexes, and he annexes everything.” In other words, fiction writers borrow, appropriate and “rewrite” works of other authors, initiating in this way a dialogue between texts from different literary genres/conventions. Recent decades have witnessed a proliferation of literary texts which rewrite earlier works from diverse perspectives and angles of vision. Classic examples of this practice include modern versions of William Shakespeare’s plays, numerous revisions of Dr Frankenstein’s story, rewrites of *Dracula*, etc. Rewrites of works of fiction also include *prequel* and *sequels* as well as stories retold from the standpoint of marginal characters.

This MA seminar is devoted to the study of literary rewrites in Anglophone fiction. The course focuses on contemporary retellings of well-known stories. Students will be acquainted with theoretical approaches which will enable them to analyse, in their MA theses, works of fiction in an intertextual dialogue with their literary predecessors.

If you are interested in both the traditional and the modern, this course is the right choice for you. 😊

Dr hab. Zbigniew Mazur

MA Seminar, English Studies, 2021-2023

Crossing borders: boundaries and borderlands in British and American culture and their film and TV representations

This is a time in which the issue of borders, either physical or metaphorical, has acquired an unprecedented significance. The increase in global migrations and human mobility is accompanied by the creation of borders, barriers and walls, as impediments to the free circulation of peoples and cultures. The seminar will explore the questions of borders, migrations, border crossing, and the construction of borderlands in British and American culture. The specific issues to be considered include, among others, the cultural effects of Brexit, the impact of the migrations across the US-Mexican border on American culture, or spatial demarcations of UK and US cities. At the figurative level, the seminar will deal with ethnic, racial, gender, and class boundaries in the two cultures, studying the effects of the construction of metaphorical borders on social identities. The seminar will discuss how class, gender, ethnicity and race have been used as barriers to exclude or marginalize some social groups. The list of theoretical concepts to be considered contains liminality, periphery, ex-centricity, trans-border dynamics, walled geographies, contested territories, no man's lands, securitization, gate-keeping, multiculturalism and national identity, and many others.

The MA projects will focus on the study of the visual and narrative representations of borders and border crossing in British and American film and television, but projects based on other sources, including literature, are also possible. The major question is how cinema and TV mediate questions of physical and social space in the present political and economic context, and how they offer discursive constructions of borders and border crossings.

Małgorzata Rutkowska Ph.D.

Around the World in Eighteen Books (More or Less): Reading Classic and Modern Travel Writing.

Pack your gear and get out your passports for a vicarious trip around the world! This seminar course will be devoted to the study of English-language nonfiction travel books and memoirs. We will read about travels to and from America, Eastern and Western Europe, the Orient, the Middle East, Africa and the Pacific. At first, readings will cover some excerpts from classic travel books of the late 18th and 19th centuries to familiarize students with generic conventions. Then, we will move to reading selected chapters from a variety of 20th- and 21st-century texts which pose questions about crossing boundaries and encountering otherness. We will study travelers and the narrative personas they adopt in the texts acting as colonists, explorers, voyagers, gentlemen and lady travelers, tourists, curmudgeons and spiritual pilgrims. In fiction and non-fiction alike travelling has been represented both as a physical journey into the unknown and an inner, psychological journey in search of oneself. In general, the way authors describe a new or foreign land may tell us more about their own selves, cultural norms and perceptual filters than about the people and places they encounter. This course provides a foundation for students' inquiry into the ways travel books represent various parts of the world and address such recurrent concepts as home and abroad, self and other, myths and imaginative geography. So, whether you are a world traveler or armchair-traveler, all Aboard!

Selected issues in gender linguistics – MA seminar

Prof. Jolanta Szpyra-Kozłowska

Have you ever thought about the meaning of such Polish proverbs concerning women as *baba z wozu, koniom lżej* or *tere fere kuku, strzela baba z łuku* and the lack of similar negative sayings about men? Consider now some other asymmetries, e.g. *męska rozmowa* ‘serious talk’ and *babskie gadanie* ‘female prattle’ as well as differences between the following pairs of nouns: *dżokej* ‘jockey’ – *dżokejka* ‘jockey cap’, *śmieciarz* ‘garbage man’ – *śmieciarka* ‘garbage truck’, *Amerykanin* ‘male American’ – *amerykanka* ‘sofa,’ where the first item in each pair refers to men and the second one means some object. What are the feminine forms of such masculine nouns as *dziekan* ‘dean’ or *prezydent* ‘president’ and the masculine equivalents of *przedszkolanka* ‘pre-school teacher’ or *kosmetyczka* ‘beautician’? All languages comprise many words, phrases and grammatical structures which are **gender-related** and which express **different judgements concerning men and women**. Gender linguistics deals exactly with such asymmetries and the ways in which men and women are represented in language.

It is also concerned with differences in the speech of both sexes and addresses such questions as *do women talk more than men? Do men swear more than women? Are there words more likely to be used by one of the sexes? Do men and women communicate in the same way or differently?* In other words, are women from Venus and men from Mars?

Finally, an interesting question concerns the gender situation in languages other than Polish. How do languages differ in this respect? What **translation problems** arise in the case of different gender systems? Should the proper Polish version of *she is an excellent candidate* be *ona jest świetnym kandydatem* or rather *ona jest świetną kandydatką*?

This seminar will be concerned with various exciting issues of **gender linguistics**, basing mostly on English and Polish, but also making references to other languages. We will examine various aspects of the topic and (hopefully) have lively discussions on **gender and language**. I will also, naturally, expect you to write your MA thesis on selected issues of this problem area.

(Un)translatability of texts: selected issues.

Konrad Żyśko, PhD

Translation studies is a broad area. Texts can be studied from various perspectives and every particular approach can make some relevant contribution to the field. This seminar is devoted to discussing the much debated yet still rich notion of (un)translatability.

Translatability seems to be a relative concept since it "has to do with the extent to which, despite obvious differences in linguistic structure (grammar, vocabulary, etc), meaning can be adequately expressed across languages" (Munday, 2004). Consequently, some texts, or their aspects, will be more translatable than others.

Our ambition in this seminar will be to study texts at the far edge of translatability, i.e. posing greatest challenge to potential translators. In particular, we will have a closer look at instances of texts loaded with witty wordplay, dialects, slang, culture-specific lexicon, poetic verse, and a whole cornucopia of other *untranslatable* phenomena. We will aspire not only to unravel these elements in the original texts but also to distil compensation strategies that deem the target text adequate.

The ultimate objective of this seminar will be to produce a dissertation offering an insightful analysis of the selected material.