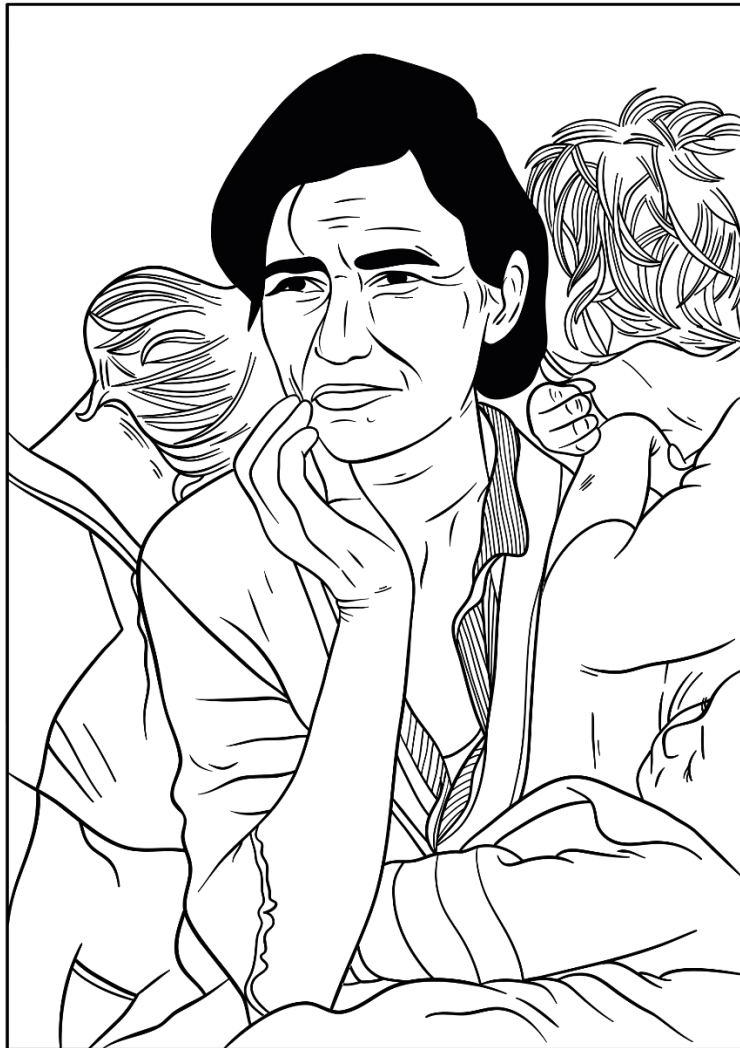


**POLISH ASSOCIATION FOR AMERICAN STUDIES**

**2022 Annual Conference**

**BOOK OF ABSTRACTS**



## **SESSION 1**

### **From Science to Religion and Back** **Chair: Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska**

#### **Edyta Frelik -- Man Ray's Hollywood Writings: From Crisis to Self-reflection**

Throughout his life Man Ray wrote incessantly, finding the process of intellection and verbalization an indispensable part of his artistic endeavors. Amidst the various topics that his notes and longer texts cover, science and technology appear frequently as both inspirational and catalytic ingredients of the creative process. Notably, Man Ray often invokes them to bolster the social usefulness of art by identifying affinities and analogies between scientific and artistic approaches to knowledge and imagination. Like his art, his writings, in which he playfully experiments with conventions of language use and logic, are particularly interesting as examples of what Marcel Duchamp famously called exercising "gray matter." The two artists were kindred spirits and the closest of friends, but Man Ray often had a hard time fully embracing the radicalism and (alleged) nihilism of the Frenchman, whose anti-art agenda involved propagating aesthetic indifference, erasure of the self from artworks and renunciation of the "retinal" tradition in painting. Especially during the years he spent in the US after the fall of France during WWII, Man Ray experienced a crisis engendered mainly by the lack of his recognition as a painter, which continued to elude him despite his persistence and dedication to this particular form of creativity. His Californian writings and notebooks (known as the Hollywood Album) reveal that, contrary to the popular view of him as light-weight and happy-go-lucky, he reflected upon his own condition and that of art and the world at large in ways that are surprisingly serious, profound and even prophetic for somebody with the reputation of an irreverent joker and trickster.

#### **Ewa Wyleżek-Targosz -- Losing my Religion/Keep the Faith – Religious Symbolism in Contemporary American Art**

The objective of my paper is to demonstrate how the Christian theme of seven deadly sins used by a contemporary painter from California, Dan Lydersen may constitute a commentary upon a dominant perception of reality and its (allegedly) firm principles. His painting *Seven Deadly Sins* embodies both the continuity and the change of the canonical moral discourse of the Judeo-Christian culture. The painting deconstructs the opposition between the universality of the God-given order and the locality of manmade orders. Lydersen replaced the "universal" iconicity of Hieronymus Bosch's painting with pop-cultural references of contemporary cinematography, and, in so doing and paradoxically, reasserts the Dutch master's diagnosis of the humankind: "the hierarchy of dual oppositions," as Jacques Derrida asserts, "always reestablishes itself."

#### **Jarosław Hetman -- David Foster Wallace's Secular Spirituality in Times of Crisis**

The publication of David Foster Wallace's mammoth novel, *Infinite Jest* in 1996 almost instantaneously gave the author the reputation of a highly demanding writer, a genius even. Admittedly, much of the initial impression of Wallace's opus magnum was a direct result of his publisher's marketing strategy, which aimed to sell the 1079-page book to the audience as a type of a challenge or dare. Over the years, however, Wallace's readers started to approach his fiction by reading his less intimidating short stories and essays, and these have been gaining increasing critical attention in recent years. One such text is the essay "This Is Water," which started life as a commencement speech for the 2005 graduates of Kenyon College. This is a transitory work, bridging the gap between the aforementioned *Infinite Jest*, and the posthumously published *The Pale King*, a novel that was supposed to mark a new direction in Wallace's writing. It is particularly important because it gives us an insight into the author's spiritual journey the author was on, struggling with yet another fit of depression and the pressure of writing a novel, whose scope and significance were to overshadow Wallace's most important work to date. In my presentation I would like to analyze Wallace's spiritual position from the perspective of the research I have conducted at the Harry Ransom Center, where Wallace's archive is housed. My focus has been firmly limited to the books in his private library that discuss matters of psychology, metaphysics,

religion and spirituality, and the richness of the marginalia they contain, as these offer a valuable insight into the construction of a consistent spiritual framework in a period of a severe emotional and creative crisis.

## **Stage Matters**

**Chair: Anna Bendrat**

**Magdalena Szuster** -- FTP by-products: Impro(v) as a Theatrical Response to Crises and a Community Outreach Tool in North America

In 1939 Viola Spolin, the intellectual and the logician behind the improvisational movement, took a position of a drama supervisor for the Chicago Branch of the WPA's Recreational Project with underprivileged, often immigrant, children, where she perceived a need for an easily grasped system of theater training that could cross the cultural and ethnic barriers within the WPA Project. Her improv games, "devised in Chicago during Great Depression as tools to teach creative dramatics to ghetto children from the West Side streets," were later picked up by next generations of improvisers, such as David Shephard and Howard Jerome (Coleman 21). At the turn of the century, the focus of such projects shifted towards programs centering on the increasing racial/ethnic tensions, rising diversity standards, and supporting gender and sexual orientation identification, as well as reaching out to underprovided social groups. In my paper, I concentrate on the formative days of improvised theater, exploring the notion of impro(v) as a community outreach tool developed under the FTP by Spolin, and explore how this concept has been carried on into the new millennium as a theatrical response to (re)emerging (economic, social and political) crises.

**Edit-Mária Dánél** -- Division, Reconciliation and Reintegration: Mediation and Mediators in Carlos Morton's *The Miser of Mexico* and *Trumpus Caesar*

My research aims towards identifying the protagonists who occupy the position of subjective mediators in Carlos Morton's *The Miser of Mexico* (1989) and *Trumpus Caesar* (2021), partially based on George Packer's arguments in his article entitled "How America Fractured into Four Parts," where he presents the narratives concerning American society's loss of values, purpose, history and meaning. In order to reconcile, reunite, remedy political, social, personal, respectively artistic differences, mediation is necessary. Also, relying on Slavoj Žižek's theory who in his work *Did Someone Say Totalitarianism? Four Interventions in the (Mis)Use of a Notion* attributes to Jesus Christ intermediary characteristics between God and humanity. In order for two opposite poles to reach the state of cosubstantiality by disappearance, "the centre has to sacrifice itself" (Žižek 2005: 40). Mediation occurs at borderline events in any person's, nations's existence and proves to be absolutely necessary for progress through self-discovery. Carlos Morton's protagonists in the dramas mentioned above become aware of the challenges and limitations regarding their inability to modify the past, still hoping to somewhat be able to remediate the future by effective mediation, examining historical causes and effects through the lens of four ideologies stated by George Packer in his book *The Last Best Hope. America in Crisis and Renewal* under the controversial names of Free America, Smart America, Real America and Just America.

**Anna Bendrat** -- The Impossibility of Fleeing: Malabou's Destructive Plasticity in Martyna Majok's *Cost of Living*

In *The Ontology of the Accident*, Catherine Malabou describes the phenomenon of a "form born of the accident, born by accident, a kind of accident" when due to a "deep cut" in a biography, the individual's path of life splits and a "new, unprecedented persona comes to live with the former person." The article explores how Martyna Majok in her 2018 Pulitzer-awarded drama *Cost of*

*Living* constructs two intertwining impositions of a new form (immigrant, disabled after an accident) on an old form in the characters of Ani, a Polish immigrant whose tragic accident left her quadriplegic, and Jess, a first-generation recent graduate who struggles both financially and emotionally to find her place in a city that actively denies the immigrants' presence. Even though the backdrop of the "urban East of America," as Majok describes the location, is not manifested through its landscape and architecture, its constant presence in the play extends beyond the role of the setting. In line with Malabou's concept of destructive plasticity, the city with its inbound and outbound mobility becomes a conceptual frame for articulating the consequences of the lack of exteriority which usually serves as a mental escape and thus offers existential relief.

## **SESSION 2**

### **Transatlantic Histories**

**Chair: Marek Paryż**

#### **Renata Nowaczewska -- Rebranding America: Rockefeller and Ford Foundations Combating Anti-American Sentiments in Western Europe during the Cold War Period**

The paper is devoted to various projects undertaken by two largest international philanthropic foundations at the wake of anti-American feelings in many countries of the Western Europe. One of the consequences of WWII was the rise of the United States to the position of a superpower. The leading position it had taken in all aspects of life, including science and technology, brought unprovoked reactions. Having suffered the 'long years of darkness', many Europeans responded with jealousy about the lost economic, military, political and even intellectual leadership. The political division into two opposing camps, the Soviet-incited propaganda, and the pro-Communist sentiments arising in the West (particularly France) appeared to pose significant challenges to the prospects of keeping the peace and to the value system cherished by Americans, including the members of the Rockefeller family and both foundations. The two foundations aimed at bringing the world together, reducing international tensions through the 'cross-fertilization of ideas', facilitating progress 'without regard of race, creed, colour, or political opinion'. In its charter, the Rockefeller Foundation declared that it strived to 'promote the wellbeing and to advance the civilization of the peoples (...) in [the] acquisition and dissemination of knowledge'. Likewise, the Ford Foundation recognized 'exchanges of ideas, and possibly also of artistic and literary productions,' as 'one of the most promising methods of fostering the development of world understanding and a sense of moral and cultural community among the peoples of the world'. In many of its intercultural projects initiated in 1951, the Ford Foundation focused on declared aims of 'establishing peace, strengthening democracy and educating people in a democratic society'. For both the support for democratic ideals in many instances translated into 'Americanization' through the support for American studies, exchange programs aimed at 'openminded' elites, the support for libraries, individual scholars and scientists pursuing their research aims, creating favorable conditions for forming enduring alliances. The paper answers questions about the motivations behind the programs, the projects' effectiveness, and most of all what lessons, if any, one can learn for the modern time challenges posing to American hegemony.

#### **Krzysztof Siwek -- A Failed Ideal? American Universalism and the Central-Eastern Europe in the 20th Century**

Since the start of the Great War, until the end of the Cold War, the United States combined its own political condition with the universal spread of American progressive, democratic and liberal values. The ideas of permanent peace, democratic system, self-determination, social progress, economic rationalism, free trade and human rights, emphasized first by Thomas W. Wilson in his

reference to the European postwar order, were all subordinated to the universalist objective of "emancipation of humanity". The Central-Eastern Europe, located between Germany and Russia as a crucial playground for the 20th century conflicts, revolutions and nationalisms, held a unique position for the American ideal of general pacification and democratic change of the Old World. Accordingly, American statesmen, policy makers and intellectuals pursued an internationalist vision that was hardly applicable to complex political, territorial and economic order of this region, ravaged by wars, ethnic conflicts, imperial designs and frontier disputes. Although an idea of transnational integration and democratic transformation of this region was shared by nations favourable to the United States, like Poles and Czechs, their geopolitical and defensive outlook seemed undesirable for the long term stability of Europe. Actually, American liberal universalism challenged both its communist (Soviet) competitor and imperial or nationalist sentiments of Central-Eastern European nations. Therefore, the U.S. calls for an international, democratic "community of ideals, interests and purposes", which translated into commercial liberty, the Atlantic Charter, democratization and market reforms, although frequently received with enthusiasm in Europe, were otherwise largely misunderstood by America's friends and foes alike. While reconciliation of many political, national and ideological tensions in Central-Eastern Europe by the end of the 20th century seemed promising, contemporary crises might be regarded as a failure of American universalist design. Still, the question remains whether a liberal ideal of "the end of history" contributed to pacification of East European conflicts or just the opposite – aggravated the current crisis to a global dimension and a state of perpetual war.

### **Adam Kuź** -- Russia's Invasion of Ukraine as a Challenge for America

**Aim:** The main aim of the article is to answer the question how the war in Ukraine can change America.

**Methodology:** The analysis is based on speeches and articles by George Packer representing a liberal point of view. Answering the question 'Can the war in Ukraine make a difference in the USA?' Packer presents the following theses:

1. The USA is threatened with 'Russification' consisting in the unlimited power of business oligarchs who do not bear any responsibility for their actions
2. The war in Ukraine caused a revival of liberal values in the USA
3. The war in Ukraine clearly showed the difference between good and evil
4. The survival of Ukraine requires the support of its most important ally, the USA
5. The stakes of this war must be clear to the Americans, otherwise they may soon forget about Ukraine

**Conclusions:**

The amount of military equipment the US sends to Ukraine is insufficient to defeat Russia. The dispute over the scale of US engagement in a Ukraine war runs across political divisions. We can find supporters of the George Packer's theses among both Republicans and Democrats. Possible agreement on this issue across political and ideological divisions would change the political landscape of the USA.

**Originality / Value:** The analysis contributes to the discussion on the future of US engagement on a global scale.

### **Women Then and Now**

**Chair: Grażyna Zygałło**

**Joanna Szymaniak** -- Survivors Who Do Not Bleed History: The Representation of Two Models of Jewish Femininity in Art Spiegelman's Graphic Novel *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*

Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1981-1990) remains one of the emblematic examples of the first and the second generation of Holocaust survivors' narratives. Despite its undoubted contribution to reclaiming the complexities of Jewish immigrant identities,

the text upholds a problematic template for addressing the subject of family memory primarily from a male perspective, reducing the existence of Jewish women to conventional, limiting, and over-simplified tropes. The female characters in the story are notoriously marginalized and contained in male-centric frames that reproduce misogynistic archetypes of Jewish womanhood, which narrows the possibilities to reimagine the memories of Holocaust survivors with their gender complexities. My paper analyzes the oppressive nature of gender relations in Art Spiegelman's comic book *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, which continues to be one of the crucial examples of post-memory graphic novels depicting the issue of family memory and its intergenerational trauma. In my analysis, I examine Maus's narrative and visual frameworks utilized to construct two contrasting models of femininity, one glorified and the other redundant. I argue that both female characters, Anja and Mala, are subjected to perpetual objectification by the male protagonists. On the one hand, Anja functions as a tokenistic and romanticized object constructed in Vladek's memory, remaining subjugated to his desire. On the other hand, Mala serves as a vilified and unwanted figure that, despite her own Holocaust experiences, ultimately is obliged to contain the unprocessed male trauma in Spiegelman's household.

### **Patrycja Antoszek** -- Dreaming Desire: Shirley Jackson, the Cold War and the Feminine Fantastic

Shirley Jackson's fiction has often been discussed in the context of supernatural horror and transgressive sexuality. Indeed, writing in the homophobic, male-oriented 1950s, the author consistently challenges heterosexual norms by hinting at, yet never openly admitting, lesbian erotic desires of her heroines. But sexual transgression is only one of many ways in which Jackson undermines the official discourses of her era. In this paper I will demonstrate how the author's insistent challenging of established boundaries and her use of the fantastic create a feminine space within and yet beyond the dominant modes of representation. Jackson's radical questioning of prevailing textual paradigms, and her methods of articulating feminine experience through the language of the fantastic, create a form of *l'écriture féminine* theorized later by feminist philosophers and literary critics. I will focus on the ways in which Jackson's writing comments on the exclusion of women from patriarchal discourses, and how her fictional strategies return the female subjectivity and silenced body into the symbolic. By exploring the psychological realm of her protagonists, Jackson probes not only the insecurities and anxieties of mid-century America, but also the complex mechanisms of female oppression at the heart of Western philosophy and culture. I will argue that the author's specific insistence on the irrational, the ambiguous, and the fantastic constitutes the feminine idiom that challenges the official patriarchal discourse and becomes a significant political statement.

### **Magdalena Dziurzyńska** -- Male Supremacism in the United States: Online Misogyny of the Manosphere and the New Face of Terrorism

The second half of the 20th century has experienced the rise of men's movements, also due to the growing fear of feminism going too far. Some masculinist believed that feminism propagates inequalities by unfairly privileging women. Consequently, in the 20th century, a variety of men's responses to feminism occurred, both in socio-political context and in literary fiction. Some American science fiction writers of the 20th century incorporated in their novels the portrayal of men's world, providing analysis of masculinity and promoting male separatism. Such texts sought to combat the purported feminization of manhood by proposing separated lands of masculinity, untainted by feminizing forces. Interestingly, the 21st century has experienced rapid rise of such male separatist tendencies. This time, however in the era of digitalization, it is the internet, or more precisely mainstream social networks, that have become the masculine asylum.

## **A Conversation with Carlos Morton**

**Chair: Anna Bendrat**

### **TRUMPUS CAESAR: Adaptation of Shakespeare's Classic with a Latinx Twist**

*Trumpus Caesar* is "a soap opera on steroids," written by a Latinx playwright who took affront with Trump's bashing of Mexican people. A bawdy satire in the tradition of Greco-Roman Comedy – *El Teatro Campesino – Trumpus Caesar* follows the rise and fall of Donald Trump.

<https://www.ihc.ucsb.edu/event/humanities-decanted-carlos-morton-trumpus-caesar>

[Humanities Decanted: Carlos Morton, Trumpus Caesar](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmu3CM1EOVI>

[Trumpus Caesar - YouTube](#)

## **SESSION 3**

### **Demographics in Crisis**

**Chair: Ewa Łuczak**

#### **Ewa Kleczaj-Siara -- All Because You Matter – Manifestations of Black Joy and Resilience in BLM Children's Picture Books**

The concept of Black joy, defined by Black activist Kleaver Cruz as "healing, resistance, and regeneration" (2017), has become the prevailing message of BLM children's picture books published within the last few years. Created in response to the racial crisis and the ongoing social unrest, the books are a site of experimenting with popular images of blackness. *All Because You Matter* (2020), *I Am Every Good Thing* (2020) and *Joy! Joy! Joy! The Anthem for Black Boys* (2020), among other titles, exhibit joy and imagination of their young characters who overcome racial barriers in their minds while being bombarded with the dehumanizing rhetoric of blackness. The aim of the presentation is to examine how selected picture books cultivate joy in their verbal and visual narratives. A special emphasis will be placed on the Black rhetorical strategies employed by the authors and illustrators to defy mainstream media coverage of Black issues. Drawing on the existing scholarship on African American resistance literature (Stover 2003) as well as the political rhetoric of African American children's writing (Cueto & Brooks 2019; Brooks & McNair 2009), it will be argued that picture book creators introduce the aforementioned discursive practices not only to subvert Black suffering but also to prove that Black joy will never disappear in the time of racial oppression. Recognizing contemporary BLM picture books as exemplars of resistance literature brings critical attention to politically engaged, yet unknown contemporary African American authors and illustrators.

#### **Aleksandra Różalska -- Teenagers in Crisis: Youth Cultures in *Euphoria* and *Sex Education***

Drawing from youth studies and contemporary critiques of the representation of youth within television studies, in my paper I look critically at the selected TV narratives on teenagers, such as *Euphoria* (2019-2022) and *Sex Education* (2019-2021). Television has traditionally depicted teenagers and young adults in a twofold way—either as "youth-as-fun" or "youth-as-trouble," which Dick Hebdige analyzed in his text "Hiding in the Light: Youth Surveillance and Display" (1988). On the one hand, youth subcultures and teenagers were linked to crime, getting involved in dangerous situations, drug and alcohol abuse, risky sexual behaviors, disregard for social rules,

which served as a justification for their surveillance and controlling measures undertaken by adults and law enforcement. On the other hand, in a more hedonistic manner, youth was related to fun, entertainment, fascination with consumption goods, partying (including drinking alcohol and experimenting with drugs), and putting friends and social environment above parents and family. British Cultural Studies (Dick Hebdige [1988], Angela McRobbie [1993, 2000], David Buckingham [2021]) started to approach youth cultures in a more complex way, going beyond perceiving them as pathological or problematic. Especially in the new millennium, together with the emergence of “quality television,” these stereotypical representations of teenagers have gradually started to change. Some narratives find a way to transgress the above-mentioned dualistic portrayal by showing “youth-as-fun-as trouble,” while others give voice to teenagers themselves and focus on their shifting identities, search for sexual pleasure, (toxic) intimate relationships, the lack of understanding from adults/parents, the role of social media in young people’s lives, as well as consequences of drug addiction. In my paper, I will analyze contemporary TV productions that—in my opinion—offer more complex and authentic representations of teenagers and change the discourse on youth.

### **Grażyna Zygałło** -- “Hollywood’s Treatment of Latinos is an Open Wound” –Racial Inequity in the 21st Century American Cinema

Camposino, observes: “You’ve seen Latinos come and go in Hollywood” depending on the political situation in the U.S. and he adds “it’s never our [Latinos/as] time.” In 2019 in Forbes magazine Veronica Villafañe published an article, “Number of Latinos in Hollywood Films Is Dismal. What Needs to Change?” in which she quotes a study from the USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, which analyzed 1,200 films from 2007 to 2018. According to the study: “Latino actors barely landed 4.5% of more than 47,000 speaking roles in the 100 top-grossing U.S. movies from each of the past 12 years and only 3% were leads or co-leads. The staggeringly low numbers are just as bad behind the camera, where Latino directors constituted 4% and producers just 3%” (Villafañe). Moreover, not only the underrepresentation of Latinos/as was dramatic, the portrayal of the Latinx population continues to be stereotypical and cliché. “Among the findings across 200 films from 2017 to 2018, 24% of all of Latino speaking characters were depicted as criminals (mostly gang members or drug dealers) and 13% were shown as poor or from low-income backgrounds. When it came to jobs on screen, the majority of Latino characters were portrayed as non-college educated individuals (construction workers, farmers, service personnel) with a meager number of highly educated professionals” (Villafañe). Edward James Olmos makes similar observations in an *L.A. Times* article by Daniel Hernandez, entitled “Hollywood’s Treatment of Latinos is an Open Wound. Healing it Requires a Reckoning,” when he says: “White Hollywood does not want to tell the real stories of Latinos. Latinos are in a worse place now than in 1964 when [I] started in the business. Just because there are several successful Latino actors does not mean that Latinos are making it in Hollywood.” Even though the number of Latinos/as involved in the movie business is constantly increasing, similarly to the number of movies or series, they are still hardly visible and appreciated in Hollywood. Consequently, in this presentation, I am going to first analyze the Latinx representation in the 21st century American cinema, and then discuss several contemporary works produced by Latinos/as to demonstrate that they are the integral part of American society who want to be justly represented and have the possibility to speak in their own name.



## **Trauma, Identity and Mental Crisis**

**Chair: Julia Nikiel**

**Izabella Kimak** -- Unfolding the Memory of World War Two: John Guzowski's *Echoes of Tattered Tongues*

In his work, Illinois-based poet and detective fiction writer John Guzowski frequently treats his parents' war-time experiences as literary material. Guzowski's parents were survivors of WW2, while the poet himself and his sister were born in a Displaced Persons camp in Germany prior to the family's relocation to the US in the early 1950s. In his latest volume, *Echoes of Tattered Tongues: Memory Unfolded*, published in 2016 to substantial critical acclaim, Guzowski revisits his earlier poems and incorporates them within the complex structure of his new book that skillfully interweaves prose and poetry. His parents' war trauma is presented alongside the family's first steps in the US, but history is not the sole province of Guzowski's work. The volume likewise shows the writer as a mature man saying goodbye to his dying parents and coming to terms with the complex family history that – as he has repeatedly stressed in interviews and his writings – has made him a man of letters that he is. The purpose of my presentation is thus to interrogate the complex interplay of past and present, history and contemporaneity that permeates the volume, showing that the present moment can never be severed from the past. The complex narrative structure of the work will be argued to function as a mirror of a fractured subjectivity, affected by intergenerationally-transmitted war trauma and the uprootedness of immigration.

**Patrycja Roguska** -- “Monsters are real, and ghosts are real, too. They live inside us, and sometimes they win”: Mental Health in Crisis in Stephen King's *The Shining* and *Misery*

The life of one of the most popular, creative, and prolific of contemporary American writers, Stephen King, has been marked by an immense worldwide literary success on the one hand, and a series of personal misfortunes and life's adversities on the other. However, the many obstacles King had to face in his life failed to put out his creative fire. The author's yearslong struggle with drug and alcohol addiction and its consequences found a reflection in many of his literary works throughout almost five decades of his career as a writer, most notably in *The Shining* (1977) and *Misery* (1987). Focusing on two of the novels' protagonists, Jack Torrance from *The Shining* and Annie Wilkes from *Misery*, the following paper analyzes the ways in which the master storyteller conceptualizes his experiences with drug and alcohol abuse as well as many crises resulting from it, such as mental and physical suffering, domestic violence, alienation, trauma, and the unspeakable torment of writer's block. The paper aims to explore the differences in the depiction of mental health crisis and addiction in both texts, accentuating the shift in King's treatment of both notions in his fiction over the years, dictated by his and his family's personal experiences of intense suffering under the weight of addiction. In his nuanced exploration of the depths of human psyche, King transcends the limitations of the horror genre and enters the realm of a deeper, psychological inquiry into his characters' minds, dreams, memories, vulnerabilities, fears, and desires while keeping an eye on their humanity and providing a timeless commentary on the human condition.

**Małgorzata Martynuska** -- Surviving Hurricane María and Reconstruction of Traumatized Identity Through Magic Realism in *Never Look Back* by Lilliam Rivera

This presentation aims to argue how Lilliam Rivera's novel *Never Look Back* provides a graspable representation of a traumatic event by employing the ancient myth about Orpheus and Euridice and combining it with magic realism and Caribbean heritage. The palimpsest of the narrative

shows the capacity for various beliefs deriving from Greek mythology, Christianity, and Afro-Caribbean folklore. The novel follows the myth to debate themes of collective importance such as music, love, loss, death, and immortality. The narrative demonstrates how the traumatic experience of surviving Hurricane María disrupts the individual's framework of reality. Hence, the protagonist has to reconstruct her identity concerning the new perception of 'the normal' with the concept of magic realism.

Lilliam Rivera places the novel within a broader conversation about the colonial status of Puerto Rico and American politics. The realistic mode is factual with post-hurricane activities of the American president who does not offer any consolation to the inhabitants of the island. The narrative reflects victimization by the trauma and American politics. The title *Never Look Back* provides life guidance and advice for Puerto Ricans to confront fear and move forward with their lives, since looking back causes harmful consequences.

### **PLENARY LECTURE:**

**Prof. Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska**  
**Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin**  
**Chair: Małgorzata Rutkowska**

#### **From Lublin to New York and Back: Polish/Yiddish/American Topographies and Peregrinations**

A number of Yiddish writers originating from Poland ended up in the United States before World War II and continued to write in Yiddish as there was still a fairly large reading audience there until the 1970s, and New York was an important center where numerous Yiddish dailies, periodicals and books were published. Few Yiddish authors, however, gained popularity among the American audience. A notable exception is Yitskhok Bashevis, known in the world as Isaac Bashevis Singer, and often perceived as a Jewish American writer. Most Yiddish authors, however, are little known in spite of their high status among Yiddish critics and readers. The lecture will focus on Yankev Glatstein and Kadya Molodovsky, best known as poets, but also very prolific as novelists, critics and editors, and on their complicated reception in the US and their gradual recognition in post-war Poland. The city of Lublin figures prominently in their oeuvre as well as in works of other Yiddish authors due to its centuries long rich Jewish history. The contemporary gradual recognition of these authors in Poland has been facilitated via English translations and criticism. Paradoxically they had to travel a long way to finally return home via New York.

### **SESSION 4**

#### **Watching Closely: From Book Covers to Moving Pictures**

**Chair: Patrycja Antoszek**

#### **Roman Vasylenko -- Clothes Make the Man: Designing Thomas Pynchon's Book Covers**

The paper, building upon the research by G. Thomas Tanselle, discusses the history and function of dust jackets. The claim is that from a protective element, a dust jacket evolved into a potent paratext that indirectly influences the reading and following reception of the main text. A primary source to illustrate the point will be the cover of the first edition of *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) by

Thomas Pynchon. Then, as counterparts, the dust jackets *The Recognitions* (1955) by William Gaddis, *The Tunnel* (1995) by William Gass, and others will be discussed. To prove that the phenomenon is not limited to the American context, I will touch upon the designs of Polish and Ukrainian editions of *Gravity's Rainbow*

### **Paweł Frelik -- K in San Diego: Gazing into the Abyss of Climate Catastrophe**

That Denis Villeneuve's *Blade Runner 2049* (2017) is a film about the Anthropocene is a trivial statement. Perhaps somewhat less trivial is to say that its depiction of the climate catastrophe is conflicted thanks to its allegiance to the cult franchise and the resultant commitment to the energy-intensive neon futures. I would like, instead, to focus on how it is about these things. In particular, I would like to zero in on one specific shot depicting the film's protagonist K standing in the ruins of San Diego. An example of the compositional device known as Rückenfigur, the seemingly desolate frame is flush with meaning. It is also yet another instance of this device that, while remaining uniformly influential in the last two centuries, has acquired a new lease of life in various depictions of the Anthropocene across a range of audiovisual media. In my presentation, I would like to examine the said shot from *Blade Runner 2049* and several other visual texts and think through their rhetorical implications (which may not be what they seem at first).

### **Divided America**

**Chair: Izabella Kimak**

### **Katarzyna Maniszewska -- From Peaceful Protests to Radicalization at High Speed**

The analysis of selected case studies will be presented to determine whether and to what extent a typical pattern in the development of protest movements and radicalization of its members can be found. The author argues that the process of radicalization (within the spectrum of protest movements) can be broken down into three main steps, which can be identified not only in the US but also during turbulent events in recent history regardless of the country and ideology that drives the protesters. Each stage is more violent and inversely proportional to the widespread support; that is, with each successive stage, the support from the public declines. The process goes from a) the active demonstration of social disagreement through b) aggressive demonstration of disagreement to c) terrorism being the highest manifestation of political extremism. A particular focus will be put on violent right-wing extremism (XRW), which according to recent studies and statistical data, is on the rise in the West, including the United States. XRW is not always legally classified as terrorism (instead: a hate crime); however, at its core, it fully aligns with the definition(s) of terrorism. Moreover, the contemporary XRW scene is transnationally linked, which compels an international collaborative approach to counter XRW. Analyzing the patterns, 'modus operandi,' development dynamics, and 'life cycle' of violent extremism movements can provide valuable information in addressing the current domestic and international security challenges.

### **Amit Gupta -- The Coming Federal Divide in America: Progressives strike back?**

In the next 25 years spatial and demographic shifts will create major changes within the American political system: by 2040 it is estimated that 8 states will have 50% of the population and another 7 states will have an additional 25% of the populace; secondly, by 2045, the minorities in the United States become a majority making it the first western nation to have moved to this status. The United States, therefore, is going through a major spatial and demographic transition that will reshape the relations between the 50 states. It has been argued that as a result of this spatial realignment of the population, the presidency will be determined by older white voters living in sparsely populated states (because the American system of the Electoral College will give these

states a continued advantage in determining the election results). This article argues that while institutional power may remain in the hands of the demographically older, sparsely populated, and conservative states, the states with the largest populations will have the resources and be at the center of the knowledge economy that the United States is fast becoming. These advantages will allow these states to rewrite the terms of their relationship with the poorer, more ethnically homogenous, and educationally backward states. Further, the more populated states may be able to bring out some significant changes in the social and economic policies of the less-populated states. Additionally, this spatial and demographic shift will be influenced by a gender transition which sees more and more women in positions of power and influence and the transition from the baby boomers to the millennials in the economy. Such shifts will, however, shape the domestic clash of civilizations in America as some religious and alt-right groups continue to push back against progressive values.

### **Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis -- Flimsy Celery and Limp Kale: Food, Race and Geography in USA**

Food has a great potential as a lens for critical inquiry of the social situation of the disenfranchised and marginalized. Instead of being a life force, in their case food has become a means of oppression. Rather than understanding food access as an isolated social problem, I want to explore interconnections of black positionality and food injustice/oppression. If we add a component of systemic racism to the idea of a food desert or food swamp, a new conceptualization is born at the intersection of residential segregation, economic capital (capitalist accumulation) and dispossession: namely “food apartheid” (Reese). It is my intention first of all to analyze how the “neutral” socio-economic idea of food desert or food swamp is transformed into food apartheid, when one adds a component of systemic racism. Secondly, I wish to analyze ways in which socially conscious individuals fight food injustice through bringing healthy food back into the diets of low-income, urban residents of color (e.g. by turning food deserts into food oases), and in so doing they transform urban geographies of dispossession and oppression into geographies of survival and empowerment.

## **SESSION 5**

### **Poetry as/in/for Crisis**

**Chair: Edyta Frelik**

### **Kacper Bartczak -- The Poem as Crisis: The Threshold Position of the Emersonian Poem in Relation to Nature and Matter**

“Heavenly Hurt, it gives us –,” wrote Emily Dickinson of light or, more specifically, a “certain slant” of it. Light in this poem is split: it is a phenomenon that belongs to nature and to something that exceeds it. American poetry of the Emersonian strain – a lineage that runs from the Romanticism of Dickinson and Whitman, via the modernism of Stevens and Williams, all the way to such contemporary continuators as Rae Armantrout and Peter Gizzi – registers a tension that occurs between the poem and the realm of matter. While the key poems of this tradition admit and welcome their close alliance with matter, they also posit an excess that sets them apart from the realm of the material and the natural. The tension that emerges from such position is the inherent mark of this poetry – the poem itself is a crisis of its material embodiment, a threshold state where the material is being continuously exceeded toward a position that, after Harold Bloom and Agata Bielik-Robson, could be called “more life.” This paper proposes an overview of this poetic crisis which I am going to discuss by reference to a conflict between two sets of ideas. One of them can be linked to Karen Barad’s “agential realism,” while the other sends us to post-secular vitalism

found in the work of Agata Bielik-Robson. These two theoretical approaches are – of course – irreconcilable. But it is precisely this irreconcilability – the crisis of the poem’s threshold position – that drives the poets of the Emersonian strain.

**Paulina Ambroży** -- “History is Ever Arriving”: Assemblage, the Camera Gaze and Planetary Translation as Third Space in Don Mee Choi’s *DMZ Colony* and *Hardly War*

My goal is to examine avant-garde practices in Don Mee Choi’s award-winning volumes *DMZ Colony* (Wave Books, 2020) and *Hardly War* (Wave Books, 2016) as critical challenges to dominant narratives concerning the Korean War. The books are highly experimental instances of documentary poetics combining elements of memoir, photojournalism, poetry, and archive. The poet calls herself “a child of memory” (*DMZ* 126), a “foreigner” in the inherited South Korean past, trying to tell a counter-story, confront her readers with the multifaceted sources of identity-in-crisis, and return “home” on her terms. Both books reveal a complex relationship between cultural memory and its material as well as discursive mediations. Choi employs here various avant-garde techniques, which she describes as “imaginary assemblage” (*DMZ* 89) and bricolage, based on intertwining and colluding public and personal documents, artefacts, testimonies, as well as photographs. They become an exploratory form of engagement with the historical narratives, cultural memories as well as the psychological, socioeconomic, and geopolitical residue of the Korean War. Choi revisits the traumatic past using the testimonies of the survivors and the camera gaze of her own father – the Korean War photo correspondent. The borrowed gaze becomes one of her multiple “languages of return” (*DMZ* 18), unsettling identities, opening up the collective as well as private spaces of memory and trauma. The journalistic and documentary externalizations of memory are counterbalanced by manual modes of representation, such as handwriting and drawing, which further complicate the volume’s discourses and affective-historical structures of remembrance. What I wish to propose, consistently with the anti-colonial thrust of Choi’s practices, is to see those strategies as working towards a liminal, hybrid and ultimately transgressive “third space”, in Homi Bhabha’s understanding of the term: an “in-between space” in which the emergent histories and identities are not fixed but processual, ambivalent, and “ever arriving”. I will focus on three interdependent practices of “thirthing”: 1) translation; 2) the intergenerational documentary gaze; and 3) assemblage.

**Jacek Partyka** -- Vanessa Place, Kenneth Goldsmith, and the Boundaries of Conceptual Witnessing

One of the fundamental elements of the creative process in conceptual art is transcription. Rooted in disciplines other than literature—for example, music, history, court documentation etc.—it connotes not only an act of relocating the material from one framework to another, but also triggers a dynamic interaction between various modes of expression or genres. The change from witnesses’ oral delivery into a written, acceptable form of court reports, or the refashioning of the transcription into what can pass for poetic discourse are matters of convention. In her seminal study *Transcription as Theory*, Elinor Ochs points to the fact that every change of such kind, “no matter how faithful to the ‘original,’ involves interference on the part of the transcriber.” Aware of this problem, the conceptual artists/poets that openly admit to having been partly inspired by the works of Walter Benjamin and Charles Reznikoff, Vanessa Place and Kenneth Goldsmith, build up their art on the often-irreconcilable conflict between the documentary and the poetic, the written and the spoken, the subjective and the objective. My planned conference paper will analyze the dynamics of exchange between authentic official documents and conceptual ways of uncovering their various potential meanings, drawing on what Michael Davidson calls “palimtext,” thus expanding the definition of palimpsest—a reused matrix for new writings, which does not fully hide its multilayered form—to better reflect on the kind of contemporary para-poetry that

tends to lay bare its sources and map the paths upon which one text “meanders among other texts.”

## **Intersecting Race and Gender**

**Chair: Paweł Frelik**

**Tomasz Basiuk** -- Representing Race in Baratunde Thurston’s *How to Be Black* and Wiktor Bagiński’s *Serce* (Heart)

I compare the representation of race by two contemporary black writers: Baratunde Thurston, a stand-up comedian and author based in the U.S., and Wiktor Bagiński, a playwright and director based in Poland. Thurston’s *How to Be Black* (2012) is a tongue-in-cheek handbook on the pitfalls of racial stereotyping, such as the failed attempts by white people to respectfully address race. Thurston’s imagined reader is someone both well-intended and well-versed on the matter of race, but whose manner in this regard may need a final polish. Still, the stereotyping which often forms part of polite (and politically correct) conversation about race—the main target of Thurston’s humor—is revealed to be a problem. Bagiński’s *Serce* (Heart), co-written with Martyna Wawrzyniak and directed by Bagiński, which premiered at the TR theater in Warsaw in 2021, includes a scene commenting on the conventions of representing blackness on stage, as the actor playing the author’s alter ego is white. However, it soon foregoes the opportunity to critically address racial stereotyping and focuses on the protagonist’s quest for his absent Nigerian father. This archetypal motif takes the whimsically fanciful form of an imaginary journey to the heart of Africa. Unfortunately, the play’s homage to Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* strips the novella of its colonial context, revealing Kurtz to be black and a stand-in for the father, whom the protagonist’s mother calls out for having raped her. The work ultimately disappoints because it relies on stereotypical ways of representing race, as well as gender. Thurston’s book and Bagiński’s play illustrate the strikingly different discursive contexts of addressing race in the U.S. and in Poland, where a perspective inspired by decolonial theory or critical race theory is missing.

**Małgorzata Mączko** -- Patterns of Violence: Narrating the Repetitive Nature of Police Brutality in American Cinema

Over the past decade, the Black Lives Matter movement’s platform has been guiding the ongoing debate about the persistence of structural racism in the United States. Black American filmmakers have been vocal about one of its focal points – the issue of police brutality against people of color – and have begun to address it extensively in their works. Films that depict this problem often rely on similar narrative structures to reflect its repetitive nature. Three recent American films on police brutality – *See You Yesterday* (2019, dir. Stefon Bristol), *The Obituary of Tunde Johnson* (2019, dir. Ali LeRoi) and *Two Distant Strangers* (2020, dir. Travon Free, Martin Desmond Roe) – use altered narrative temporality and the figure of a time loop to mirror the relentless cycle of violence experienced by people of color in America. In all three films, the death of a young Black person becomes the central event of the story, which is continuously relived by the characters. Here, police brutality becomes a force so disruptive that it alters the core narrative structure of the film. A narrative analysis of the films will provide an insight into the mechanisms and consequences of this approach. Moreover, this mode of representing police brutality calls for an extrapolation of the individual experience to the social and political level. The message about the recurring nature of violence these films convey is yet another form of commentary on structural racism in America, which undermines the so-called “postracial” rhetoric. They must be studied as a part of broader research into a “post-BLM” cinema and the ties between film and social movements.

## **Aleksandra Malinowska -- "Stop Killing Us!": POSE as a Non-White, Trans Counter-Memory of ACT UP, New York**

According to Alexandra Juhasz, to speak of the popular memory of ACT UP is to speak of white, gay men and New York City (Juhasz, 2012, p. 72); indeed documentaries such as *United in Anger* support the claim, and exemplify the typical iconography of ACT UP. Drawing on the Foucauldian understanding of counter-memory (Sylvia IV, 2021, p. 145-6), I argue that the FX television series POSE extends the oppositional DIVA TV (Damned Interfering Video Activist Television) practice and thus, engages in subversive re-telling of the predominantly white memory of ACT UP, New York. Since POSE involves Trans, Black and of Color producer, writer and cast members, the series can be considered as an extension of the DIVA TV video activism for self-representation and intersectional criticism of ACT UP. Further, POSE re-mediate archival footage, interchanging bodies of white male activists with those of Black, Trans women such as POSE's protagonist Blanca Evangelista. Hence, interweaving ghosts of real Ballroom members, as well as historical ACT UP initiatives with its fictional storyline. Starting with the protagonists' first contact with ACT UP, initiated by the show's most prominent white character, the development of the group's leadership and organizing skills becomes a prominent theme of the show. This results in ACT UP being portrayed as a Black-led institution, and the de-emphasis of the white presence in the show. Finally, I bridge Berthold Molden and Susan Stryker's ideas regarding Foucault's "subjugated knowledges" (Molden, 2016, p.128-9; Stryker, 2006, p.12-13). The two concepts find their common ground in POSE, which merges Transgender studies' methodology of drawing from one's own experience (Stryker, 2006, p.12-13), with the general principle of "subjugated knowledges" as rejected by and threatening to the dominant class (Molden, 2016, p.128-9). POSE's insistence on shaping its narrative about the AIDS epidemic around the experiences of Trans womanhood solidifies the transgressive character of the series.

## **SESSION 6**

### **Excluded Americans**

**Chair: Tomasz Basiuk**

**Irene Rabinovich -- The Feeble-minded and Unfit Should Not Have Babies – American Eugenics in K.D. Alden's *A Mother's Promise***

The concept of eugenics that has been popularized in America in the last decades of the nineteenth-century took a dark turn in the first three decades of the twentieth-century, when prominent citizens, lawyers, scientists and first-wave feminists started fervently to champion the cause. Indiana eugenicist ruling in 1907 was soon adopted by thirty-two additional states, and consequently many forced sterilizations were performed on minorities and on whomever lawmakers considered unworthy to produce offspring. Possibly, the most notorious case of forced sterilization, *Buck v. Bell* case, was performed on Carrie Buck, a young victim of rape. K.D. Alden's novel *A Mother's Promise* (2021), the only fictional rendering of the story, closely follows *Buck v. Bell* case. By sympathetically drawing the portrait of Ruth Ann Riley, Carrie Buck's fictional counterpart, it convincingly exposes this blameworthy practice. This paper aims at exploring, through a feminist lens, Ruth Ann Riley's struggle against overbearing eugenicist practices and incorrigible social injustice, practiced by pseudo-scientists, doctors and lawyers who distortedly utilized eugenics to promote their professional and economic interests. Additionally, based on the Foucault's theory of power-knowledge relations, the paper demonstrates how, in a derisive manner, power and knowledge sustain each other. Lastly, it shows that first-wave feminists and birth-control activists, who by endorsing the negative eugenics rhetoric, allegedly aimed at

'improving' human genetic built-up via regulatory and legal methods, totally ignored the possible threats such legislation may be exerted on such weakened individuals such as Carrie Buck.

### **Dániel Cseh** -- The Exclusion and Incarceration of Japanese Americans: A Study of the Dangers of Racial Resentment and Scapegoating

Following the Pearl Harbor disaster President Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered his Day of Infamy speech to a joint session of Congress on December 8, 1941. On that historic day Congress declared war on the Empire of Japan, while the shock of Pearl Harbor also served as a catalyst for the forced removal and incarceration of the West Coast Japanese. As part of the war hysteria that gripped the nation, on February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order No. 9066 authorizing the Secretary War and the appointed Military Commander to designate military areas and to exclude any or all persons. Citing military necessity, 120 000 persons of Japanese descent, two-thirds American citizens from those zones, were collectively excluded and incarcerated without due process. In such a climate of fear the anti-Japanese sentiment held by members of the American military and political leadership manifested itself in the scapegoating of the Japanese Americans as 'enemy aliens' due to their racial affiliation to the enemy and their distribution and concentration on the Pacific Coast (as later cited by Lt. General John L. DeWitt in the Final Report of 1943). The exclusion and incarceration of Japanese Americans will be analyzed based on the Final Report and the correspondences between officials of the War and Justice Department – proof of an interdepartmental conflict on the issue – which provide significant evidence of misconduct in relation to the factuality of the 'military necessity' premise of the incarceration of Japanese Americans.

### **Elżbieta Wilczyńska** -- "It is all your own fault!" or a Legacy of Colonialism: The Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in the USA

The statistics are threatening: according to a 2020 Center's for Disease Control and Prevention report, homicide is the third leading cause of death among indigenous women and girls between 10 and 24 years of age, and the fifth among women between 25 and 34 years of age. Duane Champagne, in one of his seminal books *Social Change and Cultural Continuity among Native Nations* (2006), specified a number of challenges that native communities face in contemporary America, among them globalization, the market economy, and holistic native health ravaged by many social ills such as depression, suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, and many others. Yet nowhere did he mention an issue of MMIWG, which for the last decade has been identified as the major crisis in native communities. Why is it so and what has happened since 2006? Indeed, the crisis has received relatively little attention from the American federal government until recently (Nov. 2021), when the Department of Justice launched a Steering Committee to coordinate efforts to address the crisis effectively. On the other hand, for quite some time a number of American native activist groups and institutions have been looking into the problem (Urban Indian Health Institute; The Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women, and the native feminist movement) to highlight its causes, propose solutions and raise awareness about the issue among the American society. Also, indigenous women in many walks of life strive to show the strength and their importance in the indigenous cultures (e.g. an exhibition of works of native women artists e.g. Hearts of Our People. Native Women Artists 2019 or the NoDAPL matriarch water protectors) to reverse the trend and heal Native communities. Drawing from all the sources mentioned, this paper will investigate the crisis and look at the root causes and different approaches to define and solve it by the federal government and native communities respectively, once again proving the presence of an ongoing "fight" between native communities and the government.



## **Environmental Crisis, Technological Unconscious & World(s) Re-seen** **Chair: Małgorzata Rutkowska**

**Piotr Czerwiński** -- The Extended Mind in Crisis: The Technological Unconscious in Don DeLillo's *Silence*

In his model of the extended mind Andy Clark posits that the mind is not limited to the confines of the brain, but extends beyond the brain, into the environment, incorporating aspects of social and physical environments. Consequently, the essential thought behind Clark's theory is that human beings, with their extended minds, are entities which consist in being entangled in a web of connections with the surrounding world, including the technological realm. According to Nigel Thrift the effective merger between the biological brain and the technological environment is rendered by the mechanism of the technological unconscious, construed as nonconscious interaction of human agents with omnipresent and, consequently, transparent technology. As a result, it can be argued that the smooth operation of the mechanism of the technological unconscious is essential for the effective formation and operation of consciousness and the mind. This paper investigates the representation of the technological unconscious in Don DeLillo's *Silence*. In his 2020 novel DeLillo offers an apocalyptic, and yet not that unlikely, vision of the collapse of the technology human civilization has been totally and nonconsciously dependent on. Inoperative due to power outage, the transparent technology becomes agonizingly opaque, causing havoc in New York and making the protagonists, stranded in a Manhattan apartment, question the integrity of their own minds.

**Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska** -- The World(s) Re-seen, Or, Narrating Crises in William Gibson's *Peripheral* (2014) and *Agency* (2020)

This paper will examine selected elements of dystopia and parallel/alternative universe genres in two interconnected novels by William Gibson, *Peripheral* (2014) and *Agency* (2020), in which near-future and far-future worlds are linked via, mostly data-based, time travel. Of particular interest to me will be the ways in which the future worlds interpret and manipulate past timelines in order to avert the "anthropogenic disasters" (Anna McFarlane) affecting our planet or at least ameliorate the resulting crises. Most strikingly, the "crisis management" required for the alternative universe presented in *Agency* – set in a 2017 San Francisco, predicated on the assumption that neither Brexit nor Trump presidency happened, and on the verge of thermonuclear catastrophe – helps elucidate the long-term consequences of what Cory Doctorow calls "grifty, monopolistic techno-capitalism" in the case of the 22nd century, oligarchic and thoroughly corrupted, variant of the post-apocalyptic world.

**Anna Gilarek** - Environmental Crisis and Post-Capitalist Transformation in Kim Stanley Robinson's Recent Novels

Kim Stanley Robinson's *New York 2140* (2017) and *Ministry for the Future* (2020) are the author's most recent contributions to the burgeoning genre of climate fiction – both novels deal with near-future environmental disaster scenarios. Due to the protracted and ongoing nature of the depicted environmental crises, the novels can be described as peri-apocalyptic narratives, focusing on humanity's immediate response to catastrophic events as they unfold: their modes of adaptation and mitigation, and the gradual alteration of the system recognized as the root cause of the problem – capitalism. Both novels present environmental collapse as a trigger for a systemic transformation – a step-by-step transition towards post-capitalist solutions, implemented owing to a combination of bottom-up collective effort and top-down legal steps at international level. The two novels are thought experiments – literary simulators of alternative socioeconomic realities. Robinson sees such imagining – in particular in its utopian form – as key to finding a way

out of the present crisis, primarily through the conceptualization of post-capitalist options, which are thus prefigured and imaginatively rehearsed. However, the novels' focus is not primarily on any specified outcome of the transformation, but on the utopian process itself – the various trajectories of post-capitalist transition are delineated in great detail. Drawing on Ernst Bloch's concept of concrete utopia and Tom Moylan's idea of the radical utopian subject, the paper looks at the novels as literary manifestations of subversive, dynamic, and open-ended utopianism – incremental and imperfect in its character. This transformative utopian process necessitates individual shifts in perception leading to a radical break with the prevailing standards, a rejection of capitalist hegemony, a recognition of emergent post-capitalist tendencies already in place within the capitalist system, and collective action towards new ways of being and functioning that would lead to a more equitable and sustainable way of life.

## **PLENARY LECTURE**

**Prof. Ana M<sup>a</sup> Manzananas Calvo**  
**Universidad de Salamanca, Spain**  
**Chair: Ewa Antoszek**

### **Tracing the Interior Border in Contemporary American Literature: Here There Be Dragons**

The talk looks at the landscape of exclusion within the United States through two contemporary novels by Julia Álvarez and Valeria Luiselli. Álvarez's protagonist becomes the cartographer of a geography that she calls "Dragon Country", a "no man's land beyond the gated communities of belonging." Significantly, dragon country is not out there or beyond the pale, but in here, in the spatial coordinates of the everyday. Its citizens are migrant workers that are cast out when they are not needed or when ICE lurks too closely, but also, if we can stretch the metaphor further, migrants whose children are taken away from them, or unaccompanied children that are routinely relocated to detention centers.

In Álvarez and Luiselli's novels the United States appears as a country under siege, and in danger of invasion, hence its need to cleave to the partition that separates order versus chaos, health versus disease, right versus wrong, good versus evil. Claiming the ontological difference of the United States versus surrounding countries, however, has not prevented the United States from crossing those very borders according to its economic interests, and from violating those very borders through violent interventions and/or invasions

At a time when, repeatedly, national and international emergencies transform the gathering up of "undesirable" subjects (Fassin 2005) into a routine solution, and immigrant monitoring and disciplining makes national spaces comparable to detention centers (Coutin 2010), the question is how these suspensions of human rights can be contained within the workings of democracy. Such is the discrepancy that Luiselli and Álvarez illustrate in their novels. If a country is defined both from the outside, through the fine line that separates each country, and from the inside, by means of the auto-affirmative formulas that define that very country (Martins 2007), the writers offer instances of both leaking borders and of the rerouted borders of the United States.

## **SESSION 7**

### **American Myth(s) Reconsidered**

**Chair: Anna Bendrat**

#### **Marek Paryż -- The Postmillennial Reinvention of the Comic Book Western in Poland**

The Western first appeared in Polish comics in the interwar period. The war interrupted this development, and so did the post-war years, characterized by a strict censorship policy with regard to publishing in general. The Western re-emerged in Polish comics in the 1960s, the decade that marks the beginning of a time of huge popularity of comics in Poland. The comics market was profoundly affected by the political breakthrough of 1989 and the free market reform that followed as a number of state-owned publishing houses, some of which had specialized in publishing comics, went bankrupt. Polish comic book Westerns practically disappeared again. The new millennium has witnessed at least a modest revival of the Western in Polish comics, anticipated by the publication of Grzegorz Rosiński and Jean Van Hamme's *Western* in 2001. The present paper will discuss two recent examples of Polish comic book Westerns: Mikołaj Spionek's *Wounded. Skradzione lata* (Wounded: Stolen Years, 2017) and Kuba Ryszkiewicz and Marianna Strychowska's *Nie przebaczej* (Do Not Forgive, 2014-2018). Both these works represent the revenge Western and they thoroughly redefine the audience for the genre insofar as these are the first Polish comic book Westerns clearly meant for the adult audience, as is apparent from their unprecedented graphic depictions of violence. At the same time, they illustrate different strategies of the use of the Western convention in Polish comics: Spionek's book imitates the American Western by directly evoking its most familiar generic markers, whereas Ryszkiewicz and Strychowska's work adapts the genre to ramify the representation of a specific Polish historical reality.

#### **Felix Purat -- Apocalyptic Summer of Love: American Societal Divisions in the Novels of Philip K. Dick**

Regarding literatures' potential at helping shed light on America's irreconcilable divisions, the novels of Philip K. Dick, science fiction legend and California author, come to mind. Not only did Phil Dick the man live in the era when the seeds of the current divisions were, as some argue, sewn: elements of this feature in his novels as well, a credit to Phil Dicks' avant-garde vision. Societal division manifests itself in Phil Dicks' novels in many different ways. In one novel, *Time Out of Joint*, American inability to agree on partisan issues is unambiguously referenced and only after the protagonists exit an encapsulation of the 1950's. Subtler examples include a power struggle in *The Simulacra* and the reality differential between "sanity" and "insanity" in *Clans of the Alphane Moon*. The strongest examples are found vis-à-vis the reality barrier in *The Man In The High Castle* and the Civil War symbolism of *We Can Build You*. What does Phil Dicks' literary universe promise? Simultaneous realities and ambiguity, albeit with hope. There is little promise of renewal or an "ever more perfect union." Nonetheless, the hope of unity is promised in other novels, be it the social necessity of life in *Dr. Bloodmoney*, the promising unity of a deity in *Galactic Pot-Healer* or Palmer Eldritch's mental prison in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*. The largest certainty is a loss of free will and a definitive change in the destiny of the United States.

#### **Tomasz Jachec -- Conspiracies, Crises, and the American Monomyth: Robert Langdon's Adventures in Books, Films, and the Mini-Series**

Over the course of seventeen years, Dan Brown published five novels whose protagonist is Robert Langdon – a Harvard religious symbologist and iconologist. The novels, which belong to the mystery thriller genre and whose constant theme are conspiracy theories, are: *Angels & Demons*

(2000), *The Da Vinci Code* (2003), *The Lost Symbol* (2009), *Inferno* (2013), and *Origin* (2017). Three of these books – *The Da Vinci Code* (2006), *Angels & Demons* (2009), and *Inferno* (2016) – have been adapted by director Ron Howard into motion pictures with Tom Hanks portraying the protagonist, and in 2022 Amazon Prime released a 10-episode mini-series based on *The Lost Symbol* where Professor Langdon is played by Ashley Zukerman. The Robert Langdon stories, in their structural essence, seem to perfectly fit into the narrative structure of the American monomyth, which Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence describe as: A community in a harmonious paradise is threatened by evil: normal institutions fail to contend with this threat: a selfless superhero emerges to renounce [sexual] temptations and carry out the redemptive task: aided by fate, his decisive victory restores the community to its paradisaical condition: the superhero then recedes into obscurity (xx). In my paper, I would like to examine and discuss how the representations of the character of Robert Langdon and his adventures have changed from books to films to mini-series and how those remediated representations fit into the frame of the American monomyth. I would also like to pose a question of whether the example of the adaptations of Dan Brown's novels and the changes made to the character of Langdon and the narrative structures of his stories signal the crisis of the American monomyth. Ultimately, I would like to reflect on whether there is still room for the American monomyth in contemporary, American popular culture.

### **Prosaic Matters**

**Chair: Edyta Frelik**

**Brygida Gasztold** -- The American Dream for the Haves and Have-Nots in Imbolo Mbue's *Behold the Dreamers*

*Behold the Dreamers* portrays the pursuit of the American Dream from two opposite sides: immigrants who strive to attain it, and affluent Americans who also struggle but to maintain it. My presentation explores different ways in which the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2007/2008 and the ensuing financial crisis affect the attainment of the American Dream both for the privileged and underprivileged, with the power dynamic in the relationship between the two. A life of an undocumented Cameroonian immigrant, who has come to the United States to provide a better life for himself and his family, allows an insight into immigrant struggles, which are suddenly upended by the global forces of economy. The world of great power and privilege is represented in the novel by the family of a senior executive at Lehman Brothers, Clark Edwards, a wealthy upper-class New Yorker. Through the lens of the protagonist's legal status, social class, race, and gender, the novel demonstrates the fragility of American success, which does not only depend on hard work and self-discipline but is buffeted by economic and social forces beyond control. By juxtaposing two families on the opposite rungs of the social ladder, Mbue offers critique of those who equate material possessions with happiness.

**Mirosław Aleksander Miernik** -- Dismantling the American Dream from the Inside:  
Dave Eggers *A Hologram for the King*

My presentation will focus on how the protagonist of Dave Eggers' novel *A Hologram for the King*, Alan Clay, plays the dual role of an agent dismantling the various structures that he sees as barriers for American entrepreneurship and that of a victim of these changes. I will focus on how the discourse of American prosperity influences Alan's thoughts and actions, guiding him to become complicit in the enacting of changes that led to the concentration of wealth in the hands of a transnational elite that thrives on exploiting inequality and various crises. Alan remains largely—and somewhat surprisingly—ignorant of the fact that his earlier success was built on inducing such crises into the US, even though the novel finds him during a last-chance attempt at attaining a position that would allow him to deliver on his financial responsibilities. The novel's

setting in Saudi Arabia, a wealthy oil-producing country that mostly relies on immigrant labor, emphasizes that the logic of exploitation is a global phenomenon, and will factor into my paper. Accordingly, it will focus on the dynamics of contemporary neoliberal capitalism that facilitate crises, but also the dwindling economic role of the US to which Alan seems oblivious. This will link with the final aspect of my paper, namely how the stubborn denial of the obvious can be seen as an example of what Lauren Berlant calls cruel optimism.

**Aleksandra Zuzanna Leniarska** -- "He stopped to lower his window and say hello" – Jonathan Franzen, Neo-Realism and De-politicized Communitarianism

Based on the analysis of Jonathan Franzen's novels, I will describe the changes in mainstream American fiction under neoliberalism – strong authorial presence, omniscient narrator, mimetism, middle-class family saga – that arguably constitute a post-postmodernist tendency, Neo-Realism. I will further argue that in spite of Franzen's extra-literary promise of political critique of neoliberalism and cultural critique of therapy discourse, his fiction in fact postulates de-politicization on the narrative level. Happy endings exemplify a new model of success attained by characters who renounce their idealism – happiness based on a small community, family, and abandonment of the possibility of structural change. In Franzen's fiction, there is a recurring pattern of characters with political ambitions who are described as psychologically flawed: *Purity's* Anabel is hysterical, *Freedom's* Walter is powerless, *Crossroads'* Russ is hypocritical. These characters are rewarded with personal happiness only when they give up their political goals. Moreover, this redefinition of success is presented as anti-establishment and is combined with a style of writing that stresses verisimilitude and pretends neutrality, while applying strong narratorial authority, thus asking classical literary questions about the world-shaping abilities of the author and their relationship with the reader in realist aesthetic. Therefore the analysis of the theme of the futility of revolt in plots of one of the most influential American writers will be accompanied by considerations about the political implications of a return to realism in the 21st century.

# CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

**Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska** is Professor of Comparative Literature at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland. Her books include *Polskie przekłady angielskiej literatury dziecięcej: Problemy krytyki przekładu* (*Polish Translations of English Children's Literature: Problems of Translation Critique*, 1988); *Polska Isaaca Bashevisa Singera – rozstanie i powrót* (*Isaac Bashevis Singer's Poland: Exile and Return*, 1994); *Contemporary Jewish Writing in Poland: An Anthology* (2001, c-editor); *Odcienie tożsamości: Literatura żydowska jako zjawisko wielojęzyczne* (*Shades of Identity: Jewish Literature as a Multilingual Phenomenon*, 2004); *Kazimierz vel Kuzmir – miasteczko różnych snów* (*Kazimierz vel Kuzmir: A Shtetl of Various Dreams*, 2006); *Tam był kiedyś mój dom... Księgi pamięci gmin żydowskich* (*My Home Used to Be There... Memorial Books of Jewish Communities*, 2009, co-editor); *Jewish Presence in Absence: The Aftermath of the Holocaust in Poland 1944-2010* (2014, co-editor); *Jewish Writing in Poland* (2016, co-editor). She has translated more than twenty books from English and Yiddish into Polish. In 2004 she received the Jan Karski & Pola Nirenska Award for her research on Yiddish literature and language. She is a member of the editorial board of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*.

**Ana M<sup>a</sup> Manzanás Calvo** is Professor of American Literature and Culture at Universidad de Salamanca, Spain. Her publications include *Hospitality in American Literature and Culture: Spaces, Bodies, Borders* (Routledge 2017); *Occupying Space in American Literature and Culture: Social Movements, Occupation, and Empowerment* (Routledge 2014), *Cities, Borders, and Spaces in Intercultural American Literature and Film* (Routledge 2011), and *Intercultural Mediations: Mimesis and Hybridity in American Literatures* (LIT Verlag 2003), all of them coauthored with J. Benito. She has co-edited collections of essays, such as *Literature and Ethnicity in the Cultural Borderlands* (Rodopi 2002), *Border Transits: Literature and Culture across the Line* (Rodopi 2007), and *Cine y Hospitalidad: Narrativas visuales del otro* (Salamanca 2021). Her publications have appeared in journals such as *South Atlantic Quarterly*, *Journal of Modern Literature*, *Canadian Literature*, and publishers such as MLA, Cambridge UP, Brill, Oxford UP and Peter Lang. With J. Benito she is general editor of the Brill Series "Critical Approaches to Ethnic American Literature."

## Conference Speakers:

**Paulina Ambroży** is Associate Professor and Head of American Literature Department at the Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. Her research centers on American (more recently also Canadian and Polish) avantgarde and experimental poetry. She is interested in intersections between poetry, literary philosophy, science and the visual arts. She is the author of *(Un)concealing the Hedgehog: Modernist American Poets and Contemporary Critical Theories* (Poznań, 2012), which received the 2014 American Studies Network Book Prize for remarkable research in American studies, and which focused on Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams and Mina Loy. With Liliana Sikorska, Joanna Jarząb-Napierała and Marta Frątczak-Dąbrowska she has authored *Between the Self and the Other: Essays on the Poetry of Paul Muldoon* (2018), a study which fuses four perspectives:

autobiographical, geopoetic, postcolonial and intertextual. She has also published on H.D., Robert Frost, John Ashbery, Susan Howe, Charles Simic, Adam Dickinson, Tracy K. Smith and Kacper Bartczak. She is a recipient of two research grants from the Polish-American Fulbright Foundation: a Junior Fulbright Research Grant (Stanford University, 2002-2003), a Senior Fulbright Advanced Research Grant (The University of Chicago, 2014). Concurrently, she is working on a comparative project involving posthumanist approaches to the North American and Polish lyric.

**Patrycja Antoszek** is Assistant Professor in the Department of American Literature and Culture of The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland. She published essays on contemporary American novels and short stories and is the author of *The Carnavalesque Muse: The New Fiction of Robert Coover* (2010). Her professional interests revolve around feminist literature and theory, contemporary gothic and psychoanalytic criticism. She has recently published "Intrusions from the Outside World': Shirley Jackson and the Politics and Poetics of Enclosure" in *Shirley Jackson: A Companion* and "Haunting Feelings: Shirley Jackson and the Politics of Affect" in a special issue of *Women's Studies*. Her current book project is entitled *Unhomely Feelings: Shirley Jackson's Intimate Politics*.

**Tomasz Basiuk** is a University of Warsaw professor teaching in an American studies program. His interests include life writing and queer studies. He authored *Exposures. American Gay Men's Life Writing since Stonewall* (Peter Lang, 2012) and co-edited *Queers in State Socialism. Cruising 1970s Poland* (Routledge, 2021). He is a Fulbright alumnus (2004 – 2005), a founding co-editor of *InterAlia: a queer studies journal* (since 2006), former PAAS president (2014 – 2021), and PI in a HERA-funded project "Cruising the Seventies: unearthing pre-HIV/AIDS queer sexual cultures" (2016 – 2019).

**Kacper Bartczak** is Associate Professor of American Literature at the University of Łódź, Poland. He is the author of *In Search of Communication and Community: the Poetry of John Ashbery* (2006) and *Świat nie scalony* (2009) for which he received the prize of *Literatura na Swiecie*. His latest book discussing pragmatist poetics is entitled *Materia i autokreacja: dociekania w poetyce wielościowe* (2019). He is the coeditor, with Jakub Mácha, of *Wallace Stevens: Poetry, Philosophy, and Figurative Language* (2018) and the editor of a collection of essays on New York poets entitled *Poeci Szkoły Nowojorskiej*. He is also a poet in the Polish language. He has translated and published volumes of selected poems by Rae Armantrout, Charles Bernstein, and Peter Gizzi.

**Anna Bendrat** is an Assistant Professor at the Department of English and American Studies at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland. As a member of a research team on Cognitive Poetics, she focuses her interests on the metaphors of the body in contemporary American literature and media. Her current research concentrates on the contemporary American drama and its rhetorical constructions of marginalized identities. She is a Board Member of the Polish Rhetoric Society and an editor of two international journals: *Res Rhetorica* and *New Horizons in English Studies*. In 2016 she published a book titled *Speech is Golden. American President and Rhetoric (Mowa jest złotem. Amerykański prezydent i retoryka)*.

**Dániel Cseh** is an Assistant Professor at the Department of American Studies, School of English and America Studies, Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Budapest, Hungary. He completed his Ph.D. studies at the Modern and Contemporary World History Doctoral

Program at ELTE. His current field of research is the forced exclusion and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, examining this topic from the perspective of the conflict between civil liberty and national security. Dániel Cseh is a member of the Hungarian Fulbright Association, the Hungarian Association for American Studies, and the European Association for American Studies.

**Piotr Czerwiński** received his PhD from the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, and his doctoral dissertation was devoted to the representation of the technological unconscious in contemporary fiction in English. His main area of research is the representation of consciousness and technology in contemporary English and American fiction. He teaches technical English for aviation engineers, pilots, and air traffic controllers at Rzeszow University of Technology.

**Edit-Mária Dánél:** As a creative, open-minded person, my passion for teaching and studying has come true when I became an English language teacher in 2006. I firmly believe in the constant need for professional and personal growth. In 2021 I got accepted to the Doctoral School of the University of Bucharest. These years of research shall be dedicated to studying the importance of conflict-resolution through guided subjective-participative respectively objective-passive-outsider mediation in different absurd, modern and post-modern plays through psychological, sociological, cultural, legal terms and further interdisciplinary methods to identify and implement dramatic mediation.

**Magdalena Dziurzyńska** is a PhD candidate in the department of American Literature and Culture at the Institute of English Studies, University of Wrocław. She holds a double major in English and French philology. She specializes mostly in feminist theories, gender and queer studies. She is particularly interested in the concept of single-sex societies and her research incorporates the analysis of such non-binary worlds, feminist assumptions presented in them, as well as the scrutiny of the concepts of sexuality and gender identity in utopian and dystopian fiction. She is also interested in the portrayals of non-binary worlds together with genderless narrative.

**Edyta Frelik** is Assistant Professor in the Department of British and American Studies at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland. In 2013 she won the Terra Foundation for American Art International Essay Prize. In 2019 she was invited to contribute an essay and a lecture to the Marsden Hartley retrospective at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark. In 2022 she did research at the Getty Institute in Los Angeles and at the Terra Foundation Library in Paris. Her articles have appeared in *American Art*, *The Brooklyn Rail* and *Res Rhetorica*. She is the author of *Painter's Word: Thomas Hart Benton, Marsden Hartley, and Ad Reinhardt as Writers* (Peter Lang, 2016) and *Kiedy malarz pisze (Writing About Seeing About Writing: An Introduction to the Study of Artists' Writings)* (UMCS Press, 2021).

**Paweł Frelik** is Associate Professor and the Leader of Speculative Texts and Media Research Group at the American Studies Center, University of Warsaw. His teaching and research interests include science fiction and video games. He currently serves as President of the International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts.

**Brygida Gasztold**, Ph.D, D. Litt. holds an MA degree, a Doctorate degree, and D. Litt. from Gdańsk University, and a diploma of postgraduate studies in British Studies from Ruskin



College, Oxford and Warsaw University. She was the recipient of a 2013-2014 Fulbright Senior Research Award. She is an Associate Professor at Koszalin University of Technology, Poland. Her academic interests include ethnic American literatures, American Jewish literature, Native American literature, Canadian Jewish literature, as well as the problems of immigration, gender, and ethnic identities. She has published *To the Limits of Experience: Jerzy Kosiński's Literary Quest for Self-Identity* (2008), *Negotiating Home and Identity in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Jewish-American Narratives* (2011), *Stereotyped, Spirited, and Embodied: Representations of Women in American Jewish Fiction* (2015), and essays on immigrant literature and ethnicity.

**Anna Gilarek** is Assistant Professor at Jan Kochanowski University of Kielce, University Branch in Sandomierz, where she teaches British and American literature and history. Her research interests include utopian studies, feminist speculative fiction, climate fiction, apocalyptic fiction, and gender studies.

**Amit Gupta** is a Senior Advisor to the Forum of Federations, Ottawa, Canada. Previously he was an Associate Professor in the USAF Air War College, Alabama. His writings have focused on arms production and weapons proliferation, Internal security issues in nonwestern societies, South Asian and Australian security policies, Diaspora politics, as well as popular culture and politics. More recently he has written on the U.S.-China rivalry and the impact of demography on U.S. foreign policy. His articles have appeared in *Orbis*, *Asian Survey*, *Security Dialogue*, *The Round Table*, *Mediterranean Quarterly*, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, and *Sport in Society*. He is also the author or editor of eight books. His recent work for the Forum has been on Reintegrating Warring Groups in Yemen and on the Coming Federal Divide in America.

**Jarosław Hetman** is currently an Assistant Professor at Department of American Literature and Literary Translation, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń. His fields of interest revolve around contemporary American literature and literary theory with a focus on the correspondences between the arts (mainly fiction and conceptual art). He has published extensively on the work of David Foster Wallace, most recently editing and co-authoring the first Polish monograph on Wallace for the University of Warsaw Press. He is also the author of *Ekphrastic Conceptualism In Postmodern British and American Novels: Don DeLillo, Paul Auster and Tom McCarthy* (2015).

**Tomasz Jacheć**, MA – assistant at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. In my work, I focus on the landscape of American popular culture with sport in the center of my studies. My special interest lies in the cultural phenomenon called Michael Jordan, and the role this phenomenon and its narratives play in the culture of the USA. I am also an avid fan of American stand-up comedy, as well as late night television comedy. I am a published author of academic articles on comedy and sport. On the verge of earning his PhD in American Studies.

**Izabella Kimak** is Assistant Professor at the Department of British and American Studies at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland. Her research interests encompass American minority literatures, critical race, postcolonial and gender studies. She has published extensively on South Asian American literature, with a special focus on literary representations of female sexuality and female body. She is the author, among others, of *Bicultural Bodies: A Study of South Asian American Women's Literature* (Peter

Lang, 2013). In 2021, as a Kosciuszko Foundation fellow, she was researching her second book project on Polish American literature at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, USA. She is a member of the EAAS Women's Network Steering Committee and a representative of the Polish Association of American Studies to EAAS.

**Ewa Klęczaj-Siara** is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Modern Languages, Kazimierz Pulaski University of Technology and Humanities in Radom, Poland. Her academic interests encompass ethnic American children's literature. More currently, her research focuses on the intersection of race and place in contemporary African American children's picture books. She is the author of the book *Pokochać czerń* (Loving blackness). She has published her articles in *Polish Journal for American Studies*, *Res Rhetorica*, and *College Literature*.

**Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska** is an Assistant Professor at the Department of English Philology at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland, where she teaches film, media, and visual culture. She published articles and edited volumes devoted to contemporary television and film, conspiracy theories, William Gibson's prose, and cultural representations of the city. Her current research focuses on the theoretical and practical aspects of reimagining and repurposing iconic literary characters.

### **Adam Kuź**

**Aleksandra Zuzanna Leniarska** is a Ph.D candidate at University of Warsaw, Faculty of Artes Liberales, and a Fulbright grantee visiting Stanford University (2021-22). She specializes in U.S. literature and culture, and her academic interests include literary realism, contemporary fiction, theory of the novel. Her research combines close and distant reading – she employs computational text analysis methods and has an interest in the sociology of literature. She completed her MA studies in American Studies Center at University of Warsaw with recognition of Polish Association for American Studies for one of the best theses in American Studies in 2016. She has background in English, French, and Spanish language and culture studies.

**Aleksandra Malinowska** graduated from the University of Warsaw with a Bachelor's degree in American Studies. She is currently continuing her degree as an MA student at the American Studies Center and hopes to pursue a PhD in humanities after graduating in 2023. Her main fields of academic interest are sexuality, gender, disability and film studies.

**Katarzyna Maniszewska, Ph.D.** is a member of the Scientific Board of the Terrorism Research Centre and lecturer at Collegium Civitas university (Warsaw, Poland) where she teaches courses on: Geography of Terrorism, Terrorism and Other Security Threats, Introduction to Security Studies, Colonialism and Decolonization. She co-designed the master's degree program in International Security Studies and is the director of the Polish-American Summer School program "Security and Society in the Information Age." Her research is focused on the history and development of political extremism with particular emphasis on media coverage of terrorism. Currently she holds the position of Vice-Rector for International Relations at Collegium Civitas.

**Małgorzata Martynuska** is an Associate Professor at the Department of English Studies, University of Rzeszow, Poland. Graduate of American Studies Center at University of Warsaw (MA) and the Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora at Jagiellonian University in Cracow (PhD). She completed her habilitation at SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw. Her scholarly interests focus on the American South, cultural hybridity of US Latinx, acculturation patterns, transculturation, tropicalism, ethnic representations in American popular culture, and American crime fiction.

**Małgorzata Mączko** is a PhD student at the Jagiellonian University Doctoral School in the Humanities in the Studies on Arts program. She graduated from Film and New Media Studies at the JU. Her research takes an interdisciplinary approach to the problem of minority representation in contemporary cinema, with a particular focus on the portrayal of African Americans in American film after 2008.

**Mirosław Aleksander Miernik** is an associate professor at the Institute of English Studies at the University of Warsaw. His professional interests include 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century American Culture, with an emphasis on everyday life, consumer culture and subculture studies. He also is interested in American literature. His most recent book is 2021's *Rethinking Fiction after the 2007/8 Financial Crisis: Consumption, Economics and the American Dream*.

**Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis** – Associate Professor at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland. Her scholarly interests encompass representations of foodways in literature and film, literature of the American South, American short story, and ethnic/immigrant literatures of the USA, as well as American TV series. Her most recent book project *Race and Repast: Foodscapes in Twentieth-Century Southern Literature* is forthcoming with the University of Arkansas Press (2022). Her next project explores intersections of race, body, geography and food in the 21st century texts of the American South. More detailed information can be obtained here: <http://urszulaniewiadomska-flis.com>

**Renata Nowaczewska**, Assistant Professor of History and American Studies at the University of Szczecin, Poland. She has published articles, book chapters on philanthropy in international context, social welfare, foundations and their interactions with the government. Her research interests lie in the history of philanthropy, foreign aid, social history and intellectual history, exchange programs and the role international actors play within broadly defined transnational relations. Her current book project explores the mechanisms of reinforcing/implementing democratic values through the exchange programs and other cultural activities during the Cold War period in select European countries. She has explored the role the big foundations (Ford and Rockefeller Foundations) played in organizing help to the refugees and escapees from the Eastern Europe.

**Jacek Partyka** is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Philology, University of Białystok, Poland, where he teaches courses in the history of American literature, intertextuality, and comparative studies. His research interests center on American late modernist and postmodernist poetry (Charles Reznikoff, Louis Bogan, Elizabeth Bishop, Susan Howe), literary representations of genocide (Edward Lewis Wallant, Cynthia Ozick, Charles Reznikoff), W.H. Auden's reinvention of himself as a new poet in the US, and the

literature of the Jewish diaspora in New York City. He has recently published *Disarchiving Anguish: Charles Reznikoff and the Modalities of Witnessing* (2021).

**Marek Paryż** is associate professor of American literature at the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw, the chief editor of the "Polish Journal for American Studies" and senior editor of the "European Journal of American Studies." His current research focuses on the Western across narrative arts, and he takes special interest in transnational uses of the genre. He has recently co-edited a collection of essays titled "The Western in the Global Literary Imagination," coming out from Brill in December.

**Felix Purat** is an American Literature scholar with an interdisciplinary history. He is currently studying the novels of Philip K. Dick as California regional literature at Palacky University for his PhD.

**Dr. Irina Rabinovich** is a lecturer in the English Language Department at Holon Institute of Technology, Israel. Most of her research deals with the representation of women, in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century British and American Literature. She has published numerous articles in various academic journals and presented papers at British, Jewish and American-Literature conferences. She is the author of *Re-Dressing Miriam: 19th Century Artistic Jewish Women* (2012).

**Patrycja Roguska** is a PhD candidate and an instructor at the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw, where she also earned her MA and BA in English Studies with a focus on American literature and culture. She is currently working on her doctoral dissertation devoted to representations of illness, disability, and addiction in Stephen King's fiction. Her research interests include horror in literature and film, popular culture, representations of illness, disability, and addiction in contemporary American literature and culture as well as connections between literature and medicine. She is a member of the Polish Association for American Studies.

**Dr. Aleksandra M. Różalska** is Assistant Professor at the Department of Cultural Research, Faculty of Philology and Head of the Women Studies Centre, University of Łódź. She is a local coordinator for GEMMA (Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree in Women's and Gender Studies) and P.I. for the Horizon 2020 RESET: Rethinking Gender and Scientific Excellence Together (2021-2024) and the Horizon Europe FEAST: Food Systems That Support Transitions to Healthy and Sustainable Diets (2022-2027). She has published on images of minorities and women in film and television as well as on cultural representations of 9/11 and its aftermath. She co-edited five volumes devoted to feminisms in various cultural contexts and cultures of (in)equality. Currently she is working on a book on the post-9/11 television discourses and on a journal article about television representations of abortion and reproductive rights.

**Krzysztof Siwek.** Born in 1982. Received Ph. D. in history in 2011. Currently, an assistant professor at the Historical Institute, University of Wrocław, Poland. His research and academic interests involve the history of Poland and Europe in the 20th century, the policies of the United States towards the Poland and the Central Eastern European territorial issues from 1918 to 1990. Conducted a series of projects involving archival inquiries in the United States at the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library at Hyde Park, at the Library

of Congress in Washington D.C. and several American Studies institutions across Europe. Author of articles on a broad scope of the United States' policies toward the Central-Eastern European states and disputed territories, involving Poland in particular.

**Magdalena Szuster** is affiliated with the Department of North American Literature and Culture, University of Łódź. She specializes in American theater and drama, and works now in the area of stage adaptations of plays by North American playwrights in Poland. She holds an MA in American Literature and a PhD in Literary Studies. Since 2014, she has been collaborating with the Music Theatre of Łódź, where she now designs and coordinates theatre education programs. She has collaborated with the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute and is partaking in the Institute's educational networking programs. She is a recipient of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage Fellowship for cultural education.

**Joanna Szymaniak** is an MA student of American Studies at the University of Warsaw, and her interests revolve around feminist theory, gender studies, and film analysis. In her research, she tends to examine the power relation between hegemonic and minority groups – particularly in gender and sexuality context – and its effect on culture. Her work so far included analyzing the legacy of the second wave of feminism, the non-heteronormative representation of femininity in the Cold War era, and contemporary American cinema. She plans to continue her academic path in hopes of pursuing a Ph.D. program next year.

**Elżbieta Wilczyńska**, Ph.D., is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of English at Adam Mickiewicz University, in Poznań, Poland at the Department of Studies in Culture. Her major field of interest involves Native Americans, their history, culture, identity and role in contemporary America. Other academic interests include Black studies and American and Canadian art as well as Australian and New Zealand cultures, with a focus on indigenous cultures and art. She published numerous articles on Native Americans and Australian art. Her recent publications include “Polish Indian Hobbyists and Cultural Appropriation” (2019) and “Nowe tropy, nowi bohaterowie, nowe historie, nowe konflikty – stara sprawa czyli indiańskie kontrnarracje [New Tropes, New Heroes, New Narratives, New Conflicts – The Old Tale or Native American Counternarratives] (*Historyka* 2021), and “Transculturation and counter-narratives: The life and art of the Wurundjeri artist William Barak” (2022, *Journal of New Zealand & Pacific Studies*).

**Ewa Wyleżek-Targosz**, Ph.D. University of Silesia, Katowice, Poland. She is a lecturer at the Institute of Literary Studies in the Faculty of Humanities. Her main academic interests are carnival, modernism, art history, and movie studies. In 2019 she was a guest lecturer at University of Eastern Finland. She has recently published a book titled *Tropes of Tauromachy: Representations of Bullfighting in Selected Texts of Anglophone Literature*. She is also a certified brewer (postgraduate course at University of Agriculture, Cracow).

**Roman Vasylenko** is a second-year Ph.D. student at the University of Warsaw, Poland. His thesis is dedicated to an obscure American postmodernist writer Stephen Wright. In 2021, Roman co-translated Thomas Pynchon's essays and short story collection *Slow Learner* (1984) into Polish (pol. Niepojętny Uczeń).

**Grażyna Zygałło** is an Associate Professor in the Department of American Studies and Mass Media at the University of Lodz, Poland. Her areas of expertise are in American studies, minorities and their marginalization, gender and Border studies with a particular focus on the work of Gloria Anzaldúa. She was a guest lecturer at the universities in Spain, Finland, Sweden, as well as a recipient of grants from major US universities: University of Idaho, MIT and Florida International University in Miami. Altogether she has published 2 monographs, 2 edited books and over 30 articles or chapters in edited volumes. The monographs include: *Culture Matters: Chicanas' Identity in Contemporary USA* (Peter Lang, 2007) and *"I Change Myself – I Change the World" - Gloria E. Anzaldúa and Her Writing of Committed Development in the Socio-Cultural Context*. (University of Lodz Press 2019). Since 2004, she has been a member of HispaUSA and since 2009 a member of the Society for the Study of Gloria Anzaldúa at the University of Texas, San Antonio.