**International Conference**

**At the Dusk of Literature?––21st-century North American writing *in extremis*.**

Department of North American Literature & Culture

University of Łódź, Poland

(September 28-30, 2020)

Discussing new challenges for the 21st-century literature in the wake of the newly emergent neurobiological scheme of thought in *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing*: *Dialectic, Destruction, Deconstruction* (2003), the French philosopher Catherine Malabou famously argued that writing must now face the dawn of the post-deconstructive era. Venturing beyond deconstruction, Malabou points to a necessary “reorientation of literature” along the lines of neurobiological research, whose aim is to reclaim the body from either philosophical or scientific reductionism[[1]](#footnote-2). Interrogating the notion of writing construed in the deconstructive thinking of Blanchot and Foucault as *the* *thought from the outside*, a neutral space where the subject finds shelter, she speaks of the outside as the unthinkable post-traumatic space that literature must confront in new ways. According to Malabou, the textual domain now finds itself at the twilight point, where the Derridean model no longer holds and where writing finds itself *in extremis*. At the same time, *the dusk of writing* signifies a possible horizon of transformation for writing.

One notable example of present-day poetic writing’s renegotiation of extremity has been recently offered by the American conceptual poet, scholar, and editor Divya Victor, curator of the special feature *Extreme Texts* published in *Jacket2*. For Victor, writing the call for papers in 2017 only several months into Trump’s presidency meant taking into account the reality in which “a majority of Americans had acquiesced to live, *normally*, under *extreme* conditions, with denuded civil rights, attenuated freedoms of press, increasing inequality of wages, and diminishing access to medical care, and under misogynist, transphobic, and supremacist policies”[[2]](#footnote-3). *Extreme Texts* offers an impressive range of modes of thinking about the notion of extremity in contemporary experimental poetry and poetics, reclaiming the term’s complexity visible in the ways the contributors investigated the condition of texts in terms of their own limit(s) and excess(es), evident in their material or affective extremity, as well as manifested in their radical philosophical and conceptual stakes, which, as Victor had certainly hoped, successfully accounts for the complexity of the term “extremity,” freeing it from the current association with “extremism.” Similarly, during her keynote lecture at the 2017 Annual American Comparative Literature Association Conference in Utrecht, Mieke Bal insisted on reclaiming the words “radical” and “radicalization” from the discursive grip of mass media and politics in order to make these two terms usable again for art and literature.

We welcome both individual scholarly and creative proposals as well as panels that consider the conference topic alongside Malabou’s new materialist post-deconstructive reflection on writing’s extremity as a space from which to think its present and future; and we equally encourage a variety of other approaches that reflect on the significance and complexity of the notion of extremity as it continues to affect, transform, and manifest itself in North American writing in the 21st century. The possible range of topics include, but are certainly not limited to, the following:

* neuro/biological approaches to North American narrative(s);
* post-trauma, silencing & reorientation in North American literature;
* North American literary responses to biopolitics, technopolitics, psychopolitics, and necropolitics;
* poetic (de)formations *in extremis*;
* hermetic and recalcitrant texts, non/narratives;
* radical intersections of writing and other disciplines (e.g. philosophy, science, or the arts);
* performance and performativity *in extremis* / extremity in North American theatre;
* (dark) ecology in North American narrative(s) in/of the Anthropocene and Neganthropocene;
* radical ways of narrating posthumanism;
* radical facts & radical fictions;
* translating extremes / extreme translations;
* extremities, appendages, horizons, margins;
* boundaries, borders, and (non)binaries;
* radical or extreme textual affect(s)

Keynote Speaker:

**Dr. Divya Victor**

Assistant Professor of Poetry and Writing at Michigan State University and Editor at *Jacket2*

Author of *Curb* (2019, The Press at Colorado College), *Kith* (2017, Fence Books/Book Thug), *Natural Subjects* (2014, Trembling Pillow, winner of the Bob Kaufman Award), *Unsub* (2014, Insert Blanc) and *Things to Do With Your Mouth* (2014, Les Figues)

Editor of *Extreme Texts* (2019, *Jacket2*).

A 200-word abstract and 5 keywords should be submitted as an email attachment to [writinginextremis@gmail.com](mailto:writinginextremis@gmail.com) by April 1, 2020. In your email, please include your name, affiliation, email address, title of the proposal, abstract, 5 keywords and a brief bio.

Payment information:

**Early bird fee**: **450 PLN** for academics holding positions at Polish Universities, **120 Euro** for delegates based outside of Poland, and reduced fee of **400 PLN/100 Euro** for doctoral students.  
**Payment deadline: 30 June, 2020**

**Regular fee (after 30 June, 2020): 500 PLN** for academics holding positions at Polish Universities, **135 Euro** for delegates based outside of Poland, and reduced fee of **450 PLN/120 Euro** for doctoral students.

**Notifications of acceptance along with further information regarding payment, conference venue and accommodation, as well as other conference-related details will be sent by April 20, 2020**

Organizing Committee:

Dr. Małgorzata Myk

Mark Tardi, MFA

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1. Catherine Malabou, “What is Neuro-literature?”, *SubStance: A Review of Theory and Literary Criticism* 45.2 (2016): 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Divya Victor, ed. “Preface.” *Extreme Texts*. <https://jacket2.org/feature/extreme-texts>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)