

Book of Abstracts

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Paulina Ambroży *Adam Mickiewicz University*

Desert Morphologies: Relational Poetics and Embodied Transformation in Forrest Gander's and Natalie Diaz's poetry

This paper argues that experimental contemporary American poetry reconceptualizes “America” not as a stable territorial or symbolic entity but as a morphogenetic field of relations emerging across bodies, ecologies, and temporalities. Drawing on Forrest Gander's Mojave Desert and Natalie Diaz's Postcolonial Love Poem, I read the Mojave Desert as a site where identity takes form through transformation rather than fixed outline, where, to echo Vivian Sobchack's Carnal Thoughts, meaning arises in the encounter between sensing bodies and material worlds.

Engaging process philosophy (Whitehead), Deleuzian becoming, indigenous ontologies of relationality (Leanne Betasamosake Simpson), and Karen Barad's agential realism, I argue that these poets construct a relational ontology in which self, landscape, and history are not discrete entities but intra-active processes. In Gander's porous lyricism, perception itself becomes an ecological event: feeling and geology co-compose one another across species and temporal scales, enacting what Deleuze and Guattari would term a deterritorialization of the lyric subject. Diaz, likewise, renders the Mojave as an embodied archive shaped by colonial violence, water politics, and Indigenous futurity. Her poetics stages morphing as material entanglement: the body becomes river, border, lover. foregrounding Édouard Glissant's poetics of relation while refusing the abstraction of digital fluidity.

Situated within discourses of digital morphing and networked identity, this paper proposes that contemporary experimental poetry offers a critical analogue counterpoint to algorithmic transformation. Whereas digital morphing often privileges surface modulation and platform circulation, Gander and Diaz insist on the material stakes of becoming: morphing as ecological precarity and as sensorial and political embodiment. Formally, fragmentation, translation, and shifting address enact a poetics of intra-active emergence, where America appears not as a bounded object but as a process. “Desert poetics” does not merely represent morphing America but also performs it.

Paweł M. Baran *University of Szczecin*

"So long as there are men, there will be wars.": (re)constructing American and non-American military identity through 'death quotes' in Call of Duty series

Call of Duty is a series commonly known for its militaristic and propagandistic tone. Officially, the creator Jacob Minkoff denies that the game is political (Game Informer, 0:01). This makes the relationship between Call of Duty and military entertainment complex an open secret. Call of Duty famously delved into politics, e.g., by fictionalizing the infamous Highway of Death incident and presenting it as done by the Russians in Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (Infinity Ward, 2019). Such tongue in cheek approach to history, politics, and military has caused a famous video essayist Jacob Geller to ask in critique: “Does Call of Duty Believe in Anything?” (2019). While hidden between the lines and often obfuscated to the popular discourse, cracks do appear in the officially apolitical stance of the series. One place where these cracks appear are the ‘death quotes’, citations of famous soldiers, politicians, philosophers etc. that appear after deaths in Call of Duty games, which became a trademark of the series. My paper aims to utilize Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) on circa 200 of these quotes to find how American and foreign stances on war have been reconfigured and reconstructed to form the political and philosophical identity in the series. I combine

these two, seemingly opposite, theories to examine how military identity is constructed both in micro- (CDA) and macro-scale as a structure of knowledge (FDA). At this stage, despite my research not being finalized, I can see an American bias in the quantity of authors. Upon the finalization of the analysis, I will be able to explicate the conclusion further into the political affiliations, gender, and stance on war.

Kacper Bartczak *University of Łódź*

Plasticity and Life at the Dawn of American Poetry

Catherine Malabou's concept of plasticity has a strong aesthetic potential. Much as it is a reading of an entire philosophical tradition, from Hegel, via Heidegger, to Derrida, the term receives its focus through Malabou's use of Jean-François Lyotard's discussion of the "other of discourse" – what he calls "the figure" – a non-discursive density that discourse finds in its very midst. In Lyotard's development of this notion, language and non-language seek each other out, thus opening a tension-ridden field where the play of absence and presence accompanies the dynamics of language seeking out what is outside it. As Malabou and Lyotard stress repeatedly, the plastic border area between discourse and non-discourse, where discourse meets the "wildness of the eye", has been long been the nascent site of the aesthetic experience, including poetry, especially since modernist experimentation.

As I am going to show, this very border area has also been a place of exchange between life and non-life, and, as such, constitutes the birthplace of an American poetic tradition, from Whitman, Thoreau, and Stevens to Ashbery and Armantrout. In my paper, I would like to present selected ramifications of plasticity, as it is approached, discovered, and ultimately utilized by the poems of the tradition outlined above. Specifically, I will be interested in the relation between plasticity and the vitality of the poem. My aim will be to examine how this relationship between plasticity and life is realized in the poems and texts of the authors mentioned above.

Tomasz Basiuk *University of Warsaw*

"Coming Together to Stay Apart": From Abramovich to Warhol and Back Again

In *Intimacies* (2009), Leo Bersani hypothesizes that lay people could psychoanalyze one another by establishing relationships distinct from the ordinary kinds of relationships, such as having an affair. Adopting the idea from Patrice Leconte's 2004 film *Intimate Strangers*, Bersani speculates about a relational practice paradoxically built on renouncing relationality as liberating psychoanalysis from professional and monetary gatekeeping. That same year, José Esteban Muñoz draws on performative arts for models of worlds reimagined, or imagined otherwise, to put forward a project of queer worldbuilding (*Cruising Utopia*, 2009). This paper attempts an analogous gesture, drawing inspiration for social practice from aesthetic objects and practices. It looks to Marina Abramovich's 2010 MoMA exhibition *The Artist Is Present*, re-staged as an installation in her recent retrospective at Albertina Modern in Vienna, as an instance of universal analysis. It looks also to Andy Warhol's passivity and his use of "baffle," as described by Stephen Koch (*Stargazer*, 1974), and to his filmmaking practice, as discussed by Douglas Crimp in terms of a mode of cooperation paradoxically conceived as non-cooperation—a strategy Crimp calls "coming together to stay apart" (*"Our Kind of Movie,"* 2012)—as another model of relationality based on renouncing relationality. The argument culminates in a speculation, prompted by Bruce Benderson's essay "Toward the New Degeneracy" (1997), about some possible uses of cultural models

associated with the lower classes under conditions of social, economic, and political precarity presently characterizing the United States and other globalized localities.

Ilias Ben-Mna *Humboldt University of Berlin*

Bodily Transformation as Expressions of Precarity and Self-optimization in the movie "The Substance" (2024)

The 2024 body horror film "The Substance" has gained notoriety for its depiction of the gendered aspects of mainstream Western beauty culture. The movie combines visceral realism and science-fiction to compose a ferocious takedown of late capitalist mechanisms which render certain bodies invisible on the basis of race, gender, class, ability, and age.

In my paper, I will discuss how the transformation of the human body in *The Substance* mirrors the premises of contemporary neoliberal self-optimization logic. The main character, actress Elisabeth Sparkle, undergoes a drug-induced weekly morphing procedure that allows her to look younger for seven days. This creates a cycle in which she oscillates between socio-economic precarity and a monetizable attention surplus. As the movie progresses, it becomes evident that her self-optimization project leads to a downward spiral which fragments mainstream concepts of identity, time, and corporeality.

The Substance raises incisive questions regarding the role of algorithm-driven technologies (ranging from digital plastic surgery technologies to self-help apps) and their promise to help individuals to escape aging, downward social mobility or irrelevance in the modern attention economy. Through Bourdieu's concept of "capital", I intend to outline how the main character's realities are impacted by the recurring lack and presence of specific types of capital. These observations will be flanked by Melvin Cody's concept of desubjectivation and the hollowing of the self in the context of digital neoliberalism.

These observations serve to highlight the dynamics of a digitalized and visually oriented attention economy. The algorithms behind these developments are not culturally neutral nor the result of autonomous consumer choices. Instead, they reinforce the very precarity and anxiety that they seem to promise relief from.

Magdalena Berechowska *University of Szczecin*

The Reversible Body: Classical Ballet Between Stage and Screen

American ballet has long been framed as a closed and elite tradition, an art of idealised silhouettes, rigid gender roles and pointe-shoe verticality held apart from the everyday bodies around it. This paper argues that a single filmed programme, capturing both George Balanchine's *Serenade* (1934) and Justin Peck's *The Times Are Racing* (2017) at Madrid's Teatro Real and circulated on Marquee TV and PBS's *Great Performances*, reveals the classical ballet body as reversible rather than closed. Drawing on Vivian Sobchack's phenomenology of embodiment, and specifically her use of Merleau-Ponty's concept of the chiasm, described as the "ground of all presence" from which oppositions "emerge and fall away," this paper argues that Peck's choreography does not reject Balanchine's institutional legacy but rather reveals a reversibility already latent within it.

This argument proceeds across three registers. Somatically, Peck's replacement of pointe shoes with sneakers, worn beneath streetwear costumed by Opening Ceremony's Humberto Leon, produces a felt reorganisation of the dancing body's centre of gravity and its relationship to a partner's weight. The tap duet at the heart of the piece further originates in the embodied logic of a screen-based interface, Dance

Dance Revolution. Socially, the ballet's central pas de deux has retained a fixed choreographic structure while the bodies performing it have not, moving from its original mixed-gender casting through the company's first male-male pairing in 2017 to its first nonbinary pairing in 2024. Cinematically, the recording under discussion places Balanchine's geometric and vertically aspirational bodies and Peck's grounded and laterally weighted bodies within the same visual grammar, one which mediates both for a viewer situated outside the theatre and which, in doing so, subtly redistributes what "grounded" means for each.

Reading these three registers together, this paper contends that *The Times Are Racing* does not mark a rupture with American ballet's neoclassical inheritance but rather makes visible a reversibility—of body, of form and of image—that has structured that inheritance since its inception.

Jędrzej Burszta *University of Warsaw*

The Influence of American Psychedelic History on Contemporary Polish Psychedelic Communities

While the so-called "psychedelic renaissance" is often discussed as a global phenomenon, especially in the last thirty years, the specific lineage of influence from American history to the post-communist socio-cultural fabric of Poland offers a unique case study in cultural translation. In the paper, I argue that the current psychedelic renaissance should be viewed as a transnational cultural and biopolitical phenomenon that connects the heritage of Western psychedelic history with contemporary sub-cultural practices of various Polish psychedelic communities. The paper will be based on extensive ethnographic research among psychedelic practitioners in Poland, including qualitative interviews and participant observation in a range of psychedelic events (festivals, seminars, concerts, theater plays etc.), and will focus on reconstructing the influence of "American psychedelia" on today's practices and discourses surrounding psychedelic use in Poland. It will refer both to selected texts, figures, and cultural myths from American counterculture—the original psychedelic movement from the 1960s—and their impact today (for instance, on Polish psychedelic art), as well as re-trace new circuits of knowledge that are shaping the discourse around the medicalization of psychedelic substances. The paper will thus highlight the shift from the American "mystical-spiritual" framing of psychedelics during the counterculture years to the "medical-scientific" framing prevalent in Poland today, which is also, to some extent, mediated through new clinical research on psychedelic substances conducted primarily in the US. Finally, the paper will offer a reflection on the significance of cultural and scientific transfers of knowledge between Poland and the US, and how they might be understood as part of a broader psychedelic history.

Kamila Celmerowska *University of Szczecin*

Reflections in the Screen: Queer Body Horror and Digital Becoming in the Films of Jane Schoenbrun

This paper examines how contemporary American queer identity is articulated through bodily transformation and digital mediation in the films of Jane Schoenbrun. It argues that Schoenbrun's work conceptualizes queer identity as a visceral process of continual morphing across bodies, media, and spatio-temporalities, affecting on-screen and off-screen bodies alike.

Drawing heavily on the director's own experience of growing up queer, Schoenbrun's three films – "A Self-Induced Hallucination" (2018), "WE'RE ALL GOING TO THE WORLD'S FAIR" (2021), and "I Saw the TV Glow" (2024) – represent different stages in her gender transition, and examine the formative

role of horror media within it. They contain similar themes of troubled teenage protagonists situated within suburban American landscapes, for whom various forms of horror media, from nostalgic late-night TV shows to online subcultures, serve as sole tools of survival. Searching for a means to imagine themselves otherwise, these characters become so deeply immersed in the media they consume, that their engagement exceeds psychological identification and turns into corporeal transformation. Schoenbrun's bodies absorb media textures – TV static, celluloid tape, glitches and distortions – conceptualizing identity as unstable and dynamic, emergent through affective encounters between bodies, media technologies, images, and viewers.

The paper examines how body horror functions as a mode of relational becoming queer in the digital age. Additionally, it extends this analysis beyond the scope of the screen to consider how Schoenbrun's films imprint themselves on audience-bodies. Taking into account the director's lived experience translated into film, the affective and emotional responses following the films' releases, and instances of direct bodily inscription, such as viewers tattooing symbols from the films onto their own skin, the paper demonstrates how horror media influences the construction of contemporary queer identity.

Iga Cemer-Matysewicz *University of Białystok*

Morphing Mothers: Cinematic Representations of Postpartum Transformation

In her 1962 poem *Three Women*, Sylvia Plath writes:

"I have tried not to think too hard. I have tried to be natural.

I have tried to be blind in love like other women,

Blind in my bed, with my dear blind sweet one."

attempting to dispel the long-standing veil of secrecy surrounding the hardships of motherhood for centuries.

In her day and age, it was unthinkable that a mother could have ambivalent feelings towards her child, and yet, she addressed the subject in her poems. In subsequent years, other female writers followed suit.

In 1976 Adrienne Rich published *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* – a groundbreaking work in which she combines scholarly research and personal reflections on being a mother. First gradually, then as a ripple effect women began to feel free to disclose the less idealized aspects of the maternal experience, as exemplified by Rachel Cusk (*A Life's Work* 2004), Sheila Heiti (*Motherhood* 2018) or Lucy Jones (*Matrescence* 2024).

This narrative shift is also increasingly evident in contemporary cinema. In this paper I examine the representation of post-partum depression and the realities of motherhood in cinema primarily through two films: Lynne Ramsay's *Die My Love* (2025) and Mary Bronstein's *If I had legs, I'd kick you* (2025). Drawing on the theoretical framework proposed by Elisabeth Sankey in her documentary *Witches* (2024), as well as on most recent works on motherhood, such as Lucy Jones' *Matrescence* (2024), I will attempt to analyze how contemporary cinema represents the psychological realities of postpartum experience, challenging the traditional ideals of motherhood.

Sara Cesarska *University of Szczecin*

From Bows to Bros: Jojo Siwa and the Glitched Hero's Journey in the Age of Algorithmic Morphing

Since her debut on *Dance Moms* (2011-), dancer and musical performer Jojo Siwa has functioned less as an individual and more as hyper-mediated interface upon which shifting American anxieties and desires are projected. This presentation analyzes Siwa's trajectory through the lens of "glitched" *Hero's Journey*, proposing that her metamorphosis reflects the instability of identity in an era of algorithmic polarization.

Initially, Siwa performed her version of commodified hyper-femininity characterized by the iconic "Jojo Bow," which served as a symbol of manufactured innocence palatable to conservative American sensibilities. Her subsequent rebranding as the self-proclaimed inventor of "Gay Pop" appeared to follow a traditional monomythic structure: a departure from the familiar (heteronormativity) into the unknown realm of queer visibility. However, recent developments, such as her performative shift on the 24th season of *Big Brother* (2025) and an apparent pivot toward "trad wife" aesthetics and heteronormativity, disrupt this linear narrative of progressive liberation.

Drawing on Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "liquid modernity" and Judith Butler's theories of performativity, this presentation argues that Jojo Siwa's transformations are not contradictions, but rather adaptations to the digital ecosystem that rewards rapid morphing over coherence. Siwa embodies a new American mythology where the "self" is a fluid asset managed by engagement metrics. Her oscillation between the "butch" rebel and the traditional feminine subject suggests that in the attention economy, the *Hero's Journey* does not lead to a stable return with an elixir of self-knowledge. Instead, the journey "glitches," trapping the subject in a perpetual loop of reinvention where ideology is merely another costume. Ultimately, Siwa's morphing highlights the collapse of distinct cultural registers, blurring the lines between queer emancipation and conservative backlash in the pursuit of viral visibility.

Dagmara Drewniak *Adam Mickiewicz University*

"Pilgrimage: a journey to a place of connection to the sacred": Spirituality, Pilgrimages and Earth in Polish-North American Autobiographical Writing

Drawing on Sarah Dillon's conceptualization of the palimpsest as "a simultaneous relation of intimacy and separation" (2014: 3), this article proposes to discuss selected texts by descendants of Eastern and Central European migrants as palimpsestic acts of memory and place-making shaped by a deeply spiritual engagement with land and ancestry. For second-generation subjects, ancestral homelands are neither fully accessible nor entirely absent; rather, they persist as layered sites where inherited memory, historical rupture, embodied encounter, and spiritual resonance intersect. These palimpsestic relations not only structure migrants' bonds to their past homelands but also mediate their understanding of North American cultural and spatial belonging through sacred and symbolic attachments to place. Focusing on selected poetic and memoiristic works by Cecilia Woloch and Connie T. Braun, the presentation examines how returns to the Carpathian Mountains and the Żuławy region—now situated within contemporary Poland—make these landscapes spiritually charged palimpsests and inspire their writing. Woloch's engagement with Roma inheritance and Braun's exploration of Mennonite ancestry frame return as a process of rewriting in which land, soil, and earth function as sites of spiritual memory and transgenerational continuity. Through metaphors such as "the holy republic of mud" (Woloch 2015: 9) and the "physical and emotional landscape" (Braun 2017: 151), their texts articulate pilgrimage as a literary and

contemplative practice that unsettles traditional models of homecoming and emphasizes the processes of layering, relational belonging, and sacred connection to place.

Aneta Dybska *University of Warsaw*

Towards Reparative Justice through Land Restitution

My presentation will offer an overview of Black reparations activism related to land and home ownership, in particular recent voluntary initiatives that promote racial reconciliation between descendants of the enslaved and those of the enslavers. They set out to redress historical and continuing harm and create land-based wealth. While some initiatives involve building relationships between individuals, others have a collective focus that aligns with the Black nationalist project of land-based sovereignty and a solidarity economy (e.g. Cooperation Jackson, Mississippi). Community land trusts are a form of property that creates affordable farmland and housing opportunities and ensures protections against unfair and excessive property taxes that have historically driven African Americans' displacement and dispossession (Kahrl 2024). Northeast Farmers of Color (NEFOC), in turn, runs a Reparations Map tool that connects White land owners who would like to transfer land with minority farmers in need of land as individual reparative justice gestures. Initiatives like these complement the famous 2021 restitution by the state of California of Manhattan Beach to the Bruce family - the rightful owners of a once thriving Black-owned resort lost to eminent domain, or the municipal reparation program in Evanston, Illinois, offering redress to Black homeowners for discriminatory housing policies.

Magdalena Dziurzyńska *University of Szczecin*

Morphing Masculinity: Gender Disappearance and Networked Identity in Sandra Newman's *The Men*

This paper argues that contemporary speculative fiction reconceptualizes gender separatism by situating disappearance within a digitally mediated and networked social reality. Focusing on *The Men* by Sandra Newman, it examines how the sudden disappearance of all people with a Y chromosome transforms masculinity from an embodied identity into a mediated and structurally persistent category. While the premise appears to fulfill the separatist fantasy of removing men as agents of patriarchal power, the novel instead reveals that masculinity survives as an institutional and symbolic construct embedded within social, cultural, and informational systems.

This paper situates *The Men* within the context of contemporary American digital culture, where identity is increasingly constituted through networked infrastructures, mediated representation, and archival continuity. The novel demonstrates that gender persists not solely through physical embodiment but through its reproduction across systems of communication, governance, and collective memory. In this sense, patriarchy emerges as a distributed structure that exceeds individual subjects and operates through institutional and informational continuity.

By reimagining separatism in a networked society, *The Men* reflects a broader cultural shift in which identity is no longer anchored exclusively in bodies but circulates across technological and symbolic systems. The novel thus participates in a larger speculative interrogation of how American identity morphs under conditions of digital modernity, revealing the persistence of social structures even in the absence of their original biological referents. Through this lens, disappearance becomes not an endpoint

but a transformation that exposes the mediated foundations of gender and power in contemporary American culture.

Dominika Ferens *University of Wrocław*

Morphing across genres and media platforms: On the un/popularity of Sigrid Nunez

In 2018, a relatively unknown New York writer, Sigrid Nunez, was propelled to fame when she won the National Book Award for her novel *The Friend*. Although her seven earlier books had passed virtually unnoticed, in 2019 her short story “The Plan” was selected for *The Best American Short Stories*, *The New Yorker* published “Greensleeves,” and her essay “Life and Story” appeared in *The Best American Essays 2023*. Soon Nunez’s work began morphing across genres and media platforms. Two of her novels were adapted for the screen—by Pedro Almodóvar (*The Room Next Door*, 2024) and by Scott McGehee and David Siegel (*The Friend*, 2024). The characters—played by Tilda Swinton, Julianne Moore, Naomi Watts, Bill Murray, and a dog named Bing—grew larger than life. The actors were interviewed by celebrities such as Jimmy Fallon and Drew Barrymore; Bing even howled in a duet with Naomi Watts on *The Tonight Show*. Nunez spoke graciously at film festivals and gave a long interview, illustrated with dramatic black-and-white photographs, to *The New York Times*. Since receiving the National Book Award, her books have been published in more than thirty-five countries, including Poland.

I certainly did not foresee this turn of events when I began following Nunez’s career in 1995. Even as late as 2019, when I decided to write a monograph on the role of affect in her writing, I saw myself as working to secure recognition for the challenging, if not quite experimental, prose of a mixed race author whose off-beat subject matter fell beyond the purview of both Asian American and white literary criticism. Then the mainstream public fell in love with her story about a middle-aged woman who inherits a large dog—and ruined it all for me. How was I to justify my scholarly interest in Nunez in light of her new popularity? Had Elizabeth Hardwick and Susan Sontag been right after all when, in the 1970s, they tried to dissuade Nunez from pursuing a literary career? This paper draws on Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of interest and his influential work on distinction in the literary marketplace to illuminate the economy of the popular and the unpopular, and more specifically the unusual combination in Nunez’s work of wryness and intellectual daring with what reviewer Lucy Scholes has identified as “wit, warmth, and wisdom” (*Financial Times*). I aim to answer the following questions: Has Nunez’s writing changed over time? Was it lightweight all along, or is it still heavyweight only the reading public has changed? Does the adaptability of Nunez’s fragmentary prose to the demands of mainstream cinema disqualify it as serious literature? Does it still pose enough of a challenge to warrant scholarly research—and if so, what kind?

Edyta Frelik *Maria Curie-Skłodowska University*

Cindy Sherman’s American Morph-ologies

Cindy Sherman’s *Untitled Film Stills* are usually discussed as photographs that reference cinema, but in my presentation I want to suggest that they in fact stage what cinema itself cannot show: the moment of transformation. Film is made of still images, and movement is an effect produced by projecting sequences of frames separated by black strips that, structurally, cannot be seen. It is in these gaps, or intervals, that change, metamorphosis, and morphing occur. Sherman’s photographs fabricate precisely this invisible

moment. Each image looks like a still taken from the middle of a film: a moment in which something has just stopped being what it was and has not yet become what it will be, but for which there is no before and no after. Nothing has happened and nothing will; the entire scene exists only for the camera. Through role-playing, costume, makeup, lighting, and mise-en-scène, Sherman produces images that feel as if they capture identity in the process of becoming. Viewers immediately imagine time: what has just occurred, what is about to happen, who might be waiting just outside the frame. Yet this sense of process is entirely staged. What appears as transformation is pure artifice. When read in the context of American image culture—with its stock characters, cinematic scripts, and endlessly recycled roles—her work presents identity as something that can only ever be apprehended mid-transformation.

Shoshannah Ganz *Memorial University*

Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being*: Morphing Heian Japanese Literature and pre-Modern Buddhist Philosophy for the Twenty-First Century North American Audience

A Tale for the Time Being (2013), Ruth Ozeki's third novel, connects two remote islands on opposite sides of the Pacific. While critics have primarily focused on the environmental aspects of *A Tale for the Time Being*, through posthuman perspectives and material feminist philosophy, this paper will rather focus on the morphing of Heian Japanese literature and pre-Modern Japanese Buddhist philosophy across space and time, to address the complex global networks of social, environmental, and economic problems impacting Japanese and American people alike.

The story is told by a young Japanese teenaged narrator, Nao, who is mercilessly bullied after she returns to Japan from California, and by a middle-aged, mixed race, Japanese American author, Ruth. These narrators connect across time and space through Nao's diary, that washes up on a remote shore of the Pacific Northwest, and is found and read by Ruth.

This paper argues that Ruth Ozeki, a Zen Buddhist priest, who studied Japanese Heian literature in Nara, employs the Japanese technique of honkadōri, whereby the author makes reference through literary allusion to a particular work of Japanese literary antiquity, in the process subtly morphing the significance through the new temporal and literary connections. Ozeki's employs literary allusions to *The Tale of Genji*, a Japanese novel written in the eleventh century, and the Buddhist philosophical writing of Dogen, in the process morphing the literary allusions through the Japanese literary practice of honkadōri. Thus, the narrator Nao uses honkadōri to morph the Heian diaries of Japanese noble women, connecting this form to contemporary Japanese and American popular culture. Ozeki, like Murasaki Shikibu, author of *The Tale of Genji*, explores three generations of a family. Ozeki models her novel on the Heian literary practice of creating an interactive text, where the reader is addressed and is expected to actively participate in the world of the inlaid diary and the novel itself, the reader and writer thus creating meaning together across temporal and geographical boundaries. Drawing on the Soto Buddhist tradition and first text written in the thirteenth century by Dogen, Ozeki connects the place names of literary and Buddhist tradition, such as Uji and Sarashima, to create a novel that explores how the past literary and Buddhist traditions morph in the present. Through honkadōri, the living ghosts, waking dreams, and storms of *The Tale of Genji* morph in the twenty-first century to similarly show the brevity of life and the connectedness of all beings, human and more-than-human.

Antoni Górny *University of Szczecin*

Birthing the New: The Idea of Blackness in American Politics after BLM

After 1945, Blackness became central to American politics; it was a primary stake of the debate about the shape of American democracy, the contours of the American society, and the limits of political and social responsibility of the (White) majority toward the (Black) minority. In the resulting struggle for political, equal and social equality for Black Americans, which continued to gain pace until the late 1960s, two versions of Blackness emerged: one, associated with the conservatives, made it the sign of a culprit (the subject of delinquency, criminality, the “welfare queen”); the other, deliberately foregrounded in the Civil Rights Movement, made it the mark of a victim (the object of segregation and racism). The eventual success of the former, and the failure of the movement, was due largely to the fact that the subsequent decades saw social and economic developments that disinclined the majority from yielding to the demands of minorities and reinforced existing racist tendencies. On the one hand, there were economic crises, owed at least in part to American foreign policy disasters; on the other, there was the rising crime and poverty, with the attendant victim-blaming and moral panics. The ground began to shift in the 2000s, with the election of Barack Obama – which was met with a persistent, racist backlash – and in the 2010s, with the arrival of the Black Lives Matter movement, prompted by a wave of recorded instances of (often unpremeditated) police violence against Blacks. A half-decade from the death of George Floyd, perhaps the most prominent victim of such violence, I want to reassess how the political meaning of Blackness has evolved since then, taking into account the recent broadening of the “racial” parameters of the discussion about American democracy, as well as the expanding footprint of “colored” politicians on state and federal levels, and consider the validity of received versions of Blackness in the current, increasingly socially-mediatised cultural landscape of the US.

Iwona Grodź Polskie Towarzystwo Komunikacji Społecznej, Polskie Towarzystwo Badań nad Filmem i Mediami

From Dream to Simulacrum: Morphing Images of America in Polish Film Culture

The paper examines the changing image of the United States in Polish audiovisual culture, focusing on films created by Polish directors who engage with American themes. Its main objective is to explore how the myth of America is constructed, transformed, and reinterpreted in Polish cinema from the late twentieth century to the present, and how these representations participate in broader cultural imaginaries of the United States. The study asks whether contemporary portrayals of America in Polish film represent continuations, reinterpretations, or critical revisions of earlier mythologies associated with the United States.

The research material includes selected works by Polish filmmakers who have addressed American spaces, narratives, or identities in their films, including: Roman Polanski, Agnieszka Holland, Lech Majewski, and Zbigniew Rybczyński. The analysis will include films such as *Chinatown*, *Washington Square*, *The Gospel According to Harry*, and *Valley of the Gods*, alongside experimental works and television productions connected with American contexts.

Methodologically, the paper combines film analysis with cultural studies and theories of representation, drawing on concepts such as image, imagination, stereotype, and simulacrum, as well as the notion of cultural myth. Particular attention will be given to the audiovisual strategies through which America is constructed in film: landscape, architecture, urban imagery, music, language, and narrative motifs. The analysis also considers the position of the Polish filmmaker as a cultural outsider observing America from a transnational perspective.

The argument developed in the paper suggests that the image of America in Polish cinema functions as a dynamic cultural construct that continuously transforms across historical moments and media environments. While earlier representations often reproduced the myth of America as a space of dreams, opportunity, and symbolic frontier, more recent works increasingly reveal tensions related to identity, politics, ecology, and cultural difference. In this sense, the image of America in Polish film can be understood as a process of “cultural morphing”, in which fascination, critique, and imagination coexist within a shifting audiovisual landscape.

Rena M. Heinrich *University of Southern California*

“My Fury Is Greater Than My Fear:” Elizabeth Liang’s Alien Citizen, American Identity, and the Third Culture Kid

When U.S. citizen Elizabeth Liang arrived in Morocco at the tender age of 12, she was no stranger to living in a new host country. Of Chinese-Spanish-Guatemalan, Irish-French-German-English descent, by the time she arrived in Casablanca, her family had been living in four different countries in the Americas, and most of her life had been spent outside of her parents’ cultural homes—Guatemala and the United States. Self-identified as a Third Culture Kid (TCK) and marginalized as foreign, Liang would not spend an extended period of time in the United States as an adult until years later. This is the ephemeral and elusive world of *Alien Citizen: An Earth Odyssey*, an internationally touring theatrical production and film written by award-winning, multiracial solo performer and writer Elizabeth Liang.

Coined in the 1960s, the phenomenon of the Third Culture Kid (TCK) refers to individuals who spend significant periods of their childhoods out of their passport countries. This paper will examine the TCK solo show, *Alien Citizen*, and its depiction of malleable, morphing American identity as ever-fluid and constantly evolving. Through live, cinematic, and digitally mediated performances, mixed-race, global nomad Liang not only identifies with the United States but also sharply critiques the set of practices that embody American subjectivity and challenges the instability of American racial categories. The show dramatizes the ways in which Liang’s cultural, national, and ethnic ambiguity compels her to morph into a myriad of situational identities that depend on her shifting cultural, linguistic, and geographical context within multiple nomadic spaces. Resultantly, Liang is forced to adapt, then cope, and ultimately faces “transition fatigue,” though her contingent perception of being American remains. Through the lens of Third Culture Kid hybridization and the concept of double liminality, *Alien Citizen* explores how minoritized, mixed-race subjects courageously challenge and transform our understanding of what it means to be an American and investigates those “new modes of embodiment that transform what American identity is” and has always been.

Jarosław Hetman *Nicolaus Copernicus University*

Morphing Identities. David Foster Wallace and the Impact of Existentialist Psychiatry on Self-Perception

David Foster Wallace’s critical engagement with the discipline of psychology is well-known and has been studied extensively by scholars such as Marshall Boswell, Jon Baskin and Jamie Redgate, while his debt to existentialist philosophy has been the long-time subject of investigation for Allard den Dulk. That said, no attempts have been made to bridge these two fields within Wallace scholarship thus far, which is

seems to be surprising considering the fact that the novelist was an avid reader of R. D. Laing. In my paper I would like to offer an analysis of Wallace's reading of Laing's *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* based on the writer's marginalia in his personal copy of the book. My aim is to show that significant links can be made between Laing's views on sanity and madness, and the ways in which mental health institutions, and the society at large, especially as depicted in Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, perceives these categories. Such perceptions, in my mind, are instrumental in the process of identity formation for Wallace's self-conscious characters, often balancing on the boundary between social acceptability and exclusion.

While reflecting on this problem it is difficult to omit Wallace's own life-long struggle with depression and his experiences with mental health institutions. Consequently, the study of the author's personal notes, in my eyes, helps to understand his personal investment and the prominence of psychiatry as a discipline in Wallace's oeuvre.

Tomasz Jacheć *University of Warmia and Mazury*

Americans' Three Cinematic Encounters with the Nazis in Nuremberg: Glitches in the Myth of American Exceptionalism

In 2025, American audiences were presented with yet another Hollywood's take on the Nuremberg trials of 1945-6 in the movie "Nuremberg" (dir. James Vanderbilt). Among previous cinematic depictions of the trials and events that led up to them, there are: a two-part TV mini-series "Nuremberg" (dir. Yves Simoneau, 2000) and "Judgment at Nuremberg" (dir. Stanley Kramer, 1961). Each of these three films provides a dramatized account of the events that took place during "the trial of the century."

Given the fact that neither of these three films is a documentary, but a feature film and a work of fiction, though rooted in history, I would like to approach them in my paper as mythical tales on the assumed moral superiority of America and the roots of Nazi evil. Each of these three myths of Nuremberg trials was made in the USA at a distinctively different period of America's history. "Judgment at Nuremberg" (1961) came out during the Cold War era, which was marked by the tensions between the USA and the USSR; "Nuremberg" (2000) premiered during the time of when the pre-9/11 America was the only superpower in the world and enjoyed peace and prosperity; "Nuremberg" (2025) is presented to the audiences living in the age of Trump's America and Putin's imperial Russia.

My intention is to discuss how the three narratives introduce "glitches" of geopolitical, performative, and psychological nature into the America's moral superiority narrative as well as the narratives of explanation of evil. My claim is that, when analyzed collectively, the three mythical tales reveal morphing of the discourse of the Myth of American Exceptionalism.

Izabella Kimak *Maria Curie-Skłodowska University*

"A city of holy spires": The Catholic Church in Polish Chicagoan Writing

Historians and sociologists have paid substantial attention to the role played by the Catholic Church in the creation and preservation of Polish ethnic identity in the diasporic contexts. During the major wave of migration from Polish lands to the United States, which occurred at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, religious affiliation as Roman Catholics was a more significant marker of identity than nascent Polish nationality. Upon arrival in major US cities, such as Chicago, peasants from Eastern Europe would typically contribute their meager resources to construct magnificent churches, functioning as centers of

the ethnic community. In this presentation, I wish to analyze the representation of the church in contemporary literary texts by US-American writers of Polish ancestry. Stuart Dybek's writing is filled with references to churches as architectural landmarks of the ethnic neighborhood, while worship itself is typically associated with first-generation immigrant women. In one of his mystery novels, titled *Little Altar Boy*, John Guzlowski addresses pedophilia in church. For Patrycja Humienik, a second-generation poet who debuted recently, the space of St. Hyacinth Basilica in Polish Jackowo would primarily be associated with gendered oppression. All in all, these representations – albeit very different in character – complicate the image of the church as exclusively a pillar of the Polonian community.

Anna Kobyłowska *University of Wrocław*

Against the Frontier: Contemporary Paleofiction as a Form of Contesting the Literary Canon

Science fiction is a broad and adaptable genre that can employ speculative settings to deconstruct themes such as war, colonial trauma, and systemic power structures. Because of this flexibility, the reimagining of foundational “lost world” adventure novels, traditionally rooted in colonial narratives, marks a shift from exploration to exploitation. In doing so, literary adaptations, retellings, and remixes transcend the reader's impulse for escapist narrative fulfillment and are crucial for understanding and reevaluating the literary canon. Set during the Vietnam War, Ethan Pettus's *Primitive War: Opiate Undertow* (2017) is a paleofiction novel following a search-and-rescue team who discover extinct species living in a remote jungle valley. This presentation examines the novel as a contemporary reworking of the Anglo-American “lost world” tradition, exploring how the soldiers must fight for survival against both human and nonhuman threats. The study emphasizes the longevity and evolution of motifs such as the “beast,” the “laboratory,” and the “colony” that underpin the military-paleontological imagination of *Primitive War* through an analysis of the degradation of humanity and atavism in warfare. I argue that, through references to novels exploring prehistoric animals and colonialism, such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* (1912), and Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park* (1990), *Primitive War* exposes the persistence of American frontier ideology within Cold War imperialism, thereby transforming military paleofiction into a site of canonical resistance. By establishing a non-human “Other” and functioning beyond the traditional publishing sphere, Pettus subverts these established tropes and dismantles the prevailing American frontier myth. Keywords: paleofiction, retellings, adaptation, Vietnam War

Zofia Kolbuszewska *University of Wrocław*

Neobaroque Metalepsis and Horrific Ekphrasis: Representing Art and Scrutinizing Democracy in Joseph Heller's Novel *Picture This*

This paper examines the neobaroque metaleptic strategy of horrific ekphrasis in the novel *Picture This* (1988) from the American writer Joseph Heller. Heller's employment of the trope of ekphrasis, or “verbal representation of visual representation” (Heffernan), relies on uncannily literal investment with life of a painting by Rembrandt that depicts the Greek philosopher Aristotle with a Homer's marble bust. Heller invokes the painting that is actually on display in The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and in describing it literalizes the ancient rhetorical definition of ekphrasis as a representation of a work of art in vivid language so that it is placed as if alive before the viewer's eyes.

Ekphrastic representation in Heller's novel, conceived of as morphing modelled on a (neo)baroque fold, is

a dynamic allegorical staging of embodied meaning at the cusp of different media. Even as metaleptic ekphrasis translates the affordances of one medium into those of another, it gives expression to the bleeding of realities – the world presented in the work of art invades that of the recipient. Heller figures the process of morphing embodied as transgressively metaleptic ekphrasis in order to illuminate the failures of democracy as a system of political representation and ponder over the pitfalls and rewards of Ancient Greek democracy, the condition of democracy in the Dutch Republic in the 17th c., and the plight of American democracy in the second half of the 20th c..

Thus—through the morphing inherent in the folding and unfolding of the horrific ekphrastic representation—Heller’s novel addresses aesthetical and ethical as well as epistemological and ontological ramifications of late modernity’s cultural and political crises.

Paulina Korzeniewska *University of Zielona Góra*

Writing Violent Women: Narrative Ambiguity and Female Subjectivity in Contemporary Film and Television

This presentation examines how contemporary film and television narratives construct violent female protagonists through ambiguity, contradiction, and limited psychological transparency. Focusing on Catherine Tramell (Basic Instinct), Eva Khatchadourian (We Need to Talk About Kevin), Lydia Tár (Tár), and Griselda Blanco (Griselda), it argues that these characters are written as subjects who resist clear moral and psychological interpretation.

Drawing on Judith Butler’s concept of gender performativity, Sara Ahmed’s work on affect and feminist disruption, and Murray Smith’s theory of character engagement, the paper explores how screenwriters employ narrative strategies such as withholding information, unreliable focalization, and unresolved motivations to challenge conventional expectations of femininity. Rather than simply presenting women who adopt traditionally masculine forms of power, these narratives produce female subjectivities that remain unstable, contradictory, and difficult to classify.

Through a close analysis of selected screenplays and screen narratives, the paper argues that contemporary violent female protagonists function as sites of cultural anxiety surrounding gender, power, and autonomy. Their ambiguity is not a lack of characterization but a deliberate narrative strategy that complicates established models of female legibility in contemporary visual culture.

Agnieszka Kotwasińska *University of Warsaw*

Archives of Despair: The Red Tree (2010) by Caitlín R. Kiernan and Experimental Film (2015) by Gemma Files

Caitlín R. Kiernan's *The Red Tree* (2010) and Gemma Files' *Experimental Film* (2015) belong to a recent wave of horror production focused on haunted media and long-lost, cursed or occult archives of various cultural texts. As Chiara Haefliger reminds us, "[a]rchiving is never neutral; it is an act of selection, repression and construction. To choose what to preserve is to decide what is excluded, erased, or rendered inaccessible" (2025). Crucially, it is Lois' (*Experimental Film*) and Sarah's (*The Red Tree*) privileged identification as white middle-class cis-women, however precarious their socio-economic status might be, that allows them to undertake archival work in the first place, even if that archival plunge brings them nothing but despair and disorder.

Taking cue from Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock's *Gothic Things: Dark Enchantment and Anthropocene Anxiety* (2023), I argue that multi-modal archives imagined by Kiernan and Files are examples of "ominous matter," whose dark agentiality disturbs anthropocentric faith in human exceptionalism in its various racialized, classed and gendered forms. The protagonists' encounters with ominous matter facilitate a tragic re-orientation to the crisis of care that both protagonists are experiencing and which they both try to negate (see also Dowling 2022, Hester and Srnicek 2023, Puig de la Bellacasa 2017). Sarah and Lois allow themselves to be swept into obsessive archival work as a way to mutiny against reality filled with an all-consuming gendered carework: not just for others but for themselves; for their ever-failing bodies and professional legacies. While Kiernan uses the archive to address the interweaving of queer desire and queer trauma, and Files brings into sharp relief the clashing needs of neuroatypical motherhood, both authors relentlessly return to the role of artistry, creativity and memory in identity formation, especially for female subjects and especially when the said identity is interlaced with trauma and that, in turn, with an acute crisis of care.

Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska *University of Warmia and Mazury*

The Morphology and Morphing of Poverse in Mike Flanagan's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (2023)

This presentation will be devoted to "The Fall of the House of Usher", an 8-episode miniseries released in 2023 on Netflix. Its creator and director, Mike Flanagan, uses the characters of the eponymously titled literary original as the basis for crafting an expanded universe which morphs Poe's work and its thematic and conceptual preoccupations beyond recognition, practically shape-shifting Poverse into an American morality tale.

Bearing in mind Petru Ionescu's claim that Flanagan offers an "ideologically reoriented" adaptation, I will argue that the showrunner's treatment of remediated characters merits thorough examination as a glorified fanfic rather than an approximation to which adaptation studies' fidelity/betrayal discourse should be applied. Additionally, an attempt will be made to position the miniseries as a typical Netflix product, structured as a self-contained, character-driven, binge-worthy narrative.

Marija Krsteva *Goce Delcev University*

Morphing America through Sitcoms - Third Rock from the Sun

The aim of this paper is to analyze the role and significance of sitcoms as a genre in representing the history, culture, and civilization of the United States. Sitcoms predominantly employ humor for entertainment, while simultaneously portraying real-life situations through realistic and everyday conversations, thereby offering an effective medium for communication and cultural transmission. Drawing on Claire Kramsch's (1998) notion that language expresses, embodies, and symbolizes cultural reality, this paper examines how elements of U.S. culture are represented within sitcom narratives and how they influence audiences worldwide. While such representations are characteristic of American sitcoms in general, this study focuses on *Third Rock from the Sun* as a particularly illustrative example of visual and narrative constructions of global perceptions of America.

In the sitcom, the Solomon family—portrayed as extraterrestrials—attempts to integrate into American society by adopting the roles and behaviors of a typical American family. Through episodic narratives, various aspects of cultural integration are presented in an entertaining manner, while simultaneously

highlighting underlying realities of the American experience.

In addition, the paper addresses the contemporary shift in media consumption, from traditional television formats of sitcoms to digital platforms, including social media reels and online communication, and considers how this transformation affects the dissemination and reception of cultural narratives.

Anna Kurowicka *University of Warsaw*

Critical Reevaluation of the American University in Dark Academia Literature

Set at universities, dark academia novels explore the dark side of student or faculty life, often through the employment of conventions and themes typical of fantasy, crime, or horror literature. Straddling the line between fascination with the beauty and privilege of fictional university life and suspicion of the economic inequality and racial oppression that undergirds it, dark academia is typically understood by critics to romanticize the university. In this paper, I explore the affective and imaginary landscape of dark academia, looking into the genre's simultaneous investment in university and its disinvestment from the institution's problematic history and present. I claim that authors of color, queer authors, and those from lower socioeconomic classes use the genre to imagine the university otherwise by speculating about its alternative histories and futures, all in response to their uneasy relationship to the institution.

I approach dark academia as a response to and a reflection of the contemporary crises plaguing American academia, including, though by no means limited to, reevaluations of racial inequality and the legacy of colonialism. Fantasy dark academia novels use the genre's unique affordances to illuminate racism, slave labor, and colonialism as "original sins" that haunt American universities. Through a reading of two recent dark academia novels, RF Kuang's *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence* (2020) and Alexis Henderson's *An Academy for Liars* (2024), this paper explores the reassessment of American myths about the university and the emergence of alternative visions of the institution's history.

Jaroslav Kušnir *University of Presov*

Morphing American West and Native American Identity: Tommy Orange's *There There*

This paper examines the representation of the American West in Tommy Orange's *There There* (2018) through the lens of recent theoretical developments in Western studies, settler colonial theory, and critical race scholarship. Moving beyond traditional frontier mythology, the paper argues that the novel reconfigures the West as a plural, urban, and contested space shaped by ongoing colonial structures, racial hierarchies, and digital mediation. Drawing on Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and more recent concept of "Western worlds" (Ibarraran-Bigalondo 2020), the analysis situates Oakland as a post-frontier environment in which Indigenous identity is negotiated across fragmented spatial and social contexts. The novel reflects contemporary shifts in Western studies that challenge unified national narratives and instead foreground transnational and racialized perspectives. The paper further employs settler colonial theory (Veracini 2021) to demonstrate that the West is represented as an ongoing structure of dispossession rather than a completed historical process. Indigenous theory (Moreton-Robinson 2015; Hokowhitu et al. 2020) informs the discussion of sovereignty and survivance, while recent spatial theory (McKittrick 2021;) highlights the production of urban Western space as a site of inequality and resistance. Additionally, the study incorporates media theory to argue that the West in *There There* exists as both a physical and a mediated space, where identity is shaped through storytelling and digital technologies. . In addition, this paper will analyze Tommy Orange's depiction of the contrast between a

misrepresentation of Native American culture and the American West in the media and the role of digital media as both a positive and negative force. On the one hand, as a force reducing Native American culture to stereotypical and reduced misrepresentation and, on the other hand, as a force and medium enabling Native American culture to produce valuable counter narratives to these stereotypical vision of both Native American culture and the American West

Maciej Laskowski *Adam Mickiewicz University*

Gendered Dynamics: Men as Portrayed in Polish Women's Immigrant Life Writing (1870–1914)

This paper explores representations of men in Polish women's immigrant life writing from the first major wave of transatlantic migration to the United States (1870–1914). Drawing on memoirs produced within the framework of the Institute of Social Economy's 1936 competition, it examines how husbands, fathers, male kin, priests, and employers are constructed in women's narratives as figures of authority, mediation, and constraint. The analysis adopts a qualitative, close-reading approach informed by feminist autobiography theory (Gilmore 1994) and life-writing studies (Smith and Watson 2010), combined with the perspective of the 'zwrot ludowy' (ludic/people's turn), which foregrounds ordinary and marginalised experience. Within this framework, women's memoirs are approached as situated acts of self-representation shaped by unequal social, economic, and symbolic power relations.

The paper argues that male authority in these texts is exercised less through overt domination than through everyday practices of decision-making, moral regulation, and community surveillance, frequently reinforced by religious and familial norms. In response, women develop narrative strategies of silence, restraint, and self-blame that function both as mechanisms of survival and as forms of internalized compliance. At the same time, autobiographical writing enables a retrospective reconfiguration of these relationships. By narrating coercion, abandonment, and emotional labour, women transform private endurance into public testimony. The study suggests that portrayals of men in Polish women's immigrant memoirs reveal not only structures of gendered power, but also the subtle forms of agency through which women negotiate, reinterpret, and occasionally resist these structures of power.

Magdalena Łapińska *University of Białystok*

Who Gets to Disappear?: Race, Disability, and the Infrastructures of Literary Visibility in Nnedi Okorafor's Death of the Author

Roland Barthes' declaration of the "death of the author" saw a text free from the burden of the autobiographical meaning of its author. In *Death of the Author*, Nnedi Okorafor revisits the idea, but the novel considers Barthes' notion from the perspective of a Black disabled woman writer who navigates the contemporary literary market. The proposed paper examines the idea that Okorafor, in the novel, explores the limits of poststructuralist universalism by demonstrating that authorship cannot easily "die" when the author's body remains hyper-visible because of racialized and ableist structures of reception.

Through its layered metafictional structure, the novel reveals that, although theory may detach text from its creator, cultural institutions do not. The analysis begins by placing Barthes in dialogue with Michel Foucault's concept of the "author function" and shows how Okorafor dramatizes authorship not as disappearance but as a regulatory mechanism: one that attaches identity to texts in uneven ways. The paper examines how Black authorship remains hyper-visible and overdetermined within interpretive economies in which Black authorship is persistently racialized, interpreted through expectations of

representation and authenticity; disabled authorship is similarly framed through narratives of inspiration, resilience, or bodily limitation. Disability studies frameworks allow the paper to trace how disabled embodiment shapes both narrative production and public reception.

Okorafor situates the authorship at the intersections of race and disability. Through that, the author challenges the idea of disembodied textuality and seems to propose a model in which literary authority is embodied and relational.

Weronika Łaszkiewicz *University of Białystok*

Transmotion in Darcie Little Badger's Elatsoe

The notion of continuity through transformation informs many Native American worldviews, inviting the individual to recognize the cyclical nature of existence, their obligations towards their ancestors and descendants, and their kinship with non-human Others. The Anishinaabeg scholar, Gerald Vizenor, uses the term transmotion to speak about relationality, movement, fluidity, and visions, which define Native lifeways and (oral) literature. Challenging settler-colonial modalities of existence, which follow Western paradigms of knowledge and thus reinforce Western cultural hegemony, the concept of transmotion contributes to the process of Native survivance by promoting the agency, creativity, and sovereignty of Native peoples in place of colonial meta-narratives which sustain static images of their absence and victimry. The aim of the following paper is to read Darcie Little Badger's contemporary fantasy novel *Elatsoe* (2020) in the framework of transmotion and Indigenous resurgence. Set in an alternate version of modern US, the novel follows the seventeen-year-old Ellie (*Elatsoe*) Bride as she becomes entangled, after the tragic death of her cousin, in a sinister mystery related to the fictional town of Willowbee. Like Little Badger, Ellie is of Lipan Apache descent and her ethnic heritage both informs her perception of the world and conditions her position in the settler-colonial society. The heroine's quest abounds in liminal experiences, spirit encounters, and shifts between realms, which establish Lipan Apache traditions as an alternative, but legitimate source of knowledge about the world. What is more, through the character of a modern teenager who holds ancient wisdom, communicates with spirits, and consciously challenges the dominant group for their historical crimes, Little Badger asserts Lipan Apache cultural continuity and their right to self-determination. *Elatsoe* thus offers significant contribution to Indigenous visibility in mainstream popular fiction.

Katarzyna Macedulska *Adam Mickiewicz University*

Human Enmeshment in Nature: A Relational Approach to Nonhuman Life in Bryce Andrews' *Memoirs*

This paper examines human-nonhuman relations in two memoirs by Bryce Andrews, *Badluck Way: A Year on the Ragged Edge of the West* (2014) and *Down from the Mountain: The Life and Death of a Grizzly Bear* (2019), through the lens of relational ecology and ecological entanglement. Focusing on Andrews' narrative encounters with Montana's wildlife and wilderness landscapes, the study explores how human subjectivity is shaped through sustained engagement with more-than-human environments. My analysis is grounded in Thomas Morton's concept of ecological relationality, which rejects the separation of nature and culture in favor of a 'mesh' of interconnected beings and processes. Drawing on this framework, I argue that Andrews' writing articulates a form of human enmeshment in which perception, affect, and ethical awareness emerge through direct and often unpredictable encounters with nonhuman life. These encounters destabilize anthropocentric assumptions of mastery and control,

revealing instead a condition of dependency, vulnerability, and shared existence.

By situating Andrews' memoirs within contemporary ecological thought, the article demonstrates how narrative nonfiction can contribute to rethinking human-nature relations beyond the binaries of subject and object. Ultimately, Andrews' memoirs foreground a relational mode of being in which humans are neither separate from nor dominant over nature, but continually formed, and in multiple ways, through their entanglement within it.

Patryk Sebastian Majcher *University of Szczecin*

The end of The Weeknd - Deconstruction of the closed artistic cycle of Abel Tesfaye (2011-2025)

Derived from my master's thesis "The end of The Weeknd: Deconstructing success in the closed artistic cycle of Abel Tesfaye (2011-2025)," this presentation examines the fifteen-year artistic trajectory of Tesfaye, conceptualizing his discography not as a standard commercial career, but as a deliberate, self-contained narrative loop. Tracing the evolution of the alter ego "The Weeknd," the presentation analyzes how the Canadian creator navigated the global culture industry by engineering an autotextual closed cycle that culminates in the narrative assassination of his lucrative stage persona.

The presentation reconstructs this macro-narrative across three pivotal developmental phases. First, it explores the independent Trilogy era (2011), where absolute digital anonymity generated early symbolic capital, allowing Tesfaye to secure sovereign joint-venture autonomy over traditional corporate subordination. Second, it investigates his mainstream expansion (Beauty Behind the Madness, Starboy), deconstructing the "pop Trojan Horse" strategy wherein mathematical, radio-friendly pop production camouflaged deeply transgressive scripts of chemical dependency and somatic decay. Finally, the analysis focuses on the climactic studio trilogy (After Hours, Dawn FM, Hurry Up Tomorrow), demonstrating how Tesfaye structures this finale as an eschatological journey from damnation to ego-death. The cycle achieves formal closure through the autotextual figure of the Ouroboros, with the sonic architecture of the 2025 conclusion collapsing directly back into the opening chords of his 2011 debut.

Ultimately, this performance demonstrates how constructing a closed loop structurally immunizes Tesfaye's discography against commercial obsolescence and aesthetic devaluation. By executing the lucrative stage persona at the absolute peak of global market hegemony, the project interrogates the boundary between an authentic assertion of artistic sovereignty and the ultimate, self-reflexive rebranding maneuver in contemporary popular music.

Piotr Matczak *Adam Mickiewicz University*

Morphing America through Listening: Literary Geography and Aural Relationality in "Sivulliq: Ancestor" (2023)

This paper brings literary geography and Indigenous sound theories into conversation with the concept of morphing to rethink how American space is constituted. Drawing on Sheila Hones (2022), I approach literary space not as representation but as an event that unfolds through narrative relations. Doreen Massey's understanding of space as process – as a "simultaneity of stories so far" (2005: 23) – further displaces the idea of territory as stable and bounded. Morphing, from this perspective, names not simply transformation across media but the continual reformation of space through shifting relations and embodied encounters. To account for the sensory dimension of this process, I turn to Dylan Robinson's (2020) work on listening positionality and aural sovereignty, alongside Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's

(2017) articulation of land as a site of embodied, ethical knowledge. Together, these frameworks allow space to be understood as relational and prone to morphing processes.

Read through this lens, *Sivulliq: Ancestor* (2023) by Lily H. Tuzroyluke morphs America at its Arctic edge by reorganizing how space is comprehended. The novel builds Alaska through sound – wind, ice, animal movement, machinery, and voice – rather than through panoramic description or cartographic framing. Listening becomes the primary mode of orientation. This sensory shift unsettles the visual logic that underwrites the American frontier imaginary, in which memory is mapped and claimed. Instead of presenting Alaska as a distant national margin, the text produces it as an acoustic field of human and more-than-human relations. I argue that this aural reorientation transforms national space from an object of vision into an ongoing relational practice. In doing so, *Sivulliq: Ancestor* demonstrates that America does not simply change at its margins; it morphs through the politics of perception itself.

Łukasz Muniowski *University of Szczecin*

Burroughs the Townsman: Drugs as Conformity in *Junkie* (1953)

William Burroughs was one of the icons of 20th century American counterculture, despite his reluctance to being considered as such. While rebellious in his approach to American society, Burroughs chose what he refers to as finding himself “a good deal alone.” In my presentation I intend to add to the idea of reluctance of rebellion, as Burroughs notes in his introduction to *Junkie*: “I came in contact with junk, became an addict, and thereby gained the motivation, the real need for money I had never had before.” That quote is telling, as in it drugs are presented as means of joining the workforce and sustaining the status of a townsman. I want to present the circumstances which crafted the environment in which Burroughs came of age and entered the workforce, as well as analyze *Junkie* from the perspective of his fellow townsmen, who during his lifetime turned into the middle class with the global, virus-like spread of neoliberalism.

Jacek Partyka *University of Białystok*

Conceptual Writing as an Extension of Appellate Practice: Vanessa Place’s *Tragodia*

The focus of my presentation is Vanessa Place’s three-volume conceptual work, *Tragodia*, published between 2010 and 2011, which includes: (1) Statement of Facts, (2) Statement of the Case, and (3) Argument. In legal terms, these components refer to: (1) parts of a legal pleading that outline the factual sequence of events; (2) a presentation of the case and justification of the position; and (3) a structured presentation of reasons and evidence designed to persuade the court to rule in favor of a client. Conceptually, Place—who is a writer, performer, critic, and criminal defense attorney working with Indigenous sex offenders—copies her appellate briefs to share them with readers as “literature,” which some have boldly labeled “poetry” (for example, Steven Fama). Regardless of the genre classification, which—especially in conceptualism—tends to be uncertain, *Tragodia* functions as a provocative artistic instrument that explores ethical boundaries through the accumulation of explicit content, whether seen as unoriginal or reproduced.

The most evident initial points for the ‘creative’ method of Place are, on one hand, Ludwig Wittgenstein’s remark, “A copy is a copy in reference to its intention” (this sentence from *Cambridge Lectures*, 1930-32 is cited by Marjorie Perloff in a conversation with the author of *Tragodia*), and on the other, Walter Benjamin’s posthumous *Arcades Project* (the power of collages composed of quotations without

commentary from the complier). A less frequently discussed yet, in my opinion, important context is Charles Reznikoff's vast poetic project *Testimony*, in which authentic court documents are situated within a thematic and generic framework: American criminal history at the turn of the 19th century in an epic form. In this case, the commentary on the quotation manifests through the form itself.

My presentation explores the dialogic dimension of *Tragodia*, centering on its distinctive Dantean intertextual matrix, characterized by its tripartite structure and thematic engagements. It also examines the work's indebtedness to Walter Benjamin's "The Critique of Violence," which elaborates on the relationship between violence, law, and justice. Additionally, I show how Place's work appropriates the paratextual elements, particularly enthusiastic remarks about the volume (blurbs), which are subjected to a process of meaningful erasure. These three contextual frameworks are instrumental in illustrating how conceptual writing functions as an extension of appellate practice. But, more importantly, they play a crucial role in my polemical reassessment of John Welchman's assertion that *Tragodia* demonstrates how "the uncanny juggernaut of the [American] Law collides with the excruciating strengths and fragilities of the victims."

Marek Paryż *University of Warsaw*

Burroughs and the Western: The Place of Dead Roads

The paper discusses William Burroughs' 1984 novel *The Place of Dead Roads* in the context of postmodern literary reinterpretations of the Western genre. In comparison with the innovative uses of the Western in the preceding two decades, Burroughs' novel treats the Western as a "worlded" genre, to use Neil Campbell's term, exposing its transnational status. This has to do with the manifest amorphousness of *The Place of Dead Roads*, whose genre morphs as often as its settings change. The protagonist, named Kim Carsons, travels from St. Louis further west, and from there to New York, London, Paris and North Africa. These plot developments spawn different genres, including the gangster novel, *Künstlerroman*, and colonial adventure. A key implication of such an expansive form is the inscription of the conquest of the American West into the history of colonialism. Burroughs reminds us that political and cultural repercussions of colonialism reach far beyond the chronology of the colonial era. Colonialism represents a form of power relations, which Burroughs perceives as transhistorical. These power relations depend of technologies of knowledge, which define differences and perpetuate hierarchies, thus strengthening large social orders. *The Place of Dead Roads* continues Burroughs' critical project of examining systems of authoritarian control.

Małgorzata Przybylska *University of Szczecin*

A Carnal Temporality: The Long Take After Digitality

How can an artist convey movement in a static medium? For Jackson Pollock, it meant taking a paintbrush and flicking paint across the canvas (*Blue Poles*, 1953). For Giacomo Balla, it involved the repetition of moving body parts and forms, creating the effect of overlapping motion (*Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash*, 1912). For Ioann Zelenin, it is achieved through smudging charcoal-drawn backgrounds so that the images reflect a sense of "speed" (*Run*, 2023). Such techniques not only evoke motion on flat surfaces but also elicit emotional responses. Rather than merely admiring the image, the viewer can feel the frantic energy of the medium and become absorbed into it. The multisensory dimension of cinema has long been acknowledged. Filmmakers, working across a wide range of contemporary cinematic

movements and conventions - from slow cinema, through mainstream productions, to so-called “middle cinema” - have shown a particular interest in the extraction of the sensory experience, embodying characters’ perceptions as faithfully as possible. One specific technique that enables such an intimate, almost corporeal bond between the viewer and the image is the long take. By employing this method, directors such as Orson Welles, Alfred Hitchcock, or Martin Scorsese have repeatedly demonstrated that film can be treated not only as an aesthetic experience, but also, and perhaps above all, as a bodily one. The long take exploits the synesthetic potential of the cinematic medium: not merely to follow events, but to experience them. By challenging fundamental assumptions of film theory, such as the conception of film as a work of art which possesses autonomy independent of the viewer – film as an object merely to be watched - I aim to demonstrate that the long take, particularly in the context of digitality, enhances the viewer’s perception of cinematic realism and enables a far more multisensory, almost physical experience.

Tadeusz Pióro *University of Warsaw*

Figurations of Freedom in the Fictions of William Burroughs and Thomas Pynchon

While Pynchon’s indebtedness to Burroughs is evident and well-researched, we should also take note of the differences in how each writer conceived of liberty. For Burroughs, it was the kind of freedom from state control he equated with the constitutional right to privacy. We might regard this as negative freedom, that is, freedom from something. For Pynchon, negative freedom is not enough; he postulates the freedom to do things, not just in the privacy of one’s home, but in the agora, or political marketplace. Burroughs’ fictions rely on various types of skull duggery to create an atmosphere of terror and / or horror; Pynchon parodies spooks and praises courageous opponents of oppressive and repressive political systems. My purpose in this paper is to show how these differences are made manifest in such aspects of these two writer’s works as characterization, emplotment and ideological position. The texts I wish to examine in these regards are Burroughs’ Nova trilogy, *The Wild Boys*, *Cities of the Red Night*, *Western Lands* and *Naked Lunch*, as well as Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow*, *Vineland* and *Against the Day*. It will most likely be impossible during a twenty-minute presentation to touch on all of these works, so I will not consider more than four, with the full text of the paper having been made available at an on-line resource site.

Elżbieta Rokosz *University of Rzeszów*

From ER to The Pitt: The morphing of the American medical drama

The presentation will explore the morphing of the American medical drama, focusing on two series in which the emergency room is the central setting: *The Pitt* (HBO Max, 2025-2026) and its predecessor, *ER* (NBC, 1994-2009). I would like to discuss the way in which the HBO Max production grows out of the original concept and format of *ER*, while reworking them to reflect the social, political, and cultural transformations that have taken place since the earlier series concluded.

Both series share the same primary setting: the emergency department of a fictitious busy urban hospital - Chicago’s County General in *ER* and the Pittsburgh Trauma Medical Center in *The Pitt*. The fact that the key members of *The Pitt*’s creative team, namely John Wells and Noah Wyle, the executive producers, were previously involved in *ER*, further encourages a comparative reading of the two productions.

The paper will analyze how *The Pitt* revises Michael Crichton’s original concept and assess the extent to

which the newer series registers the profound shifts that have reshaped American society and healthcare over the past two decades. The emergency room of County General has morphed into the environment of the Pittsburgh Trauma Medical Center and its microworld has been widely praised within the medical community for the accurate and comprehensive portrayal of contemporary healthcare challenges, while remaining popular with the general audience.

Tomasz Sawczuk *University of Białystok*

Letters in Flux: Morphing the Alphabet in North American Concrete Poetry

In *Inventing the Alphabet: The Origins of Letters from Antiquity to the Present*, Johanna Drucker argues that “[t]he alphabet is a way of organizing information and knowledge within standards that become so naturalized their assumptions disappear” (295), rendering claims of its transparency and neutrality increasingly untenable in the contemporary moment of the “decolonization of knowledge” (296). Yet, as Patricia Crain observes, “[f]or ill and for good, our world remains profoundly alphabetized, from classroom rosters, to bureaucratic systems ... even if random access, not ABC order, has become our everyday search mode” (Crain). Long before contemporary conceptual poets such as Kenneth Goldsmith, Craig Dworkin, and Vanessa Place foregrounded the determinism of alphabetic ordering within archival poetics, concrete poetry engaged deeply with alphabetic systems, revealing the alphabet as mutable, plastic, and subject to continuous transformation.

This paper reconceives alphabetic systems in concrete poetry not as fixed ordering devices but as morphing structures and dynamic matrices that continuously shift between regulation and invention, constraint and proliferation. Focusing on three key figures, Emmett Williams, bpNichol, and Jackson Mac Low, the paper traces distinct modes of alphabetic morphing. In Williams’s works such as “Alphabet Symphony,” “Alphabet Poem,” and the later *Aleph*, *Alpha*, and *Alfalfa*, the alphabet becomes a generative engine of permutation: sequences fold back on themselves, letters migrate across semantic fields, and ordering principles morph into estranging devices that denaturalize linguistic habit. The alphabet here is not a container of meaning but a kinetic field in which variation is produced through iterative transformation. By contrast, bpNichol’s abecedaries and alphabet books of the 1970s stage morphing as archival expansion, in which alphabetic sequencing facilitates classification, accumulation, and retrieval. Finally, Jackson Mac Low’s alphabetic procedures, as observed in *Stanzas for Iris Lezak* (1971) and *The Pronouns: A Collection of 40 Dances for the Dancers* (1979), conceptualize alphabet as an algorithmic constraint system in which morphing occurs through rule-based transformation. Bringing these concretist approaches into dialogue reveals the alphabet not as a neutral ordering tool but as a morphing cultural technology that simultaneously structures, generates, and estranges meaning. The paper further situates these practices within a broader modernist lineage by foregrounding Gertrude Stein’s proto-procedural engagement with linguistic systems, demonstrating her foundational influence on the alphabetic poetics of concretism.

Śławomir Studniarz *University of Warmia and Mazury*

Morphing “the howling wilderness”: the shifting image of American wild country in the works of N. Hawthorne, H. D. Thoreau, and E. A. Poe

In his story of the early Puritan colonies in America, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, William Bradford explicitly defined the mission of the colonists in the New World as the taming of the “howling wilderness.” Under

these terms, the wild land served merely as a resource with which to construct a state whose avowed goal would be to spread Christian religion, progress and civilization throughout the whole North American continent. As Roderick Nash explains in his classic study *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Bradford's influential account originated the long-persisting tradition of suspicion, arrogance, and hostility toward the natural environment.

However, in the Romantic period this tradition was mitigated by the newly undertaken reappraisal of American wilderness, the process that both fed into and stemmed from the rising nationalist pride. American writers, poets, and painters, unanimously recognized the uniqueness of American untamed nature and its sublime potential, and generally endowed it with a religious as well as an aesthetic significance (Nash 78). The motif of "the howling wilderness" appears in Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "Roger Malvin's Burial" and Henry David Thoreau's travel account *The Maine Woods*. Hawthorne in his story "Roger Malvin's Burial" employs the trope and the connotations it carried for the colonists, but the natural world is endowed there with new, restorative and even ethical dimensions, losing its Puritan-derived sinister or outright demonic character. It also figures largely in Thoreau's extensive descriptions of the wilderness in *The Maine Woods*, where he undertakes specifically to debunk the myth of the howling wilderness. Edgar Allan Poe, too, participated in this literary undertaking, reclaiming the wild American continent for aesthetic purposes, but his contribution in this respect has not yet been properly recognized. Poe's central text dealing with American wilderness is *The Journal of Julius Rodman, Being an Account of the First Passage across the Rocky Mountains of North America Ever Achieved by Civilized Man*, an unfinished novel published in installments in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* in 1840. The proposed article aims to discuss the individual artistic strategies employed by these three Romantic writers in their morphing of the howling wilderness.

Klara Szmańko *University of Opole*

Representation of Whiteness in Herman Melville's *Billy Budd, Sailor*

The paper is embedded in literary whiteness studies initiated by Toni Morrison in 1992 and sociological studies of whiteness pursued by such scholars as Ruth Frankenberg, Robyn Wiegman, Cheryl Harris, David Roediger and Richard Dyer. Most of the criticism of Herman Melville's *Billy Budd, Sailor* left on his desk and published posthumously in 1924, revolves around the following issues: speech, silence, inarticulacy, abuse of power, including judicial power, legal accoutrements, mutiny, violence, innocence, masculinity, homosexuality, homosociality, enforced heterosexuality, heteronormativity. At least some of those tenets are constituent elements of Anglo-Saxon whiteness, which is primarily a socio-historical construction. Many of the above mentioned whiteness studies scholars shed light on the self-constructed universality of whiteness, on how white people often perceive their own whiteness as universal. One of my observations made about whiteness in my research on race and whiteness in American literature and culture is that universal as whiteness tries to be, it rests on other putative universals such as: patriarchy, apotheosis of masculinity and heterosexuality. In the paper I want to show how the characters' choices in the novella and the ensuing tragedies are to a great extent tied to their rejection of particularity and their clinging to the obligations stemming from the putative universality of whiteness.

Mateusz Świątlicki *University of Wrocław*

Navigating Spirituality, Morality, and Empathy in Polish-Themed Young Adult Historical Fiction

Roman Catholicism, alongside the Polish language, is often regarded as a primary marker of Polish national identity. Yet Poland's long multicultural and multiethnic history also encompassed Jewish, Orthodox, Protestant, and Muslim communities, and, as Grażyna J. Kozaczka notes, "among all the factors in debates over Polish national identity [...] the thorniest was religion" (2019: 23). Religion likewise serves as a major identity marker in North American young adult historical fiction depicting Polish experiences, written both by representatives of the Polish diaspora and by authors without direct ties to Poland. This presentation examines how religious identity shapes the behavior, moral choices, and self-understanding of young Polish protagonists in young adult books by Sharon Cameron's *The Light in Hidden Places* (2020), Amanda McCrina's *Beyond Seven Forests* (2026), and Jennifer Nielsen's *Uprising* (2024). I argue that in these novels, set during World War I and World War II, religion functions not only as a cultural backdrop but also as a context that enables young heroines to confront oppression, endure wartime violence and betrayal by fellow Christians, and seek emotional recovery after trauma. Focusing on female protagonists, my analysis explores how Catholic norms, spirituality, moral obligation, and empathy inform their survival strategies and guide their negotiation of identity under extreme historical conditions.

Mark Tardi *University of Łódź*

In conversation with prof. Kacper Bartczak and Mark Tardi

Mark Tardi is a writer and translator whose awards include a 2023 PEN/Heim Translation Grant and a 2022 National Endowment for the Arts Translation fellowship. His newest books are *Recapitulation in the Wrong Key* (BlazeVOX Books, 2025), and *The Thought Lawn* (above/ground, 2026). His translations include *In Bloom* by Katarzyna Szaulińska (Toad Press, forthcoming 2026), *Viscera: Eight Voices from Poland* (Litmus Press, 2024), *Unsovereign* by Kacper Bartczak (above/ground, 2024), *The Squatters' Gift* by Robert Rybicki (Dalkey Archive, 2021), and *Faith in Strangers* by Katarzyna Szaulińska (Toad Press/Veliz Books, 2021). Recent writing and translations have appeared in *Sprung Formal*, *Argo* (Italy), *Bombay Gin*, *Conjunctions*, *Poetry*, *Full Stop*, *MAYDAY*, *Ilanot Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Interim*, *Cagibi*, and in the anthology, *Songs of Summer: Poems about Baseball* (Water's Edge Press, 2025). He is on faculty at the University of Łódź.

Adrian Trojak *University of Gdańsk*

The Poetic Networks of William Carlos Williams and Anthony Cody

"The Poetic Networks of William Carlos Williams and Anthony Cody" explores how William Carlos Williams and Anthony Cody achieve the effect of making their poems function as networks. The central aim of the paper is to compare the technique of both authors and reflect on the nature, causes and consequences of the identified differences. In their poetry, both authors seem to craft networks of intersecting experiences. However, the methods which the poets use to achieve this effect differ. In "Paterson", Williams creates a poetic network by introducing recurring thematic shifts and interrupting the flow of the poem with historical material or letters. Thus, the poem emerges as a nexus within which multiple narratives intersect and dispersed pieces of information morph into a single network. On the other hand, Cody creates poetic networks chiefly by experimental text arrangement. Many of his poems are composed of sections of text which are deliberately dispersed on the page. These sections are then organized with the use of arrows or lines indicating links between them. Consequently, the poems emerge

as visual networks of interlinked material. This strategy can be seen, for example, in Cody's "Cada día más cerca del fin del mundo" and "Borderland Apocrypha". The paper aims to study and compare the two authors' strategies of creating poetic networks. It is highly possible that the differences between these strategies can be attributed to the two different time periods in which these American poets wrote, that is the 20th and the 21st century. Thus, the comparative study of their work should provide valuable insight not only into their poetic technique, but also into the impact of the social and technological changes in contemporary American society on the nation's experimental poetry.

Natalia Vysotska *Kyiv National Linguistics University*

Morphing into Superman: biotechnical enhancement and genre fluctuations in Blake Crouch's Upgrade

The centrality of morphing as one of the crucial concepts in contemporary culture is predicated upon the epistemological arc connecting the archaic/mythopoetic perception of the natural forms as ever mutable, interchangeable, and fluid to the current posthuman perspective postulating the subject as "an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informatic entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction" (Hayles). The posthuman paradigm accentuates the permeability of borders within the triad "nature – humans – technology" and the proliferation of "prosthetic" and "cyborg" bodies (Hayles, Harraway), while for Bruce Clark a posthuman metamorph results from "the cybernetic convergence of biological and technological notions of evolution". The first-person narrator/protagonist in Blake Crouch's novel *Upgrade* (2022) undergoes accelerated corporeal and cognitive morphing caused by his involuntary exposure to an illicit genome-rewriting program in the near dystopian future. The paper reflects R.L. Rutsky's belief that technological or biological enhancement of human body "continues to rely on, and in fact reinforce, a humanist conception of the subject, defined by its instrumental mastery over the object world". The scholar's preferred term for such cases is, therefore, "transhuman" involving "an all-too-human fantasy: a fantasy of becoming, not posthuman, but superhuman." Capitalizing upon Clark's vision of the 21st century "morphing" as affecting both humans and narrative systems, the paper aims at exploring the narrative and rhetorical blending of genre fiction (a fast-paced and action-packed sci-fi thriller) with posthuman evolution story complicated by the evocation of pop-culture Superman mythology.

Like his classical precursor, Logan Ramsay answers the constant need of popular imagination for a hero "equipped with powers superior to those of the common man" (Umberto Eco). Paradoxically, though, in this case the Superhero has to face ethical dilemmas of genetic engineering that brought him to life by fighting its hazards on the global scale.

Elżbieta Wilczyńska *Adam Mickiewicz University*

Morphing Survivance: Embodied Encounters and Indigenous Coming-of-Age in Reservation Dogs

This paper engages the PAAS conference themes of morphing and embodied encounter by applying Vivian Sobchack's phenomenological framework from *Carnal Thoughts* to the television series *Reservation Dogs* (2019–2022) directed by Sterlin Harjo and Taika Waititi. Sobchack's emphasis on meaning as something that emerges through lived, bodily experience provides a productive lens for examining Indigenous identity as relational, processual, and continually becoming. The concept of morphing operates on two interconnected levels. First, it describes the digital afterlife of Reservation

Dogs as the series circulates through memes, GIFs, clips, and fandom discourse. These participatory forms extend the show's reach and invite new encounters in which audiences co-produce meaning, testing whether digital morphing sustains the series' aim to support Indigenous youth in its indigenous growth. Second, morphing structures the coming-of-age narratives of the four protagonists, each of whom transforms through distinct embodied encounters with Indigenous culture. Drawing on Gerald Vizenor's concept of survivance, the paper reads these transformations as acts of active presence rather than passive inheritance. Bear's encounters with ancestral spirits, Willie Jack's engagement with traditional practices and humor, Cheese's relational learning through elders, and Elora's embodied experience of intergenerational loss all represent different paths toward conscious Native adulthood. Together, they frame Indigenous maturity as an ongoing process of embodied survivance shaped through encounter, motion, and relational continuity.

Justyna Włodarczyk *University of Warsaw*

Morphing Pursuits: Animal Chases from Page to Silent Screen

This paper examines how narratives “morph” in the adaptation of novels with animal heroes into silent cinema, focusing on the transformation of the chase scene from literary device to visual spectacle. Drawing on case studies of *Back to God's Country* (1919), *Black Beauty* (1923), and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1927), I argue that while chases in literary texts primarily serve narrative progression and moral structuring, their cinematic counterparts foreground movement, sensation, and display. As stories migrate from page to screen, the chase becomes less a vehicle of plot development than a site of attraction – capturing viewers' attention through animal motion, risk, and embodied immediacy. The analysis builds on Lauren Berlant's essay “Poor Eliza,” extending her account of affective circulation beyond the human to animal bodies. It also engages Jonathan Auerbach's argument from *Body Shots* that early cinema's distinctiveness lies in its capacity to capture moving bodies. I show how silent films redistribute affect onto animals, often amplifying their presence: for instance, the 1927 *Uncle Tom's Cabin* uses bloodhounds, which are absent from the novel. This shift reflects the continued significance of animals for what Tom Gunning called the “cinema of attractions,” positioning animals as kinetic and affective anchors within a spectacle-driven mode of storytelling.

Jacqueline Victoria Woroniec *University of Szczecin*

Morphing the Satanic: Franchise Circulation and Satanic Queer in *Good Omens*

This paper proposes Satanic Queer as a morphing method for reading contemporary digital culture through franchise and platform circulation. Rather than treating symbols as stable carriers of meaning, I approach them as mobile configurations whose properties are continuously recalibrated across adaptation, platform circulation, and audience uptake. My case is *Good Omens*, understood not simply as a single text but as a franchised formation moving across novel, television seriality, promotional discourse, streaming infrastructures, and digital afterlives.

I argue that the franchise reshapes Aziraphale and Crowley into figures whose meanings do not rest in fixed oppositions such as angel/demon or good/evil, but emerge through repeated modulation. In this sense, the satanic is not reducible to Satan as a character. Rather, it names a residual archive of demonic signification that becomes newly operative when rerouted through contemporary digital forms. *Good Omens* does not resolve these signs into stable identities; instead, it keeps them in motion, suspending

properties before they harden into binaries. Satanic Queer names this way of tracking how cultural signs remain legible by morphing rather than by staying the same.

Methodologically, I combine intermedial close reading with attention to digital circulation. I focus first on what the franchise itself does: how adaptation, serial extension, performance, and platform distribution produce Aziraphale and Crowley as relational figures. I then consider fandom shipping as an extension of this franchised logic.

The paper therefore argues for morphing as an operational concept for American Studies: a vocabulary for analysing how contemporary identity and symbolic meaning take shape across platformed media environments, where circulation itself becomes the condition of form.

Grazyna Zygodlo *University of Łódź*

Liminal spaces of Nepantla and EntreMundos and shapeshifting Nagual in the late works of Gloria Anzaldúa

Gloria Anzaldúa is mostly famous for her Borderlands theory although throughout her life, she formulated and promoted other bold ideas, such as the belief in the fluidity of our identity and sexuality or the belief in multiple, interpenetrating and overlapping realities accessible to us only through the Spirit and spiritualism. We owe her the emergence of hybrid concepts such as New Tribalism, Nepantla, writing of convergence, El Mundo Zurdo, conocimiento, New Mestiza, autohistoria/teoría, theory of nos/ otras, Coyolxauhqui imperative, etc.

In this paper I would like to focus on two of Anzaldúa's post-Borderlands concepts: La naguala – the shapeshifter – as a decolonial practice to prove that “creative acts are transformative, including in metaphysical ways, and that Indigenous artistic rituals and practices can contribute to revealing, reforming, and healing wounds of coloniality, including those of internalized oppression” (Zaytoun, 2022, 3) and Nepantla, which is “the bridge between the material and the immaterial; the point of contact y el lugar between ordinary and spirit realities, the midground in the vertical continuum of spirit/ soul [...] Nepantla is also where spiritual transformation or rebirth occurs during visionary states of consciousness” (Anzaldúa, 2015, 28-29).