

EAST *meets* WEST

Cross-Cultural Perspectives
on America's Changing Image

12-13 September 2025, Kosice, Slovakia

Book of Abstracts

INTRODUCTION

This booklet contains abstracts of papers which will be presented at the biennial Conference of the Czech and Slovak Association for American Studies entitled **East Meets West: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on America's Changing Image**. Taking place in Slovakia for the first time, the conference is held on 12–13 September 2025 and is organized by Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice in cooperation with the Czech and Slovak Association for American Studies.

The event focuses on how America's global image has transformed in recent years. Once central to narratives of liberty and opportunity, its image is now examined through a diverse range of literary, cultural, philosophical lenses, including perspectives from both within America and regions such as Central and Eastern Europe and Asia and beyond.

This interdisciplinary conference will explore these evolving perspectives and how they are reflected in literature, media, cultural narratives and food studies and it will feature contributions from literary scholars, historians, political and social scientists, and scholars of (popular) culture not only from the Czech Republic and Slovakia, but also from Austria, Japan, Hungary, Poland, Spain, and the United States.

The conference organizers are happy to welcome the following plenary speakers, whose lectures will address some of the key issues discussed at the conference:

- [Hua-Yu Sebastian Cherng, New York University, USA](#)
- [Stephen Wooten, University of Oregon, USA](#)
- [Michaela Weiss, Silesian University, Czech Republic](#)
- [Matej Cíbik, Central European University in Vienna, Austria and University of Pardubice, Czech Republic](#)

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Members and students of the Department of British and American Studies, Faculty of Arts, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovakia

Košice, September 2025

PLENARY LECTURE 1

Hua-Yu Sebastian Cherng, New York University, USA

By Design: Structural Inequalities in US Higher Education and Beyond

As the United States continues to make headlines for volatile domestic and international policies, many are left wondering, “How did we get here?” To formulate an answer, I start by presenting a case from my research that questions the argument of higher education as a great equalizer. My team and I examine academic advising - the primary institutional support for college students - and a dataset containing records of every advising appointment over four years for all students enrolled in one of the largest US public university systems. Using quasi-experimental methods, we find that students access advising in ways that defy common assumptions: most marginalized student groups meet with the advisors more than white middle-class students. Yet, white students benefit the most from these interactions. This reveals that academic advising does not reduce racial/ethnic and social class inequalities—it reproduces them. I situate these findings within a broader historical context to show how exclusionary logics have been embedded in American nationhood from its founding. I contend that today’s political and social crises are not anomalies, but rather predictable outcomes of a national project rooted in intersecting racial hierarchies.

Hua-Yu Sebastian Cherng is a sociologist whose scholarly and community-based work focuses on the social lives of marginalized youth. His interests include comparative perspectives on race/ethnicity (with a focus on China and the US), immigrant adaptation, and social capital within the school and educational context. As such, his research examines the social relationships in the lives of minority and immigrant adolescents in the US, gender and ethnic differences in education in China, and cultural and social capital transfers between adolescents in the US. His scholarship has appeared in journals such as American Educational Research Journal, Educational Researcher, Social Forces, and Social Science Research. Cherng received his doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania and Bachelor's from MIT, and he has taught in a public middle school in San Francisco and a college in rural China.

[Hua-Yu Sebastian Cherng, New York University, USA](#)

PLENARY LECTURE 2

Michaela Weiss, Silesian University in Opava, Czech Republic

Myth, Memory, and Migration: Jewish Stories and the American Imagination

Immigration has long been one of America's foundational narratives, but in the 21st century it has become a contested and transformative theme across literature and popular culture. This keynote examines how Jewish storytelling—whether grounded in literal migration, inherited memory, or metaphor—has reshaped America's cultural imagination across fiction, Holocaust literature, and superhero mythologies.

The talk traces the shift from early immigrant fiction, rooted in linear tales of assimilation, to contemporary narratives that embrace hybridity, cultural negotiation, and fragmented voices. In these works, immigration is no longer resolved into a single "American story," but reframed as an ongoing dialogue that blends memory, autobiography, and experimental form, challenging and reinventing traditional genres. A similar evolution can be observed in Holocaust fiction, where testimony has expanded into intergenerational narratives that transform trauma and displacement into cultural myth, redefining how America engages with its past.

Finally, the keynote explores popular culture, following the trajectory from the immigrant allegory of the early superhero to the emergence of modern, explicitly Jewish and inclusive heroes. Here, immigration moves from metaphor to a defining feature of American identity itself, revealing how popular mythologies adapt to reflect a more complex and plural vision of the nation. By tracing immigration across these interconnected forms, this keynote argues that Jewish narratives do not merely mirror America's contested identity—they actively reimagine its genres, myths, and cultural imagination.

*Michaela Weiss is Associate Professor at the Department of English and American Studies at the Institute of Foreign Languages at the Silesian University in Opava, Czech Republic. She teaches courses on English and American literature, Literary Theory and Criticism, and Creative Reading and Writing. Her main areas of interest include American Jewish literature, graphic novels, and women's studies. She has published monographs *Jewishness as Humanism in Bernard Malamud's Fiction* (2010) and *Tradice a Experiment: Americká židovská próza v období modernismu* (Tradition and Experiment: American Jewish Prose in the Modernist Era, 2020) and chapters concerning metamodern literary strategies, gender identities, graphic novels, and dystopias. She co-edited a series of conference proceedings *Silse* (2010–2023) and a monograph series *Modern Approaches to Text Analysis* (2017), and *Text Analysis and Interpretation* (2019). She is currently working on a book *Community, Geography, and Language in the Works of Irena Klepfisz*.*

[Michaela Weiss, Silesian University, Czech Republic](#)

PLENARY LECTURE 3

Stephen Wooten, University of Oregon, USA

Melting Pots, Tossed Salads, and Happy Meals: Food Metaphors and Realities at the Modern American Crossroad

Food and foodways are and have been central to identity dynamics across the globe for ages from local to regional and even (inter)national levels. Some food affinities and connections have deep roots, while others are clearly more emergent. Food and identity dynamics are often most vibrant at sites where and in moments when different cultures meet. Crossroads are places or moments where and when different people come into contact, and they often encounter what could be called “culinary others” in such contexts. They are therefore particularly significant locations for analyzing the role of food in cultural dynamics. Responses can range from the positive to the negative, from grateful welcomes to coarse dismissals of food and foodways and the people associated with them. In this keynote address I explore the complicated and often ideologically driven ways in which everyday people, popular figures, and influential politicians have engaged food at a significant global crossroad: the modern United States of America. As a metaphor or experienced as a material reality, citizens, influencers, and leaders have used food to create meaning and advance visions of unity or difference and express appreciation or rejection. The lecture will focus on the 20th and 21st centuries when significant flows of immigrants arrived on American soil from many corners of the world and particularly to the contemporary moment when nationalist movements and government-led policies in the country seek to halt incoming flows of people, especially from specific locations and cultural backgrounds. This interdisciplinary oriented presentation will use food as a “lens” to engage key conference themes of literary and cultural representation of the United States. It will illuminate the powerful role food can play in the creation of identities, communities, and societies from those marked by diversity and inclusion to those characterized by division and exclusion as well as mixed approaches along this continuum.

Stephen R. Wooten is a sociocultural anthropologist whose research interests include: political ecology, food and culture, and local food systems. Dr. Wooten has been conducting ethnographic field research in Mali since 1992 and is currently involved in an international study of agroecological transitions around the world. His research publications include: “Colonial Administration and the Ethnography of the Family in the French Soudan” in Cahiers d’études africaines, “Antelope Headdresses and Champion Farmers: Negotiating Meaning and Identity through the Bamana Ciwara Complex” in African Arts and “Losing Ground: Gender Relations, Commercial Horticulture and Threats to Local Plant Diversity in Rural Mali” in an edited volume entitled: Women and Plants: Gender Relations in Biodiversity Management and Conservation, “The World Began With Farming: Creativity and Resilience in West African Savanna Agriculture” in Mande Studies, and “Cooking More than Food: The Social and Cultural Products of Women’s Alimentary Agency in Rural Mali” in Anthropology of Food. His book The Art of Livelihood:

Creating Expressive Agri-Culture explores the creativity of rural Bamana farmers. In his latest book, *Cooking Culture: Women's Culinary Agency and Everyday Creativity*, Wooten examines the power and significance of women's daily foodwork. Dr. Wooten, a three time Fulbright awardee, has been at UO since 2001.

[Stephen Wooten, University of Oregon, USA](#)

PLENARY LECTURE 4

Matej Cibík, Central European University, Vienna, Austria

How concepts travel: American export of political vocabulary and frameworks

Concepts are the basic unit of political discourse. However, they are not neutral building blocks that can be used to express every idea equally. Every concept carries with it various associations, framings, connotations and meanings that make it more readily useful to support some set of ideas and not others. The concepts we use therefore often determine the conclusions we arrive to, along with contentious points that will appear along the way.

After laying out the background for such “essentially contested concepts” (Gallie 1955), the lecture will analyze several instances of imported concepts, frames and ideas that originated recently in US public discourse and then established themselves in Central and Eastern Europe, including “cancel culture”, “wokeness” and “(neo-)Marxism”. Here, they seemingly carry their original meaning, although they appear in a very different political context. The main aim of the lecture will be to map the risks of using these adopted concepts, and show the misunderstandings and distortions they bring.

Matej Cibík is a Slovak philosopher working at the Centre for Ethics at the University of Pardubice. He focuses on ethics and political philosophy, theories of justice, and the role of equality in society. He studied at Charles University in Prague, Central European University in Budapest, and the London School of Economics. Among his publications are works such as Kant and Contemporary Ethics and Politics and Political Philosophy on the Eve of the Velvet Revolution. In 2017, he published a book dealing with liberalism and its relationship to other political currents, entitled Liberals and the Others.

[Matej Cibík, Central European University in Vienna, Austria](#)

GENERAL SESSIONS
(presenters listed alphabetically)

Land and the Female Body: Colonial Control and Narrative Possession in *The Descendants*

Lucie Altmannová, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

This paper explores the thematic and symbolic parallels between land and the female body in *The Descendants*, focusing on both Kauai Hart Hemmings's 2007 novel and Alexander Payne's 2011 film adaptation. It argues that the adaptation reinforces colonial and patriarchal frameworks by positioning both the Hawaiian land and the body of Elizabeth (Joanie in the novel) King – the comatose wife of protagonist Matt King – as feminized spaces subjected to male control, legal authority, and narrative resolution. These parallels are not merely aesthetic or incidental; they are deeply rooted in historical ideologies that treat both land and women as sites of possession, inheritance, and preservation under settler-colonial patriarchy. The paper begins by analyzing how Hawaiian land is feminized through both visual language and narrative function. Drawing on Indigenous theorists and spatial theorists like Edward Said and ku'ualoha ho'omanawanui, it examines the film's use of panoramic landscape shots and romanticized environmental rhetoric to construct the land as passive, beautiful, and endangered. These images reflect and perpetuate a long-standing colonial mythos of Hawai'i as a tropical paradise available for conquest, tourism, and stewardship by elites with tenuous connections to the land's original stewards. Elizabeth's comatose body, meanwhile, becomes a parallel terrain over which Matt must exercise control. Stripped of voice and agency, she is both the subject of medical decision-making and a symbol of betrayal and loss. The narrative uses her silence to center Matt's emotional growth and moral reckoning, echoing the way the land becomes a backdrop to his redemptive arc. Through this lens, Elizabeth's body, like the land, is rendered a site for the projection of male authority, grief, and legacy. The paper further critiques how the film intensifies Matt's agency by recasting him as the sole trustee of the family trust, a role he does not hold in the novel. This legal elevation consolidates narrative control in the hands of a single male protagonist, framing his final decision not to sell the land as both a redemptive gesture and a reinstatement of patriarchal authority. Drawing on scholarship by Rebecca Hogue, Carolina Sánchez Palencia, and Randall W. Roth, the paper argues that these choices in adaptation erase or minimize the complex Indigenous politics of land, family, and sovereignty in favor of a liberal narrative of individual morality. *The Descendants* presents land and the female body as twin sites of sentimental loss and recovery, but in doing so, it reinforces settler-colonial ideologies of possession masked as preservation. This paper centers a more critical reading of such narratives, where the politics of gender and land are inseparably entwined and should be approached through both Indigenous and feminist frameworks.

Lucie Altmannová is a doctoral candidate at the department of English and American Studies at Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, focusing on Indigenous studies and literatures, feminist studies and impacts of colonialism, Eurocentrism, and patriarchy on Indigenous communities. Her dissertation focuses on contemporary literary works by Indigenous women from present-day Canada and USA and the transformative role of Indigenous knowledge, practices and storytelling in decolonization. Her research concentrates on the roles of sexuality, female body, gender and gender roles in traditional Indigenous communities before colonization, their transformation under colonialism, and the current efforts to reclaim traditional values and practices as a form of the decolonization process. Since summer 2024, she works as a student assistant for the Central European Association for Canadian Studies (CEACS).

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Lily, Rose, and Little Dog: Fauna and flora imagery as a way of reflecting and overcoming Vietnamese American transgenerational trauma in Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*

Petr Anténe, Palacký University in Olomouc, Czech Republic

In their works published in the 21st century, writers of the Vietnamese diaspora continue to criticize American involvement in the Vietnam War and its consequences. Written in the form of a confessional letter addressed by the Vietnamese American queer protagonist to his mother, Ocean Vuong's debut novel *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019) reflects the transgenerational trauma of the Vietnam War as well as numerous cases of racism and homophobia in the United States. Focusing on the complicated relations in the characters' family history as well as their marginal position in the American society, the nonlinear narrative uses strikingly poetic language, employing a set of original fauna and flora imagery. In some cases, the imagery is used as a means of empowerment. For example, the protagonist's grandmother used to be called Seven as the seventh child in the family, and only at seventeen, after she ran away from her arranged marriage during the war, she named herself Lan, meaning Lily; the act of naming herself thus provided her with a sense of her own identity and independence. Later, she named her daughter Hong, meaning Rose. Moreover, when Lan calls her grandson Little Dog to describe him as rather small and weak, but in a tender way so that he is not taken away by evil spirits, the name functions as a form of protection according to Vietnamese mythology. The protagonist himself also often compares people to animals, for instance, his family's journey from Vietnam to the United States to the migration of monarch butterflies from the US to Mexico for the winter. However, other passages employing animal imagery have a rather surreal atmosphere, connecting to the violence of the Vietnam War as well as in contemporary America. The presentation will thus survey the

variety of fauna and flora imagery as a way of reflecting and overcoming the characters' trauma in the novel.

*Petr Anténe is an assistant professor of English at the Faculty of Education at Palacký University in Olomouc, Czech Republic. He is the author of *Campus Novel Variations: A Comparative Study of an Anglo-American Genre* (Palacký University, 2015) and *Howard Jacobson's Novels in the Context of British Jewish Literature* (Palacký University, 2019) as well as the editor of "Route CZ-AT" to the USA: *Perceiving American Culture in Central Europe* (Palacký University, 2018). His current research interests include the Irish short story and contemporary American fiction.*

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Neither Here Nor There—DACA and Belonging in 21st-Century America

Kateřina Březinová, Metropolitan University Prague, Czech Republic

In 2014, sociologist Saskia Sassen argued that rising income inequality, mass displacement, and socio-environmental disruption can no longer be explained solely by poverty or injustice. Instead, she described these trends as forms of expulsion—systemic exclusions from livelihoods, housing, and civic life—driven by global economic forces. Similarly, Douglas Massey characterized the United States as "categorically unequal," citing persistent exploitation and exclusion of ethnic minorities, women, and the poor. He observed continued discrimination in employment, housing, and financial services, alongside growing income-based neighborhood segregation. Simultaneously, the securitization of the U.S.–Mexico border has disincentivized return migration, generating a vulnerable labor force with limited legal protections. This project examines how such expulsions and inequalities are perpetuated in the contemporary U.S. through precarious legal status, focusing on Latinx migrants with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) protections between 2012 and 2024. DACA, initiated by President Obama in 2012, granted temporary legal status, work authorization, and deportation relief to undocumented youth brought to the U.S. as children with no criminal record. Of an estimated 2.1 million eligible individuals, approximately 800,000 have received DACA since its inception; as of June 2024, 535,000 remain active beneficiaries, over 90% of whom are from Mexico and Central America (USCIS, 2024). Despite contributing to U.S. society—working, paying taxes, raising U.S.-born children—DACA recipients face ongoing legal uncertainty. Since President Trump administration's 2017 attempt to rescind the program, DACA has been embroiled in legal challenges, its future repeatedly contested in the courts. This paper explores the subjectivities of Latinx DACA recipients—how they engage with, internalize, and resist U.S. border and migratory regimes, and most importantly, how they reflect on their belonging in the US. Drawing from cultural and comparative American studies, and informed by the concept of the

"border as method," I argue that DACA recipients are not passive victims but active agents navigating a system that simultaneously includes and excludes them. Their position is unique, expressed by many as "neither here nor there": they are "outsiders within" (Anzaldúa) and "strangers" (Balibar), visibly embedded in U.S. society yet continuously exposed to the threat of (re)illegalization. Their legal status remains conditional and precarious, indicating the volatility of their belonging. I explore here selected narratives of DACA beneficiaries, both individual and collective, such as those of Karla Cornejo Villavicencio and Marisol Conde-Hernandez, and movements like #SaveDACA, #HereToStay, "Define American," and "United We Dream"—to understand how DACA beneficiaries articulate belonging, legality, and resistance. By centering migrant subjectivities, my ambition is to reveal how border regimes extend beyond geographic frontiers, shaping people's daily lives deep within U.S. territory. I ask: How do DACA recipients narrate and perform belonging in the face of legal uncertainty? What spaces of resilience, solidarity, and empowerment do they construct? And how do DACA recipients' narratives challenge traditional ideals of the U.S. as a land of opportunity in the 21st-century America?

Kateřina Březinová, PhD. is a historian and American studies scholar specializing in the cultural and social history of the Americas in a global context. She is an assistant professor at Metropolitan University Prague, where she leads the Center for Ibero-American Studies, and a research fellow at CSIC's ELASOC programme. She holds a Ph.D. in History and Ibero-American Studies from Charles University in Prague and has been a researcher at El Colegio de México, UT Austin, and CSIC, as well as a visiting fellow at the London School of Economics. Among others, she is the author of El Imaginario Chicano. La iconografía civil y política de los mexicanos en Estados Unidos de América 1965-2000 (Charles University, 2014) and Latinos, jiná menšina? Američtí Hispánci mezi Kennedym a Trumpem (Libri, 2020). ORCID ID 0000-0002-1421-913X/

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**The correlation between code choice and fluid identity
in Hungarian diaspora communities in the United States of America
as analysed on social media platforms**

Éva Forintos, University of Pannonia, Veszprém, Hungary

Language choice in bilingual people is predominantly concerned with the linguistic resources accessible to them and how they construct their preferences in terms of code choice when interacting with community members. L1 and L2 use of bilinguals can refer to their group membership with regard to how they perceive themselves and in relation to others. In other words, they designate their view of themselves as well as their connection to other participants in the discussion. Language is asserted as the most significant

aspect of individual identity, and it is more typically representative of ethnicity and identity than ancestry, religion or residence (Mahootian, 2014). In this paper I argue that the members of the Hungarian diasporic communities living in the United States of America – who have progressively assimilated into the mainstream culture of their host country – have developed an identity which can be regarded as fluid as opposed to a stable phenomenon. Moreover, this identity, which can be considered a combination of their identity associated with their native language and culture on the one hand and with the dominant language and culture on the other, has not been constructed to demarcate “territory socially and politically” (Mahootian, 2014, 195). Consequently, they do not intend to isolate and segregate their communities from the dominant one, but on the contrary, through negotiating their identity via intentional code-mixing in their written discourse, they invite members of the dominant mainstream group to learn about and engage in their culture. The aim of this paper is to investigate the relationship between code choice and identity through the analysis of written mixed-language discourse, e.g., codeswitches found in the Facebook pages produced by members of Hungarian diasporic communities in the United States of America. The mixed code discourse is a variety that contributors to the Facebook pages use intentionally to mark their identity and to highlight their relationship with their heritage within the mainstream language and culture. A multimodal approach is used during the investigation, which presumes that in addition to language there may be other approaches available for making meaning. Multimodal approach is especially useful when meanings in general are to be understood in a community. Writing itself is considered to be multimodal which means it utilizes a visual medium that can include particular design features (e.g., use of colour, font and type face, choice of a particular script). The method used by linguistic landscape researchers is applied to the study of language alternation in the previously mentioned written discourses to analyse the degrees of integration or separation of languages that a multilingual mixed-language text can include.

FORINTOS, Éva (PhD) is associate professor at the English and American Studies Institute of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pannonia, Veszprém, Hungary lecturing on linguistics and applied linguistics. Her research interests include bilingualism and contact linguistics. Her publications are mainly related to the contact linguistic study of the language of Hungarian diasporic communities in English speaking countries as well as the domain language use of these communities. Her recent publications have focused on the language and culture maintenance efforts of the Hungarian diasporic communities in Australia as well as identity construction through communicative choices in diasporic language use.

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Adapting the Screenplay Novel: *Interior Chinatown* from Page to Screen

Nela Hachlerová, Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic

Charles Yu's *Interior Chinatown* is a 2020 novel using the narrative structure of a screenplay as it tells a story of Willis Wu, a self-proclaimed "Generic Asian Man" who strives to become a "Kung Fu Guy." Written almost entirely in screenplay format, Yu's novel uses cinematic conventions such as camera directions, scene headings, staged dialogue, and typecast roles to view the protagonist not just as a character, but as both performer and narrative construct within a racialized media system, and to comment on the portrayal of hypervisibility and simultaneous invisibility of Asian American experience in mainstream media. Drawing on the studies in adaptation theory and intermediality, particularly the concept of intermedial reference, this paper compares the intermedial literary techniques of the novel with the visual strategies of the TV adaptation, and further examines how the Hulu TV adaptation of *Interior Chinatown* retains and reinvents the novel's filmic narrative structure in its translation to a visual medium while addressing the East-West cultural dialogue at the heart of the story. Facing the challenge of dramatizing an already "cinematized" narrative while preserving the meta-commentary on representation, the focus will be put on how the TV adaptation preserves the novel's reflexivity and the play between the "show" and "reality" so as to convey Willis Wu's journey from the background character to the main protagonist of his own life. *Interior Chinatown* becomes not just a story of assimilation or resistance, but a hybridized narrative form that mirrors the hybridity of its protagonist's experience, one that is both shaped by and critical of Western media.

Nela Hachlerová is a doctoral student at the Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic. Her current doctoral research focuses on filmic narrative techniques in literature and drama, and on Sam Shepard and his early experimental works. Among her research interests are modern American drama, avant-garde theatre, off-off Broadway theatre, and intermedial studies.

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Metaphorical Representation of Counterterrorism Measures in Barack Obama's discourse

Marek Hampl, University of Žilina in Žilina, Slovakia

The emergence and rise of the *Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant* (ISIL) in the region of the Middle East in 2014 resulted into military confrontations with the forces of the global coalition that was formed in order to counter the activities of this terrorist organisation. From September 2014 onwards, the global coalition led by the USA launched and coordinated military operations designed to contain the influence of ISIL and to eliminate the threats posed by the organization. In his discourse from 2014 to 2016, U.S. President Barack Obama outlined the components of the overall strategy against ISIL that included a limited military involvement of the USA in the conflict, the "protection provided to the homeland against terrorist threats" (Cutler 2017: 94) as well as "countering the evil ideology of the Islamic State" (Cutler 2017: 45). The proposed paper attempts to explore metaphorical representation of the countermeasures against the activities of the terrorist organization the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in President Barack Obama's discourse. The analysis in the presentation is conducted on the corpus of political speeches that the President delivered in the period from 2014 to 2016. With the help of metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) and also with metaphors drawn from the image schemas (Johnson, 1987; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999), various aspects of Barack Obama's discourse, such as the nature of military campaign and the measures adopted against the activity of the organization can be explored. The general aim of the proposed paper is to identify and analyse metaphors from the domains of "biology and medicine" (i.e. "biological/medical" metaphors, Musolff, 2010, p. 27). These metaphors illustrate the nature of the confrontation between the forces of the global coalition led by the USA and ISIL. Other aspects that are introduced in the paper investigate metaphorical presentation of the process of radicalization of possible followers of ISIL in President Barack Obama's discourse as the organization developed "an effective virtual propaganda machinery" (Gates and Podder, 2015, p. 109) that enabled to communicate its radical message. The analytical framework for the analysis in the proposed paper follows the principles of Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA). This framework enables to observe ideological perspectives adopted by the President in his discourse and it is helpful in the process of explanation of general significance of metaphorical concepts that are presented and discussed. Findings from this type of analysis can be helpful in the perception of the nature of "threats" from the outside and they can also contribute to the specification of perspectives of U.S. foreign policy.

Mgr. Marek Hampl, Ph.D. is Senior lecturer at the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, University of Žilina in Žilina, Slovakia. He received his Ph.D. in Philology/ English language from the Faculty of Arts, the University of Ostrava in Ostrava, the Czech Republic. His research interests include analysis of political discourse from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) and also metaphorical representation of groups and social actors. He is also interested in the area which is related to the doctrines of U.S. foreign policy with the

focus on the Cold War period. He teaches courses that are focused on British and American studies.

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Performative National Cultures and Identities in Transatlantic Adventures of Batman and Joker

Tomasz Jacheć, University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland

On September 14th, 2021, DC Comics released *Batman: The World* – a graphic novel featuring stories of international crime-fighting endeavors of the eponymous superhero. Three years later, DC Comics followed up with *Joker: The World* released on September 17th, 2024. This a graphic novel focused on travelling adventures of one of popular culture's most sinister villains. In *Batman: The World* and *Joker: The World*, both eponymous protagonists begin their adventures in the USA and then shift to places such as the Brazilian *favelas*, Bosphorus Strait in Turkey, and the Wawel Royal Castle in Cracow, Poland. A prominent feature of the graphic novel in question is the fact that each short story has been created by artists from the country that Batman or Joker is visiting in a particular story. Such collaborative and international authorships of anthologies allow for an in-depth analysis of cultural elements included by each team of artists. My intention is to analyze the European portion of Joker's adventures as presented in *Batman: The World* and *Joker: The World* in order to highlight the choices made by various artists concerning cultural elements they decided to include in their work and how those elements may affect reader's perception of a given culture. The analysis will cover both visual and narrative cultural elements included in each individual story.

Tomasz Jacheć is an assistant professor at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. In his research, dr Jacheć focuses on the landscape of American popular culture and contemporary American mythology. His special interest lies in the cultural phenomenon called Michael Jordan, and the role this phenomenon and its narratives play in the culture of the USA. Dr Jacheć is the author of The Myth of Michael Jordan in Popular Culture monograph published by Routledge, as well as a number of academic articles on American popular culture, comedy and sport. He is also an avid fan of American stand-up comedy, as well as late night television comedy. He is a member of the Polish Association for American Studies and the European Association for American Studies.

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An Immigrants' Story: An Updated View of *A Touch of The Poet* by E. O'Neill

Tomáš Kačer, Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic

The play *A Touch of the Poet* (1939) is one of the last plays by the fundamental figure of modern American drama, Eugene O'Neill. It recounts a story of an Irish immigrant Cornelius Melody, who is a former soldier in Wellington's army, and as such, he is self-fashioning as a member of British nobility. This self-image is confronted with the reality of 1820s United States with its strong anti-Irish immigration sentiment and the rise of populist policies, as represented by the ideas present in the campaign trail of Andrew "Andy" Jackson. While Melody distances himself from the Irish Americans whom he considers below his own social standing, as well as the Yankees, whom he disdains for their supposed lack of class, he becomes the target of contempt and scorn because of his poverty and unbearable pretense. This social conflict parallels a struggle with his daughter, Sarah, who is determined to break free from the heritage of her father's immigrant history so that she may make herself in the new country. This presentation will focus on the story of the play as an immigrants' story, which reflects upon issues related to immigration such as a search for one's identity, about the country of origin and differences between generations of immigrants. It will discuss how the play is a unique near-tragic story of Cornelius Melody and his family, namely his wife Nora and their daughter Sarah, while at the same time being a model situation of the condition of the United States as a whole. This perspective will capitalize on various studies of the intended cycle of plays from the history of the United States, which O'Neill had planned but never finished, as discussed in works by the biographer Robert M. Dowling and the literary historian Zander Brietzke. In conclusion, I will discuss these issues from a perspective of my recent translation of the play into Czech, which is currently in rehearsal at the Městské divadlo Brno set to open in September 2025.

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Border Crisis, Xenophobia, and the Deconstruction of the Lone Gunman in *Forever* and *Desierto*

Sándor Klapcsik, Technical University in Liberec, Czech Republic

In the mid-2010s, two major border crises captured global attention and dominated international news cycles. In Europe, in 2015, a dramatic increase in refugees and asylum seekers – primarily from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq – arrived at the EU's external borders, fleeing war, persecution, and poverty. Countries like Hungary responded by erecting fences and militarizing their frontiers, triggering intense emotions, ranging from solidarity to heightened nationalism, xenophobia, and exclusion. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, the Mexico–United States border crisis was intensifying from 2014 onward. Although migration across this border had been a long-standing issue, this period saw a surge in unaccompanied minors and families from Central America – especially Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala – fleeing gang violence, poverty, and political instability. The U.S. response in the following years, including the expansion of border patrols, detention centers, and family separations, drew fierce criticism both in the news and in fictional works. This presentation intends to compare two films whose plotlines are influenced by these events and which describe and deconstruct the traditional filmic representation of the lone gunman. Pálfi's *Forever / Mindörökké* (2021) critiques Hungarian nationalist masculinity through the figure of Ocsenás (Tamás Polgár), who participates in the sexual harassment of a foreign victim of a plane crash and ultimately becomes a sniper targeting civilians. Jonás Cuarón's *Desierto* (2015) offers a parallel figure in Sam (Jeffrey Dean Morgan), a vigilante who hunts Mexican migrants attempting to cross the U.S. border. Both *Forever* and *Desierto* present their central characters – Ocsenás and Sam – as parodic versions of the Western hero archetype: a lone, nomadic gunslinger who is stoic and self-reliant. However, Ocsenás and Sam are neither defenders of a just cause, nor patrons of the weak, but instruments of state violence against refugees and war victims. Thus, both films dismantle the toxic masculinist fantasies of nationalist and patriarchal heroism by deconstructing the lone gunman myth.

Sándor Klapcsik is assistant professor at the Technical University of Liberec in the Czech Republic and a cross-border commuter living in Poland. With support from European exchange programs and the research grant Migration: Sociopsychological and Cultural Factors, his recent work focused on liminality and acculturation in ethnic and migrant cinema. He has been a Fulbright-Zoltai Fellow at the University of Minnesota (USA) and has conducted research at the University of Tromsø (Norway), the University of Lodz (Poland), and the University of Liverpool (UK). His book, Liminality in Fantastic Fiction: A Poststructuralist Approach, was published in 2012. He is currently working on a volume on European migrant cinema.

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Future Identity in *Dear Cyborgs* by Eugene Lim

Petra Kohlová, University of Pardubice, Czech Republic

This conference paper explores how Eugene Lim's *Dear Cyborgs* (2017) reimagines Asian American identities through a blend of speculative storytelling, philosophical dialogue, and formal experimentation. The novel's fragmented structure, metafictional features, drifting voices, and superhero allegories suggest a world and identity that resist confinement to a single place and category. Two critical frameworks guide the discussion. The first is techno-Orientalism, as theorized by scholars such as David S. Roh, Betsy Huang, and Greta A. Niu (2015). This concept describes how Western media often imagines Asians and Asia in hyper-technological terms—both advanced and emotionally vacant, robotic and inscrutable. While Lim's novel does not directly reproduce these tropes, it subtly plays with their echoes. Through its speculative motifs—cyborgs, surveillance, digital alienation—*Dear Cyborgs* invites readers to consider how Asian American characters are situated in narratives of the future, and what it means to be (in)visible within American society. The second framework is transnationalism, particularly as it has been developed in Asian American literary studies to trace how histories of migration, empire, and economic ambition shape diasporic narratives. Scholars like Lisa Lowe (1996) and Christopher T. Fan (2024) have shown how post-1965 Asian American fiction often engages with global networks of meaning. Lim's novel, in its own oblique way, captures that sense of drift: a disconnection from fixed place, nation, or even personal identity.

Rather than offer a clear path to resolution, *Dear Cyborgs* leans into dissonance and deferral. This paper suggests that the novel's formal strategies mirror its political ones: resisting closure, embracing ambiguity, and locating power in the refusal to simplify. In doing so, Lim gestures toward a different way of imagining Asian American identity, one shaped by movement and speculative possibility. In doing so, Lim gestures toward a model of narrative that moves along the fault lines between East and West, protest and complicity, center and margin.

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Freedom in Decline: The Collapse of Democratic Foundations in Contemporary America

Natália Koščová, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovakia

The notion of the American Dream has been used as a democratic promise symbolizing personal, political, and economic freedom, as well as equal access to opportunities for centuries. This idea has undergone a significant transformation in contemporary cultural narratives. Once an unifying ideal is now increasingly criticised as a myth obscuring systemic inequalities and a faltering democratic ethos. The omnipresence of the constant division and fight of the greater value between the truth and opinion, reason and will, contributes to an inescapable decline in democratic foundations. This paper examines the evolving meaning of the American Dream through the lens of Jürgen Habermas's theories of the public sphere, democracy, and postsecular society. Furthermore, it shall explore how the continued acknowledgement of the American Dream functions ideologically, potentially masking inequalities and obscuring the decline of democratic values. Lastly, this paper explains how human rights are being reinterpreted and undermined in the present American climate. Drawing on key works such as *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, *Between Facts and Norms*, and *The Postnational Constellation*, the paper explores how the erosion of rational-critical discourse, growing social fragmentation, and the commodification of democratic ideals contribute to the crisis of legitimacy in American democracy. Particular attention is given to a philosophical model of communicative rationality and an inclusive, pluralistic dialogue as a means of democratic renewal. By positioning the American Dream within a broader philosophical critique of freedom and legitimacy, the paper suggests that the crisis is not merely political or economic, but deeply communicative. This reveals a disconnection between democratic ideals and the practices that sustain them. Furthermore, this paper argues that the American Dream today serves rather as a distorted narrative that potentially perpetuates social division than as a genuine democratic promise of a brighter future. Ultimately, the study examines whether Habermas's framework offers tools for reimagining a more inclusive vision of American democracy in a global and postsecular age.

Mgr. Natália Koščová is an external doctoral student in the Department of Philosophy at Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice. While conducting her research, she is also working as a high school teacher of English Language and Literature, as well as Civic Studies, in Košice. She earned her bachelor's degree with a double major in British and American Studies and Philosophy, and she completed her master's degree in Teaching English Language and Literature and Civic Education. Both her bachelor's and master's theses were completed at the Department of British and American Studies, focusing on the analysis of gender and cultural issues depicted in postmillennial American cinema. Natália's enduring academic interests, which stem from the politics and religiosity of the 21st century, motivated her decision to pursue a doctoral degree in Philosophy. The focus of her current research is secular and post-secular society. Her task involves engaging with the philosophical ideas of J. Habermas. She will examine the philosophical rationale behind the resurgence of religion in politics and investigate whether Habermas esteemed

the potential for rational progress, rational communication, and the rational operation of social institutions within the state.

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An Ecofeminist Critique of America's Environmental Ethos

Klaudia Kováčová, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Slovakia

This research analyzes the historical and philosophical roots of America's environmental self-image, a narrative built on the conviction that nature is a resource to be mastered and used for human benefits. Early modern Western thought, rooted in R. Descartes' dualism and F. Bacon's empiricism, created an ethos that associates freedom and technological progress with dominion over nature. Such philosophy, which made settler-colonial expansion and the 'American Dream' legitimate, also planted the seeds for ecological exploitation and degradation of the environment. In light of today's climate emergencies and the global environmental crisis, this paper advocates for critically reassessing these long-established standards. It demonstrates how ecofeminist perspectives, represented by thinkers and activists such as Vandana Shiva and Val Plumwood, challenge the ideas of human dominance and propose a framework based on care, relationality, and ecological humility. These critiques deconstruct the patriarchal narratives embedded in America's self-representation and open up a new potential for reimagining national identity in a more sustainable, interconnected way. This study expands beyond American borders by incorporating insights from Eastern European and non-Western voices. Places, which were historically reshaped by American influence, now contribute to an emerging dialogue among cultures - a dialogue that questions the presumed exceptionalism of the United States. This multicultural perspective reveals different ways of living with nature, highlighting interdependence instead of control, and offering relevant counter-narratives to the current environmental policies and cultural myths. Through comparing historical philosophical doctrines with modern ecofeminist thought, this paper envisions a re-made American identity, which embraces ecological justice and the ethical responsibilities that are shared among different genders, ethnicities, and cultural lines. This interdisciplinary study aims to contribute to broader debates on the future of the environment and sustainable development. It calls for a shift in thinking, a new paradigm, from a history of dominion to a vision of interdependence, thus fostering a more inclusive and ecologically conscious frameworks that challenge outdated ideas of control and exploitation.

Klaudia Kováčová is a doctoral student at the Department of Philosophy at Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice. She acquired her bachelor's degree from a double major of British and American studies and philosophy and completed her master's degree in teaching of English language and literature and civic education. Both her bachelor's and master's theses were written at the Department of British and American studies with focus on cultural criticism through the analysis of contemporary American cinema. Klaudia's lasting academic interests, which are rooted in the connection between nature and

gender, led her to the decision to pursue a doctoral degree in philosophy. The subject of her current research is the concept of voice and silence in the history of philosophy, specifically how the silencing of women and nature has been historically embedded in philosophical thought, particularly within Western philosophy. She focuses her research on the current global environmental challenges from the point of view of ecofeminism and ecoethics. As for her publishing activity, her first publication is a review of Andrej Démuth's book, Anger as a/moral emotion, forthcoming in Pragmatism Today. In this review, she discusses Démuth's argument that anger is a misunderstood emotion requiring further research.

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Philip Roth's Asia

Christopher E. Koy, University of South Bohemia, Czech Republic

Long acknowledged by critics, Philip Roth's fiction, most often set in New Jersey, is nevertheless global in outlook. His plots take place not only within the confines of the borders of the United States; Eastern Europe, the Middle East as well as Asia have fascinated Roth, though his take on the last listed continent has not been subjected to any sustained critical inquiry. While no novel except his final one is essentially set in Asia, an attempt to reveal the positions Roth's Jewish American characters take on what used to be called "the Orient" reveals much about the impact Asia has exerted on American life. In his fiction, Roth represents Asia as a site for warfare, protest, commerce and trade, spirituality as well as Asian people as a target for racial stereotyping and prejudice. This contribution focuses on Roth's representations of Japan, China, India, the Philippines, Vietnam and Korea as recorded in three novels: *Sabbath's Theater* (1995), *American Pastoral* (1997) as well as *Indignation* (2008). It aims to show how fictional characters respond, positively and negatively, to the political relations America has maintained historically with Asian nations from World War II to the mid-1990s, and that in the three aforementioned novels, protagonists sometimes exhibit resentment if not outright hostility towards Asians, even echoing ugly racist tropes. Finally, the contribution also aspires to warn of the rising racism against Asians of the current political leadership of the United States with past or currently used slurs such as "Indian turned Black," "Kung-Flu" and "Chinese peasants."

Christopher Koy has taught in the English Department at the University of South Bohemia since 2006. His area of expertise is in 19th and 20th century American literature, with a particular focus on the works of Charles W. Chesnutt. He has journal and book chapter publications, as well as editorial/authorial contributions to multiple journals and conference proceedings. He guest-edited two issues of Litteraria Pragensia: Studies in

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Towards the Renaissance of Area Studies? The curious case of American Studies

Kryštof Kozák, Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic

This article argues that current theoretical and methodological debates related to the very concept of “area studies” could be enriched by including the discussion over the field of American studies approached through the perspective of area studies. Especially in the light of recent political developments in the United States, it is critical particularly for non-Americans to understand and interpret the complex matrix of relationships that eventually shape the discourse as well as policy of the global superpower. Area studies approach that emphasizes the importance of context could provide answers to pressing questions related to U.S. exceptionalism, its role in the world and its internal dynamics. By looking at American Studies through area studies approaches, the paper demonstrates renewed relevance and potential for such analytical lens. The paper revisits main theoretical and methodological questions related to area studies, as well as the somewhat contentious debate about its relations with other disciplines, such as international relations, political science, history or cultural anthropology.

It then presents ways through which area studies approach can be revitalized by asking relevant questions as well as providing actionable answers that help address transnational issues. The specific case of American Studies understood as area studies opens new ways of understanding and contextualize knowledge production. The reverting the analytical tools of area studies first developed in the U.S. to be applied on “The Others” to the area of U.S. itself is an effort to de-colonize the field of area studies. Given the global reach of U.S. influence, it is also an effort to start the discussion on prospective research projects related to American Studies conceptualized as area studies.

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**American, Transnational, Indigenous or Oceanic Cultural Identities
in Hawaii Fiction? Gary Pak's *The Valley of the Dead Air*
and Michael Puleloa's *Man Underwater***

Jaroslav Kušnír, University of Prešov, Slovakia

Hawaii's complex history of colonialism and cultural convergence has given rise to a distinct cultural identity shaped by Indigenous traditions and Oceanic worldviews, Asian settler and plantation cultures, and American colonial influence. In their fiction, Michael Pak, a Korean Hawaiian author, and Michael Puleloa, a Native Hawaiian writer, both explore the specificity of Hawaiian cultural identity as a product of these intersecting forces. This identity emerges through a nuanced interplay of cultural traditions, (post)colonial legacies, and contemporary modernities, contributing to its hybrid and evolving character. This comparative paper examines how Hawaiian identities are constructed within the framework of post-millennial, post-race, and post-ethnic aesthetics and sensibilities (Saldívar, Hollinger), while also being shaped by postcolonial modernities, media representations, and intricate interracial dynamics, as reflected in Pak's *The Valley of the Dead Air* and Puleloa's *Man Underwater*.

Jaroslav Kušnír is Professor of American, British and Australian literature at the University of Prešov, Slovakia. He is the author of Poetika americkej postmodernej prózy (Richard Brautigan and Donald Barthelme) [Poetics of American Postmodern Fiction: Richard Brautigan and Donald Barthelme]. Prešov, Slovakia: Impreso, 2001; American Fiction: Modernism-Postmodernism, Popular Culture, and Metafiction. Stuttgart, Germany: Ibidem, 2005; Australian Literature in Contexts. Banská Bystrica, Slovakia: Trian, 2003; and Postmodernism and After: New Sensibility, Media, Pop Culture, and Communication Technologies in Anglophone Literatures. Nitra: ASPA, 2015. Specificity of Place, Region and Space in Anglophone Literatures (ed.). Nitra: SlovakEdu, 2019.

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**“My name is Jack- Jack Pumpkinhead”: The Image of the Pumpkin
in American Literature and Film**

Caroline Ann Daněk Kyzek, Trnava University, Slovakia

From its early use as a fundamental food item in the Native American diet, to pumpkin pies at the Thanksgiving table and pumpkin spice lattes purchased at coffee shops like Starbucks, the pumpkin has been a staple of American cuisine. This beloved gourd, however, has retained much influence in American culture outside of the kitchen, due to its association with the rituals and celebrations surrounding two autumnal holidays: Halloween and Thanksgiving. Many Halloween traditions have been based off of the

Gaelic festival Samhain and brought to North America by Irish and Scottish immigrants, such as the carving of faces into vegetables, which was believed to ward off evil spirits. In Ireland and Britain, the turnip was customary, but after this tradition crossed the Atlantic, it was replaced by the pumpkin. Even today, the practice of making jack-o'-lantern from pumpkins has retained its popularity. For this paper, a cultural approach will be taken as it aims to analyze the cultural significance of the pumpkin from its earliest days to the 21st century, and how this is aided by its representation in American literature and film. The symbol of the pumpkin has been incorporated into American literature since its beginning with stories such as Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1820) and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Feathertop* (1852), which also impacted the American gothic tradition. Irving's story has retained its popularity through film representations, including Disney's *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad* (1949) and Tim Burton's *Sleepy Hollow* (1999), each maintaining their own depictions of the pumpkin. One character that will be analyzed in detail is Jack Pumpkinhead, a tall figure made of trees with the head of a pumpkin, originally portrayed in L. Frank Baum's *The Marvelous Land of Oz* (1904), but famously represented in the film *Return to Oz* (1985). Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, the image of the pumpkin has also bifurcated into two directions: the delightful and suitable for children, as seen in *It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown* (1966) and the terrifying and grotesque as seen in the horror film *Pumpkins* (2018). All of these different representations have shaped America's identity from its beginning until the 21st century.

Caroline Ann Daněk Kyzek is an assistant professor at Trnava University in Trnava, Slovakia, where she teaches classes such as English Literature, Interpretation of Literary Texts, and Semester Project 3 (Culture). She received her B.A. in English and History from Rutgers University and M.A. in English from Montclair State University, both located in New Jersey, U.S.A. She also received her PhD. in British and American Studies from Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, where she wrote her dissertation American Gothic/Dark Romanticism: From Walpole's The Castle of Otranto to Hawthorne's The House of the Seven Gables: Exploring Social Issues in the American Gothic and Its British Predecessor. Her latest works include "Music and Dance in The Great Gatsby" and "Growth on English Soil: Imperialism and Nature in The Secret Garden." Academic interests include various aspects of British and American Literature, especially gothic literature, fantasy, the 19th century, and historical and cultural features in literature.

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NorLife Imitates Art: Adriana Smith's, Margaret Atwood's and Hulu *The Handmaid's Tale* as Echoes of the Abuse of Black Female Bodies

Nora Júlia Levická, Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic

Despite her undeniable role as a feminist writer, Margaret Atwood has not been able to escape criticism for her rather uncomplex portrayal of female experience due to her limited focus on white women – especially so in the case of her 1985 novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. This dystopian work, despite having been long celebrated as an eye-opening narrative highlighting the mistreatment of women under the historical rule of patriarchy, has also faced criticism for its failure to highlight one crucial aspect of said suffering: the interplay of race and female subjugation, mistreatment, and exploitation under patriarchy. This historical (and ongoing) reproductive oppression of Black women was explored, among others, by the likes of Jeniffer L. Morgan in her 2004 publication *Labouring Women: Reproduction and Gender in the New World*; and Dorothy E. Roberts in the 1997 book *Unshackling Black Motherhood*. There has been an attempt to fill lacuna of portrayal of Black women in *The Handmaid's Tale* the novel by the 2017 Hulu TV series production under the same name, where multiple Black Handmaids and Marthas – notably the character of Ofmatthew/Natalie played by Ashleigh LaThrop – were portrayed, marking a significant departure from Atwood's novel. However, this adaptation decision also faced scrutiny due to its shortcomings in addressing the historical context connected to Black women being used as tools in propelling the machine of slavery, especially after the 1808 ban on importation of slaves into the USA. The importance of a nuanced but historically-conscious approach has been highlighted by Regina N. Bradley (2019) and Kinitra D. Brooks (2017) in their analyses on the portrayal of Black women in speculative fiction. Their claims that the racially-diverse portrayal has to be accompanied by nuanced storytelling acknowledging historical trauma tied to Blackness are especially poignant in relation to the absence of agency. The criticism of the portrayal of Black women in the more racially-diverse Hulu version of *The Handmaid's Tale*, as well as their absence in the novel by Atwood will be analysed against the real-life case of Adriana Smith, a Black Georgia citizen who due to medical malpractice ended up on life support where her body is kept artificially “alive” in order to maintain her pregnancy until the viability of the fetus. The case highlights the importance of bodily autonomy, consent, and healthcare accessibility in the contemporary US, and their links to race and sex. Smith's case is eerily similar to Ofmatthew's own forcibly perpetuated pregnancy after her suicide attempt, and serves as a grave reminder of the objectification of Black female bodies under patriarchy, especially in White supremacy-leaning regimes. This issue will be approached through the framework of up-to-date reporting on the case, as well as through critical race feminist framework (Crenshaw 1991, Collins 2001) in light of the current US policies regarding female reproductive rights, with a special emphasis on the role which race plays in access to healthcare and reproductive control.

Mgr. Nora Júlia Levická is a Ph.D candidate under the supervision of doc. Mgr. Tomáš Kačer, Ph.D at the Department of English and American Studies at Masaryk University, Brno. Her research focuses on contemporary feminist rewritings of ancient Greek mythology, where her main areas of interest lie on the issue of internalized misogyny,

female-on-female violence, the notions connected with motherhood, and gendered acts of violence suffered by women in myth. She has already presented at two conferences: IDEAS Brno (2023), and the Anglophone Conference in Hradec Králové (2024). On top of that, she participated on the Kathleen Dubbs commemorative symposium at Pázmány Peter Katolikus Egyetem, Budapest, resulting in the production of a book titled Crossing borders between cultures, scholars and genres with article titled "No Love like a Mother's Hate: Navigating Internalized Misogyny and Inter-Generational Trauma in Margaret Atwood's The Penelopiad" (waiting for publication).

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Popular Film and Television Portrayals of Jewish-ness: How Media Can Impact Increased Antisemitism

Regan Lipes, MacEwan University, Canada

The proposed paper interrogates how misperceptions of Jewish-ness in film, and television can lead to increased antisemitism in contemporary American society. A January 2024 survey conducted by the Anti-Defamation League found that Gen-X Americans are more likely to embrace antisemitic tropes and attitudes. Jewish-ness, broadly defined as identities situated across the spectrum of spiritual and cultural affiliation, when perceived through stereotypes and generalizations in media, provides a skewed, and often misleading image of what it means to be Jewish in America. I propose that without more diversified and nuanced depictions in film and television, pop-cultural Jewish portraiture can contribute to prejudicial attitudes and even antisemitism. My theoretical foundation will draw from the work of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha concerning topics including orientalism, othering, unhomeliness, hyper-exoticization, and fetishization. The media that I intend to analyze for this examination include: *Unorthodox*, the Netflix miniseries based on Deborah Feldman's memoir *Unorthodox: The Scandalous Rejection of My Hasidic Roots*, *Unorthodox* the Netflix reality-series featuring Julia Hart, *Jewish Matchmaking*, the Netflix reality-series hosted by Aleeza Ben Shalom, *Nobody Wants This*, the Netflix comedy-series starring Kristen Bell, *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, streamed on Amazon Prime starring Rachel Brosnahan, and *You People*, a feature film starring Jonah Hill. Collectively, this corpus samples different genres of media: comedy, drama, reality-TV, and film. Across this sampling link cultural link of Ashkenazi American Jewry, and Central / Eastern European roots is a constant establishing a connection between Western and Eastern associations of Jewish-ness as being intertwined. Some characters have voluntarily immigrated, and others are generational refugees from the Central / Eastern European space. Each example approaches the portraiture of Jewish-ness differently, and the culmination of observations can provide a foundation from which to discuss stereotyping. To provide substantiation for discussions of contemporary antisemitism in the United States, the proposed paper will draw on mainstream media commentary from American broadcasts over the last ten

years, as well as printed news media and resulting reader commentary. Additionally, to inform the discussion of global perceptions of American social attitudes, samplings of news media from the international community will be examined. Finally, there will be a concluding investigation of possible approaches to viewing popular American film and television characterization of Jewish-ness from a more informed vantage point. This paper will suggest more robust intercultural education for all minority groups, within American societal discourse to address prejudicial tropes. The unifying question that will be revisited at all stages of analysis will be: how do American portrayals of Jewish-ness and the rise of antisemitism in the United States impact global perceptions of Americans and American Jewry? As all the narratives examined depict some link between American Jewish-ness and Central / Eastern Europe, in answering this question, the analysis will invariably integrate discussions of multilayered cultural identity perspectives.

Dr. Regan Lipes is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at MacEwan University in Edmonton, Canada. She is a Comparative Literature specialist with a focus on Jewish literature and cultural identity construction. She teaches courses in World Literature starting with The Epic of Gilgamesh up to the present day, introductory English-language literature, Jewish women's literature, and Holocaust literature in film adaptation. Dr. Lipes was the 2024 recipient of MacEwan University's Sessional Teaching Excellence Award before beginning her position as Assistant Professor in July of 2025.

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Land of Hopes and Dreams: Bruce Springsteen's Vision of America

David Livingstone, Palacký University in Olomouc, Czech Republic

Many of you will be aware of the recent tiff which arose between Bruce Springsteen and Donald Trump. During a concert in Manchester UK on May 15, the Boss, sat down mid-song on the stage and lamented the current political situation in his home country referring to Trump "as an unfit president" and the current administration as "a rogue government." Notoriously thin-skinned Trump immediately hit back on his media platform Truth Social referring to the American rocker as "an obnoxious jerk" who should "keep his mouth shut". Ironically, one of Springsteen's most famous songs "Born in the USA" from the album of the same name, released in 1984, has often been used by right-wing politicians on the campaign trail; anyone who listens to the lyrics, however, will realize how this appropriation is beyond absurd. An English writer friend of mine, on the left politically, asked me recently about my opinion of Springsteen, voicing his impression that the songs all simplistically revolved around pursuing the American dream: "driving away to a better life and so on". I assured him that this was far from the case. This talk will argue that Bruce Springsteen has, throughout his over fifty-year-career, presented a complex, nuanced picture of America with his latest comments being completely consistent with his

overall message and philosophy. I will make use of songs from each of the decades of his work in order to do so, including the misunderstood anthem mentioned above and his lesser known song “American Land” from 2012 inspired by an earlier Slovak song from 1947, “He Lies in the American Land”, originally written by Andrew Kovaly, an immigrant steelworker in Pittsburgh. Springsteen’s vision of America, with his championing of the working man, the underdog and the downtrodden, is diametrically at odds with the current administration’s support for the rich and powerful without regard for ethics and social justice.

*David Livingstone is an American citizen living and working in the Czech Republic for the last thirty years. He teaches Shakespeare, British and Irish Modernism, Czech culture, children’s literature and American folk music at Palacký University, Olomouc. His most recent book, *In Our Own Image: Fictional Representations of William Shakespeare*, looks at the wealth of novels, plays, short stories, films, television series and even comics focused on Shakespeare as a character. He is currently completing a collection of essays dealing with North American folk music.*

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“What It’s Supposed to Be’: Contemporary Country Music’s Response to a National Identity Crisis”

Anthony Macías, University of California, Riverside, USA

Country music expresses “Southernness,” “the Sacred” (particularly gospel songs), race, class, gender, and a flag-waving populist politics. The music, in which the “religious sentiment” of “North American evangelical Christianity” is often conflated with nationalism, has long been associated with “the political right.” Accordingly, as the editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Country Music* notes, the genre, “with its supposed connections to a socially regressive, conservative, rural, white audience ... does not sit comfortably in the context of the politically and culturally liberal academy,” just as “much popular writing on” it “scorns the United States’ rural and working-class whites.” This presentation details country music’s response to the fraught cultural-political moment in the aftermath of the 2020 Black Lives Matter and statue-toppling protests, as well as the Covid vaccine- and mask-mandates and government-enforced lockdowns. Outspoken recording artists refuted what they perceived as a national identity crisis led by flagburning, America-hating protesters and justified by mainstream, legacy media pundits who promulgated propaganda, undermined foundational values, and colluded to censor dissent. Yet even before the Covid pandemic stay-at-home orders and public school closures, country musicians released songs and videos expressing support for God, guns, and the USA. Examples of each of these three themes, including selected lyrics, will be presented. According to an American Studies-trained cultural historian, populism “militates against the civics of a successful democracy” because it rests on the binary thinking that collapses

all distinctions to those between good and evil, us and them,” although “populism also possesses the ability to voice those things we share amidst our differences.” However, from the perspective of its practitioners and fans, country music does articulate things that many Americans share despite their differences, such as religious faith; firearms ownership; respect for the American flag, as well as for military and law enforcement personnel; and a love-it-or-leave-it patriotism. Indeed, these common denominators abound in contemporary country music. Endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, politicized country music artists sing about conserving the traditional values of Faith, Family, and Nation, but do not use the rhetoric of *saving democracy*. Rather than preaching or protesting, they declare their reverence for the constitutional republic of the United States. They cherish the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and The Bill of Rights, especially the First Amendment, which enshrines freedom of speech and freedom of religion, and which continues to protect Americans from censorship and religious or political persecution, but also the Second Amendment—the right to bear arms—which defends the First. Rather than skirmishers in the culture war of our divided times, they see themselves as protectors of a way of life endangered by corrupt politicians and a state-sanctioned media narrative platforming a zealous secular progressivism. They seek to, as country music star Jason Aldean explained, reaffirm how America is “supposed to be.” In defiance of cancel culture, these popular performers exercise their artistic freedom of expression—and other Godgiven rights—by singing patriotic songs and praising a higher power.

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Felix Leiter versus 007
The Vision of US Intelligence Agent in James Bond Movies

Piotr Mamet, Emeritus, Poland

It goes beyond doubt that 007 is presented in James Bond movies as the indispensable, perfect and always winning agent. One may overlook the fact that his actions are supported, if not made possible at all, by a number of partners and supporters. One of them is Felix Leiter, a CIA agent, who assists 007 on a number of occasions and in a variety of ways. The aim of the study is to analyse how Felix Leiter is presented in the movies, to identify the dynamism and character of his relationship with James Bond. The study also concentrates on how the language the two agents use and the nature of the discourse between them reflect this relationship.

Dr hab. Piotr Mamet, is engaged in the research on LSP, genre and register analysis as well as the linguistic aspect of a brand name. The research also covers specialized translation, humour and movie translation. His recent research covers the language of film characters, e.g. the monograph Licence to Speak. The Language of James Bond (2014) and The Discourse of M: Managing British Intelligence in James Bond Movies [with Dr Anna Majer] It also includes conference participation and articles in which he analyses the translation of the language of 007. Before starting his teaching and research work Piotr Mamet worked in the international trade sector, including Polish Chamber of Foreign Trade (1995-1991).

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Self as Narrative: Subjectivity and Community in Dawn Quigley's
***Apple in the Middle* (2018) and Tommy Orange's *There There* (2018)**

Michaela Marková, Technical University of Liberec, Czech Republic

One set of norms on which racial and ethnic differences emerge involves those that relate to incorporationism. Certain minorities, such as African-Americans and Latinx, are more likely to believe that blending into the larger society and maintaining the cultural traditions of one's ancestors are not mutually exclusive and that both are very important factors which define being American. Many Indigenous NA communities, however, engage in an "oppositional process" by which the boundaries between Indians and the dominant groups are maintained. They attempt to reconstruct their identity, reviving languages, bringing back ceremonies, and regaining land and cultural items. The reconstitution of identity is an important component of reconciliation, but some have claimed that possible

loss might be greater and irretrievable. The questions then are: How can Indigenous values be upheld and authentic perspectives highlighted? Where do subjective identity and registered national identity end? Is identity changeable or adaptable? This proposed contribution will seek answers to these questions in Dan Quigley's novel *Apple in the Middle* (2018). It portrays a view of America and its people from a double-outsider's perspective of a mixed teenager, who becomes a definitive interpreter and proponent of Native identity, shatters Indian stereotypes and learns what it means to find her place in a world divided by colour. Thus, the novel lends itself to a fascinating insight into how America is portrayed by minority and isolated groups. Employing such means redresses the grievance that the NA perspective on heritage, ancestry, and community is still largely unknown and often seen as illegitimate.

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Awakening America: Bob Dylan's Take on the Murder of J.F.K. from a 2020 Perspective

Jiří Měšic, University of Granada, Spain

The presentation will explore the reinterpretation of American history in Bob Dylan's song "Murder Most Foul," which centres on the assassination of John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963. Released during the COVID-19 pandemic, the song not only recalls the turbulence of the 1960s but also resonates with the era of its release. As a modernist, stream-of-consciousness portrayal of American society, resembling T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* in composition and its search for truth and meaning, the song features multiple voices: the singer narrating the atmosphere without directly interpreting events, Kennedy addressing his assassins, and other voices, including Black voices struggling to be heard. The narrative is further interwoven with cultural references to songs, films, and literature, including Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Even a DJ—Wolfman Jack—is asked to "howl" for Kennedy and, in the song's two final stanzas, is instructed by Kennedy to play music on his journey to the cemetery. Surprisingly, politics and even countercultural movement—its music and artists, such as the Beatles—are depicted as distractions from the deeper truth, a form of imposed blindness. That is perhaps why Dylan describes Kennedy's assassination as a "magic trick," in which thousands watched but failed to see

the real murderer: “Thousands were watching, no one saw a thing / It happened so quickly, so quick, by surprise / Right there in front of everyone’s eyes / Greatest magic trick ever under the sun.” This theme of mass deception also resonates with the social engineering seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many artists endorsed the official narrative of the crisis. Without explicitly referencing COVID-19, Dylan subtly evokes its trauma, framing Kennedy’s death as the catalyst for a series of catastrophic events in American history—including the assassinations of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy. However, among them, John F. Kennedy is seen as a Christ-like figure, sacrificed for the supposed good of America—a “sacrificial lamb [...] on the altar of the rising sun.” His death, according to Dylan, marked the beginning of the Age of the Antichrist, ushering in an era of perpetual war and manipulation. Ultimately, this presentation will question the official narrative of Kennedy’s assassination, revealing a perspective far more complex than the one traditionally accepted as Dylan’s intricate sequence of events and cultural references serves as a roadmap to the truth. Soon, with ongoing efforts to declassify documents related to Kennedy’s death, new revelations may emerge that enrich Dylan’s narrative or even validate what has long been dismissed as conspiracy theory.

Jiří Měsíc, is an Assistant professor and researcher in the Department of English and German Philology at the University of Granada. His main interest lies in the mystical branches of the Abrahamic religions (Christian mysticism, Kabbalah, Sufism) and their echoes in literature, popular music and culture. Among his most recent publications are the monograph Leonard Cohen, the Modern Troubadour (Palacký University, 2020); the critical editions of Alberto Manzano’s poetry, Mandle a citróny [Almonds and Lemons] (Protimluv, 2025), John Pass’s poetry, Větrná zvonkohra [Windchime] (Protimluv, 2020), Gertrude Stein’s selected work, Mluvit a naslouchat [To Speak and Listen] (Éditions Fra, 2019 & 2021), as well as several book chapters and academic articles addressing religious sources in popular music.

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Schemata, Archetypes, and Authority: Mapping a Political Figure in the American Press

Elina Paliichuk, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, Kyiv, Ukraine

This paper explores the linguistic and conceptual portrait of a political persona in the American press. It builds on a case study approach through the media framing of James Michael Johnson, an American lawyer and politician who has served as the fifty-sixth speaker of the United States House of Representatives since 2023. On the day the politician was elected, the American media burst into highlighting the Speaker’s worldview and career path, suggesting the social implications and the role of the iconic American dream on a domestic and global scale. This study aims to build a conceptual and linguistic

portrait of Mike Johnson as a political figure. The language data was taken from the corpus of 50 publications at *apnews.com*, *time.com*, *theguardian.com*, *politico.com*, and *vanityfair.com*, dated 2023. Specifically, quotes and direct speech were used for the analysis to avoid journalistic bias. The methods of Mark Johnson's image-schema conceptual theory and Jungian archetype theory were applied to identify the pillars of the Speaker's worldview and forecast its influence on global political communication. The results reveal the dominance of PATH image schema manifesting in the verbal means in *backward-forward* direction, thus representing the desire to restore and to resort to the American political legacy rather than the development and progress in the future, and *up-down* direction representing authority and morality; CONTAINMENT (*in-out*) manifesting the security rhetoric of defending the national borders against migrants; BLOCKAGE manifesting in the tendency to speak more problems and difficulties, or obstacles rather than opportunities, FORCE representing the concept of the strength of America as a world leader. The identified schemata evolve in speech built around *faith* and *religion*, *family*, *institution*, *economy*, *foreign affairs*, and *society*. The *father* archetype acts in M. Johnson's speech as an appeal to authority, power, and discipline when referring to the *God (Lord)*, biological father, the founders of the USA, and the then-presidential candidate, Donald Trump, a follower of whom he is. The findings open new horizons in studying cultural, historical, and political contexts within interdisciplinary linguistic studies and social sciences, deconstructing media images of political personas through linguistic tools. The conclusions imply rethinking the current approaches by making allowance for the schemata, concepts, and archetypes discovered when interpreting the messages in media, which can help establish conceptual prerequisites and develop linguistic measures in response to emerging challenges and political uncertainty framed in American and global media discourse. The results and inferences can be applied beyond linguistic dimensions to construct meaningful transatlantic political dialogues.

Elina Paliichuk, Ph.D., is an Adviser to the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (since 2023) and Assistant Professor at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, Ukraine (since 2015), and holds an MA in Linguistics degree from the Kyiv National Linguistic University. She initiated studies on warning human trafficking victims with a focus on metaphor, storytelling, schemata, and sensory language in discourses and empirical methods. The researcher is implementing Changing Young Minds: Student Awareness of Human Trafficking under War Conditions at the French Research Center in Humanities and Social Sciences in Prague. She also worked on Ukrainian legislation to align with EU acquis standards as an Associate Translation Fellow at the EU-funded Project "Association4U" (2017-2019) and as a translation infrastructure national expert at the 3E4U EU-funded project within the GIZ / ICON Institute (2025).

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Environmental grief, autism and biocentrism in Richard Powers's novel *The Bewilderment*

Michal Peprník, Palacký University in Olomouc, Czech Republic

Since the early 2000s, ecofiction has increasingly shifted from concerns about the representation of nature toward themes of ecological and environmental activism. The widely discussed gap between knowing and feeling—what Richard Kerridge terms the "dissociation between knowing and feeling"—has prompted renewed ethical and existential urgency in literature (environmental grief), opening the door for ecological radicalism to re-enter fictional narratives. This paper examines the entanglements of biocentrism and autism in Richard Powers's novel *The Bewilderment* against the backdrop of an increasing dehumanized and shortsighted social and political machinery. The paper asks whether the novel endorses the protagonists' biocentric prioritization of nonhuman life over human concerns, or whether it subtly critiques this stance by highlighting its potential ethical blind spots. The tentative solution embraces both positions and suggests a troubled moral ambiguity (bewilderment) at the heart of Powers's narrative.

Michal Peprník is Professor of American literature and literary theory at the Department of English and American Studies, Palacký University, Olomouc. His publications include three monographs in Czech and one textbook of critical theories: Metamorphosis as a Cultural Metaphor (2003); The Topos of the Forest in American Literature (2005); James Fenimore Cooper's Early Novels: Topological Beginnings of the American Novel (2011). He has also published a number of articles in English in journals and edited collections. His main fields of research are space, place, topos, literary representations of Native American in 19th century American literature, and the literature of the fantastic.

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The Road to Richmond: An Examination of YouTube Reaction Videos and the Role of Music in the Conservative Cultural Shift Among Black Americans

Robert Perez, University of California, Riverside, USA

There is no doubt that for many around the globe, including in the United States, the concept of the American Dream is evolving or being examined more critically than in the previous century. Since the political rise of Donald Trump the various organs of American media and academia have been at the forefront in warning about disturbing rhetoric and policies. From the beginning they have sounded the alarm at the prospect of a potential slide towards racism, authoritarianism, xenophobia, ultra-nationalism and even fascism. Many share these fears, but, at the same time, at least half of the country does not share this interpretation of the current moment. There is a more conservative, not necessarily

Republican, cultural shift taking place in the USA that is reflected in popular culture, music, and social media among other things. This cultural movement rejects the modern left's version of history and favors patriotic and unapologetic conservative values. This presentation examines the role of primarily Black Americans in this cultural movement, through the examination of "reaction" videos on the website YouTube. Although Blacks and Hispanics voted in unprecedented numbers for Donald Trump in 2024, academics, journalists and pundits have paid scant attention to this phenomenon. By examining hundreds of reaction videos over the past ten years the presentation will show that there is an identifiable trajectory that Black content creators follow that leads them from the world of hip-hop to rock and roll to country music. There is a pattern of these Black creators, at the suggestion of their subscribers, eventually transitioning to more political videos from conservative Black scholars such as Thomas Sowell. In short, many of these creators begin to question racial divisions and preconceptions as a direct result of their exposure to this hitherto unknown body of American music and Black political thought. They begin to openly express the idea that we are all Americans first and foremost, regardless of race, and that we share a unique cultural heritage. These are some of the non-White Trump voters that the media and professors can't explain. In August of 2023 a previously unknown singer/songwriter named Oliver Anthony burst onto the music scene with the release of a song titled, "Rich Men North of Richmond." Reacting to this song was a sort of culmination of this trajectory for many Black YouTube creators, the moment where it all came together. Through an examination of over 300 reactions to "Rich Men North of Richmond," this presentation will present a look at the role of music and culture in the rise of Black conservatives in the United States and their open refusal to reject the growing sense of American nationalism or the American Dream in its traditional sense. These Black conservatives and common folk are skeptical of the left's constant claims of racism. This is a population that merits study and understanding.

Robert Perez is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Riverside. He teaches and does research in the areas of American Indian history, Colonial Latin American history, the history of Race and Ethnicity, and American Popular Culture.

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Digital Resurrections and the Ghosts of Hollywood: American Sci-Fi Elements in *Restore Point*

Tomáš Pospíšil, Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic

This paper will examine the 2023 Czech science fiction film *Bod počátku* (*Restore Point*) as an example of how Central European cinema adapts traditional Hollywood genres to address local realities.

Drawing on visual and narrative conventions from U.S. dystopian and cyberpunk cinema—such as *Blade Runner*, *Minority Report*, and *Gattaca*—*Restore Point* imagines a futuristic Prague where citizens have a legally guaranteed right to digital resurrection after violent death. The film uses familiar American film elements—cyberpunk aesthetics and its urban representations, noir-inflected narrative structures and characters, and depictions of bioethical dilemmas—while situating its narrative in (post-communist) anxieties about technology, surveillance, and state control. It also raises timely questions about the distribution of power and influence in a futuristic society, marked by extreme social stratification. *Restore Point* has apparently been produced to creatively respond to American cinema from the vantage point of European filmmaking. Yet it testifies to Hollywood's enduring intellectual and stylistic influence, even as it creatively engages in the global conversation about the risks and promises of the digital age.

Tomáš Pospíšil is Associate Professor in the Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno. He teaches American literature, American and Canadian film and American cultural studies. He was an ACLS visiting scholar at the University of California, Santa Cruz in 1993/94 and Fulbright fellow at the University of Southern California in 1999. More recently he has been visiting Canadian universities on a variety of short-term fellowships. His current research interests involve African American film representation, Canadian feature film, and the reception of American culture in the Czech lands.

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From Bohemian Idealism to American Disillusionment? Emanuel Klácel and the Transatlantic Reimagining of Liberty

Libor Práger, Silesian University in Opava, Czech Republic

The figure of Emanuel Klácel (1808–1882)—Czech philosopher, theologian, and nationalist—offers a unique transatlantic lens through which to examine shifting cross-cultural perspectives on America in the 19th century. A former Premonstratensian monk turned radical intellectual, Klácel was a prominent voice in the Czech national revival before his emigration to the United States in 1857. Drawn by Enlightenment ideals and

the promise of democratic freedoms, Klácel saw America as a land of liberty, pluralism, and social progress. What he found, however, was a nation in turmoil—divided by slavery, driven by materialism, and often indifferent to the philosophical and cultural ideals he cherished. This paper examines Klácel's decade-long experience in the U.S., especially within the Czech immigrant community in Iowa, as a case study in early Central European engagement with American identity. Through his letters, essays, and published reflections, Klácel emerges as an early critic of the American Dream, whose idealism slowly gave way to skepticism. Rather than simply rejecting America, however, Klácel reinterpreted it: he came to see the United States not as a failed utopia, but as a flawed yet instructive political experiment—a mirror in which to reflect on the limits of national mythologies and Enlightenment universalism. The paper argues that Klácel's American writings anticipate later critiques of American exceptionalism by Central and Eastern European intellectuals. His evolving views on democracy, community, and spiritual freedom offer a rich, underexplored contribution to 19th-century transatlantic thought. By situating Klácel's experience within broader historical contexts—including the Civil War, immigrant identity, and transnational utopianism—this paper highlights the entangled nature of philosophical and cultural imaginaries across continents. In doing so, it challenges simplistic narratives of admiration or rejection and reveals the more nuanced dynamics of cross-cultural interpretation, disillusionment, and adaptation. Ultimately, Klácel's American chapter reflects not the end of his philosophical journey, but its transformation—from Bohemian idealism to a more complex, cross-cultural humanism rooted in dialogue, doubt, and the ongoing redefinition of freedom.

Libor Práger is a university lecturer and scholar based at the Silesian University in Opava, Czech Republic, where he teaches courses in English and American literature, cultural history, and adaptation studies. His research spans transatlantic intellectual history, narrative identity, and cognitive literary studies, with a particular focus on how literary and philosophical texts shape cultural perceptions of freedom, belonging, and social change. He previously taught at Palacký University in Olomouc and served as a Fulbright teaching professor at Mount Mercy University in Cedar Rapids, Iowa (2009–2010), where he became deeply engaged with the legacy of Czech immigrant communities in the American Midwest. Práger also explores how fictional and historical narratives frame the experience of exile, cultural translation, and ideological disillusionment. His recent work includes comparative studies on contemporary American fiction, cognitive approaches to poetry interpretation, and the pedagogical uses of literary adaptation.

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Reimagining Personal Development: Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* (2016) and the post-Black Bildungsroman as Resistance to American National Myths

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This paper analyzes Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* as a post-Black Bildungsroman that challenges dominant narratives of personal growth, national identity, and the enduring myth of the American Dream. Traditionally, the Bildungsroman centers on individual development and social integration; however, *Homegoing* reimagines this form through a fragmented, intergenerational story that resists coherence and linearity. By tracing the divergent trajectories of two half-sisters—Effia and Esi—and their descendants across more than two centuries, Gyasi presents a compelling criticism of institutional racism and historical erasure, exposing how they challenge and complicate the foundations of American national identity. Gyasi's narrative strategies—including shifting perspectives and historical gaps—demonstrate how the novel dismantles linear models of development, thereby challenging the very genre of the Bildungsroman. Through close reading, I show how these formal choices foreground the fragmentation of identity across time and space, disputing the notion of self-development as a universal or attainable ideal. Rather than culminating in resolution or assimilation, Gyasi's narrative offers a series of ruptures and reckonings, underscoring how identity is profoundly shaped by generational memory, state violence, and historical erasure. The novel ultimately proposes a critical alternative to Western-centric notions of progress and selfhood, urging a more nuanced, historically grounded understanding of development that transcends national borders and linear time. Moreover, *Homegoing* functions as both a critique and a reconfiguration of the Bildungsroman. Gyasi displaces the conventional arc of assimilation and self-mastery, replacing it with narratives of rupture, resilience, and resistance. The descendants confront inherited trauma, state violence, and cultural dislocation, illustrating that identity formation is shaped by collective wounds inflicted by imperial and racial power. The novel's nonlinear, multivocal, and transnational structure reflects the fractured nature of diasporic identity, offering a powerful counter-narrative to dominant American myths of progress. This paper positions *Homegoing* as a vital contribution to the evolving Bildungsroman tradition—one that foregrounds diasporic experience, decenters national narratives, and reimagines development as a nonlinear, transhistorical process. Gyasi's work thus exemplifies a meeting point between East and West—not in terms of geographic binaries, but as a literary and ideological crossing that reconfigures Western forms through the lens of transnational post-Black experience and challenges readers to reconsider the assumptions underlying conventional models of identity formation and personal progress.

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dissertation, she explores how contemporary Bildungsroman narratives challenge, subvert, and reinvent the traditional Bildungsroman narrative structures to better reflect the fluid and often fragmented experiences of identity, belonging, displacement, and cultural negotiation in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world.

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“Goin’ Home: The Triangular Relationship Between Music in America, Bohemia, and Japan”

Maki Sadahiro, Meiji Gakuin University, Japan

This presentation examines the transnational musical connections linking the United States, Japan, and the Czech Republic, centering on Antonin Dvořák's transformative “From the New World” Symphony. While scholarship has documented how rock music transcended Cold War boundaries—exemplified by the symbolic relationship between the Velvet Underground and the Velvet Revolution—these musical exchanges have much deeper historical foundations. The watershed moment occurred during Czech composer Dvořák's 1892 American sojourn, coinciding with Chicago's World's Columbian Exposition. Dvořák identified authentic American musical sources in Indigenous melodies and African American spirituals. Influenced by the renewed popularity of “The Song of Hiawatha,” he synthesized Bohemian folk traditions with Native American and Black musical expressions, noting parallels with Irish and Scottish folk music—a cross-cultural approach that catalyzed folk culture rediscovery across continents. This cultural synthesis resonated powerfully during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s. King Vidor incorporated the symphony in his groundbreaking all-Black cast film *Hallelujah!*, while African American writers frequently referenced Dvořák. The Harlem Renaissance, embracing “national self-determination” rhetoric and influenced by Czechoslovakia's establishment, strengthened the Czech American musical dialogue. The symphony underwent remarkable transformations: William Arms Fisher added English lyrics (“Goin’ Home”) in 1922, while in Japan, Kenji Miyazawa created Japanese lyrics in 1924 and referenced the work in his literary masterpiece “Night on the Milky Way Train.” The cultural impact expanded when Kenji Mizoguchi featured a jazz arrangement of the Largo movement in his 1930 film *Hometown*—a pivotal moment in Japanese talkie cinema. After appearing in 1930s Japanese textbooks, the symphony evolved into a beloved post-WWII Japanese folk song. This presentation traces how Dvořák's “New World” Symphony was reimagined in Japan through the lens of 1920s African American culture, illuminating how “Americanness” in music evolved through this triangular cultural exchange between Eastern Europe, the United States, and Japan. By examining this musical migration across continents, we gain fresh insights into how folk traditions transcend national boundaries and become vehicles for cultural identity formation. The case of Dvořák's symphony demonstrates how a single musical composition can acquire multiple cultural meanings as it traverses geographical, temporal, and social landscapes, ultimately

revealing the interconnectedness of seemingly disparate musical traditions in the formation of national and cultural identities.

Maki Sadahiro is professor of American Literature at Meiji Gakuin University, Tokyo, Japan. She received a PhD in English from the State University of New York at Buffalo. She earned a Fulbright Research Grant to conduct research at Columbia University in 2019. Her recent research focus is on the institutionalization of American literature and the formation of American literary history. Her publications include "Thoreau's Ontology of "We": Friendship in A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers" (Thoreau in the 21st Century Perspectives from Japan, 2017), "Fin-de-Siecle British Socialism and a Prelude to the Melville Revival" (Leviathan, 2020), and "Melville's Twentieth-Century Revivals" (A New Companion to Herman Melville, Wiley-Blackwell, 2022).

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Orientalism and Lynching in the Wild West: A Pedagogical Reading

Hana Ulmanová, Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic

Four Treasures of the Sky (2022) is the literary debut by a Chinese American writer Jenny Tinghni Zhang (1990), published when Americans still remembered Donald Trump calling covid a „Chinese virus“. Yet, it is primarily a historical novel, going back to the 1880s and based on the observation of the author's father who, while travelling through Idaho, saw a memorial dedicated to five Chinese hanged individuals (reportedly because they murdered a white businessman). As such, it questions the great narratives about the land of freedom and unlimited opportunities, the promised land, as well as the well-established mythology of the Wild West; and also deepens the readers' understanding of the phenomenon of lynching and (in Edward Said's terminology) orientalism. First, the female protagonist did not come to America by choice; as a result of the so-called Page act excluding from immigration Chinese women, since they were not seen as fit for heavy manual labor, she was smuggled in as a potential prostitute. Second, while escaping from a San Francisco brothel, where females were treated like slaves, she did not go west; but, trying to conceal her gender, went to Idaho, hoping not for a new beginning, but for a return home. And there, she accidentally ended up being lynched, for exactly the same pretext and reason African Americans were lynched in the South: on the surface, there was accusation of the rape of a lily-white virgin, in reality, economic competition and jealousy. And the need to intimidate the others (be it Mexicans or even Irishmen), and to manifest, in a spectacular fashion, white supremacy. At the same time, though, next to some typical elements of Bildungsroman (such as rites of passage, sexual awakening, friendship and identity) the text contains occasional troubling features of orientalism: the East is constructed as something different, foreign, passive, feminine and exotic, described in a dehumanizing and/or clichéd language. Consequently, while discussing

the author's place in the contemporary literary context, there is ample space for both praise and minor reservations

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**“My Father Was Not a Cowboy, Truly Not”:
The Changing Image of America in Hungarian Pop Music, 1980 – 2025**

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Our presentation maps the changes in the portrayal of American cultural topics and the United States itself in Hungarian popular music between the arbitrarily chosen starting date of 1980 and the present day. Through an analysis of the lyrics of such artists as Márta Záray–János Vámosi, Neoton Família and Első emelet from the 1980s, AD Studio, Exotic and Waszlavik Gazember Petőfi Velorex Sámán Ullmann Mónika Bőgatya Szabadcsapat László from the 1990s, Bon-bon, Bělga, Ganxsta Zolee and the Kartel and Tankcsapda from the 2000s, Mary Nótár, once again Ganxsta Zolee and the Kartel, as well as Ismerős Arcok from the 2010s, and Krisztián Burai feat. Barbi Opitz and G.w.M., Parafa & Zelena and G.w.M. from the 2020s. Showcasing a range of attitudes from longing, inspiration, idealization through criticism and disillusionment to reappropriation, or, even, a point where “America’s national symbols [have] turned into free-floating signifiers” (Federmayer 2006,2), these songs, we argue, can be fruitfully interrogated in search for the changing perception of the United States in Hungary. While the songs come from three different political periods (late Kádár-era state socialism, the Third Republic and the System of National Cooperation), they all exemplify that “In Hungary we have a special understanding of American culture, in the same way, as the Poles have their own special understanding of it. The specialty of the understanding is not the product of an essentialist position: rather it is the outcome of an interaction (series of interactions) of various actors—the US is one among them” (Rozsnyai 2005), an understanding that is

“not [based on] identification with the Americans” (Rozsnyai 1986, 204). On the contrary, it is one where musicians in particular, and readers/consumers in general, “adopt and adapt meanings and pleasures for their own purposes” (Campbell and Kean 1997, 258) amidst “the continuing fragmentation of American society and culture” (259). We argue that these evolving musical portrayals reveal not only how American culture has been perceived, transformed, and repurposed in Hungary over time, but also how popular music serves as a dynamic site for negotiating global influence within local cultural frameworks.

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Cross-Cultural Dialogues in the Contemporary Slovak American Narratives

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Stories of immigrants are as old as immigration itself. Many Central and Eastern Europeans sought a better future in North America, entering the symbolic melting pot where their identities and memories often gave way to the pursuit of happiness in “the promised land”. In the multiethnic and multicultural United States, their descendants reimagined the stories of their forefathers' homeland with the realities of their own lives into the narratives which often portray the clash of Eastern and Western values. This paper looks at some of these narratives as the echoes of deeply personal and philosophical questions. Andrew Krivak, a contemporary American writer and the grandson of Slovak immigrants. is an acclaimed novelist, particularly through his *Dardan Trilogy*—comprising *The Sojourn*, *The Signal Flame*, and *Like the Appearance of Horses*. Krivak offers a multi-layered portrayal of the Slovak American experience, spanning different historical periods, geographical settings, and thematic perspectives. Through the intergenerational story of the Vinich family, he traces their journey across European and American landscapes. His characters, once rooted in their domestic convenience, are

inevitably directed into the claws of wars, which has shifted the image of America as a beacon of freedom and democracy into the country of displacement, hybrid identity, and disconnection.

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