

Keynote presentations

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The Declaration as History and Ideology: A Cold War Debate

Conservative intellectuals in America during the Cold War debated the meaning and significance of the Declaration of Independence. At stake was more than the proper interpretation of a historical document. The Declaration was used as an epitome for the United States as a whole and for its duty to the world and to itself. Was the Declaration simply an announcement to the world of American independence and the Revolution completed once the war was ended in 1783? Or was the Declaration a statement of universal principles and the Revolution itself but one part of a perpetual, universal struggle for human emancipation? Was the Declaration essentially conservative or radical? Ought it to be understood more historically or abstractly? Was America's post-World War II foreign policy a fulfillment or betrayal of the Declaration? Leading scholars in this debate included Russell Kirk, Daniel Boorstin, and Leo Strauss, and the controversy stirred controversy over Edmund Burke, John Locke, Friedrich Gentz, and the American Founders.

Richard M. Gamble is Professor of History and holds the Anna Margaret Ross Alexander Chair in History at Hillsdale College in Michigan. His books include *The War for Righteousness* (ISI Books, 2003), *The Great Tradition: Classic Readings on What It Means to be an Educated Human Being* (ISI Books, 2007), *In Search of the City on a Hill* (Continuum/Bloomsbury, 2012), and *A Fiery Gospel* (Cornell, 2019). Currently, he is writing the first biography of the Hungarian-American historian John Lukacs for the University of Notre Dame Press.

Keywords: Declaration of Independence, Founding Fathers, US foreign policy

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Pynchon's Americas

The literary event of 2025 (at least in some circles) is the upcoming release of the most recent, and likely the last, novel by the legendary American novelist Thomas Pynchon, *Shadow Ticket*. With the publication of this late novel (Pynchon is now 88), it seems an appropriate moment to reconsider Pynchon's career as a whole—and given the fact that the new novel is reportedly set in Hungary, the 15th HAAS conference is the perfect place to do just that. In my talk, I am going to examine two main facets of Pynchon's career, dealing with his entire corpus of novels, but paying particular attention to his three most recent novels, *Inherent Vice*, *Bleeding Edge*, and *Shadow Ticket*, which can be seen as a late crime fiction or hardboiled trilogy. First, I will argue that it is becoming increasingly clear that as a body of work, his novels offer a surprisingly coherent and complete counter-history of the American experiment from its inception (in *Mason & Dixon*) to the twenty-first century (in *Bleeding Edge*), a history marked by a profound bifurcation between, if the lack of nuance can be forgiven, good and evil. This is particularly clear in relation to his

hardboiled trilogy, and may be one reason why Pynchon's late fiction has leaned so heavily on the crime genre. Second, it is also becoming clear that Pynchon's America—or better his Americas—do not exist in isolation, but are instead carefully situated within, and entangled with, a broader global history of inequality, oppression, and—crucially—resistance.

Eric Sandberg completed his PhD at the University of Edinburgh, and is currently an Associate Professor at City University of Hong Kong. He also holds a Docentship at the University of Oulu, Finland. His research interests range from modernism to the contemporary novel, with a particular interest in the borderlands between literary and popular fiction. He published a companion to the work of Dorothy L. Sayers in 2021, co-edited *Adaptation, Awards Culture, and the Value of Prestige* in 2017, and edited *100 Greatest Literary Detectives* in 2018. He has published essays on topics ranging from Eileen Chang to Thomas Pynchon in numerous edited collections and journals. His most recent monographs, *Studying Crime in Fiction* and *Crime Fiction and the Holocaust*, appeared in 2024 and 2025.

Keywords: Thomas Pynchon, *Inherent Vice*, *Bleeding Edge*, and *Shadow Ticket*

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The Road Through the Wall, Suburban Hyperreality, and White Women's Subjectivity Formation

Keywords: Suburbia, Hyperreality, Whiteness studies, Shirley Jackson, Affect

This paper examines Shirley Jackson's *The Road Through the Wall* (1948) as a critical anatomy of postwar American suburbia and a key text for understanding the spatial production of white women's subjectivity. Drawing on theories of space (Henri Lefebvre), hyperreality (Jean Baudrillard; Umberto Eco), and affect (Sara Ahmed), the talk argues that Jackson exposes suburbia not as a neutral domestic refuge but as a regulated ideological project sustained through exclusion, surveillance, and myth-making. Focusing on Pepper Street's built environment, its wall, spatial hierarchies, and informal systems of policing, the chapter shows how suburban space functions as an abstract and hyperreal environment that organizes belonging, class differentiation, and racialized fear. The paper contends that white women in Jackson's novel occupy a structurally ambivalent position: they are both constrained by suburban norms of domesticity and respectability and actively implicated in their reproduction through affective labor, gossip, and boundary maintenance. By analyzing scenes of expulsion, rumor, and collective narrative control, the paper demonstrates how whiteness and femininity are formed relationally through spatial practices rather than inherited as stable identities. Ultimately, the chapter positions *The Road Through the Wall* as a foundational suburban Gothic text that reveals the fragility of mid-century suburban whiteness and the disproportionate emotional and ethical labor demanded of women in sustaining its illusions of safety and order.

Rahmeh Abdin is a PhD candidate in American Studies at Eötvös Loránd University, building on her MA in the same field. She holds a BA in English Language and Literature from the University

of Jordan. She has taught courses on the Gothic and digital culture and currently teaches displaced students with the Open Learning Initiative (OLive). Her research examines U.S. literary suburbia in Shirley Jackson's fiction through spatial studies and postcolonial approaches. Her interests include the Weird and the Eerie, SF, technology in literature, critical theory, whiteness studies, digital culture, and media literacy.

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The Haunting Spirits: Trauma and Memory in Jesmyn Ward's *Let Us Descend* (2023)

Keywords: Trauma, healing, slavery and the slave trade, slave and neo-slave narratives, trauma studies, decolonizing trauma studies, psychoanalysis, intergenerational memory

This presentation examines the portrayal of trauma as a legacy of enslavement. It explores the journey towards healing and recovery in a contemporary novel by an American novelist Jesmyn Ward which is *Let Us Descend* (2023). It highlights the way in which traumatic memories can be verbalized and the way trauma victims reconcile with their past. Furthermore, it sheds light on the intergenerational transmission of trauma through the family lineage starting from the grandmother Mama Aza, the mother Sasha, and the daughter Annis. It aims as well to decipher the symbolic tapestry (especially the spirits) of the novel in order to reveal the hidden meanings of trauma and healing, and read the corporeal wounds as an aftermath of slavery. In order to approach these ideas, I will rely on theories of Trauma studies in literature and decolonizing trauma studies including views of Cathy Caruth, Judith Herman, and Dominick LaCapra. In addition, I will use the Psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud and the Post-Freudian approach to portray how the victims of trauma tend to encounter, act, react, and deal with the traumatic feelings and memories that have a latent and haunting appearance. Additionally, literary onomastics and symbolism are two other points that I will rely on in this paper in order to explain and decipher the tokens of trauma and healing within *Let Us Descend*. Moreover, a close reading analysis to Ward's *Let Us Descend* with a deep analysis of the fragmented narrative, memory, and attitude will be followed.

Amira Khoulood Abed is a 2nd year PhD student at the Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies at Szeged University, Hungary. Her current research focuses on the idea of trauma as a legacy of slavery and slave trade, the power of African American female fiction in verbalizing the silence around this taboo and the way fiction serves in the process of healing wounds of the past. Her areas of interest include American Studies, trauma Studies with an emphasis on trauma as a legacy of slavery and slave trade, memory studies, contemporary African American Fiction and slave and Neo-slave narratives.

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Power and the Politics of Documentation: Dorothea Lange and Paul S. Taylor on Mexican Migrant Laborers

Keywords: politics of documentation; Mexican migrant workers; Great Depression; Dorothea Lange; Paul S. Taylor

This presentation contributes to academic discussions on the politics of documentation (e.g. Sara Ahmed, Michael Buckland, Bernd Frohman) by investigating a pivotal period in its history: the collaborative work of documentary photographer Dorothea Lange and agricultural economist Paul S. Taylor on Mexican migrant laborers in California during the Great Depression. Through a close reading of their images, texts and research methods, it analyzes the specific documentary strategies they employed in their project to provide a detailed and credible record of labor conditions in agriculture. The presentation argues that Lange's and Taylor's commitment to ethical and faithful documentation enabled them to challenge dominant stereotypes and prevailing public narratives about Mexicans, thus contesting exclusionary immigration policies, mass deportation, racialized labor regimes and systemic exploitation. The presentation, therefore, demonstrates the power invested in practices of documentation that may both resist oppressive social and political practices and re-shape public opinion and policy.

Irén Annus is Associate Professor at the Department of American Studies at the University of Szeged, Hungary. She is a cultural studies scholar, whose primary interests include identity studies, visual culture, and nineteenth-century American society and culture. She has lectured and published widely in these fields, including seven volumes she has authored or (co-)edited. She also sits on the editorial board of *Americana* and *TNT E-journal*, and is series editor of *TNT E-books*. She served as the Secretary of the Hungarian Association of American Studies for two terms.

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Remaining Hungarian in America—45 interviews about the Current State of the Hungarian Diaspora and Its Future Prospects in the U.S.

Keywords: Hungarians in America, Hungarian language, culture, identity, scouts troops, church communities, weekend schools, folklife

We moved to the US in 2022 because of my husband's job. As a freelance journalist, I started conducting interviews with Hungarians living in New Jersey and later on across North America about their past and present, the joys and difficulties of their daily lives, the preservation and transmission of their cultural heritage—providing a broad picture of the current state of the Hungarian diaspora and its future prospects in North America. 106 of these interviews have been compiled in three Hungarian volumes and translated to English and published by the Bocskai Rádió in Cleveland, OH. These not only include conversations covering local Hungarian community life (churches, scout troops, weekend schools, folklife, cultural complexes), but also introduce former or current representatives of several Hungarian diaspora organizations at regional and national levels across North America. Their life stories are interesting and valuable in their own right, but also provide an authentic Hungarian American chronology of the various waves of immigration. They prove that the only hope for Hungarian survival in the diaspora is based on

the preservation and cultivation of the Hungarian language, culture, and traditions at the individual, family, and community levels, as well as on close cooperation between various generations and organizations. Recently, 45 of the interviews have been compiled in a new volume *Remaining Hungarian in America* published by Fekete Sas Publishing Co. in Hungary in February.

Ildikó Antal-Ferencz has a degree in economics. In 2016 she became a freelance journalist, focusing mainly on family matters. She is author or co-author of several books, hosted radio programs, round table discussions and conferences, appeared on television programs in Hungary. She had been living in the U.S. between 2022 and 2025 with her family. She authored 200+ articles about the Hungarian diaspora in North America and released five volumes (three in Hungarian and two in English) of her interview book *Being Hungarian in America* and is going to publish a selection *Remaining Hungarian in America* also in Hungary. She is also the creative editor of prof. Zoltán Ács's memoir *The Road Less Travelled*.

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Two Women, Two Diaries: Negotiating Faith and Authority in 18th-Century America

Keywords: First Great Awakening; Sarah Osborn; Sarah Edwards; religious authority

Eighteenth-century American colonies saw profound economic and social transformations which precipitated the rise of a renewed spiritual awakening. Public health, economic and social tensions were societal concerns, each perceived through religious lenses. In the midst of these changes, a new longing for spiritual and heart-centered connection to God emerged, leading to the birth of the First Great Awakening. This paper examines the First Great Awakening as a venue where Enlightenment ideas converged with religious experiences, reflecting a crucial transition from inherited European traditions to an evolving American subjectivity. Central to this study are the private diaries of Sarah Osborn (1714–1796) and Sarah Edwards (1710–1758), whose writings offer a revealing window into the shifting nature of authority. Their narratives illustrate how the act of recording one's spiritual journey served as a vital tool for negotiating authority within a rapidly changing cultural landscape. Through a close reading of their writings, this study shows how Osborn and Edwards used their personal accounts to negotiate and reinterpret inherited religious norms. Rather than perceiving the Old Light doctrine and the New Light spirituality as opposites, their writings illustrate the continuity of traditional theology as a necessary support for unconventional personal experiences. By comparing these New Light personal reflections with the experiences of women more closely aligned with Old Light traditions, this paper highlights the diversity of female religious expression and also underscores how gendered voices contributed to the ideological landscape of the First Great Awakening. Ultimately, it argues that women's writings provide a crucial lens for understanding the complex intersections of religion, Enlightenment thought, and the negotiation of authority, which remain a vital part of the American religious and social legacy.

Emőke Ágoston is a PhD student at the Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Szeged. Her research primarily focuses on the roles of black and white women in the First Great Awakening.

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The Forgotten Chapter of the American Dream: Hungarian Returnees and Their Enduring Legacy

Keywords: emigration, returning, micro-history, participatory family history, legacy, transatlantic connections

We launched the *Hungarian Roots & American Dreams* initiative to preserve the memory of the hundreds of thousands of Hungarians who emigrated to the United States—many of whom eventually returned—and to create a cross-generational, cross-Atlantic community of their descendants. A significant portion of our members are great- or great-great-grandchildren of early 20th-century Hungarian immigrants who returned home before World War II. Through our participatory storytelling project and bilingual book series, we collect and share personal narratives that reveal a little-known dimension of transatlantic migration history: the experiences of those who came back. These micro-histories include stories of financial success, social reintegration, and cultural resilience—but also of postwar persecution, property confiscation, and decades of silence. In this presentation, I explore how participatory family history research can reshape our understanding of U.S.–Hungarian migration by illuminating the legacy of returnees. Drawing from community-sourced materials—including survey data, oral history interviews, and photographs—I show how this heritage lives on in the memory, identity, and transnational connections of the next generations. By focusing on these long-overlooked stories, we challenge the dominant narrative of migration as one-way, and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of what the “American legacy” means—on both sides of the ocean.

Réka Bakos is a senior consultant and passionate family history researcher with a professional background in HR, research, and content strategy. After nearly two decades in multinational business environments, she turned her focus to participatory family history and community storytelling—motivated by her own family’s story: her great-grandparents emigrated to the U.S. at the turn of the 20th century and later returned to Hungary. She is the co-founder and Program Director of *Hungarian Roots & American Dreams*, a transatlantic initiative that brings together descendants of Hungarian immigrants and returnees through a growing bilingual book series, oral history collection, and digital community. Her work explores how personal and local stories contribute to a richer, more nuanced understanding of migration, identity, and legacy.

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Revolution in Print: Franklin and the Visual Rhetoric of 1776

Keywords: Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Franklin, early American political communica-

tion, colonial print culture, typography

Do you know why certain words in the Declaration of Independence appear in emphatic capitals—or why a severed serpent became one of the most recognizable symbols of American unity? This talk examines how revolutionary ideas circulated in 1776 by looking closely at the multi-modal communication strategies of early American political persuasion. The presentation invites audiences to reconsider the print techniques that helped ideas spread quickly—what we might now call viral circulation—across the colonies, and the impact these strategies had on readers. Benjamin Franklin serves as a guiding thread. Long before independence, Franklin experimented with striking typography, compressed symbolism, and visually memorable layouts—editorial techniques that efficiently supplemented his other tools of political communication. I will argue that The Declaration’s visual rhetoric, including its strategic capitalization of key abstractions like “People,” “Rights,” and “Liberty” not only stand out as actionable forces but also reflects design choices for oral intonation. The talk also revisits Franklin’s 1754 Join, or Die serpent, widely regarded as the first American editorial cartoon. Originally crafted for a different political moment, the segmented serpent became a durable emblem of unity and called for collective action in the revolutionary era. The presentation thus examines how revolutionaries blended textual, typographic, and pictorial strategies to communicate ideals, convey urgency, and articulate the stakes of political action that helped fuel the Revolution.

Beatrix Balogh is a faculty member at Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest. She teaches U.S. history, the American political system, the British constitution, and the culture and society of English-speaking countries, and leads seminars in the English BA and American Studies programs that interrogate social, political, and cultural practices. Her research focuses on empire studies, the cultural-political manifestation of national myth, and early American political communication

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Policy Reversal on the Southern Border: A Comparison of the Border Strategy of the Biden and Trump Administrations

Keywords: Trump, migration, US-Mexico border

This paper examines the radical redirection of U.S. immigration policy during the first year of the second Trump administration. Following a period of record-high irregular arrivals under the Biden administration, the new executive declared a national emergency, designating the border situation an “invasion.” By reinstating the “Remain in Mexico” policy and leveraging the One Big Beautiful Bill Act for increased funding for enforcement, the administration prioritized mass deportation and the removal of humanitarian protections like Temporary Protected Status (TPS). The study evaluates the immediate outcomes of these measures, highlighting a historic decline in border encounters and a significant deterrent effect on Central American migration routes. The analysis addresses the resulting domestic conflicts, including legal challenges to the proposed abolition of birthright citizenship and civil unrest in sanctuary jurisdictions. While the Trump administration’s strategy successfully reduced irregular migration, its long-term viability

faces critical judicial tests.

Máté Gergely Balogh is an instructor at the North American Department and senior researcher at the Migration Research Institute. He received his degree as an English major from the University of Debrecen, and also graduated majoring in International Relations from Corvinus University Budapest and in History from the Central European University. He defended his doctoral dissertation in 2022, the title of which was *The United States of America through the Eyes of the Hungarian State Security, 1956–1989*. His research areas include international relations of the United States after 1945 with a special focus on Hungarian-American relations, and migration to the United States.

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The Revolt from the Suburb: Dismantling the Suburban Dream in the Fiction of John Cheever, Philip Roth, and Richard Yates

Keywords: 1950s, suburbs, Revolt from the Village, John Cheever, Philip Roth, Richard Yates, small town in American literature, postwar American fiction

That the 1950s American, middle-class suburb was not the idealistic haven that advertisements and TV sitcoms of the period had shown it to be, has been, by now, sufficiently exposed both in popular culture and academia. What seems to have been frequently ignored, however, is the close relation of the suburban pastoral to an older but ever-popular American imaginary: the myth of the happy, innocent small town. This continuity is crucial as it provides one with new perspectives with which one may analyze and contextualize that strain of postwar American fiction that was highly critical of the false promises of midcentury suburbia. In this paper, it is argued that when major writers such as John Cheever, Philip Roth, and Richard Yates placed this locale under scrutiny, they were often doing it along the same lines as the members of the “Revolt from the Village” literary tradition had done when they deconstructed the myth of the American small town. Thus, a strong case can be made that the suburban dream was, in truth, a variation on the already well-established small town myth, and that the village revolt of Edgar Lee Masters, Sinclair Lewis, and Sherwood Anderson was the literary predecessor for what one might term as the “Revolt from the Suburb”.

András Basa-Tamás is a PhD student at the Doctoral School of Literary Studies, in the field of American Studies, and junior assistant professor at the Department of American Studies at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. His main area of academic inquiry is 20th-century American drama, and his PhD research is focused on the reevaluation of the works of William Inge and the “Revolt from the Village” American literary tradition. His other interests include 1950s American culture, and the novels and short fiction of Richard Yates, John Cheever, and William Styron.

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Play it again, Bill: Echoes of World War 2 in *The Edge of Tomorrow* (2014)

Keywords: World War II; D-Day; military science fiction; war mythology; war trauma; PTSD; alien invasion

The Second World War occupies a prominent place in American popular culture. Visual texts have been reflecting on events related to the war and the role of the United States in various ways. This is probably one of the last armed conflicts in the history of the country which can be framed and narrativized as the epic struggle between Good and Bad, as opposed to the Vietnam War, for example, which met strong social, political, and cultural opposition from the start. The cultural representation of the Second World War often relies on the myth of American exceptionalism, the figure of the American (war) hero, and the USA as the guardian of the democratic world order. This does not mean that reflecting on the world would be devoid of a critical approach, as recent media has often focused on the carnage of combat, the invisibility of marginalized groups—like African American or Native American soldiers, or women—or on how those left behind at home coped with the war. Just like in realist popular culture, the Second World War also occupies a central position in science fiction (SF), which frequently utilizes certain important historical eras, either as templates for its worldbuilding strategies, or in the estranged discussion of certain real historical events. SF usually relies on the world war in alternate history narratives, which explore situations where the Allies ultimately lose the fight against the Axis powers. *The Edge of Tomorrow* (2014) showcases yet another use: it does locate its story within the specific spatio-temporal coordinates of the 1940s but utilizes the events of D-Day (1944)—and to a smaller extent the Battle of Verdun (1916) from the First World War—as a template that underlies its plot. The film lies at the intersection of several SF subgenres: on the one hand, it is an alien invasion story, on the other a time loop narrative, which relies on video game logic in building its plot. My paper will explore the thematization of the World War within the film and examine questions like the mythologized representation of the conflict, including the monsterization of the enemy, and the time loop and the video game mechanisms as a narrative template, including as a tool to depict PTSD.

Vera Benczik is currently Senior Lecturer at the Department of American Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. Her research interests lie mainly in the field of science fiction, with special emphasis on the works of Ursula K. Le Guin; she has done extensive research on (post)apocalyptic science fiction, concentrating on topics like the spatial discourse and objecthood in the (post)apocalypse, both in print and visual media. Her current project explores the various manifestations of science fiction and speculation in Margaret Atwood's works. Her book *Circles and Lines: The Voyage in Ursula K. Le Guin's Science Fiction*, was published in 2025.

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From German Noble to Texan Citizen: Migration and Identity in Nineteenth-Century Texas

Keywords: Texas, migration, German-Americans, Adelsverein, mobility, North America

In the first half of the nineteenth century, socio-economic transformations brought about by the Industrial Revolution, along with political conflicts, prompted several thousand emigrants to cross the Atlantic Ocean. Many of them settled in the independent Republic of Texas, which existed between 1836 and 1845. Recognizing the growing popularity of the region, a group of German nobles founded the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas in 1842. The Society aimed to facilitate the settlement of German immigrants and, through its colonies, to establish economic relations between Texas and the German territories. In 1845, the organization appointed its second commissioner general, Baron Ottofried Hans Freiherr von Meusebach, who departed for Texas as a nobleman but arrived as a private citizen. His primary responsibility was to secure the conditions for the arrival and settlement of several thousand emigrants from the German lands. Among his achievements were the founding of the Society's second colony, Fredericksburg, in 1846, as well as the conclusion of a peace treaty with the Comanche Indians. How did this German nobleman relate to the North American continent and to Texas in particular? What challenges did he face in his role as commissioner general? How did Baron Meusebach become a citizen of his new homeland, and what career did he pursue following the Society's bankruptcy in 1847? In my presentation, I seek to address these questions.

Alex Berczeli-Nemcsényi is a doctoral candidate at the University of Szeged, conducting his research within the Modern History Program of the Doctoral School of History. His research focuses on the economic and social history of the nineteenth century United States. In his doctoral dissertation, he examines the history of German emigrants who arrived in Texas during the first half of the nineteenth century. The central question of his research concerns how the citizenship and cultural identity of German settlers changed between the 1830s and the 1850s, a period shaped by significant political, economic, and social transformations in both Europe and the United States. His work contributes to a deeper understanding of identity formation within immigrant communities in a transatlantic context.

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The Impact of the Confinement Motif on Selected Works of American Literature

Keywords: captivity narratives, subjectivation, intersubjectivity, American identity

This essay examines the enduring cultural and literary significance of captivity narratives in American history and asserts that these writings were a foundational motif in both collective and individual American experience. Focusing on three late nineteenth- and early twentieth century texts—Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), and Zitkala-Ša's *Schooldays of an Indian Girl* (1900)—the study analyzes how female protagonists respond to systems of domination through performative strategies that transform objectification into subjectivation. These stories reinforce that intersubjectivity, either in its antagonistic or affective version, can only take place after achieving subject status. The protagonists also project a narrated self which functions retroactively as both the performative and intersubjective aspects are recorded in the actual writing process following the completion of the given captivity experience. Harriet Jacobs provides a glimpse at how slavery is coupled with sexual exploitation, Charlotte Perkins Gilman shows how a woman turns to destructive behavior to rebel against her submissive status within the institution of marriage reflecting patri-

archal domination, and Gertrude Bonnin reports on the forms of culture shock she suffered in a Quaker boarding school. The essay argues that these narratives reveal captivity—physical, cultural, or psychological—as a central dynamic in the formation of American identity.

Ágnes Bodnár earned her BSc degree at Budapest Business School specializing in European Union Studies in 1997. She earned her MA degree in American Studies at Eszterházy Károly University, Eger in July 2016 and has received her PhD Degree at ELTE in 2022. The title of her PhD dissertation is *The Making of the Subject in Indian Captivity Narratives: An Exploration of the Performative, Intersubjective, and Narrative Self*. Presently she is working at EKKE as an assistant professor. Her essays were published in several periodicals, including *Pro et Contra* and the *Eger Journal of American Studies*.

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The New American Hero Is a Conspiracy Theorist: the Complicated Emancipatory Politics of *Bugonia* (2025)

Keywords: conspiracy theory, emancipatory film, American hero

Yorgos Lanthimos' latest, *Bugonia* (2025), is part satire part social commentary. Following two men who kidnap the CEO of a pharmaceutical company due to their suspicion that she is an alien, the film puts a black comedy sci-fi spin on both conspiracy theory-fueled post-truth discourses that operate on misinformation or outright lies, and more evidence-based critiques of 'elites', or CEOs (depending on where the criticism comes from), and their often exploitative practices. The question that arises when watching the film is how to differentiate between these two strands of argumentation. What is an acceptable way to share grievances towards, for example, the pharmacy industry, and what line must be crossed for discourses to be deemed conspiratorial? Moreover, is the reveal of wrongful practices always for the good of society, or not so much? My presentation focuses on these issues, framing them in terms of emancipation and heroism, through an analysis of the emancipatory potential of the conspiratorial discourse in *Bugonia*. Utilizing Csaba András' theoretical work on contemporary films and the interconnectedness of the political and the aesthetic within them, I aim to examine whether a conspiracy theorist can become an archetypal American hero, and if so, what novel characteristics he embodies when embracing "alternative facts."

Dóra Busi is a PhD student at the department of American Studies at Eötvös Loránd University. Her research focuses on conspiracy theories in American fiction, particularly in contemporary crime television and film. Her main interest lies in examining the narrative potential of conspiracies and conspiracy theories for identity construction and social criticism.

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Commodifying Death: Late Capitalism and the Marketed Self in Don DeLillo's *Zero K*

Keywords: Commodification, late capitalism, American fiction, Don DeLillo, *Zero K*, mortality, consumer culture, hyperconsumerism, technoscience, identity

This paper examines how contemporary American fiction lays bare the entanglement of late capitalism with the most intimate dimensions of human existence, particularly mortality and identity, by transforming them into objects of consumption. Focusing primarily on Don DeLillo's *Zero K*, and drawing comparative insights from *White Noise*, *Libra*, and *The Body Artist*, it explores how cryonics, media spectacle, and technoscientific discourse recast death as an elite commodity, accessible mainly to global capitalists who treat time, the body, and even the afterlife as strategic assets. The analysis traces how DeLillo's characters confront the commodification of the self, as identities are branded, packaged, and circulated within consumer culture, intensifying alienation rather than overcoming it. By bringing Marxist and postmodern theoretical frameworks into dialogue with DeLillo's fiction, the paper argues that contemporary American narratives not only depict capitalism's capacity to absorb resistance and utopian desire, but also expose the ethical and existential consequences of a system in which even the fear of death becomes marketable surplus.

Hana Chellouk is a first-year PhD student in the PhD Program in British, Irish, and American Literatures at the University of Pécs, Hungary. Originally from Skikda, Algeria, she focuses on post-modern and posthumanist fiction, with particular interest in spatial theory, capitalism, and the commodification of identity, especially in the novels of Don DeLillo.

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Could Nathan Walk Free? Challenging American Cultural Normativity in Philip Roth's *Zuckerman Unbound*

Keywords: Americanness, authenticity, community, convention, identity, freedom, writing.

Part of what was collected as *Zuckerman Bound, A Trilogy and Epilogue* (1985), Philip Roth's 1981 *Zuckerman Unbound* is neither his most political writing, nor the one most overtly concerned with the vulnerability of America's democratic ideals. Preceding the American Trilogy by a decade and a half, it is rather preoccupied thematically with the evolution of the creative self and its confrontations with conventionalism. As such, it is, nevertheless, the novel whose title openly alludes to freedom, as opposed to an alleged lack thereof. The proposed analysis will consequently focus on Roth's exploration of the concept and its ramifications in the context of end-of-the-1970s U.S. society and its constraints on the nonconformist Jewish protagonist. Having authored an unexpectedly successful novel, Nathan Zuckerman borrows a lot from young Roth's struggle with celebrity and its adverse effects on the personal and professional liberties he could afford to take. Beyond its evident autobiographical undertones, the novel provides ironic commentary on the limitations imposed on artistic expression by a hypocritically normative society, which he portrays as not living up to its own utopian standards. It also ponders the communal

parochialism and the idiosyncrasies of the Jewish-American middle-class when confronted to criticism from within. References to the 1950s quiz show scandals, as well as to the U.S.'s role in Vietnam and the beginning of the Nixon presidency, frame Zuckerman's complaint against and ongoing observation of what he perceives as successive hurdles to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" in the very country built on the philosophy of inalienable rights. As an American writer of Jewish extraction, the protagonist, like Roth, is forced to meditate on the inherent restraints of his background's concentric circles and how they (re)define his very nature. Exactly how (un)bound is Zuckerman? My paper will explore the interconnectedness of the facets of Zuckerman's conundrum with the overarching notion of freedom as axis of individual and collective identity, aiming to demonstrate Roth's constant dedication to directing his readers' attention to uncomfortable, yet necessary (public) conversation topics.

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Transgressing Strategic Borders: Soviet-American Nuclear Spying in 1945

Keywords: nuclear spying, atomic bomb, nuclear secret, nuclear parity, thalassocracy, NKVD, NKGB

Transgressing borders can have very literal meanings. In 1945 the Soviets were capable of precisely assessing the strategic advantage of the nuclear monopoly of the USA. Soviet military intelligence made all efforts to extort information from all possible sources to create nuclear parity. The paper argues that their initial hardships to catch up with the Americans were greatly enhanced by the information gathered from NKVD sources, which were gained by the combination of the efforts of the Janus-faced game of Soviet foreign policy and the relevant scientific and spying organizations of the NKGB. The study aims at "deciphering" this intricate network of relations.

Zoltán Cora is a Senior Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Arts, University of Szeged. His main areas of research are 19th–20th-century European history, international relations, British and Hungarian political and social history, especially in the interwar period (1918–1939), as well as classical and modern aesthetics with a focus on the sublime. His publications include books, edited volumes, book chapters on these topics and articles published in *Comparativ*, *Aetas*, *Múltunk*, *Századok*, *Social History*, *Korall*, *European Review of History*, and other journals. He received

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In the Shadow of the Declaration of Independence: the Lee Resolution in Hungarian Newspapers

Keywords: American independence, Lee Resolution, Hungarian newspapers, public awareness

Although John Adams firmly believed that July 2 should be celebrated as the United States' birthday—the day the Second Continental Congress passed the Lee Resolution—the nation ultimately chose July 4, the date when Congress formally adopted the Declaration of Independence. This choice largely eclipsed Richard Henry Lee's role in initiating the break with Great Britain. The three-part Lee Resolution not only preceded the Declaration in severing ties with the mother country but also called for foreign alliances and a plan of confederation; today, however, it is largely absent from public memory. This paper examines the patterns of public awareness of the Lee Resolution in Hungary and in Hungarian-speaking diaspora communities by analyzing relevant Hungarian-language newspaper and journal articles. The corpus was compiled using Arcanum Digitheca (<https://www.arcanum.com>). Initial findings suggest that the centennial and bi-centennial commemorations of U.S. independence briefly foregrounded the Lee Resolution, particularly in Hungarian-American diaspora newspapers, which often conflated it with the Declaration of Independence. In Hungary, more sustained scholarly attention to Richard Henry Lee appears mainly after 1990, following the fall of Communism.

Sándor Czeglédi holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics/Language Policy and currently works at the English and American Studies Institute of the University of Pannonia as an associate professor. His publications mainly focus on U.S. language policies, language ideologies, identity construction and Hungarian-American communities.

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Metalepsis, Fictional Truth, and Interpretive Compensation in Bret Easton Ellis's *Less Than Zero* and *Imperial Bedrooms*

Keywords: metalepsis, ethics, truth, interpretation, meta-criticism

My proposed presentation examines the problem of "truth in fiction" through the metaleptic interplay between Bret Easton Ellis's *Less Than Zero* (1985) and its sequel novel *Imperial Bedrooms* (2010). The paper investigates how fictional truth-conditions are destabilized when narrative levels are transgressed and retroactively reassigned. In *Imperial Bedrooms*, the narrator, Clay, claims

that *Less Than Zero* was authored by someone who “used” him as the first person narrator, which complicates the ontological status of the earlier text. The metaleptic gestures of the sequel—such as referencing *Less Than Zero* as well as its film adaptation of 1987 as cultural artifacts from the “real world”—do not merely serve to foreground fictionality (as is the case with metafiction), but they also interfere with the hierarchies that typically secure truth in fictional worlds such as narratorial authority, (putative) authorial intention, and sequel-based epistemic priority. The paper also argues that such ontological destabilization tends to provoke compensatory interpretive strategies that seek to reinstall coherence and authority to the literary texts. The Ellis-corpus thus provides a case study for a broader theoretical claim: metalepsis exposes the fragility of fictional truth by unsettling the boundaries that make adjudication possible, while it also renders interpretation itself part of the regime of truth that the narratives in question interrogate.

Péter Csató is an assistant professor in the North American Studies Department of the University of Debrecen, Hungary. He earned his PhD in 2009 from the University of Debrecen for his dissertation on the philosophy of Richard Rorty. He was Fulbright Visiting Researcher at Cornell University in 2001-02, and Fulbright Visiting Lecturer at the University of Texas at San Antonio in 2015. He has also taught at the University of Bristol and St. Mary’s University London-Twickenham. Péter Csató’s academic interests include European and American philosophy, theories of interpretation, contemporary American prose fiction, and the philosophy of science. He is author of a scholarly monograph, *Antipodean Dialogues: Richard Rorty and the Discursive Authority of Conversational Philosophy* (Debrecen University Press, 2013), and journal articles related to American prose fiction, questions of interpretation and interpretability in the context of literary theory and criticism.

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Mendez v. Westminster: The Struggle Against School Segregation in California

Keywords: Mexican Americans, California, School Segregation, Mexican Schools, *Mendez v. Westminster*

Considering the issue of school segregation we tend to focus on the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) ruling of the Supreme Court, a unanimous decision formulated by Chief Justice Earl Warren, declaring that the “separate but equal” doctrine, established in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), had no place in education. Nevertheless, the struggle for integration in education included not just the African-American minority, but also other marginalized groups, including legal challenges by members of the Mexican-American community. The proposed paper will focus on the distinctive legal and social status of Mexican Americans in California, its complexities, through the lens of the struggle for school desegregation, the challenge presented in *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946), and its implications with regards to segregation policies. Mexicans were considered “white”, from a legal perspective, once they were “incorporated into the Union of the United States” as citizens,

Article IX of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848). However, this classification – which implied “the enjoyment of all the right of citizens” – did not manifest in their social equality, as in the case of education in the Golden State. In *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946), District Court Judge Paul McCormick ruled against the segregation of Mexican students on the ground of “social equality”; a finding that was later echoed by Chief Justice Earl Warren in the *Brown* decision.

Cseh Dániel is a Senior Assistant Professor at the Department of American Studies, School of English and American Studies, Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE). He completed his Ph.D. studies in 2020 at the Modern and Contemporary World History Doctoral Program, ELTE. Apart from teaching U.S. history and political culture, he also holds classes dealing with African American and Asian American history. Dániel Cseh is a member of the Hungarian Fulbright Association and the Hungarian Association for American Studies. He is one of the founding members of the Ethnic and Migration Studies Research Group at the Department of American Studies, ELTE.

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Mood/Interest Conflicts in American Foreign Policy (2016–2026)

Keywords: introvert, extrovert, foreign policy, conflicts, Biden, Trump, transatlantic relations

American foreign policy is characterized by continuity and change, partly due to cyclical trends. According to Frank L. Klingberg (1952), moods in American foreign policy had displayed a pattern since 1776, with introvert and extrovert phases of about 21 and 27 years, respectively. This was expanded by Jack E. Holmes's (1983) mood/interest theory, highlighting the influence of certain propositions (public opinion, liberal tendencies, security interests, executive and legislative roles, and the conflicts and extremes that follow from these factors) in American foreign policy. Neither Klingberg nor Holmes explored the post-Cold War era, however, their approaches suggested an extroverted phase for 1989–2016 and an introverted one for 2016–2037. The paper examines the contemporary mood in American foreign policy. Since the current cycle has not concluded, the paper focuses on how its first decade (2016–2026) witnessed the flux from extroverted to introverted phase. Specifically, the paper provides an analysis of how the Administration, Congress, and the electorate have related to foreign affairs. It argues that the respective propositions have indeed showed conflicts between public opinion and security interests, as well as between the White House and Congress. In doing so, the paper reviews presidential inauguration and state of the union addresses, national security strategy documents, key congressional foreign policy resolutions, major-party platforms and public opinion polls. In accordance with the mood/interest theory, special attention is given to transatlantic relations.

Gábor Csizmazia is senior research fellow at the John Lukacs Institute for Strategy and Politics, at the Ludovika University of Public Service. His research focuses on contemporary American foreign policy, particularly the security relationship between the United States and East-Central Eu-

rope. He earned his PhD from the Doctoral School of Military Sciences at the Ludovika University (2021). Gábor is an Alumnus and Scholars Program participant of the George C. Marshall Center for European Security Studies (2018) and a former guest researcher at the George Washington University (2018) and the Institute of World Politics (2024). Gábor designs educational materials and holds lectures for future foreign and security policy officials. His main subjects include Geopolitics & East-Central Europe; International Security Studies; US Foreign Policy; Transatlantic Relations; and US Government.

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Marketing the “American Way”: The Hidden Sociopragmatic Significance of Hungarian Jewish Contribution to Hungarian American Press at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries

Keywords: Hungarian American Press; code-switching; Hungarian Jews; advertisements; identity construction

Hungarian Jews constituted the most extensively “Hungarianized” ethnic subgroup of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Yet, despite the fact that their migration and assimilation trajectories often diverged substantially from those of Hungarian Magyars, Hungarian Jews have seldom been treated as a separate analytical category in Hungarian scholarship on U.S.-bound migration; rather, they are generally grouped under the broader label of “Hungarian immigrants.” Unlike many Hungarian Magyars, Hungarian Jews more often arrived in the United States with the intention of permanent settlement, in many cases immigrated 10–15 years earlier, and pursued integration through entrepreneurship and English-language acquisition. As a result, their social and linguistic incorporation frequently diverged from the sojourner-oriented plans typically associated with Hungarian Magyar migrants. Hungarian Jews also played a significant role in the Hungarian-language press as journalists, editors, and sponsors, and they both promoted and documented processes of linguistic, cultural, and economic integration—including upward mobility—through code-switched advertisements and news items. Advertisements in particular, across domains such as legal services, banking, beauty and personal care, fine dining, and jewelry, promoted a middle-class consumer lifestyle. This evidence complicates the prevailing scholarly depiction of Hungarian immigrants as predominantly sojourners committed to frugality and short-term residence. My assessment of Hungarian Jewish contribution to the Hungarian-American press—and of the ways it both promoted and documented linguistic, cultural, and identity transition—draws on three complementary perspectives: Mark Sebba’s approach to analyzing written code-switching with their visual clues; François Grosjean’s Complementarity Principle, whereby English insertions index emergent, specifically American domains while Hungarian functions as the matrix language; and, finally, reflections on Anna Fenyevesi’s analysis of code-switching in AH spoken in the second half of the 20th century to demonstrate that the roots of a “Hunglish” contact hybrid were already taking shape around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Bio: Ádám Csörghe is an English teacher and translator whose research focuses on code-switching in Hungarian-American newspapers. He has also worked as a copywriter and as a marketing and PR specialist, supporting Hungarian companies entering Western markets. His scholarly interests were shaped in part by his own experience of living as an immigrant in Dublin, Ireland, for a decade.

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From Monroe to Donroe doctrine: US foreign policy reiteration or imitation?

Keywords: US. foreign policy, Monroe, Donroe doctrine

Two hundred years ago the young, ambitious United States decided to express her own will and firm intention to control and maintain hegemony over her own hemisphere in the Americas, excluding any rival, non-American power from her continental sphere of interest. The classic historical wisdom claims that “history does not repeat itself, though it tends to follow the same patterns,” which proves to be the case with the re-emergence of Donald Trump in the White House since 2025. President Trump, as an outspoken admirer of Presidents Monroe, Theodore Roosevelt, and McKinley has also proclaimed to pursue a significantly more protectionist, pragmatic, realist as well as assertive stance and less idealist foreign political attitude. The new Trumpist paradigm also involves the reiteration and implementation of the classic American foreign political doctrine elaborated in 1823 by President Monroe and Secretary of State John Q. Adams. In this political dimension the rivals of the US seem to resemble the great powers from the 19th century, namely China and Russia (much less the UK and Spain). The new National Security Strategy of the US tends to focus particularly on the old-new power bloc challenges, which, from this perspective seem to be threatening not only the global but even the continental hegemony of the United States in the 21st century.

Zsolt Csutak (PhD) is a lecturer of English and civilizational studies, as well as an externally affiliated university researcher and policy analyst of US foreign and security policies at UPS-Ludovika University, Budapest. He holds a doctorate in international security studies from Ludovika, and MA degree in American and Political Studies from the University of Szeged. Zsolt has a special multi-disciplinary interest in analyzing global issues and various new social phenomena, such as the new challenges imposed by the rise of computerized technologies on culture as well as on education.

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Remembering 1956 Seventy Years Later: The Maléters – A story of Suffering, Struggles, Survival

Keywords: 1956, Hungarian refugees, role of UN

After the arrest in Hungary of her husband, Colonel Pál Maléter on November 3, his ex-wife Mária Maléter (née Pausz) and two of their children, Pál, aged 10 and Mária, 9, fled Hungary on November 21, 1956 and sought refuge in Vienna, Austria. The third child, Judit, aged only 7, joined them a month later because she had the flu at the time of the fleeing. Then the family of four went to Montreal, Canada first, before they were invited by the International Rescue Committee to address the United Nations in New York on behalf of her husband and the other captured Hungarian government officials.

On the double occasion of the 70th anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian revolution and freedom fight, and the 250th birthday of the United States commemorated in 2026, my aim is to present the role of the UN, and then Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld in particular, in Prime Minister Imre Nagy's and Pál Maléter's case in Hungary on the one hand, and the contribution of the Maléter family in the USA, on the other hand, after they received their green card shortly after Maléter's execution in 1958. The research is based on oral history interview with Pál Maléter II, his recollections published in 56 Stories, online databases of newspaper and FRUS documents.

Nóra Deák graduated as an English-Russian high school teacher in 1990 in Debrecen, then received an LIS MA degree in 1997 in Budapest. She was a librarian between 1990-2022, and now she works as an international relations officer at the Secretariat of the MTA. Her research on the reception, registration, and resettlement of the 1956 Hungarian refugees in the US was supported by a Fulbright Visiting Research Scholarship at the American Hungarian Foundation, and by Rutgers University Libraries during 2014/15 in New Brunswick, NJ. She participated in The Post-1956 Refugee Crisis and Hungarian Émigré Communities During the Cold War project.

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Photographic Hauntology: The Deathscapes of the U.S. Civil War

Keywords: hauntology, ontopology, photography, U. S. Civil War, deathscape

This paper examines photographs of the U.S. Civil War through the lens of hauntology, focusing on images that conspicuously lack human bodies while nevertheless staging death as a spatial presence. Photographs by figures such as George Barnard document the aftermath of military campaigns through ruined infrastructures, scarred landscapes, and emptied battlefields, producing images in which absence becomes the primary index of violence. While dominant theories of photography have framed the medium through a temporal ontology grounded in death, belatedness, and anticipation, as articulated by Roland Barthes's concept of the "anterior future," this paper argues that such approaches overlook the spatial work performed by these images. Drawing on Jacques Derrida's notion of the ontopological, the paper proposes a shift from a temporally oriented ontology of photography toward a spatial hauntology. Civil War photographs are read as deathscapes in which time is not merely deferred but materially inscribed into space through traces, voids, and scars. By foregrounding spatial extension, the paper reconsiders the relation between life and death, past and present, not as temporal oppositions but as coexisting

spectral layers embedded within photographic space. This reconceptualization offers a way to rethink photographic representation beyond the logic of presence and absence, situating photography as a medium that organizes historical trauma through spatial haunting rather than temporal fixation.

Zoltán Dragon is Associate Professor at the Department of American Studies, University of Szeged, Hungary and a photographer. His fields of research are digital culture, film theory, psychoanalytic theory, photography and visual culture. He is the author of *The Spectral Body: Aspects of the Cinematic Oeuvre of István Szabó* (2006), *Encounters of the Filmic Kind: Guidebook to Film Theories* (with Réka M. Cristian, 2008), *Tennessee Williams Goes to Hollywood, or the Dialogue of Drama and Film* (2011). He is founding editor of *AMERICANA – E-Journal of American Studies in Hungary* and *AMERICANA eBooks*.

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Family History Chronicles as Collective Memory: Microhistory in a Community Project

Keywords: Hungarians, United States, microhistory, collective memory, family history

The presentation provides an overview of the “Hungarian Roots & American Dreams” project—a book series that grew out of a Facebook group—showing how family histories involving immigration from Hungary to the United States (and in some cases, remigration to Hungary) become living family chronicles and tools for preserving collective memory. The over 100 stories featured in the volumes of immigration stories (edited by Anna Fenyvesi and Réka Bakos; the first volume was published in 2024, and the second in October 2025) can also be read as an anthology of microhistory (cf. Magnússon and Szijártó 2013), providing an almost comprehensive picture of the cataclysmic historical events of 19th- and 20th-century Hungarian and US history. The project demonstrates the significance and role of jointly written, microhistorical approaches to history in preserving the past.

Anna Fenyvesi is Associate Professor and Director of the Institute of English and American Studies, University of Szeged, Hungary. She lived in Pittsburgh from 1991 to 1996, working towards her MA (1994) and PhD (1998) in linguistics at the University of Pittsburgh. She completed her habilitation at the University of Debrecen in 2013. She is a sociolinguist with an interest in the Hungarian language use of American Hungarians, language contact, bilingualism, and digital language use. She is co-author of *Hungarian* in the Routledge Descriptive Grammars series (1998), editor of *Hungarian Outside Hungary: Studies in Hungarian as a Minority Language* (Benjamins, 2005), and co-editor, with Réka Bakos, of *Hungarian Roots and American Dreams: Tracing Personal History* (2024, Americana eBooks) and *Hungarian Roots and American Dreams: Tracing Personal and Local History* (2025, rootStories).

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Martin Luther King's Gospel

Keywords: MLK's faith journey, social gospel

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led the contemporary American Civil Rights Movement for fewer than 13 years, from December 1955 to April 4, 1968. In that time, African Americans made more real progress toward racial equality in America than they had in the preceding several hundred years. He was more than just the preeminent civil rights leader; he is also categorized as a martyr for his faith and leadership and even a saint of sorts. Being the son and grandson of Baptist ministers on both sides, Dr. King said that he would always want to be remembered first and foremost as a Black pastor. Based on his own writings and his interviews, however, several scholars have come to the conclusion that, though he skillfully used Christian rhetoric to champion civil rights, King had come to reject the most basic Christian beliefs and instead adopted a social gospel.

Julia Fodor graduated from Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, where she completed her doctoral studies in American History, defending her dissertation in 2010. She is an associate professor at Károli Gáspár University, where she teaches a variety of courses on US and Irish history, as well as British, Irish and American civilization. She recently published a book under the title *The Road to Obamacare*, where she traces the developments, key players, and pivotal moments that shaped the American healthcare policy landscape from Theodore Roosevelt to Barack Obama. In her free time, she enjoys tour-guiding and taking road trips with her family.

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Linguistic Landscape Meets Social Media: Mixed-Language Writing in Hungarian Diaspora Communities in the USA

Keywords: diaspora, code-switching, identity, linguistic landscape

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 color, 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 analyze the degrees of integration or separation of languages that a multilingual mixed-language text can include. In this paper I argue that the members of the Hungarian diasporic communities living in the United States of America have developed an identity which can be regarded as fluid as opposed to a stable phenomenon.

Forintos (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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“Playing with a Loaded Gun”: Ways of the Post-Black

Keywords: African American, post-black, blackness

Touré’s assumption sheds light on the ambiguity of redefining Blackness both in relation to white America and from within the Black community—a challenge that has occupied it since the turbulent events of the 1960s. Diverse as the community is, so have the responses been, ranging from theological to ecological, political to cultural discourses. A discourse has been revolving around the idea of “Post-Black.” The concept can easily be dismissed as continued oppositionality to white conceptualizations of “Black” or as the emerging denial of Black identity conservatism. A closer look reveals that the concept accumulates other layers as well, including parting with “Black” or recreating it on new bases. The presentation intends to scrutinize different conceptualizations of the idea of “Post-Black” to argue that it, in many ways, ascertains the continuing presence of Black cultural energies to escape and withstand fixities imposed on the community both from without and within.

Péter Gaál-Szabó received his PhD (2010) and habilitation (2016) in Literary and Cultural Studies from the University of Debrecen, Hungary. His research focuses on African American literature and culture, cultural spaces, religio-cultural identity, and intercultural communication. He has widely published in these fields, including the books *"Ah done been tuh de horizon and back": Zora Neale Hurston's Cultural Spaces in Their Eyes Were Watching God and Jonah's Gourd Vine* (Peter Lang, 2010), *Afroamerikanisches Ökogedächtnis, ökologisches Denken und Ökowomanismus* (Praesens, 2024), and *Religio-Cultural Projection in African American Sermons and Speeches in the 1950s and 1960s* (Peter Lang, 2025).

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Posthuman Bodies and Ecological Exploitation in Leigh Bardugo's *Six of Crows* and *Crooked Kingdom*

Keywords: Biopolitics, Climate Crisis, Ecological Catastrophe, Extractivism, Grisha, Jurda Parem, Necropolitics, Posthumanism, Sacrifice Zones, Young Adult Fantasy

The figure of the Posthuman in Young Adult fantasy has emerged as a critical site for rethinking the relationships among bodies, power, and ecological issues that have become paramount in American political discourses, especially those related to the notion of climate crisis and the ubiquitous problems rooted in the unbalanced economic power relations between classes and nations. This research's main objective is to investigate how Leigh Bardugo's *Six of Crows* (2015) and *Crooked Kingdom* (2016) mobilize Posthuman Bodies and biotechnological enhancement to interrogate extractivist capitalism and climate catastrophe. My reading focuses on how Grisha (beings with special powers) are constructed as Posthuman life forms whose capacities are treated as natural resources within a neoliberal regime of control, and how the drug of Jurda Parem operates as a biopolitical technology that pushes these bodies beyond sustainability. Through close textual analysis informed by Rosi Braidotti's theory of *The Posthuman*, Michel Foucault's lectures on *The Birth of Biopolitics*, and Achille Mbembe's *Necropolitics*, the study aims to demonstrate that Bardugo represents forms of bodily extraction that mirror contemporary ecological exploitation and the production of sacrifice zones. In addition, it seeks to show how the duology contributes to ongoing debates on climate justice and Posthuman vulnerability by reimagining Young Adult fantasy as a space in which the disposability of certain lives reflects the unequal distribution of environmental harm.

Ferial Gharbi is a first-year student from Ain Temouchent, Algeria, currently pursuing a PhD in Literary Studies at Pázmány Péter Catholic University in Budapest, Hungary. Her research focuses on the forms of exploitation in Leigh Bardugo's *Six of Crows* and *Crooked Kingdom* and examines how the characters' reclamation of agency, emphasized with moral ambiguity, reshapes heroism within the context of Young Adult fantasy.

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Trianon and Memory Politics: The Budapest Celebration of the Bicentennial of George Washington's Birth (1932)

Keywords: US-Hungarian relations, interwar years, Washington bicentennial, memory politics, Trianon treaty revision

The various Hungarian governments between the two world wars were not interested in extending democracy (through, for example, universal suffrage), and American diplomats serving in Hungary repeatedly pointed this out to Washington in their official reports. Ironically, during the same period, Hungarians industriously celebrated the various achievements of American democracy, including July 4th and Washington's 200th birthday. Using the one-off celebration of Washington's achievements, jointly organized by the government and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, this paper explains the motivations behind these festivities as well as the American response to them. I argue that the full frontal arrival of American popular culture in Hungary and the desire to win American support for the revision of the Treaty of Trianon combined to convince Horthy and his inner circle that free discussion of American democracy could and should not be censored. American diplomats in Budapest and Washington believed that this was hardly more than lip service to win support for treaty revision, which they were not interested in. This created a public atmosphere of cordiality in bilateral relations without any meaningful cooperation in international affairs: there was not much Hungary could offer to the US, and the US did not want to provide what Hungary wanted.

Tibor Glant is associate professor at the North American Department, University of Debrecen and research professor at the John Lukacs Institute of the Ludovika University of Public Service, Budapest. He has a combined BA and MA in history and English from KLTE, Debrecen (1991), and an MA (1993) and PhD (1996) in history from the University of Warwick, UK. He has published 8 books and dozens of scholarly articles on US-Hungarian relations and US foreign policy as well as on film travel writing. <https://ieas.unideb.hu/en/dr-tibor-glant> & glant.tibor@uni-nke.hu.

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"Do you want to be ruled by a robot?" —The politics of simulation in Asimov's "The Tercentenary Incident"

Keywords: simulation, science fiction, AI, democracy, dystopia

While there are numerous examples of science fiction narratives set around the 200th anniversary of the declaration of American independence (*Robocop*, *Running Man*, *Her*), these stories do not explicitly speculate on or extrapolate political institutions. If one wants to turn to an anniversary depiction of an imagined future American presidency and the moral and ethical dilemmas it entails, they must leap forward 300 years. "The Tercentenary Incident" is a science fiction short story first published in 1976. The story is a political satire involving robotics, set in the United States in 2076 during the 300th anniversary of American independence. The story explores whether a machine might govern more safely and humanely than a human, questioning the uneasy relationship between democracy and efficiency, and raising doubts about trust, transparency, and political power in an automated society. The story speculates that society might accept a simulated version of leadership if it is safer and more efficient. From the perspective of simulation, the paper discusses questions the narrative raises about whether hyperreality based on the Three Laws of Robotics can/should/will replace human authority and democracy.

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Deterritorializing Desire: Surveillance and Ethical/Moral Collapse in Dave Eggers' *The Circle*

Keywords: Panoptic control, Post-panoptic Surveillance, Control Society, Synoptic Surveillance, deterritorialization, Reterritorialization, Desire, Moral Collapse

This paper examines Dave Eggers' *The Circle* (2013) with a special focus on the effects of the integration of panoptic, post-panoptic, and synoptic surveillance regimes on human behavior, desire, and their entanglement with the arising ethical dilemmas and tragic events in the novel. While existing scholarship has addressed surveillance in this novel from various perspectives, it has treated those forms of surveillance as separate or successive models, neglecting their connection, and an interpretation of it through the notions of Deleuze and Guattari remained underexplored. Addressing this gap, this study investigates how *The Circle* represents these surveillance regimes drawing on Deleuze's concept of 'control society' and Guattari's notions of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Moreover, this research examines how surveillance power operates through the modulation of the individual's motivations and behavioral tendencies instead of direct coercive disciplines. It explores how Mae Holland's desire is indirectly modulated rather than directly governed, which contributes to her moral collapse, which along with the dangerous principles of the circle lead to a series of tragic events such as the death of Mercer, Annie's coma, and Ty Gospodinov's arrest. By foregrounding how *The Circle* combines the panoptic, post-panoptic and synoptic control, the paper demonstrates how tragedy emerges from normalised and internalised surveillance power where the individual has to submit or die.

Wissal Hadjazi is a first year PhD student of English literary studies at Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest. Her major fields of research interest are Posthumanism, contemporary litera-

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From Adversaries to Partners: A Secretary of the Air Force–Led Delegation in Central and Eastern Europe, 1992

Keywords: Cold War, United States Air Force, Hungary, intelligence services

In the winter of 1992, Dr. Donald Rice, then serving as the United States Secretary of the Air Force, led an official delegation to Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, and Hungary. The delegation's mandate was to assess the condition of the air forces of these former Warsaw Pact states and to offer guidance on their post–Cold War restructuring. The delegation included Colonel Michael Hayden, who later served as Director of both the National Security Agency and the Central Intelligence Agency, and Dr. Richard P. Hallion, a senior advisor to Secretary Rice and head of the U.S. Air Force History Program. During the visit, the delegation engaged with a range of military and civilian authorities and also gathered information concerning the former security and intelligence services. They also experienced first-hand the immediate aftermath of the regime changes of these countries from the unusual perspective of a former adversary turned partner. Drawing on a series of correspondence with Dr. Hallion, who has provided detailed descriptions on the delegation's visit, this presentation will recount the delegation's findings and situate them within the broader context of the late–Cold War arms race and intelligence competition, as well as contemporary American and Hungarian diplomatic and political objectives.

Jákob Horváth is a PhD student at the Department of Modern and Contemporary World History of ELTE University, where he previously earned his MA in American Studies. His research is focused on the technological intelligence gathering of communist-era Hungary's state security, especially in connection with the space race. His research has earned the Sacknoff Prize for Space History and has led to papers in *Quest: The History of Spaceflight in the U.S.*, as well as *Betekintő* and *ArchívNet* in Hungary. In the Spring semester of 2026, he holds a seminar on the space race at ELTE's Department of American Studies.

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Peruvian-Japanese in the United States during WWII: Road to Crystal City Family Internment Camp

Keywords: Peruvian-Japanese, migration, World War II, American internment camps, Crystal City

In the 1930s, most of the population of Crystal City, Texas, located about 60 km from the Mexican border and famous for its spinach production, were immigrant workers of Mexican origin. The migrant labor camp, known as El Campo by Spanish speakers, became part of the Crystal City Family Internment Camp established by the Immigration and Naturalization Service in 1942. The camp, which operated until 1948, was the last World War II camp to close. Most of its residents were Latin Americans of Japanese, German, and Italian descent, including many Peruvian-Japanese people. The first Japanese immigrants arrived in Peru in 1899, and during World War II, Peru was one of the Latin American countries with the largest Japanese colonies. Anti-Japanese sentiment had already flared up in the country before World War II, but it intensified after 1941 as people of Japanese (German and Italian) origin faced suspicion as enemy aliens. Along with several other Latin American countries, the Peruvian government was convinced by the US government to allow the extrajudicial rendition of persons of Japanese ancestry. In my paper, I will outline the steps taken and the attitude adopted by the Peruvian government and follow the journey and lives of the Peruvian-Japanese who were sent to the camp by processing oral history materials and contemporary documents found in Densho Digital Repository.

Katalin Jancsó, Phd, is an associate professor at the Department of Hispanic Studies, University of Szeged, Hungary. Her main areas of interest are the history and the social and economic situation of minorities and immigrants in Latin America. Her research career has focused on indigenism in Peru and Mexico, historical aspects of immigration in Latin America, women in Latin American history and Hungarian-Latin American relations, with a special focus on the trajectory of Hungarian travellers in the 19th and 20th centuries. Her most recent works include: Golden Beads in Latin America. The rise of a Diverse Continent (in Hungarian); Violence and economic terrorism in the lands of the Asháninka people, Peru (in Spanish); The Story of the Yaqui Resistance, Their Persecution and Forced Deportation in the Light of the Contemporary Press Sources.

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Involuntary Mobility and Extraordinary Rendition: From the Middle Passage to Black Sites

Keywords: Guantánamo Bay, slave narratives, detention, extraordinary rendition

The paper offers a comparative analysis of nineteenth-century slave narratives and contemporary narratives of Guantánamo detainees, highlighting their striking thematic similarities. Despite profound differences in historical period, legal framework, and geopolitical context be-

tween Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) and Mansoor Adayfi's *Don't Forget Us Here* (2021), both works represent the transhistorical tradition of carceral testimony created in response to the imperial practice of confinement by the United States. By comparing and contesting these narratives, the paper aims to highlight the significance of their similarities, which include involuntary transatlantic transportation; deprivation of freedom, rights, and security; sustained exposure to cruelty; and the explicit condemnation of the institution in which they were held captive. The parallels between the narratives of slavery and detention may project possibilities for future detention efforts of the United States in light of the current geopolitical events and the immigration policy of the Trump administration.

Olga Kajtár-Pinjung is a PhD candidate in the English and American Literatures and Cultures doctoral program at the University of Szeged, Hungary. Her dissertation examines the construction of enemy images surrounding Guantánamo detainees by comparing presidential rhetoric and legislation across four administrations with the self-fashioning of former detainee Mansoor Adayfi in his memoir *Don't Forget Us Here*. Through this macro–micro comparison, she highlights how personal narratives can challenge and reframe dominant political discourses. Her research interests include American Studies, post-9/11 US foreign policy, enmification, and life writing.

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Possibilities of Continuity and Irreversible Change: the Significance of Displacement in two American Short Stories (Washington Irving, "Rip Van Winkle" and John Cheever, "The Swimmer")

Keywords: displacement, continuity, change, nature vs. culture, time, identity crisis, home

The presentation will compare a 19th- and a 20th-century short story from the point of view of the protagonists' sense of identity shaped by both continuity and change. Both Rip Van Winkle and Neddy Merrill are members of American communities that are in special, somewhat displaced positions: initially, in Irving's story, the small Dutch town is under British rule in America, whereas in Cheever's text, the suburban area is restricted for the wealthy upper-class inhabitants. In both stories, nature and culture are juxtaposed: this can be seen in Rip Van Winkle's astonishment to see the newly built houses upon his return from the forest or in Neddy Merrill's idea of a man-made artificial river named after his wife, Lucinda, built out of a chain of swimming pools. Both protagonists go through a time-travel experience that brings about irreversible changes in their lives, challenging their dream of continuity as well as questioning who they are and where they belong. The presentation will focus on the two texts, discovering similarities and differences in their symbolic representation of time, nature, continuity, change, and individual identity. The notion of displacement and its role in an identity crisis will be examined in both stories. The presentation will conclude in an analysis of the word "home" and its possible metaphorical connotations, on the basis of Edward S. Casey's *Getting Back Into Place*.

Katalin G. Kállay teaches American literature at Károli Gáspár University in Budapest and used to offer summer courses at the University of California in Santa Cruz. She took an M.A. at L. Eötvös University in Budapest and defended her Ph.D. at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. Her first book on nineteenth-century American short stories, *Going Home Through Seven Paths to Nowhere: Reading Short Stories by Hawthorne, Poe, Melville and James* was published in 2003 by the Hungarian Academy of Science. Her forthcoming book, entitled *Sudden Sparks: Questions of Surprising Coincidences, Communication, and Mystery While Reading Eudora Welty, Flannery O'Connor and Carson McCullers* is going to be published by L'Harmattan Publishing House in 2026. Her fields of research include nineteenth- and twentieth-century American fiction, especially Southern women writers, Hungarian literature in English, literary responses to the Holocaust and the relationship between philosophy and literature.

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“Talking About a Revolution? It Sounds Like a Whisper”: The Emergence of the New Social Democrats Within the Democratic Party

Keywords: Populism, Trumpism, Socialism, Democrats, Democratic Party

This study examines the emergence of a new left and social-democratic current within the Democratic Party in the United States, with particular attention to generational cleavages, principal policy priorities, and modes of political communication. Particular attention is given to Representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib, and Mayor Zohran Mamdani, whose public profiles are treated as central to the development and dissemination of this faction's agenda. The research interprets the phenomenon as, in part, a populist reaction from the Democratic left to the Republican Party's recent tonal and strategic reorientation—most visibly embodied in the MAGA movement and the broader phenomenon of Trumpism—which has reshaped partisan discourse and political opportunity structures. Employing a mixed qualitative methodology, the study draws on congressional records, contemporaneous news coverage, and narrative discourse analysis to trace how generational identity, policy emphases (including economic redistribution, racial justice, immigration, and climate-related measures), and communicative strategies interact to produce both intra-party realignment and partisan polarization. The findings contribute to scholarship on populism and political communication by interpreting how a resurgent leftist faction within the Democratic Party reframes policy demands and mobilizes constituencies in response to a populist shift in Republican rhetoric and strategy.

Sándor Kiss is a PhD candidate in the American Studies Department at the University of Debrecen and an Assistant Lecturer at the University of Nyíregyháza. His field of research is environmental politics, its current state, and the connection between contemporary politics and the new media.

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Running North to Freedom in Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* (2016)

Keywords: Mobility, slavery, underground railroad, literary representation, Colson Whitehead, metaphors of freedom

Colson Whitehead's genre fiction often relies on literalizing metaphors. He represents the problem of racial uplift in a story about elevators in his *The Intuitionist*, and depicts issues of multiculturalism in a narrative about colored Band-Aids in *Apex Hides the Hurt*. In his award winning *The Underground Railroad*, Whitehead turns the metaphor of the underground railroad, which refers to an interracial network helping runaway slaves, into an actual system of tunnels and railroads under the ground. The paper looks at the result of this strategy in the novel and asks where the literal underground railroad takes its passengers and what kind of freedom they find riding it. The paper argues that Whitehead's literal underground railroad provides its passengers with a bleak tour of racial inequalities across the US and thus questions the idea of interracial cooperation for freedom that the metaphor of the underground railroad relates to.

Ágnes Zsófia Kovács works as an associate professor at the Department of American Studies of the University of Szeged, Hungary. She published three books: *The Function of the Imagination: The Cultural Production of Experience in Henry James* (2006), *Reading in Context* (2010), and *The Memory of Architecture in Edith Wharton's Travel Writings* (2025). Her papers appeared in *Neohelicon*, *Metacritic*, *Edith Wharton Review*, *HJEAS*, *AMERICANA* and *The Henry James Review*, among other journals.

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Migration and Identity—A Hungarian Nobleman in the United States of America

Keywords: László Újházi, Reform Era, Hungarian War of Independence, Immigration, Hungarian 48ers, Identity, American Civil War

László Újházi, a Hungarian landowner of the lesser nobility played an active role in the Hungarian bourgeois revolution and war of independence of 1848–1849. After its failure he went into exile in the United States of America. He founded a Hungarian colony in Iowa, and then moved to Texas. He became a citizen of the United States and was a fierce opponent of slavery and se-

cession. During the Civil War he served as American consul in Ancona, Italy. On his return to Texas he helped found the Republican Party in his county. After the Compromise of 1867 and the creation of the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary he was offered amnesty, but he insisted on remaining in exile as long as the Habsburgs ruled Hungary. In my presentation I propose to discuss how Újházi became a prominent figure in expatriate life in the United States of America, and how he also maintained connections with his homeland. I will analyze how he and his family adapted to the circumstances and changes in Texas before and after the Civil War, and at the same time, how they tried to preserve their Hungarian identity.

Andrea Kökény is Senior Assistant professor at the Department of Modern World History and Mediterranean Studies. She teaches courses on modern European history and U.S. history. Her main research interests include the 19th-century history of westward expansion in the United States and the formulation of American identity, and the comparative study of the transformation of the Pacific Northwest and the American Southwest.

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Fortresses of the First Amendment: Institutional Continuity and the Pragmatic Protection of Free Expression

Keywords: First Amendment, constitutional law, equity law, freedom of press, freedom of speech

“Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press.” These words of the First Amendment are widely known as guarantees of freedom of speech and press; however, we rarely examine the pragmatic legal institutions that give them real binding force. The “spirit” of the First Amendment is usually seen as a standalone guardian of freedom of speech and press, but the actual system is far more complex than that. The objective of my research was to explore the interconnected system of legal institutions—including other Amendments, paragraphs of equity law, and Supreme Court decisions—that protect First Amendment rights at a practical level. In my presentation I will offer an overview of the continuity and development of these institutions through the 250-year history of the United States, during which the meaning of expressions of “press” and even “speech” have changed in response to technological development, while their freedom has been repeatedly challenged. For my research I used doctrinal legal analysis of statutes and landmark decisions in their historical context. I argue that although the First Amendment is usually treated as the “only” bastion of free expression, in practice a continuously evolving network of various legal institutions provides the real framework of the protection. My findings will lead to a greater understanding of the American approach to the freedom of the press and speech and the application of constitutional law in given cases.

Koppány Kujbus is a professional legal translator and holds an MA in Education (English Language and Culture) and an MA in American Studies. His main field of research is the First Amendment and its relationship to freedom of the press. His MA dissertation focused on the institution of prior restraint in First Amendment law, examined through landmark decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States. His current research explores how courts respond to changes brought by technological development: while the language of contemporary debates is often technical, the conflict itself remains one of the oldest constitutional questions.

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A ReMarkable Encounter of the Shavian Kind: Chambers Stevens' *Twain and Shaw Do Lunch* and Early Twentieth-Century Transatlantic Literary Connections

Keywords: Mark Twain, George Bernard Shaw, early 20th century, Irish-American relations, contemporary American drama

Chambers Stevens' (1964–) one-act play titled *Twain and Shaw Do Lunch* (2005/2011) depicts the two titular men of letters, namely American prose writer Mark Twain (1835–1910) and Irish dramatist George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950), as people who, beyond their obvious differences, actually do share a lot of qualities. Inspired by a real-life encounter between the two notable literary figures in 1907, this combination of actual events and fictitious elements provides a handful of intertextual references to the authors' respective works. With the latter's wife, Charlotte, also appearing, Twain and *the Shaws* address some of the features, traditions, customs, and norms connecting and separating the cultural milieus of their homelands. In my paper, I examine and evaluate the eponymous characters of *Twain and Shaw Do Lunch* as iconic and even symbolic personifications of the literary dimensions of their respective communities. Reading the play as an early twenty-first-century take on a set of early twentieth-century (Anglo-)Irish-American cultural relations and a contemporary manifestation of the *continuity* of transatlantic discussions between the two English-speaking countries, I analyze modern(ist) *changes* in the USA and the UK alike, focusing on the most conspicuous and significant overlaps, clashes, and conflicts between the two giants of the Anglophone world at that time—both on more comprehensive (inter)national levels and in more private, (inter)personal terms.

Bence Gábor Kvéder is an assistant lecturer in the Department of English Literatures and Cultures at the University of Pécs. His main field of interest is late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Irish drama, with a focus on modernist and post-colonial aspects. The primary area of his research covers the new readings, latest re-interpretations, and potential twenty-first-century re-canonization of George Bernard Shaw's plays. His academic ventures have recently started extending to the realm of prose and non-fiction within the Shavian corpus, as well as to the re-

ception of and various later works based on the author's legacy in the Anglophone world.

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Architecture as a Site of Continuity, Change, and Diasporic Agency in the US

Keywords: African Diaspora, Architectural Heritage, Cultural Memory, Black Placemaking, Continuity and Change, American Studies

As the United States marks 250 years, its built environment stands as a profound record of the nation's defining tensions between continuity and change. This paper interrogates the American legacy through the lens of architectural history and heritage studies. It examines how structures associated with the African Diaspora, from plantation enslaved quarters to the urban hubs of the Great Migration, embody both oppression and resilience. I trace the continuum of spatial practice from historical erasure to the conscious acts of "Black Placemaking" and formal heritage designation. By analyzing the evolution of sacred spaces and community institutions, the presentation argues that these architectural sites form a critical, tangible archive. They materialize the dialectic of continuity and change, transforming static landscapes into active agents of cultural memory and social transformation. This study offers a framework for understanding how the preservation and interpretation of diasporic sites engage in a meaningful dialogue with the American past, present, and future, highlighting architecture's role in asserting agency within the national narrative.

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The Role of Cuban Immigrants in Reshaping American Organized Crime

Keywords: American Mafia; Cuban Mafia; Cuban Immigration; Inter-American Relations; Cold War

My lecture explores the history and operations of Cuban organized crime in the United States, contextualizing the topic within the political, social, and migratory processes of the Cold War era. I emphasize how the fate of Cuban communities forced into exile after Fidel Castro's rise to power became intertwined with the American Mafia and the United States' intelligence objectives. The lecture unveils the causes of the radicalization of Cuban immigrants and the long-term effects of the traumas triggered by the Bay of Pigs invasion and its failure. It also examines the role these factors played in the organization of the Cuban Mafia. José Miguel Battle is a central figure, who used his police experience and Mafia connections from the Batista era to become a key figure in creating and consolidating in the United States the so-called Corporation. The analysis shows that the development of the Cuban Mafia was not just a crime phenomenon, but was also closely connected to U.S.–Cuban relations, CIA anti-Castro operations, and the political and economic integration of immigrant communities. I argue that Cuban organized crime in the United States emerged as a unique network, deeply influenced by ethnic and political factors. This network became a significant and enduring player in the American underworld, reshaping a landscape traditionally dominated by Mafia groups of Italian and Jewish origin.

András Lénárt is Associate Professor at the University of Szeged, Department of Hispanic Studies. His main areas of research are inter-American relations, the contemporary history and cinema of Latin America and Spain, and the relationship between history and cinema. He is the author of 4 books, more than 170 book chapters, essays and articles in English, Spanish and Hungarian, and co-editor of 4 volumes. He was President of the International Federation of Latin American and Caribbean Studies (FIEALC) between 2019 and 2023. He is a member of various international research groups and academic associations in the fields of history and cinema.

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Spectacular Vulnerability: Millie and Christine McKoy and the Afterlives of Racialized Embodiment

Keywords: contemporary women's fiction, short fiction, racialized embodiment

This presentation examines Black American author Mecca Jamilah Sullivan's short story "A Strange People" (2008) as a text that engages in an implicit dialogue with the past by invoking the historical treatment and conceptualization of non-white bodies in the United States. The story centers the real-life conjoined twins Millie and Christine McKoy (1851–1912), who were born into slavery and exhibited throughout their lives on various stages. "A Strange People" seeks to fill in the gaps left in the medical accounts, the biographies, and the commercialized autobiography of tenuous authorship that all attest to the American public's long-standing fascination with Black women's bodies. Sullivan's narrative reflects on the twins' sexual precarity, limited agency,

and extreme commodification. Relying on Black feminist thought and Black disability studies, I read their conjoinment as a form of compromised bodily integrity that renders their bodies simultaneously spectacular and vulnerable. The story's concluding gesture toward the possibility of bodily separation further complicates conventional notions of bodily integrity, suggesting that neither conjoinment nor separation guarantees autonomy or wholeness. In both states, the body remains a problem to be managed that structures and overdetermines the twins' lives. Finally, the presentation situates Sullivan's story within a broader trend in contemporary U.S. women's fiction that foregrounds embodiment and centers "irregular" bodies.

Zsuzsanna Lénárt-Muszka, Ph.D. is an assistant professor at the Institute of English and American Studies, University of Debrecen, Hungary. Her research on North American representations of embodiment, motherhood, and womanhood has been published in journals such as *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* (2023) and *Canadian Literature* (2023). She is the editor of a special issue of the journal *Short Fiction in Theory & Practice* titled *Uniquely Canadian Cultural Narratives* (2026) and co-editor of the upcoming collection *Contemporary Maternal Subjectivities on the Page and on the Screen* (Sciendo 2027).

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"All the existence of America is based on this simple document": The "pilgrimage" of the original copy of the Declaration of Independence from adoption to the Shrine(s)

Keywords: Declaration of Independence, American Revolution, iconography

The author analyzes the process of "sacralization" of The Declaration of Independence through the studying of the changing storage and display of it. Approaching the fiftieth anniversary of its adoption, a growing interest was observable in the document, which led to the printing of the first facsimile reproductions of it. The original copy became accessible for the wider public for the first time in 1841, and the first concerns about the deteriorating conditions of the document were raised around the centenary of its adoption. Several committees were appointed by different presidents to examine the possible methods of preservation of the document, without any significant results. The Declaration was transferred to the Library of Congress in 1922, where it was exhibited with the original copy of the Constitution. The new building of the National Archives was designed to house the fundamental founding documents of the United States, and The Declaration, and the Constitution were transferred there in 1952 with military pomp, and the crowd was addressed by president Harry Truman. The author also analyzes the iconography of the present-day exhibition of the founding documents.

Csaba Lévai (1964) is a full professor of history at the University of Debrecen. His research interests are the history of the history of the British colonies in North America, the American Revolution, and the history of slavery. He was a two-times Fulbright scholar at the University of Virginia,

and he was also a two-times research fellow at the International Center for Jefferson Studies, and at the Fred W. Smith Library for the Study of George Washington. His works has been published in seven countries (Hungary, Great-Britain, USA, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany) in Hungarian and in English.

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From Democracy to Fascism: *The Boys* (2019–)

Keywords: superheroes, Homelander, democracy, fascism, Trump

The recent American political changes that shook the foundations of democracy have been continuously mirrored on American television by highlighting the gradual moral downfall of the democratic system and/or by demonstrating desperate efforts to show the hopes of the democratic idea even in incredibly unfavorable circumstances. Recently the superhero narrative, which has traditionally been associated with the theme of fighting global threats (calling for a power that is beyond the human) has been shifting its focus to internal affairs. This has been a gradual change, parallel with the erosion of faith invested in democracy due to the radicalization of the right wing in American politics which made the rise of Donald Trump and his MAGA cult possible. The future that was extrapolated from this radicalization is the world of *The Boys* (2019–), an ongoing superhero television series streaming on Amazon Prime Video, which has become famous for its equally radicalized presentation of the democratic crisis. This paper focuses on various strategies that Vought International, the company that manages superheroes in this fictive American future, applies to undermine democracy while continuously working on creating and maintaining the pretense that superheroes are the unchallengeable protectors of the shining city on the hill that the US likes to imagine itself as. Highlighting how the concept of superheroes is used to communicate about American ideals, special attention will be paid to Homelander's character as an antithesis to Superman and Captain America and an uncanny reminder of how seeming has taken over content in America in the past decade. The paper will outline how this unwelcomed change is linked to corporatism, hypocrisy, fascism, perversion, and psychosis—factors that are linked to Trump's present politics and the dystopian present that is unfolding before us.

Ildikó Limpár, associate professor at Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Hungary, does research in the fantastic and the monstrous linked especially to YA fiction, posthumanism, eco-narratives, and religion. She is author of *The Truths of Monsters: Coming of Age with Fantastic Media* (McFarland, 2021), associate editor of *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* and has edited anthologies and thematic journal blocks on fantastic narratives and the monstrous in English and in Hungarian.

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Reagan and the Rise of US Latinos

Keywords: immigration, Latinos, Reagan

This paper revisits Ronald Reagan's 1980s "Latino outreach" and argues that its apparent success was largely performative: while the administration promoted optimism, deregulation, and individual responsibility, its immigration and social policies institutionalized new forms of control, surveillance, and exclusion for Latino communities. It treats the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) as a pivotal political and institutional turning point—a legislative compromise that paired mass regularization with employer sanctions and expanded enforcement capacity—thereby widening access to legal status for millions while embedding new monitoring and exclusionary pressures into everyday work and border governance. The paper then situates IRCA within the Reagan era's broader domestic agenda (Reaganomics, welfare retrenchment, and the War on Drugs) and within U.S. policy in Central America, where intervention shaped displacement and intersected with asylum governance and civil-society responses such as the Sanctuary Movement. Finally, it shows how these pressures contributed to the consolidation of a pan-ethnic "Latino" political identity through organizational adaptation (e.g., MALDEF, NCLR, LULAC) and rights-based mobilization. The Reagan era thus illustrates a durable policy pattern: symbolic inclusion paired with institutional exclusion, with long-term consequences for Latino citizenship and its historical course.

Balázs Mály is a PhD student at ELTE-BTK Doctoral School of History. My research examines the history of U.S. immigration governance and the welfare state in the late twentieth century, with particular attention to how federal legislation and administrative enforcement reshaped the everyday life of Latino communities. In my paper, I am about to put special focus on the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) and its implementation—legalization, employer sanctions, workplace verification, and intensified enforcement—as well as its connections to the Reagan administration's domestic agenda and to U.S. policy in Central America and the politics of asylum. Methodologically, I work with legislative and policy records, institutional histories, and the archival/public strategies of civil-rights and community organizations (including legal advocacy and faith-based networks). I am interested in the long-term political consequences of these institutional changes for Latino citizenship throughout the Reagan administration.

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Haunted Histories: Indigenous Memory and the Afterlives of Colonial Violence in *There*

There by Tommy Orange

Keywords: Tommy Orange, Indigenous literature, memory studies, cultural memory, Native American literature, *There There*

There There by Tommy Orange is a contemporary memory narrative that interrogates the continuity of colonial trauma within the cultural history of the United States. The aim of my presentation is to analyze the way the novel stages Indigenous memory not as a stable archive of the past, but as a fragmented, embodied, and affective force that structures present-day experience. Set in urban Oakland, *There There* challenges dominant American narratives that situate Native American history as concluded or peripheral. Instead, Orange foregrounds intergenerational trauma as an ongoing condition produced by settler colonial violence, forced displacement, and cultural erasure. The novel's polyphonic structure, shifting temporalities, and repeated return to historical scenes of violence enact what trauma studies describe as belatedness and narrative rupture, emphasizing how the past persistently intrudes upon the present. By framing urban Indigenous life as a site of both inherited trauma and cultural survival, the novel complicates linear models of historical progress often associated with American national identity. My presentation affirms that *There There* exposes the limits celebratory narratives of continuity while offering a reparative counter-memory that insists on Indigenous presence within the American cultural imaginary. In doing so, the novel reclaims storytelling as a vital mode of historical accountability and collective remembrance in twenty-first-century American literature.

Nóra Máthé is an associate professor at Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania. She holds a PhD from Babeş-Bolyai University, with a dissertation on contemporary American essays on 9/11. Her research interests include American literature, the essay form, trauma and memory studies, war studies, gender studies, and the cultural and discursive dimensions of language. She has published in international peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes, and her doctoral thesis, "*The Howling Space: 9/11 in the Contemporary American Essay*" is forthcoming as a monograph with Palgrave Macmillan.

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Continuity and Change in the Conception of US Leadership Since 1945: A Brief Overview

Keywords: US foreign policy, US leadership, Trump administration, international order

The title of my proposed presentation is „Continuity and Change in the Conception of US Leadership Since 1945: A Brief Overview.” As the current administration's view of the United States' international role differs significantly from that of its predecessors, it seems relevant to investigate the conception of US leadership in a historical perspective. After the Second World War the United States took on a more active international role than ever before. First I will investigate how US

leadership was constituted during the Cold War, and then I will explore how the end of the bipolar world order impacted the role of the United States in international politics. Finally, I want to assess how radical is the change that the Trump administration brought about in US foreign policy and what implications it has for the future role of the United States. I will also open up the question of how the current conception of US leadership could impact the international order. The presidential doctrines and the national security strategies issued by the various administrations will be my primary sources for investigating how US foreign policy has unfolded since 1945. As for secondary sources I will rely on the relevant academic literature.

Tibor Mezei is a Lecturer at Milton Friedman University. He submitted his PhD thesis in the Doctoral Program for Modern and Contemporary History at Eötvös Loránd University in December, 2025, and is expected to defend his thesis this spring. His area of research is US foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific region with a focus on the Korean Peninsula. He holds an MA from Central European University, and has published in various Hungarian journals including *Világtörténet* (World History), *Külügyi Szemle* (Foreign Affairs Review), and *Eurázsiai Szemle* (Eurasian Review). He is looking forward to participating at a HAAS Conference for the first time.

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Anne Hutchinson, the Cordelia of Puritan New England

Keywords: Anne Hutchinson, early American history, New England Puritans, religious heterodoxy, exile, Cordelia, affect theory

This paper departs from the different readings of the figure of Anne Hutchinson, as she embodies multiple cultural tradition, such as the mystic, the heretic, the heterodox religious leader, the founding mother, and the proto feminist. In the process it will become clear, how the Christian and proto feminist features align in her persona, giving substance to the argument that this is a viable marriage between the two ideological/philosophical/political positions. Meanwhile the presentation will gesture towards a yet unprobed way of interpreting Hutchinson's case: through the lens of the Shakespearean character Cordelia. Bringing the affective side of Hutchinson's narrative to the fore, I will try to show how strong affections towards her own readings of the Bible and her growing audience led to her expulsion in the end. Moreover, as the co-founder of Rhode Island along with Roger Williams, she was later glorified as a founding mother, even if she became a martyr of unfortunate circumstances.

Laura Mike earned her Ph.D. (2024) in the English and American Literatures and Cultures doctoral program, University of Szeged. She carries out research in early modern English drama, with special emphasis on revenge tragedies. She investigates revenge drama from the perspective of the English reformation, which she interprets, on the basis of the ongoing revision of its history, as a major collective trauma. This approach, in turn, connects her project to other fields of research,

such as cultural memory, and trauma commodification. Recently her attention has turned towards American cultural phenomena, while she has been co-lecturing “The History of North American Christianity” with Professor Tibor Fabiny at Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary.

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Narrativity as a Method of Argumentation in *Noem v. Vasquez Perdomo*. A Case Study

Keywords: constitution, immigration, law and literature, narrativity, supreme court

Noem v. Vasquez Perdomo is a 2025 decision of the United States Supreme Court. The Court granted the Government’s application for stay concerning the decision of the United States District Court for the Central District of California. The District Court enjoined immigration officers under authority of the Immigration and Nationality Act from conducting investigations concerning suspected illegal immigrants on the basis of circumstances that may amount to collective stereotypes, making such investigations similar to sheer racial profiling. The Supreme Court’s decision itself is brief and has no majority opinion, but a concurring and a dissenting opinion have been filed, the former by Justice Brett Kavanaugh, and the latter by Justice Sonia Sotomayor. While Justice Kavanaugh’s reasoning is centered on the reasonability of the Government’s concerns about immigration, Justice Sotomayor highlights the situations into which the immigrants under procedure get. The relevance of narrativity in jurisprudence and legal reasoning has been firmly established by law and literature scholarship for decades now. Storytelling is a method of knowing, as well as a way of persuasion. In her dissent to the *Noem v. Vasquez Perdomo* decision, Justice Sotomayor relates accounts and personal stories of the immigration officers’ actions and how they affected those subject to them. In my paper, I would like to demonstrate how Justice Sotomayor’s argumentation is a contemporary example of narrative argumentation in relation to one of the most actual and most controversial social issues.

András Molnár is assistant professor at the University of Szeged, Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, Institute of Comparative Law and Legal Theory. He wrote his PhD thesis from the United States Supreme Court’s interpretation of the 14th Amendment’s due process clause at the beginning of the 20th century. His current primary research interest is speculative fiction and the law.

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Being Black in a World in Which Discourses About Black Lean Towards Negativity

Keywords: American Dream, Blackness, Black epistemology

For Black people, the American legacy of 250 years since independence has not qualified them to fully enjoy the benefits of the American Dream, even though their presence shapes the entire American history and culture. Drawing on *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015), this study analyzes the discourses of being Black in the contemporary twenty-first century United States of America. It interrogates the ways in which Coates portrays the ontological realities of Otherness and the marginalized existence of Black people within the American borders, from three perspectives: to the fore, exclusion of African Americans from the American Dream; secondly, criminal justice system and police brutality on the Black body; thirdly, parenting and education of Black children. The analysis is expected to inaugurate a rethinking of Blackness as synonymous with criminality, by highlighting the perspectives of marginalized Black epistemology of existence, often burdened with being perceived as disposable. *Between the World and Me* is a nonfiction, autobiographical and philosophical book which is in form of a letter from the author, to his teenage son, Samori. Growing up in Baltimore, Coates often struggled to understand his own racial identity beyond violence against the Black bodies. Howard University emerged as one of the few spaces in which his racial identity became effervescent and where he connected with African American history and culture. It did not only function as a historical place, but it also served as a space of authentication. He realizes that African Americans repeatedly have been oppressed through institutions such as slavery and Jim Crow, which appear to end, but then are reborn in new forms such as criminal justice system, tailored to the needs and constraints of the time. Throughout the letter, Coates shares his own experiences in coming to terms with the realities and injustices of being Black in America. He does this to equip his son with the epistemic insights required to navigate the world as a person of color in America. Through the history of racism and its contemporary manifestation, he urges Samori to reject the version of the American Dream idealized by white people in a manner that entirely excludes Black people. The version that systematically eradicates the Black people's epistemic realities.

Muhia is an early career researcher at advanced stages of PhD studies, in the University of Pécs, Hungary. Currently pursuing a PhD in Literary and Cultural Studies (British, Irish, and American Literatures). Additionally, he is a Research Assistant with teaching duties at the Africa Research Centre, University of Pécs; where he teaches Social Studies/Humanities modules and Kiswahili as a foreign language to Political Science and International Relations students.

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Continuity in Rupture: Post-9/11 Literature and the Recycling of American Exceptionalism

Keywords: canon revision; continuity-rupture dialectic; cultural memory; exceptionalism; post-

9/11 literature

Even though 9/11 is frequently framed as the decisive rupture between the 20th and 21st centuries, the ensuing cultural production reveals a striking tension between historic(al) change and ideological continuity. This paper argues that the revisitation of post-9/11 literature at the quarter-century mark should move away from the initial scrutinies of trauma towards a more robust historicization of the events of September 11, 2001. This can be conducted through the analysis of how post-9/11 literary works manage to reinterpret narratives of national identity and exceptionalism. The re-reading of post-9/11 works of varying cultural recognition, such as Don DeLillo's *Falling Man*, Thomas Pynchon's *Bleeding Edge*, and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, showcases that the post-9/11 imaginarium often recycles representational frameworks from earlier historical crises, such as Cold War binaries and frontier myths of lost innocence. Thus, post-9/11 literature emerges as a paradoxical locus for apparent rupture and in-depth continuity within the evolving American canon, set between entrenched historical moods and the gestation of new cultural manifestations.

Alexandru Oravițan is Junior Lecturer Ph.D. at the West University of Timișoara, Romania, where he teaches 20th-Century American Prose and Contemporary English. He has conducted extensive research into post-9/11 literature as part of his doctoral work and on Don DeLillo's 21st-century novels. Currently, his research endeavors revolve around contemporary American literature and linguistics, as part of his affiliation with the American Studies Center (CSAM).

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A Fantasy of America: Politics, Territory, and Petro-Cultural Nostalgia

Keywords: petro-culture, fantasy, television drama, territory, sustainability, governance

This paper wishes to tackle the ways in which contemporary American television drama circulates affective responses to crises through serial narrative forms that emphasize ongoing conditions over closure or resolution. Notions of crisis have been increasingly mobilized in global discourses. Sustainability, governance, and sovereignty continue to be probed by rapidly shifting US political agendas, this paper will try to bridge the gap between current political discourses and the ways in which contemporary American television drama negotiates the historical and cultural legacies of territory, identity, safety, economic interests and democratic liberties amidst emerging social anxieties. It traces how these notions continue to haunt and subvert cultural perceptions of a "fantasy of America" that is pitted against lived experiences domestically, and a sense of disillusionment globally. It looks at the ways in which symbolic representations in television drama represent the subjective dimensions of crisis, and, conversely, the ways in which these narratives also perpetuate notions of crisis that will have produced paradoxical responses among audiences in different geographic contexts. How can the potentials of television drama

be harnessed for peace-making and reconciliation? Recent examples of popular television dramas such as *Yellowstone* (Paramount, 2018–2024) and its spin-offs, and *Landman* (Paramount+, 2024–) emerge as a provocative rehashing of a petro-cultural fantasy—the idea that the US economy is inexorably linked to, and dependent on, the petroleum industry, and the contesting approaches to the intricate nexus between political and cultural agency, land ownership, and ideas of conservation. The paper argues that the complex and dynamic media landscape these programs inscribe themselves into poses new challenges and opportunities for negotiating the causes, consequences and responses to contemporary conflicts, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the political and economic actors involved in them.

David Levente Palatinus is Associate Professor in Digital Media and Cultural Studies at the Technical University of Liberec, holding a secondment at the University of Trnava. He is also founder of the Anthropocene Media Lab. His research moves between and across visual studies, digital media, and cultural theory. He has worked and written on violence in serial culture and human-non-human relations in the Anthropocene. He is co-editor (with Elke Weissmann) of the ECREA section of *Critical Studies in Television Online*, and is on the editorial board of *Bloomsbury Studies in Digital Cultures*. His most recent works include *Itinerari LIX* (Thematic Issue): “Perspectives in the Anthropocene: Beyond Nature and Culture” (Mimesis Edizioni, 2020, with Stefania Achella), and *J.R.R. Tolkien in Central Europe: Context, Directions and the Legacy* (Routledge, 2024, with Jan-ka Kascakova).

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Subverting the Docile Body: Spatial Power and Resistance in Mira Nair's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2012)

Keywords: 9/11, Muslim identity, heterotopia, panopticon, subjectivization

Destabilizing cultural memories and enabling the viewer “to think of 9/11 as a culturally and racially encoded event” (Mendes and Bennett, 2017: 110), Mira Nair's 2012 film *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* tells the story of a young Muslim man, Changez Khan's physical and metaphorical journey from the USA to Pakistan, from “a lover of America” to a “reluctant fundamentalist” in the aftermath of 9/11. Drawing on Foucault's claim that “space is fundamental in any exercise of power” (1984: 252), the present paper focuses on Nair's visual interpretation of corporate America and New York City, of metaphorical and physical spaces exercising the power of surveillance and exclusion. Through the close reading of the protagonist's embodied experience in these spaces, it examines the ways in which they discipline Changez's body and consciousness, turning him into a Foucauldian produced subject and docile body, shaped by spatial power. I shall argue that the protagonist's consequent subversion of his subjectivization is an act of resistance against the panopticon and heterotopia – complex sites of both control and disruption – whereby Changez gains agency as a Muslim man America and Nair offers a spatial critique of global

politics.

Éva Pataki is a lecturer at the North American Department, Institute of English and American Studies, University of Debrecen. Her main area of research is postcolonial literature and a comprehensive study of identity, with a specific focus on contemporary literature and film of the South Asian diaspora. She has published articles in various scholarly journals and four book chapters (most recently in *Space, Identity and Discourse in Anglophone Studies: Crossing Boundaries*, 2024). She is currently doing research on the interconnectedness of affect, space and identity in contemporary Anglophone literature of the South Asian diaspora.

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Race and Fear as Unifying Forces in the Declaration of Independence

Keywords: British colonies, United States of America, War of Independence, nationalism, propaganda

When the British colonies in North America revolted against the mother country and the War of Independence got under way in the spring of 1775, it was hard to call the separate colonies a unified nation. Despite that shortcoming, in the summer of 1776 these people declared their independence from the British crown, and fought mostly as a unified nation against George III, whom they considered a tyrant, and the king's armies. In addition to many things, unity was a major component, which phenomenon, this was the contemporary general agreement, was lacking in the eastern half of the North American continent. The people living in the various colonies did not establish close relations with one another, they lived under different climatic, economic, and cultural circumstances, and a few years prior to the hostilities there was no tangible sign that these roughly two and a half million people wanted to become independent from Great Britain. The study wants to find answers how this mainly heterogeneous society managed, in almost an instant, to express and establish a unified national feeling, what hindered and helped the Americans in this process, and during the fight for independence, how the Patriots used propaganda in order to achieve the final success.

Zoltán Peterecz earned his Ph.D. in 2010. He teaches as an associate professor at the Institute of English, American, and German Studies at Eszterházy Károly Catholic University, Eger, Hungary. His main field of research is American history, American foreign affairs, and American-Hungarian relations in the first half of the twentieth century, on which subjects he regularly publishes books and articles. His latest book introduced the career of Nicholas Roosevelt, one-time American minister to Hungary in the early 1930s, while his most recent book in Hungarian gave an overview of the work of the American ministers in Hungary during the interwar years. He is also the editor-in-chief of Pro&Contra, an online English-language journal for PhD students and young academics.

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The Long Shadow of the Founding Fathers: Struggles over an Unamendable Constitution

Keywords: US Constitution, American history, American politics, US Supreme Court, originalism

The Constitution, the second oldest foundational document of the United States after the Declaration of Independence, enjoys such a near-universal reverence among Americans that resembles a secular cult. While the constitutional framework has provided an unmatched stability and continuity for the American republic, its imperfections or outright defects made certain adjustments—in the form of amendments—necessary from time to time. Three such periods are observable in US history: the Restoration era (late 1860s), the Progressive era (1910s), and the 1960s. These periods are separated by roughly 40 years. Since 1971, when the 26th Amendment was ratified, however, the Constitution has proved in practice unamendable, as the increasing political polarization makes any two-thirds majorities in Congress as well as ratification by three-fourth of the states impossible to achieve. The “frozen” Constitution has pushed the US Supreme Court further into the limelight, as the 9-member body has the unique position to effect constitutional change by deciding contentious cases and creating new precedents. However, since the 1980s a distinctly conservative interpretative school of originalism has emerged, which argues that the “original intent” of the Framers should be the exclusive guideline for interpretation. In my presentation, I intend to illustrate why originalism is a misguided interpretative doctrine and how its backward gaze is an impediment to approach 21st century challenges of the American nation.

Károly Pintér is associate professor and currently chair of the Institute of English and American Studies, Pázmány Péter Catholic University (PPKE), Budapest. He holds MA degrees in English and History, and received his PhD in 2005 from ELTE University, Budapest. Within literary studies, he specializes on utopian studies as well as H. G. Wells and classic English-language SF, the subjects of his book *The Anatomy of Utopia* (2010). His other research area is American studies: he has been teaching Introduction to the USA, American history, and US government courses for more than 20 years, as well as publishing essays both in English and in Hungarian on American presidential elections, church-state relations in the US and the phenomenon of American civil religion. His Hungarian-language volume *Isten áldja Amerikát!* is due to be published in 2026. In 2017 he was Visiting Fellow of the Nanovic Institute at Notre Dame University.

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From Abject Eating to Commensality: Food and Social Critique in *Fargo* Season 5

Keywords: Crime drama series, noir, neo-noir, consumption, commodification

Intrigued by the centrality and the implied complexity of the food motif in the fifth season of the critically acclaimed *Fargo* crime series (1923–24), the present study aims to discuss food and eating in this high-end television drama against the intertextual backdrop of film noir, the Coens' eponymous neo-noir and the reiteration of the food motif in *Fargo* Season 3. I will argue that – consistently with the noir tradition – food-related motifs in the crime series contribute to a poignant critique of both commodity culture and the way patriarchal consumer society promotes the commodification and concomitant violation of human beings – in their physical, moral and emotional integrity. Although Season 5 reassociates food with the maternal and the logic of nurturing, unconditional love, this postfeminist re-appropriation of the food motif is still not free from its own ironies, in close parallel to the polysemy of food (cf. Gunkel 2016, 246–47) in the Coens' *Fargo*. Premised on the truism that “[i]f there is one sure thing about food, it is that it is never just food” (Eagleton 1998, 204; see also Goldstein 2018, 43), the present case study of *Fargo* Season 5 is aimed to demonstrate how food is able to convey intricate messages concerning gender, social and political critique – even political activism – in the context of crime drama.

Angelika Reichmann is Professor of English Literature at Eszterházy Károly Catholic University. She is the author of *Desire – Identity – Narrative: Dostoevsky's Devils in English Modernism* (2012) and has published widely on English and Russian modernist rewritings of Dostoevsky's 1872 novel. Her recent studies focus on J.M. Coetzee and Dostoevsky, as well as crime narratives in fiction and film. Her chief academic interests also include adaptation theory, psychoanalytic and feminist literary criticism and the female Gothic. She has worked as co-editor of *Eger Journal of English Studies* since 2020, co-edited *Az angol irodalom története 5* ('History of English Literature' vol. 5, 2024) and guest-edited with Renáta Zsámba *Hybridization and Generic Experiments in Crime Narratives*, a themed volume of the *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* (2025).

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Carnavalesque Masculinity and Abject Femininity in Zach Cregger's *Weapons* (2025)

Keywords: Abject Femininity, American Masculinity in Crisis, Carnavalesque Masculinity, Grotesque Imagery, Hegemonic Masculinity, Horror Films

This paper analyzes Zach Cregger's *Weapons* (2025) as a contemporary American horror film that uses a carnivalesque framework to highlight the fragility of hegemonic masculinity, within the longstanding theme of American masculinity in crisis that persists throughout U.S. cultural histo-

ry. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's carnival theory, R.W. Connell's hegemonic masculinity model, and Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection, the paper contends that *Weapons* (2025) creates a social environment in which patriarchal authority diminishes, thereby exposing the inherent fragility of masculine dominance. The film, set in the small town of Mayfield, Pennsylvania, focuses on the mysterious disappearance of seventeen third-grade children, an incident that incites widespread terror. Conventional male dominant figures, such as fathers and police officers, fail to regain hegemony, leading the society to shift blame onto female figures, including a female teacher and a grotesque mother figure. The film employs grotesque imagery to depict abject femininity as a canvas for the projection of unresolved masculinity in crisis. Overall, the paper contends that *Weapons* (2025) enacts a carnivalesque reversal of gendered power, revealing the fragility of hegemonic masculinity in the context of modern social, emotional, and cultural anxieties, while providing a critical examination of American gender politics.

Amira Rihab Saidi is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Dr. Moulay Tahar University of Saida. She earned her PhD in American Studies from the University of Szeged in 2025, where she researched contemporary representations of American masculinity in crisis in Contemporary American cinema. Her dissertation examines the collapse of hegemonic masculinity in popular culture, focusing on how films portray gender, power, and social anxieties through cinematic narratives.

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Screening the President: Mythmaking, John F. Kennedy, and What the Press Chose Not to Print

Keywords: JFK, affairs, media, newspaper

Even today, John Fitzgerald Kennedy remains one of the most popular presidents of the United States, whose regal, yet Hollywoodesque public image seems unbreakable. Not only was he the youngest president ever elected, but also the first to use media consciously to create and maintain a positive public image. This image became strong enough to keep JFK's good reputation despite allegations about his extramarital affairs. The murder of his mistress, Mary Pinchot Meyer, for example, was covered up, and the press did not publish any articles about his infidelity until the 1970s. Since then, publishers built a robust cottage industry upon releasing biographies and memoirs of his love interest. Incidentally, all these stories created a huge uproar in the media, but then suddenly vanished without a trace, not hurting Kennedy's reputation. I hypothesize that the subdued media response is the result of a mutually beneficial silent pact between the President and the Fourth Estate that was stern enough to exist even after his assassination in 1963. The goal of this presentation is not to declare whether the allegations about the womanizer president were true, but to investigate when and how they were made public, and how they

influenced Kennedy's reputation.

Xénia Petronella Sándor is a second-year American Studies MA student at Eszterházy Károly Catholic University. She graduated from the University of Miskolc with an English and American Studies BA degree specializing in Intercultural Communication in 2014. Later, she continued her studies at Kodolányi János University of Applied Sciences to become a translator in economics and social sciences. She developed a keen interest in the field of history in the early years of her studies; therefore, she is currently engaged in research on the private life of John F. Kennedy as part of her thesis work. Ms. Sándor teaches English as a Second Language for teenagers and adult, focusing not only on the language itself, but also on teaching the culture and history of English-speaking countries.

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There and Back Again: Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and the End of the American Dream

Keywords: literature, myth, twenties, Paris, lost generation

This paper proposes to present literary representations of the American Dream from a myth-critical perspective, and traces how its meaning was transformed by the First World War. In theory, the American Dream promises freedom, prosperity, success, and upward mobility through hard work in a society imagined as relatively open and meritocratic. However, after World War I, disillusionment reshaped that dream: first came Prohibition and the whirlwind of the Roaring Twenties, followed by the Great Depression. Seeking alternatives to American disenchantment, many artists and writers turned toward Europe—especially Paris—in search of a new home on the “old” continent. They initiated an expatriate movement, more precisely a recurring transatlantic circulation between Europe and the United States. Against this background, the paper examines continuity and change: what did it mean to belong to the Lost Generation? Was this movement merely performative, or did it constitute a genuine artistic response to the upheavals of history? Did the “American Dream” ever really exist, or was it always nothing more than a myth? We address those questions through close readings of texts by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway.

Krisztina Sárdi is Deputy Head of Communications at the Danube Institute. She is an award-winning journalist, and communications expert who was Head of the Culture section at *Magyar Hírlap*. A PhD-candidate in Comparative Literature at Pázmány Péter Catholic University, she worked there as an external lecturer, teaching classes from Early Modern to 20th Literature, and Journalism. She is also a Tolkien-scholar.

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Objects of Memory: Remnant of the Cold War in Don DeLillo's *Underworld*

Keywords: Cold War, postmodern fiction, history, objects of memory, representation

Don DeLillo had been long considered the writer of Cold War terror and of the technological sublime. With the collapse of the bipolar global system of power, he revisits the historical period defining a substantial part of his writing career in *Underworld*, a monstrous 1997 novel, a finalist for the National Book Award in the year of its publication. The text signals a turning point in the author's oeuvre in that it aims at summarizing DeLillo's understanding of the Cold War after it was supposed to have ended and anticipates many a motive to preoccupy him in the last couple of, arguably more minimalistic, decades of his writing. As I will argue, *Underworld* reckons with the historical past of the Cold War by representing three types of objects: decommissioned weaponry repurposed as artwork, pop cultural collectibles with a provenance marking the progress of time, and waste to be done away with the help of the atomic technology of the Cold War. The representation of these object defines ways in which to recall, to reckon and do away with the passing of an historical epoch, which, in the middle of the 1990s still indicate the hope for "the end of history".

László Sári B. is a literary historian, a freelance literary critic and a translator. His areas of expertise comprise contemporary American fiction and cultural studies. He is the manager of the MA program in American Studies and the PhD program in English, Irish and American Literatures. He serves as a member of the editorial board for 1749.hu, the Hungarian online journal for world literatures. He was a Fulbright Scholar to the University of Rhode Island in 2009/2010. His scholarly work appeared in Hungarian and English journals and collections of essays. To date, he published three monographs in Hungarian. His latest book received the Erdődy Edit Prize of the Institute of Literary Studies at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and the „Publication of the Year” award in the humanities at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Pécs. In 2023, he received the Ország László Award.

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The Greeks of New England: American and European Intertexts, Patterns and Paradigms of Donna Tartt's *The Secret History*

Keywords: dark academia, Donna Tartt, intertextuality, contemporary American literature

What becomes of an American who imitates Greeks? What becomes of a poor boy who claims to be rich? Whenever the ambiguous term dark academia is mentioned, Donna Tartt's first novel, *The Secret History* (1992), comes up as a paradigmatic novel belonging to this category. Although the roots of dark academia have been mentioned several times, the complex intertextual world of Tartt's novel, which contains numerous references to vastly different literary works and traditions, has not been completely charted yet. *The Secret History's* main character, Richard Papeen, arrives from working-class life in rural California to the compelling but also weird world of a prestigious New England college and gets tangled in a close circle of friends studying Classics under the guidance of a charismatic professor. He becomes immersed in a life both influenced by liter-

ary works and resembling them. Both American and European literary works are explicitly mentioned in the novel, serving as reference points not only for the readers but also for the characters. This paper investigates the novel's key intertexts with a special focus on how America and the American identity are depicted and compared to what Europe represents in the novel.

Anett Schäffer is an assistant professor at the Department of English Linguistics and Literature at the University of Miskolc. She earned her PhD at the Doctoral School of Literary Studies at the University of Miskolc in 2023. The title of her dissertation is "Térbe írt történetek: Városábrázolás és realizmus a kortárs anglofón és magyar prózában" ["Stories Woven into Spaces: Portrayal of Cities and Realism in Contemporary Anglophone and Hungarian Prose"]. Her main research fields are contemporary Anglophone and Hungarian literature. She regularly attends conferences and publishes studies and book reviews in these fields.

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Continuity and Change in the 250 Years of the U.S. Census

Keywords: census, demographics, race and ethnicity, Hispanic or Latino

The practice of counting populations for the purpose of taxation has a long historical precedent. While individual American colonies occasionally conducted their own censuses, they did so inconsistently. This changed after independence when the 1787 Constitution mandated a decennial census to determine the number of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives needed to represent each congressional district. Since its inception, racial demographics have been a component of the census. However, the inclusion of a separate question regarding Hispanic ethnicity in the 1980 Census was not achieved until pivotal civil rights legislation was enacted and Hispanic advocacy groups lobbied persistently. For several decades, there had been a growing consensus that Hispanic or Latino status should be classified as an ethnic category rather than a racial one. However, this is about to change with the 2030 Census, which will categorize Hispanic/Latino individuals as a distinct racial group. This paper compares and contrasts ongoing research concerning the multiple and changing ethno-racial identities of Latinos. It also explores the extent to which political and socioeconomic interests can create inequities by lumping certain groups within the Latino community—especially Afro-Latinos and Indigenous Latinos—under the same racial term. This reduces their visibility and potentially distorts the census data overall.

Éva Eszter Szabó is a historian, Americanist, and Latin Americanist. She is an associate professor and the chair of the Department of American Studies at the School of English and American Studies in Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. Her courses and research focus on inter-American relations, U.S. immigration history and policy, the history and culture of Latino communities, and international migration issues in global politics. Her most notable publications include *U.S. Foreign and Immigration Policies in the Caribbean Basin* (Savaria University Press, 2007) and *The Migration Factor in U.S. History from the Civil War Era to the Present* (Americana eBooks, 2025).

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Reading Secrecy in Munro's "Before the Change" After Dobbs and the Revelations

Keywords: secrecy, care, reproductive health, Alice Munro

This paper offers an interdisciplinary reading of Alice Munro's "Before the Change" as a reproductive health narrative in which clandestine abortion is mediated by secrecy and in which care and harm are inseparably entwined. Drawing on Georg Simmel's account of secrecy as a distinctive social form, and integrating feminist and historical scholarship on abortion secrecy with psychological research on concealment—especially James Pennebaker's inhibition/disclosure paradigm and Michael Slepian's work on secrecy's cognitive burden—I argue that Munro constructs a series of secret dyads (doctor–patient, father–daughter, former lovers) whose intensified intimacy is purchased at the cost of exclusion from the wider community. I further read the story's communication protocols—code words, telephone routines, and a ban on the word "abortion"—as techniques through which secrecy becomes the medium of care, and the narrator's retrospective letters and interior monologue as secrecy's afterlife: chronic rumination rather than discrete acts of concealment. This reading is timely in light of shifting legal and cultural conditions around reproductive health in the United States following the 2022 Dobbs decision that overturned *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), as well as the recent public attention to Munro's personal life.

Andrea F. Szabó, PhD, is associate professor in the English and American Studies Institute at the University of Pannonia, Hungary. She teaches courses in North-American literatures, popular culture and media representations of femininity. Her research focuses on the Gothic and literature with Alice Munro's fiction in the center.

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Keywords: eugenics, genetic counseling, post-World War II, population concerns, comparative analysis

From the second half of the 19th century onwards, eugenics became intertwined with public health issues in both Hungary and the United States. It has had a profound influence on the development of medicine as one of the most prominent ideological discourses, shaping policy issues in many areas, and contributing to the advancement of genetic research. This intertwining met with very little resistance until the middle of the 20th century. However, as a result of the racial hygiene discourse of World War II, both in the United States and in Hungary—as in other countries—genetics began to be separated from eugenics. One of the most significant arenas for this demarcation was the institutionalization of genetic counselling and the discourse surrounding it. Despite the divergent political systems and processes of reflection in the two countries, it is worthwhile to treat the United States as a point of reference. In the United States, the systematic eradication of eugenics from genetics commenced in the late 1940s and persisted until the

1970s. Conversely, in Hungary, the field of human genetics was largely ignored until the 1960s. In the '60s, academic discussions began on its medical applications in relation to population issues. These discussions subsequently led to its institutionalization, primarily through genetic counseling. The analysis presented in this study will concentrate on the manner in which post-World War II thinking and scientific values have shaped the history of genetic counseling.

Barna Szamosi works at Eszterházy Károly Catholic University at the Institute of English, American and German Studies in Eger, as an assistant professor. His research interest is at the intersection of medical history and biopolitics. He currently studies the role that eugenics played in the development of reproductive medicine in the state-socialist period.

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Munkácsy in Latin America

Keywords: Mihály Munkácsy, art, migration, László Passuth, József Smilovits

This presentation will concentrate rather on the movement of images and ideas than of people, although they are inevitably interconnected. The focus is the artwork of Mihály Munkácsy and its influence in the Americas. There are some well-known details: on one hand the trip of Munkácsy to the United States of America, sales to US collectors, and the possibility to see some of his works in the USA, and on the other, the articles written about his paintings by the Cuban revolutionary, José Martí, a great admirer of Munkácsy, which were published in various Latin American newspapers, including Argentina, Venezuela and Mexico. From the 1970s it became evident that there have been more ties between Munkácsy's artistic creations and Mexico. The research presents two threads: one related to the church Iglesia de la tercera orden in the center of Mérida, Yucatán, and the other, to the musician József Smilovits, member of the Léner quartet, who had emigrated to Mexico in the 1940s. The investigation relies principally on Hungarian press, where articles about these ties were published in the 1970s and 1980s. However, despite their significance they came to be largely forgotten.

Mónika Szente-Varga is a historian, a Latin America specialist. She studied History at the University of Szeged (Ph.D. in 2005 and Habilitation in 2014), and worked in Puebla, Mexico between 2005 and 2008. She joined Ludovika University of Public Service in 2015. She is full professor and at the same time vice dean, responsible for the area of education of the Faculty of Military Science and Officer Training. Her main fields of research are connected to Modern and Contemporary History of Latin America; Global History; Cold War History, Cultural Studies and International Migration.

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Epistolary Agency and Revolutionary Memory: Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren from a Decolonial Perspective

Keywords: Epistolary Agency, Revolutionary Memory, Decolonial Feminist Historiography, Cultural Memory, Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren

This presentation examines the correspondence between Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren as intertwined sites of memory and epistolary agency in the Revolutionary and early national United States. Their letters illuminate how elite white women negotiated voice, mentorship, and political participation within a settler-colonial and patriarchal public sphere that formally excluded them from power. I argue that letter-writing functioned as an intellectual and political practice through which both women articulated patriotism, cultivated authority, and constructed relational identities within the domestic sphere. The presentation also reassesses Warren's three-volume *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution* (1805), the first national history authored by a woman, written from an Anti-Federalist perspective. John Adams's outraged claim that "history is not the province of the ladies" underscores the gendered limits imposed on historical knowledge production, even as he and Abigail facilitated Warren's research by granting access to his correspondence. Reading the Adams–Warren exchange as cultural memory, the paper traces how digitization has elevated Abigail Adams's letters in the contemporary canon, while Warren's formal historiography remains comparatively marginalized, reshaping their afterlives and legacies.

Lívía Szélpál is a senior assistant professor in the Department of English Studies at the University of Szeged (SZTE), where she teaches American and British History, Literature, and Culture. She completed her M.A. in American Studies (2004) and History (2005) at the University of Szeged (SZTE) and earned a PhD in Comparative History at the Central European University in 2013. She is an advisory board member of *AMERICANA E-Journal of American Studies in Hungary* and an editorial board member of the *Társadalmi Nemek Tudománya Interdiszciplináris e-Folyóirat*. She participates in the work of the Centre for North American Studies of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Osijek, as an associate member and the Gender Studies Research Group, University of Szeged, as a core member.

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The Paradox of the 250-Year Legacy: The Continuity of the Black Struggle for Freedom

Keywords: African American History, Semiquincentennial, Jim Crow, Civil Rights Era, Black Intellectual Tradition, Citizenship, Racial Justice, American Democracy

As the United States marks its semiquincentennial anniversary this year, amidst the celebratory drums, it is important to examine the experiences of African Americans (or Blacks in America) within this American legacy. The American Declaration of Independence states, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Blacks in America were not extended the same rights and privileges that their white counter-

parts received naturally. For African Americans, the story of the United States is not a linear progression toward liberty, but a complex situation marked by a continuity of resistance to both state-sanctioned racial policies and structures meant to deny them these rights. This paper examines how Black communities in America have navigated the shift from chattel slavery to Jim Crow and then to the New Jim Crow policies that have denied them citizenship in a country that they built with their sweat and blood. By focusing on four key historical periods: Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Era, and the Post-Obama Presidency, the paper explores how the African American intellectual and activist tradition has consistently challenged the American Republic to reconcile its founding ideals with its lived realities. I conclude by arguing that the 250-year legacy is not found in static documents such as the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution, but in the evolving efforts of the Black community to redefine the boundaries of democracy, human rights, and citizenship.

Bekeh Ukelina is a Professor of History and African American Studies at the State University of New York Cortland, where he also serves as the Director of the Center for Gender and Intercultural Studies. He is the Vice President of the International Scientific Committee on Interpretation and Presentation (ICIP). Professor Ukelina's research addresses issues of development, indigenous and minority communities, and their integration into the global socio-economic order. His scholarship bridges the gap between archival history and the interpretation of cultural heritage, focusing on the long-term continuities of resistance and the evolution of global human rights frameworks.

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“Instructions to the Living from the Condition of the Dead” – Convict Confessions and Dying Warnings in the Colonial Period

Keywords: ethos, pathos, implied author, implied reader, pastoral power, heuristic and hortatory function

In seventeenth and eighteenth century New England the leading genre of public discourse and literary production were the sermon and the journal. While most sermons were written and delivered by reverends, or ministers, preaching was not restricted to the religious elite. Following the English tradition convicts on the scaffold also addressed the audience of their upcoming execution. Such “gallows literature” (Schorb 462) included a public admission of guilt and a recitation of a list of sins, misdemeanors, and crimes, which eventually led the perpetrator to the noose. As Lawrence Towner asserts such “true confessions and dying warnings” were structured along “a grand design of sin, remorse, confession, presumptive salvation, and death.” One of the best-known confessions is “The Last Words and Dying Speech of Levi Ames” (1773). Ames, a career criminal was sentenced to death for a series of crimes, the last of which could qualify as aggravated burglary. Although unlike several of his guilty counterparts he did not commit murder, the Superior Court of Massachusetts viewing Ames’ activities as a threat to the Puritan work ethic

and value system meted out the harshest sentence possible. The farewell confessions of convicts enjoyed tremendous popularity. Suffice to mention that Ames' last words inspired at least nine broadside poems (Anthony Vaver). Such texts provide an outstanding research opportunity to explore the Puritan mindset and the dynamics of contemporary social, political and legal relations. Consequently, utilizing Aristotle's tools of rhetorical analysis, Michel Foucault's idea of pastoral power, and Lawrence Towner's cyclical approach, I will investigate the oratory, functional, and narratological aspects of a selected sample provided by the respective documents.

András Tarnóc earned his PhD at Debrecen University in 2001 and completed his habilitation at the same institution in 2013. In addition to directing the American Studies disciplinary MA program at Eszterházy Károly Catholic University, where he works as a full college professor, he has taught courses on American history, literature, and ethno-racial relations. He wrote several publications including two monographs focusing on the mythopoeic aspects of confinement narratives in American culture with special attention to the Indian captivity narrative, the slave narrative, and the accounts of prisoners of war.

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***The Whore of Mensa* by Woody Allen as High Culture Comedy**

Keywords: Woody Allen, high culture comedy, humor, American literature

In this paper, I intend to discuss *The Whore of Mensa* by Woody Allen in order to reveal the multi-faceted sources of humor and highlight its intellectual humor. Basically, this brilliant short story is a "high culture" comedy, which also pokes fun at itself. "High culture" comedy is more cognitive, intellectual and sophisticated that typically appeal to more "educated" and "cultured" audiences who will probably have the adequate frames of references and look for cognitive pleasures rather than opting for more "popular" forms that are usually lowbrow, bodily, instant, easily accessible producing roaring laughter. "High culture" comedy is "inclined to induce contemplation and detachment in its audience rather than the more "vulgar" response of out-loud laughter" (Symons 2013, 121). Woody Allen's artistic output has been investigated from the point of view of various research fields and theoretical considerations, humor included, however, I will focus on the intellectuality of his humor production and why this tiny comic piece is an excellent example for it. I will rely on Alex Symons' 2013 article that examines *Annie Hall* (1977) from the point of view of "high culture" comedy and I will apply his concepts to *The Whore of Mensa*. This story is a parody of hardboiled detective fiction, on the one hand, because the private detective protagonist has to investigate a "crime ring" (and protect its client from blackmail), which is actually not a sex trafficking ring, so it is not criminal activity. On the other hand, it turns out that this service to provide pleasure is not about sex but about intellectual stimulation and cognitive satisfaction, thus it is also a joke on how prostitution works as well as how brothels and pimps operate. In addition, since the whole story relies on relatively wide knowledge concerning culture and litera-

ture—so readers need education and adequate cultural information as well as wide-ranging reading knowledge to get most of the jokes—it counts as “high culture” comedy that indirectly pokes fun at itself for being too intellectual likewise. At the same time, it also creates a pseudo dystopia where intellectuality is punishable and intelligent conversation is viewed as a crime, thus, it is also a satirical view of general societal trends that prefer uncultivated modes of entertainment.

Zsófia Anna Tóth received her PhD in British and American literature and culture from the University of Szeged and is currently a senior assistant professor at the Department of American Studies, Institute of English and American Studies, University of Szeged, Hungary. Her PhD research focused on the representation of female aggression and violence in American literature, culture and especially cinema. Her research also includes Jane Austen’s works and their adaptations, the New Woman, American women writers especially Sandra Cisneros as well as Disney and Pixar animations. Her current research focuses on theories of humor, the questions of humor and gender as well as women’s humor while she is currently working on a book about the work(s), humorous products/performances and the overall phenomenon of Mae West.

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Reframing the Ethnic Villain in Post-9/11 American Cinema: Continuity and Transformation in US Cultural Identity

Keywords: Post-9/11 American cinema; racialization; ethnic villain; cinematic representation; American cultural identity

This paper explores the persistence and transformation of the ethnic villain in post-9/11 American cinema as a racialized figure through which anxieties about national security, identity, and global influence are articulated. Situating post-9/11 films within the context of American cultural history and applying critical approaches to race and representation, the paper develops the concept of the ethnic villain as a cinematic tool of racialization that both reproduces established hierarchies of difference and adjusts them to contemporary geopolitical realities. Through a comparative analysis of selected films, the study examines three interconnected case studies: Asian American, Latino American, and Arab/Muslim representations. Although these groups hold distinct historical and political positions within US racial structures, their cinematic portrayals often reveal recurring narrative patterns that associate criminality, foreignness, and danger with racialized differences. Simultaneously, post-9/11 cinema shows moments of ambiguity and challenge that complicate earlier, more stereotypical depictions without fully dismantling them. The findings show that post-9/11 American cinema does not break away from earlier representational regimes but rather recalibrates them, producing a flexible model of ethnic villainy that maintains racial hierarchies while accommodating discourses of diversity, inclusion, and narrative complexity.

Rabeb is a PhD Candidate in American Studies at Eötvös Loránd University, researching the transformation of American cinematic identities in the post-9/11 era. She was nominated for the 2025 K. Patricia Cross Future Leaders Award. Her research interests include American national identity, film studies, and border studies. Rabeb has published four peer-reviewed papers, including “The US–Mexico Cinematic Border: Screening the Northbound Movement” and “Making Sense of the American Collective Identity through *Captain America: The First Avenger* (2011).” She has taught “Ethnic Minorities in the US” and “American Culture” to undergraduate students in the Department of American Studies at ELTE University.

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“They walked the Trail, walked and crawled and died:” The Haunting Memory of the Trail of Tears in Brandon Hobson’s *The Removed*

Keywords: indigenous literature, historical narrative, Cherokee cosmology

For the Echota family the saying “history repeats itself” is an integral part of their past and present. While they are trying to process the loss of their son Ray-Ray, who fell victim to police brutality, they also carry the weight of the communal trauma of the Trail of Tears. The forced removal of the Cherokees from their sacred land echoes through the narrative as one of their ancestors, Tsala, describes the ominous signs that preceded the arrival of the federal troops, who killed him for refusing to walk the Trail. Brandon Hobson in *The Removed* (2021) creates a story that blurs the spatial and temporal boundaries between the lives of contemporary Cherokees and their ancestors who lived in the 1830s. The narrative structure of the novel suggests that the Trail of Tears is not merely a historical event, rather it is actively shaping Cherokee cultural identity and impacts the self-perception of the members of the tribe. As the death of Ray-Ray traumatizes the Echotas, the ancestral voice of Tsala resurfaces, demonstrating that similar tragedies have happened to the family before, but with the power of storytelling healing and cultural continuity are possible.

Éva Urbán is a second-year PhD student in the North American Literature and Culture subprogram of the Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Debrecen, Hungary. She started her researching contemporary Native American literature in 2020. Currently she is working on her doctoral dissertation which focuses on the healing potential of storytelling, the depiction of historical trauma, and Indigenous epistemologies in contemporary Native American fiction. Her research interests also include visual narratives, and Indigenous horror.

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Thomas Jefferson's Vision of the American Nation before Independence

Keywords: Thomas Jefferson, America, Nationhood, Independence

Debunking an old paradigm of early American national identity, a more recent view has assumed the vigor that supposedly characterized the nationalism of pre-Independence white Americans, mainly on account of their adversarial view of racially different social groups of the continent, arguing how such an attitude contributed to their wish to break ties with Britain. Such a view strongly relies on a more general perspective of the problem of national identity as promoted by historian Anthony D. Smith. What this recent turn, however, seems to ignore is the fact how Smith's understanding of the potential coexistence of the "civic/territorial" and the "ethnic/cultural" conceptions of the nation can apply to early American national thought with respect to the colonies and the mother country. This is what I undertake in relation to Jefferson's A Summary View of the Rights of British America (1774) arguing how his construction of a story for the American nation could be best understood as an attempt at positing both a political and ethnic community already in existence in the document. The vigor of US nationalism, as Jefferson's case shows, was, then, in part fueled by a peculiar understanding of imperial relations as constructed through such works as the Summary View, preparing the road to independence.

Zoltán Vajda is an associate professor of American Studies at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Szeged, Hungary. His main areas of research and teaching encompass early American intellectual and cultural history, antebellum Southern history, Thomas Jefferson and his times, John C. Calhoun, and US political thought. His current research interest includes the significance of sentimentalism in early US political thinking as well as the issue of poverty and nationhood in the early Republic. He serves on the editorial board of *Aetas*, a historical journal in Hungarian and AMERICANA, an e-journal of American Studies.

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Extremism Across the Border: The Revolutionary Mexicanist Action in the 1930s

Keywords: American Fascism, Mexican Fascism, nativism, right-wing extremism

The Inter-War period saw the formation of a dozen right-wing groups in the United States, among them the German-American Bund led by Fritz Kuhn and William Dudley Pelley's Silver Shirts. Ideologically similar, but different in their goals and approaches, these groups often crossed paths, shared members, and worked together on their quests to rid the United States of the "unwanted:" Communists, Catholics, immigrants, Jewish people, and the generally "unfit." Henry D. Allen, a floundering businessman and political activist, was one of the extremists link-

ing together a few of these groups, as he hopped from organization to organization during the 1930s. He traveled across the country to recruit new members to the cause of white supremacy, and in the process crossed the border to Mexico and met the leader of the Revolutionary Mexicanist Action, Nicolás Rodríguez Carrasco. The RMA, or the Gold Shirts as they were also known, was ideologically identical to the right-wing groups of the United States, was in correspondence with the Nazi Party of Germany, and worked towards a “Mexico for Mexicans Only.” Allen connected Rodríguez Carrasco’s organization with US groups and helped him during his exile in Texas when the Mexican government deemed the Gold Shirts too dangerous to continue operating. This paper will focus on the actions of the RMA in Mexico before Rodríguez Carrasco’s exile to the US, Rodríguez Carrasco’s stay in Texas, and his connections with American extremists during the 1930s.

Regina Varga is a PhD student at the Doctoral School of Literary Studies at Eötvös Loránd University, pursuing a degree in American Studies. Her research focuses on white supremacy in the United States, identity creation, the concept of whiteness, and far-right discourse in various forms of media.

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Revisiting Aldous Huxley in Santa Barbara 1959 : A 2026 Update

Keywords: Huxley; education; human potentialities; academic fragmentation

In 1959, Aldous Huxley gave a series of lectures at the University of California, Santa Barbara entitled “The Human Situation.” In this radical and extraordinary lecture series Huxley lays out his wide-ranging views in what he expressed as an “antidote to academic specialization and fragmentation.” Focusing on his second and last lectures of the series – “Integrate Education and Latent Human Potentialities” – this paper aims to bring out some of the key features of the talks and see if they still have relevance in the second quarter of the twenty-first century. Huxley has rightly been regarded as a voyeur of what is to come, most notably with his classic novel *A Brave New World*. However, his more personal and intellectual lectures may have become lost to the sands of time. It is certainly time for this major intellect of the mid-20th century to be revisited and, hopefully, for some of his prescient thoughts to be re-integrated into a way forward in developing our current human potentialities.

Mr Geoffrey Vaughan is a lecturer in English and ESL and a final year Doctoral school student at Eszterházy Károly Catholic University and Doctoral School of Education, Eger, Hungary. He holds a Master’s degree in Foreign Language education from Eszterházy Károly Catholic University and obtained his Bachelor’s degree and Teacher Diploma from the University of Stirling, UK. He has been a school educator for 25 years, teaching English literature and language in the UK and internationally and is now researching learning with a specialism in digital pedagogy and the

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Restrictions, Reactions, Restructuring: Migration Pathways of Hungarians in 1920s North America

Keywords: migration, Hungary, Canada, US, inter-American, agency, infrastructures, mediation

This paper examines the rapid restructuring of Hungarian migration pathways in the second half of the 1920s by situating migrant mobility at the intersection of migration policies in various countries, historical antecedents, mediated perceptions, intermediation, as well as migrant decision-making. Focusing on Hungarians navigating North America after the introduction of U.S. immigration quotas, it demonstrates how migration trajectories were reconfigured through the combined effects of American restriction, selective Canadian openness, and Hungarian attempts to regulate (and discourage) emigration. Drawing on government documents, contemporary Hungarian-language newspapers, travel writing, and migrant accounts, the paper conceptualizes migration as a multi-layered process shaped not only by formal policy regimes but also by migration infrastructures and informal networks facilitating legal, semi-legal, and unauthorized mobility. By integrating transatlantic and inter-American perspectives, the study highlights migrant agency in adapting to shifting constraints and shows how Canada emerged simultaneously as a destination with shifting locations and a springboard within a re-routed North American migration system.

Balázs Venkovits is associate professor of American Studies and director of the Institute of English and American Studies and the Canadian Studies Centre at the University of Debrecen. He earned his Ph.D. in 2014 and completed his habilitation in 2021. Among others, he is the recipient of the Hungarian OTKA (2022-26) and Jedlik (2013-14) grants, a JFK Research Fellowship (2013) and a Fulbright (2010-2011). His academic interests include travel writing and migration studies, he is currently researching Hungarian immigration to Canada in the 1920s, working on his monograph on this topic and a digital mapping project on Hungarians in Montreal in the past 100 years.

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Against the American 250: Counter-Historical Continuity in *Almanac of the Dead*

Keywords: hemispheric vision, revolution, counter-history, empire, sovereignty, crisis, resistance

Commemorative narratives of the United States consistently rely on a logic of rupture and renewal. Such a framing represents American history as a sequence of crises ultimately resolved through progress, reform, or reinvention. This paper reads Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) as a radical counter-history to such narratives. The novel exposes the deep continuity of settler colonial violence, imperial expansion, and ecological extraction beneath changing political forms. Rather than recounting US history from 1776 onward, *Almanac* situates the nation within a hemispheric and Indigenous temporal framework in which conquest, resistance, and dispossession recur across centuries and borders. The novel dismantles the myth of American exceptionalism by presenting the United States as just one episode within a longer continental struggle over land, resources, and sovereignty. By refusing national chronology and linear progress, Silko offers a literary archive of counter-historical continuity that challenges celebratory accounts of the American 250-year legacy. The paper argues that *Almanac of the Dead* provides a powerful literary model for rethinking continuity and change as intertwined processes that sustain imperial power while also enabling enduring forms of resistance.

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Crime Writing and Gothic Imagination in Seeley Regester's *The Dead Letter*

Keywords: dime novel, Gothic, mystery, locked-room, female crime writing, Reconstruction era

Crime writing in North America had long been present before Metta Victoria Fuller Victor published *The Dead Letter* in 1867. Writing under the pen name of Seeley Regester, Fuller produced the first American detective novel that not only enriched popular literary forms advertised as dime novels but it also impacted the genre's narrative form and style in the USA. Fuller's detective novel, however, is disregarded for its weak plot, shallow characterization, and heavy reliance on Gothic traditions. Nevertheless, recent critical trends in crime fiction scholarship have demonstrated the shortcomings of previous criticism regarding crime narratives as rule-bound and formulaic. Since Maurizio Ascari's monograph, *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction. Supernatural, Gothic, Sensational* (2007) shed light on the multiplicity of forms and genres influencing crime writing traditions stemming from sixteenth- or seventeenth-century crime literature, scholars have more and more turned their attention to individual texts to explore their idiosyncrasies and impact on the literary evolution of crime fiction. Therefore, this paper has at least two main goals: first, it

examines how Fuller exploits earlier models of crime narratives born out of Gothic conventions, and second, it examines how this hybrid text expands on previous models to foreshadow the first, fully acclaimed American locked-room mystery novel, *The Leavonworth Case* (1878) written by Anna Katherine Green, “the mother of the detective novel.” Renata Zsámiba is senior lecturer at Eszterházy Károly Catholic University, Eger, Hungary. Her research focuses on British and American as well as socialist and contemporary Hungarian crime fiction. Her recent publications include an edited themed issue on Hybridity and Generic Experiments in Crime Narratives published by HJEAS in 2025, and an edited volume on Hungarian crime fiction also published in 2025. She is the treasurer of the Hungarian Association for American Studies and the main organizer of the 15th HAAS conference held at EKCUCU on 28-30 May 2026. She was the main organizer of the 11th Captivating Criminality conference on Hybridisation and Generic Experiments in Crime Narratives at EKCUCU in June, 2024.

