

Croatian Association for American Studies  
10<sup>th</sup> Annual Workshop

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Breaking Stereotypes  
in American Popular Culture

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Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek



# Book of Abstracts

## Breaking Stereotypes in American Popular Culture

Croatian Association for American Studies

10<sup>th</sup> Annual Workshop

Organized by  
Centre for Popular Culture



Center for North American Studies



Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek



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## KEYNOTE TALK

### CHALLENGING “KAREN” STEREOTYPES

Kamilla Elliott

Kamilla Elliott is Professor of Literature and Media in the Department of English and Creative Writing at Lancaster University. Her principal interests lie in relations between British literature of the long nineteenth century and other media (painting, illustration, theatre, film, television, new media). She is author of *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (Cambridge, 2003), *Portraiture and British Gothic Fiction: The Rise of Picture Identification, 1764-1835* (Johns Hopkins, 2012), and *Theorizing Adaptation* (Oxford, 2020). She is working on a sequel to *Portraiture and British Gothic Fiction*, continuing the study to 1918, and focusing her study of adaptation on new media.

#### Abstract

Although it has long-standing historical roots, the “Karen” stereotype went viral in 2020 and still permeates social and news media. “Karen” is typically an angry, entitled, American, middle-class, middle-aged white woman who uses her racial, economic, and age privilege to call authority figures to punish people she considers to be beneath her for behaviours that do not meet her unreasonable expectations or demands. Karen threatens lives and livelihoods: she complains to the manager about service workers, calls the authorities on law-abiding ethnic minorities, and threatens those who challenge her own law-breaking, whether calling the police on a black man who asks her to observe dog-leash laws or coughing on white peers who ask her to follow mask-wearing laws during the Covid-19 pandemic (here, her sense of lethal, privileged entitlement derives from her political ideology). This paper considers several ways in which the Karen stereotype informs the conference theme, “Challenging American Stereotypes.” “Challenging” resonates doubly and inversely: as a participle, it refers to people challenging stereotypes; as an adjective, it articulates how stereotypes are challenging to people. “Challenging” furthermore describes the core of the Karen stereotype itself: amidst many variations, Karen is one who challenges. The keynote concludes with a discussion of how the multifariousness, mutations, contradictions, and contests within and about the Karen stereotype offer ways to challenge challenging American stereotypes more generally.

## PRESENTATIONS

### TEACHING ABOUT STEREOTYPES ON EXAMPLES OF AMERICAN POPCULTURE

Marinela Boras

Marinela Boras is a teacher of English and German as foreign languages at a secondary school in Osijek, Croatia. She is active at national and international scientific conferences and enjoys sharing best teaching practices. She is also a doctoral student of Pedagogy and Contemporary School Culture at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Osijek, Croatia. Her scientific interests include cognitive linguistics, glotodidactics, innovative teaching methods and digital tools, intercultural competencies and curriculum, continuous teacher education, and international projects in foreign language teaching.

#### Abstract

Researchers in the field of glotodidactics try to find new ways of successful teaching. One of the many topics teachers teach are stereotypes. The aim of this paper is to explore how teachers teach about stereotypes and give examples of good practice from American popular culture in their English language classes. This research has been conducted through a focus group of six secondary school teachers of English as a foreign language in the Republic of Croatia. The results have shown how teachers teach about stereotypes on examples of American popular culture and that the teachers agree that they should help students break stereotypes. Teachers should raise awareness among their students about discrimination and stereotypes, especially as the students are often unconscious about them. Schools in Europe, the US, and all around the globe should be places of respect, trust, and understanding. Diversity and inclusion should be key words in educational systems worldwide.

## I DON'T KNOW, BUT I'VE BEEN TOLD: STEREOTYPES ABOUT ROCK'N'ROLL

Tomislav Brlek

Tomislav Brlek, PhD, is Associate Professor at the Department of Comparative Literature (Section for History of World Literature), Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. He received his BA in English and Spanish (1996), MA (The Placing of Ted Hughes in Shakespeare Criticism, 2002), and PhD (T.S. Eliot in the Context of Contemporary Theory, 2007) in Theory and History of Literature, from the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb.

### Abstract

In popular as well as critical discourse, stereotypes about rock'n'roll are galore, starting from the inveterate problem of the term's referent, through the routine conflating of its socio-political and cultural, not to mention historical, import, to the literalness customary in interpretive readings of its formal content, both musical and verbal. That academic discussions, likewise, swarm with kneejerk responses and rash inference and are more often than not contingent upon unexamined assumptions, should perhaps come as no surprise, given that two of the most ineradicable stereotypes about rock'n'roll are its unpremeditated nature and the unreflective response it concomitantly mandates. Drawing on the insights of Greil Marcus on the elusive haecceity of rock'n'roll and of Christopher Ricks on the creative use of clichés and other forms of dead language, the paper offers for consideration the very paradigm of stereotyped notions of rock'n'roll – Led Zeppelin. In the light of Steve Waksman's perspicacious take on the sundry aspects of their work habitually deemed highly problematic, the consentient judgement of dismissal as regards its significance is shown to be predicated upon a host of stereotypes, all of which are readily broken when the songs are actually attended to in performance, Beth Hart's *A Tribute to Led Zeppelin*, released in February 2022, being but the most recent case in point.

## WHAT'S WRONG WITH PUBLIC OPINION

Sven Cvek

Sven Cvek is Associate Professor in the American Studies program of the English Department at the University of Zagreb, where he teaches courses in contemporary US literature and culture. He also works on issues of post-socialist transition. His publications include books *Towering Figures: Reading the 9/11 Archive* (2011) and *Borovo on Strike: Labor in Transition 1987-1991* (2019).

### Abstract

Any discussion of stereotypes today will likely be framed by a narrative of recognition of difference of particular social groups (and, if only implicitly, some normative ideal of their "proper" representation). My intention in this talk is to turn to Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922), the book which gave us the contemporary understanding of stereotype, in order to comment on the implications of the concept as it was influentially elaborated by Lippmann. Moving between political science, social psychology, popular philosophy, and journalistic commentary, Lippmann discusses stereotypes in relation to more fundamental problems of knowledge, representation, and self-interest. His main theme, however, is liberal democracy and what one commentator called "the paradoxes of majority rule," in the wake of the First World War, The Russian Revolution, and in the context of the rise of mass culture.

## THE WHITE SAVIOR TROPE IN POPULAR CULTURE

Dina Cvrtila

Dina Cvrtila graduated with a BA in English and Italian language and literature from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb. In 2015, she received her MA degree in American Studies with the thesis entitled "Slotkin's Reading of Violence and the American Story," supervised by Professor Stipe Grgas, PhD. She is currently working as a translator for English and Italian. In her free time, she is passionate about pursuing her interest in American Studies. Lately, she has developed a keen interest in racial issues as well the issues of marginalized communities in general. Recently, she has taken courses on Coursera entitled Anti-Racism I and Anti-Racism II, Black Lives Matter, Race and Cultural Diversity in American Life and History, Feminism and Social Justice, and Reducing Gun Violence in America: Evidence for Change.

### Abstract

This paper aims to present the white savior trope in various works of popular culture. At the center of the white savior narrative is a benevolent white protagonist whose mission is to educate or liberate the person of color from poverty and/or deprivation. The focus is not on the person of color's experience of racism but on the moral upliftment of the white protagonist. Such a protagonist typically goes through complex character development, having to stand up to his/her racist community, ultimately being rewarded with personal fulfillment. Marginalized groups are presented as passive in their own stories, needing white people to act on their behalf. They lack three-dimensionality and are reduced to their negative experiences, further perpetuating the idea of the white hero. Often set in the past, these narratives offer feel-good endings of interracial reconciliation, providing the audiences with the false sense that the complexity of racism has been solved and enabling them to distance themselves from the ongoing racism in contemporary society. However, the underlying systemic causes of oppression are rarely discussed, and no real value is added to addressing this issue. The popularity of such narratives is owed to the belief that white audiences typically better relate to stories about marginalized people if they are told from the white person's perspective. However, this paper aims to bring awareness to and challenge these deeply rooted concepts and offer the readers a new outlook, enabling them to actively confront their own bias.

## THE NOTION OF DECENTRALISED SUBJECT IN THOMAS PYNCHON'S *THE CRYING OF LOT 49*

Sanita Delić

Sanita Delić earned her MA degree in British and American literature and is at present a second-year PhD student of literature at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo. Her main research interests include American literary postmodernism and postpostmodernism, postmodern philosophy, and feminism. She is currently working as an ESL teacher at the French International School (CIFS) of Sarajevo.

### Abstract

This paper aims to show how through the state of paranoia, historiographic meta-fiction, and the deconstruction of the detective genre, *The Crying of Lot 49* by Thomas Pynchon brings up the subject of violence and tactics of manipulation performed on the powerless. It explores stereotypes and problems of traditionally divided gender roles, especially through the position of Oedipa, a decentralized subject who lives an invisible life on the margins of existence in a dramatically fragmented society. Through defamiliarizing the familiar, the main heroine is trying to unravel a mystery called "Trystero" after being named the co-executor of the estate of her ex-boyfriend, Pierce Inverarity. As she tries to "write" a story about the secret postal organization, Oedipa goes from man to man looking for answers, and along the way, she becomes the object of their ridicule and desire. Going beyond the framework of her unhappy marriage, Oedipa breaks the patriarchal shackles while taking on the role of (anti)detective, trapped between the reality.

## HIGH SCHOOL STEREOTYPES IN *THIRTEEN REASONS WHY*: VICTIMS, BULLIES, AND PARENTS

Vedran Domjanović and Biljana Oklopčić

Vedran Domjanović holds a Master's degree in English Language and Literature – Translation and Interpreting Studies and Pedagogy. His main areas of interest are popular fiction, crime fiction, YA literature, and the position of subordinated groups in literature and culture. He is the co-author of one original research paper titled "Murder and Crime-Solving Strategies in Agatha Christie's Works," which was published in *Folia Linguistica et Litteraria*. He works as an English teacher and a freelance translator.

Biljana Oklopčić is Associate Professor of American literature, currently serving in the capacity of Vice-Dean for Study Programs and Lifelong Learning, at the Department of English of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Osijek, Croatia. She specializes in literature of the American South, American Modernism, popular culture, popular fiction, and stereotypes in literature and culture. She is the author of *Faulkner and the Native Keystone: Reading (Beyond) the American South* (2014) and *Mit i stereotip u djelima Williama Faulknera* (2021). For her academic achievements, she has been rewarded with Fulbright, Otto Bennemann, Erasmus, and John F. Kennedy Institute Library grants.

### Abstract

Jay Asher's debut novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* has been sparking a lot of controversy ever since its publication in 2007, which was further reinforced upon the release of the Netflix adaptation in 2017. The story of a typical American high school, which is, as usual, teeming with stereotype-embodying jocks, cheerleaders, and other popular and less fortunate students, is told in an unconventional, beyond-the-grave manner, through the combined narration of Hannah Baker's audio-taped depiction of events that lead up to her suicide and Clay Jensen's subsequent reaction to the tapes. Though Asher deserves praise for managing an almost impossible task of portraying an archetypal American high school in such an unprecedented manner in terms of narration and creating some of the characters much differently than is typical, a large portion of the backbone of the novel is comprised of highly stereotyped characters and situations. The aim of this paper is to analyse these particular characters and situations as they are depicted in both the series and the novel, highlighting the standardly ruthless bullies and present but absent parents as well as Hannah Baker, a typical victim of bullying, as they are depicted in both the series and the novel.

**CONQUERING FEMININITY:  
(DE)CONSTRUCTION AND/OR SUBVERSION OF  
HIGH SCHOOL STEREOTYPES IN *EUPHORIA***

**Dora Golub**

Dora Golub holds a BA in Dramaturgy at the Academy of Dramatic Art and a BA and MA in Comparative Literature at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. Currently, she is attending the PhD program in Literature, Theatre and Performing Arts, Film, Musicology, and Culture at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. Dora Golub's postgraduate research deals with revisioning aesthetic representation of female death on the theatrical stage through feminist dramaturgy. Her academic interests include theatre and performance studies, feminist criticism, girlhood studies, and *horror* film. Since 2014 she has worked as a dramaturge on numerous projects in various theatres in Croatia.

**Abstract**

Since its airing in 2019, HBO's teen drama *Euphoria* has gained cult status among zoomers and millennials alike. As *The Guardian's* Adrian Horton noted, "*Euphoria* is best understood as a millennial revisionist fantasy of their own proto-social media high school days, if the current digital hellscape was our teenage playground." Controversial for graphic depictions of drug use, underage sex, and violence, Sam Levinson's TV series equally transcends and widens the generation gap. However, contrary to claims of the enraged Parents Television Council, it was not (only) the count of penises in the provocative scene of the episode *Stuntin' Like My Daddy* that gave it a cultural significance. *Euphoria* depicts a range of characters embodying well-known high school stereotypes of popular American culture, such as jocks, cheerleaders, nerds, and the rest, while dealing with problems of gender identity and representation, most obviously demonstrated through the portrayal of the transgender character Jules. The aim of my presentation is to analyse the artistic means and strategies *Euphoria* uses to endorse and then subvert stereotypes of the high school milieu commonly displayed in the American popular culture, taking into account gender, race, and class as crucial social indicators. More importantly, focusing on phenomena of slut-shaming and fat-shaming, I will discuss and address the problem of representation of femininity in the series from the perspectives of girl studies and feminist criticism, using Laura Mulvey's male gaze theory to dissect how the embodiment of popular stereotypes (re)configurates protagonists' identities.

## THOMAS PYNCHON'S REPRESENTATION OF STEREOTYPICAL PRECONCEPTIONS IN *AGAINST THE DAY*

Lovorka Gruić Grmuša

Lovorka Gruić Grmuša is Associate Professor at the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka, Croatia. She has contributed to many literary journals and conference proceedings, co-edited a collection of papers - *Space and Time in Language and Literature* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2009), is the author of *The Novelistic Vision of Kurt Vonnegut* (FFRI 2015), and co-authored with Biljana Oklopčić - *Memory and Identity in Modern and Postmodern Literature* (Springer Nature 2022). Among her academic achievements, she has been awarded the Fulbright Fellowship and the Duke University Literature Program grant.

### Abstract

Pynchon's reiteration of "irregularities" and "irregulars" as multilevel puns about identity of the people who endure "enslavement" and who fight against harmful "wardens" of their states (*AtD* 87), tied primarily to the wider Balkans area and its populace, but also to the American labor, identified as talking "several Slavic tongues [...], fingerless slaughterhouse veterans, irregulars in the army of sorrow" (*AtD* 51), is an irony directed towards Western politics, which ascribe stereotypical images of picturesque backwardness and bloody unruliness to any oppressed, disobedient or marginalized group of people, stigmatized as outsiders, inferiors, and "the Other." Pynchon picks up on Western historians' (such as Misha Glenny and William Sloane) exaggerations about inhumanity, the myriad identities, and "otherness" of the region and its anarchic elements (like the Uskoks) for they often announce that great powers appear to be "dragged" into Balkan or Balkan-like disputes and warfare, revealing highbrow posture of civilized rule and instruction, justifying Western ideas about superiority. As usual, Pynchon plays the role of the anti-categorical postmodern writer, mixing time and space, sixteenth century Uskoks, turn of the twentieth century fictitious Neo Uskoks, and North American anarchists, who are suppressed, degraded, and/or exiled, and who are pejoratively labeled as "the tribal, the backward, the primitive, the barbarian" (Todorova 3). To Pynchon, constituting somebody's identity (personal, collective, social, national) on the grounds of rumor and alike artificial constructs, imposed disfigurations, or biased views, serves as a reminder of stereotypical constructions for the author warns his readers against easy one-sided interpretations of life, drawing attention to how hard it is to distinguish villains from victims in different contexts.

**A POSSIBILITY OF TRANSFORMATION:  
(UN)STEREOTYPICAL IMAGES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE  
CHARACTERS IN ALICE WALKER'S *THE COLOR PURPLE***

**Aleksandra Izgarjan**

Aleksandra Izgarjan is Full Professor at the English Department, University of Novi Sad. She teaches courses in American literature, culture, and history. She has published four books and more than fifty articles in the field of literature and gender studies. She was a guest lecturer at New York University, Howard University, and University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, USA. She is the president of the Association for American Studies in South East Europe and vice-president of the Serbian Association for Anglo-American Studies.

**Abstract**

From the inception of the African American female literary tradition, one of its main goals has been to dismantle the stereotypes about African American women created by the dominant white community. Hazel Carby states that the objective of stereotypes is "not to reflect or represent a reality but to function as a disguise, or mystification, of objective social relations." The aim of my presentation will be to show how and why the dominant white community constructed the stereotypes of mammy, tragic mulata, Sapphire, and Jezebel and the ways African American women writers and scholars strove to replace them with images of strong black women in order to break away from these negative portrayals of African American women. I will particularly focus on Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple* since it is my contention that Walker skillfully manipulates these stereotypes and by the end completely revises them. Her character's struggle with stereotypes is an obvious example of the African American women's struggle for control over their cultural representation and self-definition. By illustrating how ungrounded these stereotypes were in African American women's reality, Walker at the same time shows how they were essential in the construction of Southern white patriarchy and racial supremacy. Each of Walker's characters frees herself from the constraints of stereotypical portrayal of African American women and manifests potential for their transformation.

## KENDRICK LAMAR AND WOKE RACISM

Andrea Jović

Andrea Jović is a PhD student in the Literature, Theatre and Performing Arts, Film, Musicology, and Culture doctoral studies program at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. Her dissertation examines literary representations of work to better understand how literature can denaturalize work and help us imagine a post-work world. Her research interests include contemporary literature, political theory, post-work theory, xenofeminism, and queer theory.

### Abstract

In May 2022, American hip hop artist Kendrick Lamar released his fifth album, *Mr. Morale & the Steppers*. The album traces Lamar's personal growth and reckoning with emotional trauma caused by racism, patriarchy, and poverty, offering a nuanced social critique rarely encountered in the mentioned genre. However, it was met with quite a lot of backlash, mostly from white liberals. Lamar was accused of sexism for the song "We Cry Together," aimed at depicting the mechanics of dysfunctional, underprivileged couples, as well as transphobia for the song "Auntie Diaries," in which he portrays his own coming to terms with his uncle's and cousin's trans identity. This paper, however, will argue that Lamar's effort, while imperfect, is not in any way regressive and is indicative of a wider climate of "an obsessive, self-involved, totalitarian, and utterly unnecessary kind of cultural reprogramming" which John McWorther names "woke racism," a semi-religion portraying black people as helpless victims of unchangeable white oppression, thus denying them agency. As Dan Kovalik notices, this ideology unnecessarily ruins careers and undermines leftist politics by leaving no room for solidarity and education. The paper argues that Lamar's album is a perfect shot to exit the vampire castle, a piece of art that should be appreciated for its intent and scope and criticized in a spirit of solidarity to cultivate its egalitarian sensibilities rather than twist them for self-righteous ideological gratification.

### Works Cited

- Kovalik, Dan. *Cancel This Book: The Progressive Case Against Cancel Culture*. Hot Books, 2021.
- McWorther, John. *Woke Racism: How a New Religion Has Betrayed Black America*. Portfolio/Penguin, 2021.

## JOHN FORD'S *HAMLET*, OR THE WESTERN AS AN AMERICAN MOURNING PLAY

Tatjana Jukić

Tatjana Jukić is Professor and Chair of English Literature in the Department of English at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, where she teaches Victorian literature and arts, and film studies. She also teaches in the doctoral programs of Comparative Literature and of Croatian Language and Literature and has been invited to lecture on literary history and theory by universities and research institutes in Europe and the United States. She has authored two books. Her work has been published in *The Henry James Review*, *Orbis Litterarum*, *Neue Rundschau*, and *European Journal of English Studies*.

### Abstract

It could be argued that the Western epitomizes film as an American art, to which the gunfight at the O.K. Corral (1881) supplies a specimen story and a story of origin – a proposition supported by the fact that Wyatt Earp eventually acted as a consultant to early Hollywood filmmakers, including young John Ford. In Ford's version of the gunfight at the O.K. Corral – *My Darling Clementine* (1946) – the story invites to be considered against an emphatic reference to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, suggesting that *Hamlet* ultimately captures the constitution of the Western and anticipates the seminal function of American cinema in the ideation of modernity. With a focus on *My Darling Clementine*, I propose to analyze how *Hamlet* is accommodated and transformed in the Western, while Ford, freshly returned from World War II, claims for the Western the rationale and the rationality of the early modern mourning play. What is finally at stake is America as a laboratory of political modernity whose own rationale relies on the thinking of transformation.

## ON CLICHÉS AND NICHES: REMARKS ON THE SHAPING OF EARLY ROCK MUSIC

Borislav Knežević

Borislav Knežević is Professor in the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. He is the author of two books and a number of articles. His research interests include Victorian literature, representation of economic matters in literature, topics in film, and conceptualizations of the study of English literature as an academic discipline.

### Abstract

In the 1950s, changing roles of local stations in American radio broadcasting and an increasing commercial reach of new vinyl record formats helped create conditions favorable to specialized markets in popular music and commercial development of relatively autonomous (although interacting) forms of cultural convention and innovation (the field of popular music was thus rather differently structured from the configuration of the cultural field of network television as established in the 1950s, which sought to provide cultural conventions or clichés mainly designed to appeal to a nation-wide audience). However, the development of rock music in the 1960s seemed to rearrange the configuration of the field of American popular music. Because of the role of British artists in the shaping of rock music, influenced as they were by American music genres and cultural iconographies as well as distanced from much of their social context, rock music took on a complex cultural significance which cannot be construed as proceeding from an exclusively American logic. Given this international dynamic, 1960s and early 1970s rock may be said to have often been informed by ambitions of or ventures into esthetic transnationalism or even universalism. This paper seeks to address some of the elements of this complex position of rock music with regard to American culture, especially concerning its ways of contending with the logic of cultural clichés and market niches.

**THE BLIND HOLLYWOOD:  
THE CASE STUDY OF STEREOTYPING OF BLINDNESS  
AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN FILMS AND VIDEO GAMES**

**Matko Kosovec**

Matko Kosovec is a Ph.D. student of literature at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Studies, University of Zagreb. His main area of research is Gothic literature, but he is also interested in other literary genres as well as film. He is visually impaired with six percent remaining eyesight. That is why he has chosen the topic of the portrayal of blind and visually impaired people in Hollywood.

**Abstract**

Why is there not a single white cane in Hollywood? Because all its blind inhabitants apparently either have superpowers or pretend to be blind in the first place. From shooting a gun to driving a Ferrari through the streets of NYC, there is almost nothing a blind man cannot do in Hollywood, except find a romantic and sexual partner. There is a persistent pattern of stereotyping regarding the visually impaired in Hollywood: the majority of blind characters are predominantly male, self-reliant to the point where others do not notice their handicap, and sexually repressed or deprived. They are funny, with a good dose of black humour, melancholic, stoical, reasonably wealthy, and romantic heroes with a specific type of masculinity. The works that will be briefly discussed in this presentation are three films - *Scent of a Woman*(1992), *The Book of Eli*(2010), and *Blind Dating*(2006) - as well as the video game *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*(2004). The main goal of this presentation is to explore different approaches to blindness and stereotypes and preconceptions related to the blind and the visually impaired. My goal is to observe each individual blind character and discuss how they represent the visually impaired as a marginalised group in general, with regard to stereotypes and misconceptions as well as the level of realism ascribed to each character. It is important to state the obvious bias - blind and visually impaired women are excluded from the corpus, not by my volition, but by the clear lack of films and video games depicting blind female characters.

## BREAKING BLACKFACE: CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN AMERICAN COUNTRY MUSIC

**David Livingstone**

David Livingstone is an American citizen living and working in the Czech Republic for the last thirty years. He teaches Shakespeare, modernism, Czech culture, children's literature, and American folk music at Palacký University, Olomouc. His doctoral dissertation, entitled *Subversive Characters and Techniques in Shakespeare's History Plays*, attempted feminist and cultural materialist readings of the first Henriad in particular. He recently published a book, *In Our Own Image: Fictional Representations of William Shakespeare*, which looks at the wealth of novels, plays, short stories, films, television series, and even comics focused on Shakespeare as a character.

### **Abstract**

Country is without a doubt the whitest American genre of music and the banjo is the most quintessential instrument used in it. Both the musical style and the instrument, however, have their roots in African-American culture. The Blackface minstrel tradition in the nineteenth century not only appropriated and ridiculed African Americans but also eventually alienated them from their own music. This paper will explore how contemporary black musicians have begun to rescue and redeem their musical heritage. These artists have begun to combat the stereotypes surrounding country music and attempt to use the medium to not only entertain but also educate and enlighten. Particular reference will be made to the old-time/country string band *the Carolina Chocolate Drops* and the various offshoots and solo projects of the members. The talk will include a musical performance.

## SUBVERSION OF GENDER STEREOTYPES IN HOLLY BLACK'S *THE FOLK OF THE AIR* TRILOGY

Valentina Markasović

Valentina Markasović (1997) received her BA and MA degrees in History and English Language and Literature from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Osijek, Croatia. She currently works there as a Teaching Assistant and is a doctoral student in the "Literature and Cultural Identity" program. She also works as an English teacher and a freelance translator. Her primary fields of interest are popular and fantastic literature, children's and Young Adult literature, with a focus on the representation and construction of women's identities.

### Abstract

Holly Black is a contemporary American author of fantastic fiction. Her trilogy entitled *The Folk of the Air* (2018-2019) is a popular Young Adult fantasy series centring on Jude Duarte, a mortal girl growing up in a magical land called Faerie. It focuses on her quest of ensuring safety for herself and her family, gaining political power, and, ultimately, becoming the Queen. The heroic quest is entangled with the romance plot, with Jude gradually developing a relationship with Cardan Greenbriar, a prince of Faerie. This paper focuses on Jude and Cardan and analyses them as a romance heroine and hero. When discussing Jude, the paper compares her both to the prototypical romance heroines and to the strong woman characters found in adventurous fantasy. Cardan is primarily examined through Pamela Regis' elaboration of the dangerous hero in need of taming and the sentimental hero in need of healing. Finally, keeping in mind the fantasy aspect of the series, the paper turns to Jude's and Cardan's connection to magic and nature to see to what extent they confirm or subvert gender stereotypes. The paper shows that Jude and Cardan partially adhere to the typical characteristics of the heroine and the hero but never fully conform to the stereotypes.

## BREAKING STEREOTYPES IN CHINESE AMERICAN LITERATURE: AMY TAN'S FICTION

**Gordan Matas**

Gordan Matas is Associate Professor in the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Split, Croatia, where he has been teaching since 2003. His courses include American literature and culture, with special emphasis on African American as well as the US and Canadian ethnic literatures. He obtained his PhD, MA, and BA from the University of Zagreb, Croatia. He has received several grants for research in the United States (Fulbright award), Canada, Norway, Australia, and Sweden. His research interests include American and Canadian ethnic literature, multiculturalism, hybridity, postcolonial, and gender studies. He has written a book on African American literature, edited two books on multiculturalism, and published numerous articles in reviewed journals.

### **Abstract**

This paper analyzes complex relationships between ethnicity and identity in American multicultural literature in the literary opus of the Chinese American author Amy Tan. The interplay between ethnicity and identity is one of the crucial issues in American society and literature, and it has influenced the shaping of the American national character and its manifestations in literature. The immigrants of Chinese descent faced numerous prejudices from the beginning of their immigration to the United States. The specific circumstances of their existence in the USA have contributed to the development of Chinese American literature, whose most prominent feature is the influence of Chinese ethnicity in the creation of a new identity in the United States. The novels of Amy Tan break numerous stereotypes about Chinese Americans and at the same time they reflect various theories of ethnicity and the creation of identity in the lives of the first and second generation of Chinese immigrants.

## RE-INVENTING THE ZOMBIE IN GEORGE ROMERO'S *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD*

Ljubica Matek

Ljubica Matek, PhD, is Associate Professor at the Department of English and Director of the Centre for Popular Culture at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek. She teaches courses in Anglophone literature at undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate levels. She was a Fulbright Fellow at Study of the U.S. Institute (SUSI) on Contemporary American Literature at the University of Louisville in 2008. Her research interests are broad and include fantastic and Gothic literature, adaptation studies (literature and film), Shakespeare, and popular culture.

### Abstract

Hardly any academic discussion related to the zombie character can avoid referencing George Romero's debut film *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). This paper will argue that the film's seminal quality lies in the fact that in the making of his film, Romero broke several (stereo)typical norms of both horror genre in general and zombie horror in particular. Departing from the initial representations of the zombie as an enslaved body as depicted in Seabrook's *Magic Island* (1929) and in *White Zombie* (1932) – the first zombie film, Romero finds inspiration in Matheson's novel *I Am Legend* (1954) and represents the zombie as an uncontrollable reanimated corpse craving human flesh and infecting everyone it bites. Furthermore, the film allows for an emotionally immersive and socially reflective experience, moving beyond the stereotypical idea of horror film as merely a "scary movie." In rejecting the conceptualizations of the zombie-slave based on Haitian folklore, Romero espouses, by means of the zombie-monster and, even more so, by means of the people's reaction to it, social and political commentary. Finally, the film challenges racial stereotypes ubiquitous in the US popular culture of the time. In its representation of a Black protagonist as a tragic hero who dies at the hands of imprudent White "saviours," Romero's film manages to transcend the stereotypical idea of horror films as trashy entertainment and, unexpectedly, exhibits serious artistic tendencies.

## THE WOMAN IN THE BATHTUB: ELDERLY WOMEN AND SEXUALITY AS A HORROR TROPE

Filip Medar

Fillip Medar is a PhD student currently enrolled in the Doctoral Studies Programme in Literature, Theatre and Performing Arts, Film, Musicology and Culture at the Department of Comparative Literature, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. He received his MA degrees in English (Translation Studies) and Classical Archaeology at the same Faculty in 2020, with his theses focusing on the translation of medical terminology in a hybrid text from English into Croatian and on depictions of the Etruscan underworld, respectively. His PhD thesis will focus on the topics of haunting and possession in contemporary Canadian gothic literature. His research interests also include horror films and the colonial gothic in Australia and New Zealand, and he is also interested in the ways ancient and classical iconography and beliefs permeate contemporary culture. Alongside his studies, he is currently employed full time as a translator specializing in pharmaceutical texts.

### Abstract

While frequently rendered invisible in many Western art forms, a specific image of the elderly woman has almost cemented itself within the scope of American horror cinema. In this genre, the elderly female body, in a sexually active role, has traditionally been used to elicit surprise, disgust, fear, and/or laughter in the viewers. More precisely, rather than erasing such women from the screen, their bodies feature prominently, whereby they are juxtaposed with that of the male protagonists or the final girl. Such confrontations with the feeble and, on occasion, decaying, in contexts typically reserved for young, conventionally attractive, sexually appealing bodies, conjure up a sense of what Julia Kristeva defines as the abject – an image which disturbs system and order, and as such provokes a desired reaction in the audience. As is the case with many horror tropes, the nude elderly female body persists in contemporary slashers and supernatural horror films; yet, its role seems to be undergoing a slow process of reassessment. This potential subversion of the nude female body shall be the topic of the paper at hand. It shall be explored by analysing selected horror films, such as *The Shining* (1980) and its sequel, *Doctor Sleep* (2019), *It Chapter Two* (2019), and others. Special attention will also be given to the recent American slasher *X* (2022), a film that is arguably the most explicit in its subversion and re-examination of this trope.

## BREAKING PSYCHOSIS STEREOTYPES THROUGH VIDEO GAMES

Marcel Moser

Marcel Moser is a fifth-year student of English Language and Literature (Translation Studies) and Philosophy. He is also the lead editor of the student journal *Kick*. He is currently finishing his studies and working as a freelance translator. He has dedicated the last year of his studies to gathering experience and mastering the use of different translation tools and techniques through subtitling and non-literary translation. His other interests include literary translation and video game localization.

### Abstract

People experiencing psychosis have long been subject to many harmful stereotypes that American popular culture helped propagate. In almost all forms of media, psychosis has been portrayed in a way that further alienates people who have already been mistreated for centuries. Most notably, TV shows and movies often use psychosis when depicting violent villains, such as serial killers and homicidal maniacs, in horror films and crime films. Besides unjustifiably portraying people experiencing psychosis as innately violent, these depictions grossly misrepresent the symptoms of psychosis, focusing on the most severe ones and presenting the afflicted individuals as deranged, senseless, and hostile. With the rise of mental health awareness, there has been a push to destigmatize mental illnesses and conditions such as psychosis. A prime example of this is *Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice* (2017), a video game whose gameplay mechanics and narrative seek to give a more fair representation of the main character's struggle with psychosis. In *Hellblade*, players control the character of Senua, experiencing various symptoms of psychosis while following her on a personal journey where she comes to terms with her condition. With its careful approach to the topic, *Hellblade* sets a precedent for the presentation of mental illness in popular culture while displaying the potential of video games for giving a different perspective on matters concerning mental health.

## THE “WITCH’S MARK”: RETHINKING MONSTROUS BREASTS

Emilia Musap

Emilia Musap graduated in English Language and Literature and Russian Language and Literature from the University of Zadar in 2014. She is currently employed as a Teaching Assistant at the English Department in Zadar, where she is finishing her PhD dissertation entitled “Space and the Articulation of Monstrosity within Popular Culture”. Her research interests include the Gothic genre, gender studies, space/place in literature, film and television, and monster studies. She is a member of the editorial board of *[sic] - a journal of literature, culture, and literary translation* and the executive editor of the English version of *Political Lexicon: Pandemic*.

### Abstract

Marion Yalom notes that the witch’s “teat” or “mark” was one of the main pieces of evidence of the witch’s profession during the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century prosecutions carried out by both Catholic and Protestant courts (60). The abnormal breast was believed to be characterized by an additional teat that a “familiar” used to suck the witch’s blood for nourishment (60). Because many of these witches, as Yalom argues, were of advanced age (61), their breasts were not only considered abnormal but also caused discomfort and disgust among their interrogators. Based on scholars such as Barbara Creed, it is clear that the perception and subsequent portrayal of witches’ breasts in popular culture were influenced by the infamous trials and have changed little over the centuries. The breasts of an aging witch are still portrayed as decaying, deflated, and sagging and, according to Jane M. Ussher, embody the epitome of the abject (89). Conversely, the breasts of the coming-of-age witch stand in stark visual contrast to the stereotypically conceived breasts of the woman who is past her reproductive prime. However, using contemporary narratives such as *American Horror Story: Coven* (2011), *The Witch* (2015), and *The Neon Demon* (2016) as examples, this paper will argue that while the breasts of the coming-of-age witch are stereotypically eroticized since such breasts, as Gripsrud et al. argue, conform to the gendered economy of vision (216), they nonetheless embody a different set of cultural anxieties that relate to the bodily changes of puberty that ultimately mark them as both abject and monstrous.

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## ENCANTO: EVERYDAY HERO(IN)ES AND THE POWER OF (COLOMBIAN) COMMUNITY

Jelena Pataki Šumiga

Jelena Pataki Šumiga holds a degree in English and Croatian language and literature. She is currently a PhD candidate in Literature and Cultural Identity Studies and a Teaching Assistant at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Osijek. She is a member of the Croatian Association for the Study of English (CASE) and Croatian Association for American Studies (CAAS). Her field of study is Anglophone literature and culture, with an emphasis on YA, fantasy, and dystopian literature. She is also a freelance translator and member of the Croatian Literary Translators Association.

### Abstract

If asked to summarize the portrayal of Latinos on American screens, one's first associations would surely be drug traffickers and servants. These polarized stereotypes include both genders, allowing for popular adaptations of Pablo Escobar's and fictional Teresa Mendoza's story, and Spanglish-speaking housemaids and gardeners in sitcoms and Oscar winners alike. "Hollywood's stereotyping apparatus" has long been challenged, firstly by its recognition in American-made films, and then by Latino filmmakers' self-representation (Ramírez Berg 5). In this light, Disney's *Encanto* (2021) is a major step toward a decidedly positive representation of Latinos, specifically Colombians. Subverting stereotypes attributed to Disney films in general, it is also celebrated for its approach to gender and identity. Led by a matriarch, with a "madman in the attic," and muscle woman, the magical community finds its heroine in a dark-skinned, short-haired, bespectacled girl unencumbered by romantic pursuits. Finally, as the only family member lacking magical powers, Mirabel's "Not Special Special" status can be compared to *Joker* (2019) and *The Batman* (2022), who are no longer larger-than-life figures, but products of their closest relationships, proving that the relationship with community can make a hero and a villain out of the same person.

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**RECONCEPTUALIZING THE ILL BODY:  
LAURIE BROOKS' JACK MCCALL AS THE HERO  
OF THE ROMANTIC MODE**

Lucija Periš

Lucija Periš graduated in English and Croatian Language and Literature from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek in 2017. She is employed at the Academy of Arts and Culture in Osijek as a Teaching Assistant and participates in teaching courses in the field of world drama and theatre. In 2019, she enrolled in the Postgraduate Study Programme in Literature and Cultural Identity at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek, and she is currently writing a PhD thesis in contemporary American drama. She has attended numerous scientific conferences in Croatia and abroad.

**Abstract**

The paper considers the idea of illness as depicted in Laurie Brooks' play *The Secret of Courage* (2019), an adaptation of the short story "Imaginary Friends" (1991), written by Terry Brooks, which illustrates the experience of a teenager, Jack McCall, who is diagnosed with cancer. The narrative takes an unexpected turn when the protagonist enters a magical world following his diagnosis, a utopia which represents a means of reestablishing his identity and overcoming his fears, including illness. On his journey, Jack encounters mysterious creatures, such as trolls, elves, and ghosts, as well as an evil demon with whom he fights to save the magical realm. The paper employs Northrop Frye's theory of myths established in his book *Anatomy of Criticism* to show that Brooks' play follows six phases of the mythos of romance: the birth of the hero, the innocent youth, the quest, the maintaining of the integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience, an idyllic view of the experience from above, and the end of a movement from active to contemplative adventure. Drawing upon Frye's theoretical reflections, the paper aims to prove that Brooks offers a new paradigm of observing illness by portraying Jack McCall as the hero of the romantic mode, as opposed to the stereotypical literary representations of illness which equate the condition with inability.

## SUBVERTING STEREOTYPES: THE ROLE OF FEMME FATALE IN FILM NOIR

Rajko Petković

Rajko Petković is Associate Professor in the English Department at the University of Zadar, where he teaches various film studies courses. In addition to film noir and American independent cinema, his research interests include history of film style, Croatian cinema, animation film, and classical Hollywood cinema.

### Abstract

Drawing on different typology models of female stars in classical Hollywood, ranging from the virgin and *flapper* to the *independent woman* and *femme fatale*, this paper analyses the specific function performed by the *femme fatale* in *film noir*. One of the reasons *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) is often cited as the beginning of the *film noir* cycle is that it introduced the basic constellation of its most important character types - the hard-boiled urban detective and the *femme fatale*, played by Mary Astor. The role of the *femme fatale* has often been linked to the pervasive male anxiety resulting from the new-found freedom of women who had gained financial independence by entering the workforce during the war. However, it can also be seen as a dark mirror of the previous archetypal portrayal of women in American film - that of the home builder and obedient, loyal wife and mother. In this way, the *femme fatale* is a major step forward in breaking the stereotypical portrayal of women in classical Hollywood cinema. Although duplicitous, seductive, and dangerous, she is also an intriguing and multi-layered character who strongly influences the narrative development of the film. This essay focuses on two of the most intriguing *femmes fatales* in the classical *film noir* canon - Gene Tierney, as the monstrous Ellen Berent in *Leave Her to Heaven* (1945), and Jane Greer as Kathie Moffat in *Out of the Past* (1947).

**YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD(ED) SPIDER-MAN:  
INTO THE SPIDER-VERSE AND THE  
CULTURAL POLITICS OF THE HOODIE**

**Zvonimir Prtenjača**

Zvonimir Prtenjača (1996) received his BA and MA degrees in History and English Language and Literature from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Osijek, Croatia, where he currently works as a Teaching Assistant and studies as a doctoral student. When he is not teaching English at his elementary school, he can be found researching theories, politics, and practices of representation and difference in Anglophone young adult and children's fantasy novels, graphic novels, popular culture, and especially superhero films.

**Abstract**

This paper examines the cultural politics of the hoodie as relayed by Bob Perschetti, Peter Ramsey, and Rodney Rothman's Academy Award-laden animated superhero film, *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (2018). Drawing from Carol Tulloch's fashion studies concept of *style-fashion-dress* and Stuart Hall's and Lawrence Grossberg's cultural studies method of *articulation*, the paper argues that these cultural politics conflate with Miles Morales' coming-of-age and style narrative. Specifically, as the film's Afro-Rican teen protagonist from Brooklyn gains agency to independently refashion his Spider-suit with a hoodie, an item of clothing which has become a basis for suspicion and racial profiling in the twenty-first century United States, the film responds to the dominant discourse of stereotyping youths of color grounded in the intersection of their skin color and chosen attire. The paper ultimately reveals that, simultaneous to Miles asserting his identity via a distinctly visual language of fashion, the demonized garment of the hoodie is reclaimed and its semiotics resignified to transform the dialogue of dehumanization into a discussion of potential.

**PHILIP K. DICK AND PREJUDICE SUBVERSION:  
RACE IN *MARY & THE GIANT*, INSANITY IN *CLANS OF THE ALPHANE MOON*, AND BOTH IN *DR. BLOODMONEY***

**Felix Purat**

Felix Purat is currently obtaining his PhD in American Literature at Palacky University in the Czech Republic. Originally from Berkeley, CA, Felix is studying Philip K. Dick's role as a California regional writer and is a published writer himself.

**Abstract**

Just as Philip K. Dick was unconventional as both writer and personality, his views on handling prejudice were as fascinating as they were, in many respects, ahead of their time. Three novels are especially noteworthy, particularly where race and mental disabilities are concerned. Phil Dick took on prejudice early on, with *Mary & The Giant*. Written in the 1950's, it follows an interracial relationship in small-town California. Phil Dick associates the protagonists' relationship as a desire to break free of the repressive small-town life which is not enough for her. Not only is this relationship portrayed with sympathy: breaking free of prejudicial thinking constitutes freedom itself. *Clans of the Alphane Moon* (1964) is partly set on a moon where people with mental conditions have formed their own community and caste system. Phil Dick depicts these characters utilizing the peculiarities of each condition to amuse the reader while generating sympathy for people struggling with mental disabilities. In the subsequent years, Phil Dick then turned these depictions on their heads in *Dr. Bloodmoney* (1965). One character, Stuart McConchie, finds his racial experience as a black man challenged, then made redundant by a nuclear strike, while the character of Hoppy Harrington, a disabled phocomelus, gains godly powers that transcend his disability. Through these novels, Phil Dick grants us the ability to break free of prejudicial thinking while also granting his characters the same freedom to define themselves in the process.

**EMPOWERING VOICES OF OTHERS: BREAKING RACIAL STEREOTYPES  
THROUGH CELESTE NG'S *LITTLE FIRES EVERYWHERE* (2017)  
AND BRITT BENNETT'S *THE VANISHING HALF* (2020)**

Nadira Puškar Mustafić

Nadira Puškar Mustafić was born in Gračanica, Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1980. After getting her BA degree in English Language and Literature at the University of Tuzla in 2004, she continued her postgraduate studies in Vienna and Osijek. Following the completion of a doctoral program in *Literature and Cultural Identity* at the University of Osijek, she obtained her PhD degree, defending an interdisciplinary research-based thesis titled *Cathartic Effects in Contemporary Auto/biographical American Plays* (2017). Nadira has authored many articles mainly related to American drama. In 2020, *Citadela Libri*, a publishing house from Zagreb, released her book titled *Tears in the Audience, Cathartic Effects in Contemporary American Plays*, funded by the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education. Nadira has worked at various state and private educational institutions at primary, secondary, and university levels. Since September 2021, she has been an Assistant Professor of English literature at the International University of Sarajevo's English department. In May 2022, Nadira was appointed as the Cultural Studies Program Coordinator at the International University of Sarajevo. She is also a founder of *Bookworm*, the first American Literature Book Club in Bosnia and Herzegovina, gathering local and international members.

**Abstract**

The American Novel has constantly been undergoing a cyclical process of underrepresentation/misrepresentation of the marginalized social groups, prejudice deconstruction, raising bias awareness, and fictional or factional sanctioning of prejudice. Although the American Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and equal opportunities for all Americans, the proclamation most often does not match the reality since the voices of the "others" (i.e., gender, racial, and other minorities) are still often misrepresented, silenced, or completely muted in mainstream media. However, the American Novel, as the most popular written medium of the present, provides a rare space for the marginalized voices to be heard, recognized, and validated. This paper will analyze female African American and Asian American characters in two contemporary American novels, *Little Fires Everywhere* (2017) by Celeste Ng and *The Vanishing Half* (2020) by Britt Bennett. By employing close reading and comparative textual analysis, deconstruction theory, etc., we will attempt to illustrate that the novels' authors as American born racial "others" offer an insider's perspective into the nature of racial prejudice, moving beyond mere prejudice deconstruction and recognition to the empowerment of characters labeled as the racially other.

## SUBVERSION OF THE FEMALE CHARACTER(S) IN HORROR: WENDY TORRANCE – THE FINAL GIRL

Iva Romić

Iva Romić is a first-year doctoral student at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Osijek. She received a master's degree in Education, in the fields of English language and literature and German language and literature. She conducts her research in the humanities within the research field of philology, and her area of interest is Gothic literature, especially the works of Edgar Allan Poe, Stephen King, and Emily Brönte. Her BA thesis explored the works of Edgar Allan Poe, whereas her MA work focused on the haunted house motif in Gothic literature.

### Abstract

Female characters obtained a notable role in Gothic literature, as women were considered its primary readers. In the beginning, Gothic literature nourished the literary tropes of a damsel in distress, which was attributed to female characters, and a heroic persona that was exclusively the male protagonist. Coupled with this, female characters were dependent on their male counterparts who heroically freed them from the villains. The death of a male protagonist would entirely jeopardize the female characters and could result in their overbearing grief or tragic demise. Following the arrival of modern Gothic literature, female characters have been centered in the story, equalized with male characters, and independently bear the title the "Final Girl." The "Final Girl" in literature marks the female character that prevails despite the odds against her. On the example of Stephen King's Wendy Torrance, the subversion of female character(s) in horror literature will be observed and analyzed.

**BREAKING STEREOTYPES ACROSS CULTURES:  
THE CROATIAN AND HUNGARIAN STEREOTYPICAL  
REPRESENTATIONS OF AMERICAN CULTURE**

**Lívia Szélpál and Jadranka Zlomislić**

Lívia Szélpál is Assistant Professor at the Institute of English Studies, University of Pécs (PTE), where she teaches American History, Literature, and Culture. She completed her MA 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. Her research interests include American Studies, the history of the USA, the issue of history on film, urban history, and modern and contemporary American culture. She is an advisory board member of AMERICANA E-Journal of American Studies in Hungary. She is a member of the AHEA, HUSSE, HAAS, and Hajnal István Kör: Társadalomtörténeti Egyesület. She is currently working on a book focusing on Hungarian urban history from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Jadranka Zlomislić is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Osijek, Croatia. She grew up in the United States, where she received her elementary and high school education. After returning to Croatia, she earned her BA in English and German Language and Literature at the University of Osijek, her MA in English literature from the University of Zagreb, and her PhD in English literature from the University of Osijek. She teaches British and American Culture and Civilization. Her research interests include American and British cultural studies, American academic fiction, and cultural translation.

### **Abstract**

This study is a joint research exploring identity and diversity across cultures in the Croatian, Hungarian, and American contexts. The primary focus of this study is aimed at raising awareness of stereotypical preconceptions and the cross-cultural similarities and differences among Americans, Hungarians, and Croats to broaden understanding and help break the stereotypes that may lead to discrimination and bias. The research is divided into two parts: The first part of the analysis provides a brief historical background of stereotypical representations of American culture from the Hungarian perspective and includes a qualitative analysis of Hungarian university student response papers on the representation of general American stereotypes. Jessica Keener's novel *Strangers in Budapest* (2018) provides the American perception of Hungary and Hungarians while the Facebook blog Hesna Amerikai naplója [Hesna's American Diary] by Hungarian journalist and writer Hesna Al Ghaoui offers the Hungarian perception of America and Americans. The second part of the study takes a closer look at the Croatian perspective of America and

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Americans by analyzing the information obtained by a student survey. The American perspective of Croatia and Croats is obtained by a qualitative analysis of Cody McClain Brown's lecture, blog, podcast, and two novels, *Chasing a Croatian Girl: A Survivor's Tale* (2014) and *Croatia Strikes Back: The Unnecessary Sequel* (2018). The results of both studies will be compared to define the cross-cultural similarities and differences among cultures. By promoting intercultural dialogue and increasing self-awareness as well as Other-awareness, this research seeks to show that academic collaboration among Americans, Hungarians, and Croats brings multiple opportunities and mutual benefits as we strive to break stereotypes to counter divisiveness and build bridges across cultural divides and embrace the rich diversity of our world's cultures.

## HOW TO NURTURE (LITTLE) MEN AND (LITTLE) WOMEN: NEW EDUCATIONAL DIRECTIONS IN LOUISA MAY ALCOTT'S BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

Jelena Šesnić

Jelena Šesnić is Full Professor in the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, Croatia. Her research interests encompass the American nineteenth-century literature, U.S. ethnic literatures, methodology of American Studies, and transnational cultural processes (with special emphasis on the Anglophone Croatian diaspora). She is the author of two books and editor and co-editor of two collections of essays. She is a co-founder of the Croatian Association for American Studies and its current president, co-organizer of the annual American Studies Workshops, vice-president of the Association for American Studies in South-Eastern Europe, and co-editor of Working Papers in American Studies (CAAS digital, peer-reviewed, open access publication; <https://openbooks.ffzg.unizg.hr/index.php/FFpress/catalog/series/WPAS>).

### Abstract

As is well known, Alcott's books for children had a broad popular appeal in late-nineteenth century United States and helped establish their author's reputation and financial success. Alcott undeniably drew on her own experience of being home schooled and raised by experimental educational methods advocated by her father, Bronson Alcott, and other Transcendentalist reformers, who laid out novel and unconventional theories of education based on their philosophical principles. Furthermore, as a committed feminist, abolitionist, and suffragist, Alcott considered ways to undo the stereotypes regarding education and raising of children. In my presentation I propose to examine how Alcott manages to create visions of an alternative educational model for boys and girls, respectively, and to what extent it reflects the departure from stereotypes and adoption of more modern nurturing practices.

**“BECOMING BLOND AND POPULAR”:  
REPRESENTATION OF GENDER, RELIGIOUS,  
AND ETHNIC IDENTITY IN *MS. MARVEL***

Selma Veseljević Jerković

Selma Veseljević Jerković (1982) is Associate Professor at the Department of English Language and Literature of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Tuzla and is currently Head of the English Language and Literature Department. She teaches Literary Theories as well as English and American literature and Cinematography at the undergraduate and graduate studies. Her research interests are in continuing the cultural importance of dystopian themes in Young Adult literature and popular culture and the works of the twenty-first century American and English literature. Dr Veseljević Jerković's more recent research focuses on comics and graphic novels as well as adaptation studies.

**Abstract**

The driving force behind comic books is the context from which they emerge. Marvel comics' introduction of a new character taking over the identity of Ms. Marvel in 2014 represented a move toward a more diverse audience. A sixteen-year-old New Jerseyan of Pakistani origin, Kamala Khan, is the first Muslim teenage superheroine in a stereotypically white and masculine subgenre. Since its onset, the subgenre has been suffering from a problematic representation of minorities, hardly ever challenging the stereotypical and astute conceptualizations. For example, Muslims were presented as terrorists reciting the Quran and carrying bombs. However, Kamala Khan's headlining in the mainstream comic is a breakthrough for the representation of Muslim women in the West. This article explores the interplay of gender, ethnic, and religious stereotypes through the lens of Social Role Theory. Focusing on gender and cultural representation issues, it identifies Kamala Khan as a representation of Muslim American women confronting socio-cultural challenges in contemporary American society. Social role theory acknowledges that stereotypes align with the core values of a culture (Cuddy et al.), representing a set of expectations from individuals with certain social identifications in particular social situations.

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**DISMANTLING THE CHAIR:  
BREAKING LEADERSHIP STEREOTYPES  
THROUGH IRONY AND SATIRE**

Aleksandra Vukotić

Aleksandra Vukotić is Assistant Professor in American Literature at the English Department of the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade. She is the author of *Don DeLillo and the Poetics of History* (Akademska knjiga, 2018, in Serbian). She has taught courses in English and American Literature, from Shakespeare's Major Tragedies to Postmodern American Fiction and the Twentieth Century Irish Short Story. Aleksandra is a member of the editorial board of the *Belgrade BELLS* journal published by the University of Belgrade. Her interests include contemporary English, Irish, and American literature, cultural studies, literature and film, literature and technoculture, literary theory.

**Abstract**

The paper analyzes the subversion of leadership stereotypes in the Netflix miniseries *The Chair* (Amanda Peet and Annie Julia Wyman, 2021), examining the effects of the employed comic devices such as irony, (self-)parody, and sarcasm. The show, which has been defined as a "campus comedy" and a "satire of contemporary academia," as well as a television series on the "powerlessness of middle management," addresses a number of problems connected to racism, sexism, and ageism in higher education, from precarious employment, elitism, and prejudice to the traditional gender, age and ethnic stereotypes. As viewers follow the story about the short-lived appointment of the Asian-American professor Ji-Yoon Kim as Chair of the English Department at the fictional Pembroke University, an "almost Ivy-league college" located somewhere in New England, they are presented with a series of stereotyped beliefs connected to contemporary academia, represented in a cartoonish and exaggerated manner. The paper offers a close reading of the creators' use of humor as a strategy of subversion and resistance to the established beliefs and practices, especially with regard to the pursuit of personal and institutional excellence and leadership in academia and beyond.

## COMBATTING THE POPULAR HEMINGWAY STEREOTYPE

Aleksandra Žeželj Kocić

Aleksandra Žeželj Kocić (1977) holds a PhD from the Faculty of Philology – English Department, University of Belgrade – as well as a Research Associate title endowed by Institute for Literature and Arts in Belgrade, Serbia. In addition to a number of literary and critical papers on Serbian and Anglo-American authors, she has published the following monographs: *Normative Masculinity and Its Subversions in Tennessee Williams' World and Style* (2016), *Hemingvej i rod: pisac u mreži teorije* (2018), *Pesnik i jedan čitalac: ogledi o poeziji i prozi Dragana Lakićevića* (2020), *Zbirka leptirova: ogledi o angloameričkoj književnosti* (2021), *Valjarević u dijalogu* (2022).

### Abstract

Relying on some of the most eminent Hemingway scholars, the paper explores the popular image of Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961), which still seems to be ossified as an embodiment of the widespread misogyny and hyper-masculinity of the 1950s. Namely, Hemingway had always been a public figure, but during the post-war decade, his fame rose to that of celebrity. Having survived two plane crashes, won a Nobel Prize, and published his acclaimed novels and short stories, he appeared on the pages of a number of pulp men's adventure magazines (*Vagabond, Rogue, Modern Man, Male, Bachelor, Sir Knight!, Gent*) as a conspicuously macho figure of the American literary world. Bearing in mind the socio-cultural conditions that heavily contributed to the performative interdependence between Hemingway's biographical legend and his fiction, as well as the unrelenting creation of multiple narratives of the so-called Hemingwayesque persona, the paper attempts at subverting the Hemingway stereotype of almost mythic proportions, only to show that it is based on ambiguously disparate representations and perceptions pertaining to gender, race, ethnicity, to name but a few. If we choose to believe his own words that "in valid myths the truth is always more interesting than the published (journalistic) myth," Hemingway the writer needs to be freed from media exploitation and the oversimplified public portrait of himself.