

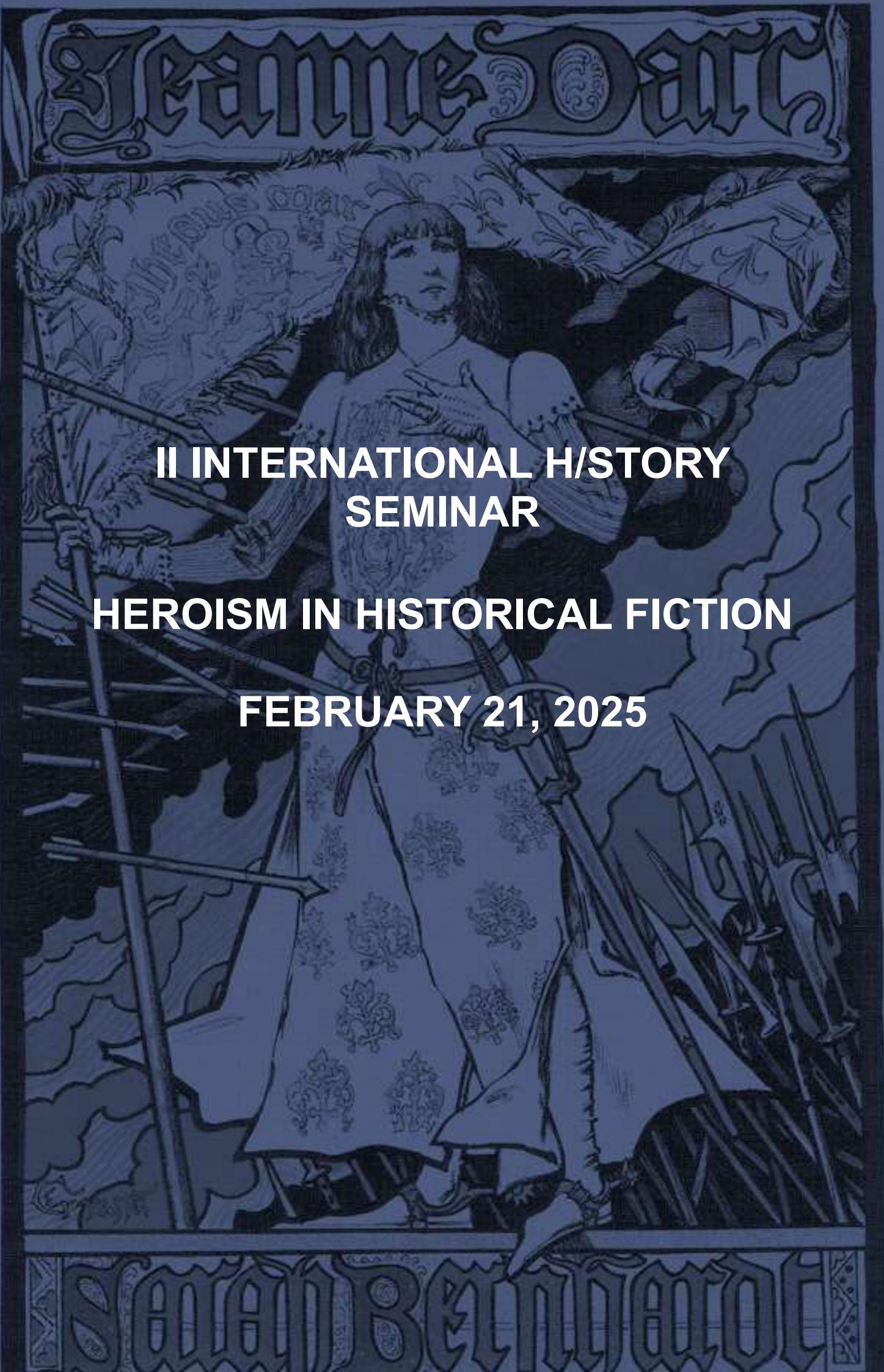
Jeanne Darc

**II INTERNATIONAL H/STORY
SEMINAR**

HEROISM IN HISTORICAL FICTION

FEBRUARY 21, 2025

Susan Bernhardt



Seminar Programme

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| 10:00 | Seminar start and opening remarks |
| 10:15 | Alicja Bemben |
| 10:15 | Keynote Address (chair: Inna Häkkinen) |
| 11:15 | Michael Joseph – Joseph Campbell’s The Hero's Journey. Its Origins, Methodology, and Utility as an Analytical Tool |
| 11:30 | Panel 1 Writing the Hero(ic) (chair: Rafał Boryśławski) |
| 13:00 | Gabriella Vöö – The Hero in Disguise: Shakespearean Comedy and the Southern Ideal of Manhood in William Gilmore Simms’s <i>The Yemassee</i> |
| | Inna Häkkinen – Revalorizing “Chernobyl Motherhood” in Fictionalizing the Nuclear Disaster: Literary Dimensions |
| | Alicja Bemben – The Life-Cycle of Heroism in Contemporary Historical Fiction |
| 13:00 | Lunch Break |
| 14:00 | |
| 14:00 | Panel 2 Heroism, Gender, and Race (chair: Gabriella Vöö) |
| 15:30 | Flavia Garrigós Cabañero – An Approach to the Concept of Black African Heroism in Western Cinema about Africa |
| | Yekta Noyan – Depiction of Biracial Heroines in Times of War and Peace |
| | Paulina Hacaś and Aleksandra Mzyk – False Generosity and Victimhood of White Heroism in R. F. Kuang’s <i>Babel</i> and <i>Yellowface</i> |
| 15:45 | Panel 3 Poetic Lessons on Heroism (chair: Flavia Garrigós Cabañero) |
| 16:45 | Rafał Boryśławski – The Hero’s Quest for Fear: Old English “Guthlac A” and the Reciprocity of Dread |
| | Katre Talviste – Teachable Moments Provided by a Poem about a National Hero who Created a National Hero |
| 17:00 | Panel 4 Screening the Hero (chair: Aleksandra Mzyk) |
| 18:00 | Yago Paris – Hero Typologies in Michael Bay’s <i>Pearl Harbor</i> (2001) |
| | Juan Zamudio – The Discourse on the Legitimization of the Anti-Hero in Selected Contemporary Television Series |
| 18:00 | Closing remarks |

Abstracts and Biographic Information

Michael Joseph

Joseph Campbell's *The Hero's Journey*. Its Origins, Methodology, and Utility as an Analytical Tool

This presentation examines the origin, function, structure, and applications of Joseph Campbell's *Hero's Journey*. The first part of the talk looks at the criteria constituting the Rank-Raglan model of the mythic hero, and the model of the Rite of Passage Campbell adopts for the journey's structure from the ethnographer, Arnold von Gennep; then reviews the structure and functions of the *Hero's Journey*. This part of the talk ends by introducing the psychoanalytic archetypes Campbell derives from depth psychology, most notably Carl Jung. The longer middle part of the talk extends the discussion of Jungian archetypes into an analysis of a well-known children's story, demonstrating the strengths and weaknesses of the *Hero's Journey* as a theoretical basis for literary criticism. A critical examination of a sophisticated work of historical fiction that combines archetypes and structure concludes the middle part of the talk. The short third part of the talk offers speculations on the viability of the *Hero's Journey* as a theoretical model for understanding historical fiction, and remarks on the problematic relationship between the mythic hero and history.

Michael Joseph is an emeritus professor at Rutgers University, The State University of New Jersey, where he taught for ten years. He retired in 2020 as the Director of the Rare Books Program. His fields of expertise include myth, fairy tales, poetry, artists' books, and the graphic novels of Lynd Ward. He is the editor of *The Robert Graves Review* and North American Vice President of the Robert Graves Society. His article "Making Video Poems from Poems Made from Diary Entries Made from Dreams" is to appear in a forthcoming issue of *Book 2.0*.

Gabriella Vöö

The Hero in Disguise: Shakespearean Comedy and the Southern Ideal of Manhood in William Gilmore Simms's *The Yemassee*

William Gilmore Simms's 1835 historical novel blends frontier adventure with Shakespearean comedic structure. The machine that sets the plot in motion is the double identity of its protagonist, who shifts identities as Gabriel Harrison, a rugged frontiersman, and as Lord Craven, the governor of colonial South Carolina. This duality represents, on the one hand, the hero's journey of transformation as he loosens his allegiance to the British monarchy – the plot is set right after the death of Queen Anne and the succession on the throne of George I, “the elector of Hanover” – and forms a strong bond with the embattled settlers of the colony's remote frontier. On the other hand, Craven/Harrison redefines heroism in terms of Southern ideals of manhood, embodying both physical vigor and intellectual authority.

Much scholarship emphasizes Simms's portrayal of frontier life and regional identity. This paper argues that the comedic plot device of dual identity serves an additional purpose: to assert Southern reinterpretation of national masculinity in antebellum American literature. By merging the adventurous, action-oriented heroism of the frontier – the standard of which had been set by Cooper's Leatherstocking series – with the refined leadership of strategic governance, Simms creates a hero who embodies the Southern ideal of balance between civilization and wilderness. This synthesis not only reflects the cultural tensions of the antebellum South right after the South Carolina nullification crisis, but also critiques Northern models of heroism. My analysis demonstrates that the Southern literary imagination actively reworked prevailing paradigms of historical fiction written by Northern authors like James Fenimore Cooper, Lydia Maria Child, and Catharine Sedgwick. Simms's interpretation of heroism in *The Yemassee* reveals how historical fiction functioned as a cultural battleground for negotiating regional and national identities in antebellum United States.

Gabriella Vöö is Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of Pécs, Hungary. Her fields of teaching and research are US-American Studies, nineteenth- and twentieth-century American literature, and Reception Studies. She has published critical articles and two books in these areas. Her research interests include historical and utopian fiction, as well as ecocritical theory.

Inna Häkkinen

Revalorizing “Chernobyl Motherhood” in Fictionalizing the Nuclear Disaster: Literary Dimensions

Motherhood in the Nuclear Anthropocene (Carpenter 2016) refers to the experience of becoming a mother and raising children within nuclear hazards, nuclear anxiety, nuclear phobia, stemmed from nuclear technologies’ application. Within fictionalizing antinuclear mothers’ movements – 1954 Japanese mothers’ Antinuclear movement, the Women of Three Mile Island (1979), 1982 Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp in UK, Mother for Nuclear (California 2017) – Chernobyl motherhood stays underestimated, although this phenomenon also lies within using the concept of “motherhood” as a symbol of peace. Even being a sample of non-mainstream heroism (in comparison with Chernobyl fire liquidators, Chernobyl babushkas, Chernobyl children), the phenomenon of “Chernobyl motherhood” can be represented as a compelling example of heroism in historical fiction via emphasizing Chernobyl mothers’ heroic acts and their motivations and demonstrating their self-sacrifice and altruism driven by their maternal instincts.

Via amalgamating selected theoretical perspectives – feminism theory, trauma studies, postcolonial studies, environmental humanities – the presentation aims to outline the narrative tools of fictionalizing “Chernobyl motherhood” in nuclear fictional writings, such as Andrea Write’s *Radioactive Girl* (2008), Helen Bate’s *The Lost Child of Chernobyl* (2021), Kostiantyn Klymchuk’s *The Summer When the Sun Got Black* (in Ukrainian origin: ‘Літо, коли сонце стало чорним’, 2023). With the appeal to the motifs of survival, resilience, hope, the presentation contributes to reconsidering the “mother agency” in the Chernobyl disaster’s context of transforming gender roles within nuclear precarity (Nayar 2023): from a resilient protector and a multifaceted survivor to a more nuanced and empowered, although non-mainstream, image of mother in nuclear traumatic experience. (Silvia 2017; Weiner 2019; Olson 2019; Hutner 2022; Eschle 2023) The presentation emphasizes the transformations of “Chernobyl mothers” perception via highlighting maternal strength and resilience, challenging the conventional image of mothers in the face of environmental and social challenges, outlining the emotional toll of protecting their children in extreme circumstances, which all together contributes to showcasing maternal agency within storytelling the nuclear history of humanity. By examining the literary dimensions of “Chernobyl motherhood” through the perspective of “hero as a product of constructive imagination” (Colley 1902), regarding the gendered heroism as the sample of resilience and sacrifice in the collective imagination, the presentation contributes to exploring the implication of heroism in historical fiction, particularly in relation to non-traditional forms of heroism and the complex motivations behind heroic acts in challenging historical contexts.

Inna Häkkinen (née Sukhenko) is a visiting researcher of Helsinki Environmental Humanities Hub, the Department of Cultures, the University of Helsinki. Her current project is focused on researching the narrative tools of emoting nuclear energy in nuclear fiction for children and young adults. After defending her PhD in Literary Studies (Dnipro, Ukraine), she has been a research fellow of Erasmus Mundus mobility programs (Bologna, 2008; Turku, 2011-2012), Cambridge Colleges Hospitality Scheme (2013), Open Society Foundation (Warsaw, 2016-2017), JYU Visiting Fellowship Programme (Jyväskylä, 2021), PIASt Fellowship Program (Warsaw, 2022), iASK Fellowship Program (Köszeg, 2023). She coordinates and (co-)teaches “Chernobyl Studies” course as well as “Nuclear Narratives in East Central Europe” at the University of Helsinki. Her general research interests lie within environmental humanities, energy humanities, ecocriticism, nuclear criticism, literary energy narrative studies, world energy literature, nuclear fiction, Chernobyl fiction, energy ethics.

One of the key discussions in heroism studies concerns the definition of the heroic figure, to simplify, who and why counts as a hero. This discussion is, by and large, fuelled by Franco's and Zimbardo's conceptualisation of heroism as a potential in every human "waiting for a moment in life [for one] to perform a heroic deed" (2006). As a result, works with proposals of sets of traits (and their definitions) that identify the hero and reworkings of these proposals accrete. In this presentation, first, I would like to expand on how Franco's and Zimbardo's idea has translated into the field of historical fiction and show that contemporary historical fiction increasingly moves away from portraying "heroic elects" towards portraying heroism as "a universal attribute of human nature." For this purpose, first, I briefly adduce Franco's and Zimbardo's idea and, then, point to the various ways in which we can see it develops in contemporary historical fiction.

In the second part of my presentation, I would like to address the voices of those historical fiction critics who have started accusing historical fiction of "diluting" ideas to the point at which they become irrelevant – for instance, Cooper and Short (2010), Plate (2011) – and link them with the heroism developments identified in the first part of my presentation and the concept of "the life of an idea" (Fawcett, 2018). This is to give grounds to my analysis of a selection of historical fiction takes on heroism to substantiate the view that, in contemporary historical fiction, the dilution of heroism occurs when this concept is used as a narrative device (e.g., in *The London House*), whereas its reconceptualisation occurs when this concept is attached to some social values (e.g., *Circe*).

Alicja Bemben, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor at the University of Silesia, Poland. She is a founder of the *H/Story* research group, under the auspices of which she has co-organised a number of conferences (<https://www.hstory.us.edu.pl/>). She has also co-edited several monographs and authored a number of texts dealing primarily with historical fiction, historiography, and their affinities. She is an associate editor of *The Robert Graves Review* and cooperates with several other journals. Her recent publications include *Emotions as Engines of History* (Routledge, 2021) and "Mask as a Means of Shaping Intellectual Identity" (Springer, 2023).

Flavia Garrigós Cabañero

An Approach to the Concept of Black African Heroism in Western Cinema about Africa

V.-Y. Mudimbe (1988) already explained that Africa is what the West has written about it. For this reason, he stated that the African continent, as we know it, is an invention. It is an intertextual invention, linking literature, science, and media, and it evolves over time. Cinema contributes to this intertext and its ongoing actualization, and it has significantly helped establish a determined image of Africa since the birth of the medium.

According to Dokotum (2020), this intertextual framework originated from a “master text”: *King Solomon's Mines* (Haggard, 1885). This basis has always been driven by a motive tied to power and substantiated by the fictional distinction between the Self (White) and the Other (Black African). Consequently, Black Africans have rarely appeared as fully developed characters. In most cases – and following Campbell's (1980) concepts – they have been depicted as villains and/or antagonists, often portrayed as lacking intelligence.

As mentioned, the intertextual basis continually evolves to adapt to contemporary contexts. Therefore, Black Africans in Western cinema about Africa are no longer confined solely to the role of the antagonist. For instance, consider the character of Paul Rusesabagina in *Hotel Rwanda* (George, 2004). However, Black African heroism in these films often contains specific elements that warrant deeper study.

The objective of this research is to offer a general perspective on the relationship between Black African characters and heroism in Western cinema about Africa, particularly over the last few decades. This includes cinema about conflicts as well as Afrofuturistic films, such as *Black Panther* (Coogler, 2018). The methodology is based on the analysis of audiovisual texts, drawing inspiration from Edward Said's *Orientalism* (2006 [1978]), adapted to the context of Africanism.

Flavia Garrigós Cabañero holds a degree in Audiovisual Communication from Complutense University of Madrid (UCM) and a master's degree in International Relations and African Studies from Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM). She holds a PhD in Audiovisual Communication, Advertising, and Public Relations (UCM). Among her activities, she is a member of the Center for Afro-Hispanic Studies (CEAH) at UNED, former Secretary of the Spanish Association of Africanists (AEA), former collaborator of the UNESCO Chair of Afro-Ibero-American Studies (UAH), and occasional columnist for the magazine *África Fundación Sur*. She has organized and participated in various congresses and has presented and published scientific works on African studies, cinema, and communication.

Race has been a controversial issue in modern German history. While biracial marriages were allowed in the late 19th and early 20th century, inter-racial relations generally were frowned upon by German colonial administrators. The inter-war period (1918-1938) paved the way for another set of relations. The French occupational forces' interaction with German females during the inter-war period in German Rhineland resulted in biracial children in large numbers. Following the Nazi take-over of Germany in 1933, biracial children were persecuted, sterilized and doomed to the infamous concentration camps. In the aftermath of WWII, this time fraternization between German females and African Americans took place.

There are a few German movies regarding biracial children. *Toxi* (1952) is an early example. The movie focuses on its heroine, a five-year-old biracial girl who is left at the steps of a German family's residence. Her interactions with this new foster family are its main focus. However, the movie ends with the African American father (American GI) taking Toxi to the U.S. for good; thus, suggests that biracial children belong not to Germany but to the U.S.

In 2018, *Where Hands Touch* was produced by a British team. This movie tells the fictional story of a biracial teenager, Leyna, conceived during the inter-war period. Following the adoption of the discriminatory Nuremberg laws, life becomes very challenging for the biracial heroine and her family. Eventually, Leyna and a high-ranking Nazi officer's son, Lutz fall in love. Their story ends with Lutz's being shot by his father and Leyna and her family miraculously reuniting in a post-war refugee camp. This movie was criticized for romanticizing the Nazis. This paper compares the two movies and their biracial heroines in the context of their production time and against the national affiliation of their production teams.

Yekta Kamil Noyan is a final year Ph.D. Student at the University of Pretoria, Department of Historical and Heritage Studies. He is a member of American Historical Association (AHA) and South African Historical Society (SAHS). His most recent publication is entitled "Colonialism, German Experience and the Reflections on History: South Africa experience" and is published in *International Crimes and History*. Yekta Kamil Noyan is a former Fulbright alumnus. He holds two M.A.s from Monterey Institute of International Relations and Loyola University Chicago, respectively; in addition to his B.A. from Ankara University. His area of focus includes history of modern Europe and colonialism in Africa, Ottoman and Turkish history, conflict resolution and non-proliferation studies.

¹ The views expressed by Mr. Noyan are his personal opinions.

Paulina Hacaś and Aleksandra Mzyk

False Generosity and Victimhood of White Heroism in R. F. Kuang's *Babel* and *Yellowface*

The offered presentation is inspired by the observation of the hero-worthy altruism enabling the white saviour syndrome (Burr, 2010; Cammarota, 2011). In order to satisfy their needs, white people render themselves the heroes of modernity; making people of colour virtually handicapped (Cammarota in Jefferson, 2021). Therefore, this presentation situates itself alongside the discourses regarding whiteness (DiAngelo, 2011; Phipps, 2021; Kherbaoui and Aronson, 2022), false generosity (Keramatfar and Bavakhani, 2019; Jefferess, 2021, Cammarota, 2011) white victimhood (Brandon, Emandache, and Iwaniec, 2024; Phipps, 2021), and heroism (Bandyopadhyay, 2019). Additionally, Rodrigues' observation on the problematic representation of white women in the context of decolonialism implies that they are often unable to see past themselves, turning blind eye to struggles of minority groups (2022). DiAngelo furthers this thought about “[white people] in wh[om] even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering defensive moves” (DiAngelo in Phipps, 2021). Such observations can be applied to an analysis of R. F. Kuang's historical fantasy novel *Babel* (2022) and meta-commentary novel about publishing industry *Yellowface* (2023). Our intention in this presentation is to focus on the perpetuation of the white heroism by two characters from the novels: Lettita (Letty) Price (*Babel*) and June Hayward (*Yellowface*). Accordingly, the proposed presentation is structured as follows: in the opening section, we offer a brief summary of the novels and explain the theoretical background of this work. Then, we explain how white victimhood and false generosity are the key factors in the hero-mythos creation of both Letty and June. We conclude our analysis by juxtaposing the meta-commentary from *Yellowface* with relevant social phenomena.

Paulina Hacaś is a former student at the Institute of Literary Studies at the University of Silesia. She is currently preparing for PhD enrolment. Her interests include folklore, retellings, queer and gender studies. She participated in H/Story seminar *Social Problems in Contemporary Female Historical Fiction* (2023) at which she presented the paper titled “The Pursuit of (Idealistic) Love”; and later published the same paper in *Media i Społeczeństwo* (2023).

Aleksandra Mzyk is a graduate student of a master programme at the Institute of Literary Studies at the University of Silesia. Her research areas involve gender, queer, memory and Asian studies. Currently, she is preparing for PhD enrolment. She presented a paper “Maladaptive Coping Mechanisms of Sring Venka in Response to Sexual Trauma and PTSD in The Poppy War series by R. F. Kuang” at the *Social Problems in Contemporary Female Historical Fiction* (2023) seminar. Later, the same paper was published in *Media i Społeczeństwo* (2023).

Rafał Borysławski

The Hero's Quest for Fear: Old English "Guthlac" A and the Reciprocity of Dread

According to his early 8th-c. hagiographer, St Guthlac, perhaps one of the earliest Old English saints, abandoned his active military service in favour of the life of a hermit, who engaged in no less heroic series of confrontations with the demons that had occupied the retreat chosen by the saint. The poeticised version of Guthlac's vita, recorded in the *Exeter Book* as two poems, "Guthlac A" and "Guthlac B," abounds in emotions and tensions manifested in the intensely charged debates between the saint and his demonic assailants. While confrontations with demons are staple components of saints' lives, which, by definition, are centred on extolling saintly virtues, the one emotional state that appears to dominate the exchanges particularly in "Guthlac A" is fear with its derivatives of anxiety and dread. The poem engages this emotion in its narrative, dramatic, and didactic frames, which centre and diverge when Guthlac faces the choices posed by *engel dryhtnes ond se stela gæst*, "the angel of God and the fearsome spirit," ("Guthlac A," 116). Their outcomes lead to the celestially and wisdom-oriented *timor Dei*, "fear of God," and to the hellish incitement of the bodily fear leading to the terrifying death of the soul. Both fears are engrained and explained in exegetical tradition (in Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* and Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob*). In Old English contexts, they are employed in Ælfric's homilies (notably in *Be ðam seofanfealdan ungifa* and *Lazarus I*). Relying on these, my aim will be to present the poem's types of fear as forms of reciprocal engagement, whereby mutual acts of terrorizing the opponent lead to a paradoxical emotional gift-giving offered both to and by Guthlac and the demons. In other words, "Guthlac A" may be seen as presenting a somewhat surprising model of a Christian hero who actively chooses and engages in the quest for fear as an act of pious devotion to spiritual life. In result, the poetic depictions of the attempts to elicit fear in Guthlac, in the demons, as well as in the poem's audiences form a lesson in humility that effectively leads these audiences to piety and to its higher state of wisdom, much as it has led Guthlac there.

Rafał Borysławski is an Associate Professor in the Institute of Literary Studies, University of Silesia, Poland, and co-founder of its Centre for Old Norse and Old English Studies. His research focuses chiefly on Old English culture and literature, the uses of apophatic philosophy in the early European Middle Ages, medieval emotionology (with particular emphasis on fear and its derivatives), and on the questions of medieval culture associated with the field of social history and femininity. He is the author of *The Old English Riddles and the Riddlic Elements of Old English Poetry* (2004) and he has co-edited seven volumes related to medieval studies and the intersections of history, historiography, and philology, including *Emotions as Engines of History* (2021), *Aspects of Royal Power in Medieval Scandinavia* (2018), *HistoRisus. Histories of Laughter and Laughter in History* (2016), and *Cryptohistories* (2015).

Katre Talviste

Teachable Moments Provided by a Poem about a National Hero who Created a National Hero

I would like to present a case of hero-making in the service of nation-building in nineteenth-century Estonia. In 1857, Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald published the epic poem *Kalevipoeg*, which came to be perceived as the Estonian national epic already in the 1860s. The poem is based on material from folk tales and employs poetic devices that are characteristic of folk songs, both of which Kreutzwald had creatively adapted in order to construct a coherent plot of hero's exploits in the spirit of classical and Romanticist epic poems. The poem's contemporary reception shows that Kreutzwald succeeded in creating a relatable hero and inspirational story that worked well in the context of the national movement. He created other comparably well-received heroes in his prose works, particularly the collection *Eesti rahva ennemuistsed jutud* (*Ancient Tales of the Estonian People*, 1866). His contributions led to his own consecration as a national hero and an iconic author. In this paper, I wish to address a rather marginally known representation of Kreutzwald in a poem by another author of comparable status from a later generation, Gustav Suits, who has paid homage to Kreutzwald in his poem *Üks ennemuistne jutt* (*An Ancient Tale*, 1903). Filled with intertextual references to Kreutzwald's work on several levels (title, dedication, poetic devices, motifs, biographical allusions), the poem explicitly addresses the topic of Kreutzwald's heroism. I come to this topic from the point of view of a school textbook author in the process of revising the representation of the national movement and early Estonian literature at school. I consider the potential of this set of texts as a relatively accessible material to use in teaching about the process of constructing heroes in support of a cause.

Katre Talviste is a lecturer in literature pedagogy at the University of Tartu, editor and author at *Avita Publishers*, and free-lance translator. She is co-editor of *Histoire de la traduction en Europe médiane* (A. Chalvin, J.-L. Muller, K. Talviste, M. Vrinat-Nikolov, eds., PUR, 2019), author of *La poésie estonienne et Baudelaire* (L'Harmattan, 2011) and various articles, essays and textbooks, most recently a revised version of a 7th-grade literature study kit (V. Kivisilla, P. Ratassepp, K. Talviste, Labürint I., Avita, 2024). Full bio available from the Estonian Research Information System: https://www.etis.ee/CV/Katre_Talviste/eng/.

According to Kohen, Langdon, and Riches (2017), heroes are not born but made. The scholars propose four commonalities defining everyday heroes' social formation: imagining themselves as heroes; a strong sense of empathy that includes the Other; the regular practice of heroic action-taking; and having a skill that allows them to act heroically. I propose an analysis of the heroic main figures that appear in Michael Bay's *Pearl Harbor* (2001). Rafe (Ben Affleck), the main character in the film, condenses these four elements. On the contrary, his best friend, Danny (Josh Hartnett), does not present them, yet relating to Rafe motivates him to become a hero, too. Finally, Doris "Dorie" Miller (Cuba Gooding Jr.) manifests the four elements, yet he is not allowed to become a war hero due to his race.

Through an analysis of the three characters present in *Pearl Harbor*, I claim that Michael Bay offers a complex vision of what it takes to become a hero. I argue that Bay develops a nuanced vision of heroism, which is both born and made: abilities are needed, yet they are not enough for a character to become one. This allows me to expand the analysis to Bay's oeuvre to conclude that he is one of the directors of contemporary commercial cinema who is deeply interested in the idea of heroism, as can be observed in the classification I propose for the analysis of his cinema: the hero who does not want to become one; the hero who is ready to become one; and the hero who desperately wants to become one.

Yago Paris (Tenerife, 1989) is a doctorate student in Humanities at King Juan Carlos University (Madrid). He is a member of the High-performance Research Group in Visual Arts and Cultural Studies (GIAVEC). He has published papers in academic journals such as *Studies in European Cinemas* or *Studies in Eastern European Cinemas*. He is the author of book chapters and of papers delivered at numerous conferences, co-editor and co-author of the book *Lo que nunca volverá: La infancia en el cine* (Applehead Team Ediciones, 2022). As a film critic, he writes in *Cine Divergente* and *El Antepenúltimo Mohicano*, and has collaborated with the newspapers *InfoLibre* and *Ctxt*.

Juan Zamudio

The Discourse on the Legitimization of the Anti-Hero in Selected Contemporary Television Series

This presentation explores the role of the anti-hero in contemporary television, particularly within the context of the "New Golden Age" of television (Newman & Levine, 2012), marked by the influence of cable television and streaming platforms. This research points to the emerging figure of anti-heroes as protagonists in television narratives since the late twentieth century, which, as semiotic resources (Bezemer and Jewitt 2009), allow an analysis of legitimization processes through their discourse and social practices.

Through a comparative analysis of mythological archetypes, drawing on Carl Jung (1959) and Joseph Campbell (1949), this presentation identifies the anti-hero as a modern manifestation of the traditional hero, but with a focus on individuality and resistance to institutional norms (Vaage 2015). The semiotic potential of these characters is examined using Critical Discourse Analysis tools, emphasizing their role in challenging societal structures. The research works with the legitimization strategies of Berger and Luckmann (1967) and Antonio Reyes (2011) to understand how these characters validate their actions and beliefs in a complex social context.

This analysis draws on a selection of television series that feature anti-heroes, among which *Peaky Blinders* (2013) stands out as historical fiction. By focusing on the protagonists' dialogue and broader narrative functions (Gee 2005), the discussion aims to highlight the cultural significance of the anti-hero as a character type that reflects contemporary themes of alienation and disillusionment. Ultimately, the discussion offers insights into how television as a medium contributes to the construction of social myths (Barthes 1957) and the legitimization of alternative values.

Juan Sebastián Zamudio G. is a professional in social communication from Universidad Santo Tomás de Colombia with an emphasis in education and a master's degree in semiotics from the University of Tartu in Estonia. He has worked in the design and execution of educational, marketing, and social impact campaigns for NGOs and private companies. Meanwhile, in the academic field, his research has focused on approaching concepts such as discourse, myth, and cultural memory in mass media, specifically in the audiovisual field of North American entertainment. He has participated in several conferences and organized the international forum on semiotics with the Ministry of Education and Culture of Uruguay. His most recent academic article, "Semiotic Perception of Cuteness in Groggu" (2024), was published in the online journal *Hortus Semioticus* of the University of Tartu.

Jeanne Darc



Seven Belngard