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HOME

HOMECOMING

HOMESICKNESS

HOME, HOMECOMING, HOMESICKNESS

April 20-21, 2026

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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PLENARY LECTURE

DR. NATALIIA VOLOSHKOVA

HOMESICKNESS, DUTY, AND FAMILY IN LADY JANE CATHCART'S TRAVEL JOURNAL AND LETTERS, 1768-1771

ABSTRACT

This paper considers Lady Jane Cathcart's residence in the Russian Empire in the capacity of ambassadress between 1768 and 1771. Drawing on evidence from her little known travel journal, letters, and other materials relating to this period, it reconstructs Lady Cathcart's and her family experiences in the foreign environment and explores her perceptions of Other culture. It pays special attention to discussing the phases of the family's adaptation to the new sociocultural milieu, also providing glimpses into Lady Cathcart's parental experiences abroad.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Nataliia Voloshkova is associate professor at Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz. Her research interests focus on British travel writing in the long eighteenth century. She is the author of *Bluestockings and Travel Accounts: Reading, Writing and Collecting* (Cambridge UP, 2021) and a number of publications about British accounts of travels in the Russian Empire. Her recent publication on the topic is "Writing Travelogues in the Early Nineteenth Century: The Story Behind Mary Holderness's Travel Account of Journeying From Riga to Crimea Via Kyiv" in *Ukrainian Historical Review* (2024).

KLAUDIA ANTKOWIAK
ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY IN POZNAŃ

CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR OF HOME IN TAYLOR SWIFT'S SELECTED SONG LYRICS

The study examines the metaphor of home in Taylor Swift's selected song lyrics, focusing on the albums *folklore* (2020) and *The Tortured Poets Department* (2024). Employing conceptual metaphor theory, the research explores how HOME functions as a key conceptual domain for expressing emotions, describing mainly past relationships and childhood memories. In *folklore* Swift evokes the metaphor of a haunted house to describe an experience of domestic violence seen through a child's perspective and frames relationships through the metaphor of home as a place that can no longer be accessed, highlighting distance and loss. This pattern continues in later work – in *The Tortured Poets Department* home is associated with emotional attachment to the past relationship and its gradual dissolution. The analysis focuses on how Swift constructs “home” as a fluid and unstable concept, using the metaphor to shift between feelings of safety, loss, and betrayal.

RUPSHA BANERJEE

INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

**‘COME HOME WITH ME’: RECLAIMING DISAPPEARING HOMELANDS IN
RABINDRANATH TAGORE’S *RED OLEANDERS* AND ANAÏS MITCHELL’S
*HADESTOWN***

The twentieth and twenty-first century literature has engaged with the construction and deconstruction of homelands socially and environmentally, especially in the context of late capitalism and the anthropocene. Increasingly, discourses on political identity and belonging, and the construction of nationhood have intersected with the question of the climate crisis, which serves to transform one’s homeland into the utterly unfamiliar, or drive it into annihilation. Rabindranath Tagore’s *Rakta Karavi* or *Red Oleanders* (1926), and Anaïs Mitchell’s *Hadestown* (2019) explore this transformation through the construction of fictional mining towns inhabited by exploited groups who imagine themselves, interestingly, to be denizens of hell, and develop complex relationships with the idea of a homeland, and of social and ecological rejuvenation. This paper will critically assess these two dramatic texts through the lenses of postcolonial and anthropocene studies, to examine their portrayals of nostalgic longings for a state of ecological harmony which is increasingly disappearing due to the nexus of industrialism, capitalism, and imperialism that defines the anthropocene. It will further demonstrate how mythical motifs from Europe and South Asia regarding the literary imagination of hellscapes and catabatic journeys facilitate discussions on the transformation of homelands into dystopic spaces, and the marginalisation and forced immigration of the inhabitants of those spaces. Finally, it will argue that such rhetoric is employed in both texts in an attempt to comprehend the production of such dystopias, and how the catabatic journey becomes crucial to an attempt to disrupt such productions and reclaim one’s home.

JULIA BORKOWSKA
UNIVERSITY OF SIEDLCE

HOME IS WHERE *IT* WAITS: *RETURNING TO DERRY* IN STEPHEN KING'S *IT*

The primary aim of this work is to examine how domestic space functions as a repository of traumatic events and how such trauma is reactivated upon the characters' return. When the adult members of the Losers' Club reappear in their hometown of Derry they are confronted with an unsettling experience, an extent to which the town, accompanied by Pennywise's presence, was able to preserve their childhood trauma and re-enact it upon their return. Derry, as a hometown, does not function as a stable place of belonging and nostalgia, but rather, emerges as a space where the past persists and resurfaces in disturbing ways. In this work, Freud's concept of the *Uncanny* (unheimlich), describing a specific type of fear or dread that arises when something once familiar and homely becomes strange¹, serves as a main frame for a broader analysis of characters' response. In the novel places like an abandoned house on Neibolt Street or the Barrens illustrate how domestic spaces can work as archives of suffering, marked with a memory of violence rather than nostalgia. As Cathy Caruth observes, the significance of trauma lies in its "delayed appearance and its belated address".² For the characters who previously suffered partial amnesia of childhood events, Derry is a place where the past is not recalled but experienced again. This reading also engages with recent critical approaches to King's *It*, particularly *Encountering Pennywise Critical Perspectives on Stephen King's It* (2022) edited by Whitney S. May.

¹Freud, S. 1919. *The Uncanny*. Alix Strachey (tr.). Oxfordshire: Imago.

²Caruth, C. 1996. *Unclaimed Experience*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. p. 5.

KATE BRODERICK
INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER

**ROADS TO NOWHERE: FAMINE INFRASTRUCTURE, LANDSCAPE SCAR, AND
THE UNHOMELINESS OF THE IRISH MIDLANDS**

Home, in the Irish tradition, is not a structure but a landscape — a system of named fields, remembered paths, and inherited relations between people and place. This paper argues that the Irish midlands constitute a landscape in which home has been systematically unmade through scar: the physical inscription of colonial violence into the terrain itself. The Famine roads are this paper's central exhibit. Built under the British public works relief scheme, these roads were constructed by starving people as a condition of receiving wages too small to purchase food. They were designed deliberately to lead nowhere — to connect nothing to nothing, to serve no economic or social purpose, to demonstrate that the labour of the Irish poor existed only to be extracted and discarded. Many remain. They cross fields, end at hedges, disappear into bog. They are home's opposite: infrastructure built to sever community connection, to write purposelessness into the ground as a colonial statement of power. This paper reads Famine roads against the contemporary Irish midlands, where data centre access roads are now being built across the same terrain. The colonial infrastructure logic has been rerouted. New roads lead to surroundings communities will never inhabit: to inaccessible server halls behind security fences, consuming vital electricity and water. Homesickness, this paper argues, is not always longing for a place one has left. Sometimes it is the condition of standing in a landscape so thoroughly marked by violence that home has been made impossible from within.

NAVYA CHOUDHARY
INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER

**RETHINKING HOMECOMING: TRAUMA AND LIMITS OF RETURN IN NOVIOLET
BULAWAYO'S *WE NEED NEW NAMES***

Homesickness is commonly defined as a feeling influenced by memories, affection, emotional pull and a desire to return where one belongs. Such a definition, however, rests on the assumption that home is a stable, intact space where one can eventually return to. However, Home, as Helen Taylor suggests, is less a fixed geography and an affective construct shaped by lived experience, memory, and a shifting relations of belonging. This concept becomes much more complex in African discourse, where home is frequently entangled with histories of displacement and colonial disruption. In such circumstances, home cannot be seen as a place of solace or homecoming as it is frequently characterized by violence, instability and loss. Homesickness, therefore, goes beyond simple nostalgia into something much deeper than that. It is a feeling of want not only for a location but for a sense of belonging that may never have existed in the first place. This paper argues that NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) challenges the traditional notions of homesickness by depicting home as a space which is already marked by loss and uncertainty. The story portrays home as a place shaped by famine, political violence, and daily uncertainty rather than as a place of comfort through Darling's (protagonist) upbringing in Zimbabwe. As a result, what she brings with her when she migrates is a very unstable sense of belonging rather than a stable memory. In this context, Achille Mbembe's views on postcolonial existence help frame home as fundamentally unstable, characterized by fragility. This can further be contextualized within Ira Berlin's migration typology, with Darling's journey, reflecting in a more complex and a later phase of migration marked by fragmented identities and dislocated belonging. Instead of resolving this instability, migration to America exacerbates it, putting her in a situation where she imagines returning but is emotionally and structurally unable to do so. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to reframe homesickness in African writing as not a simple longing for return, but as a condition shaped by rupture, where home itself remains unresolved. It implies that home is neither completely lost nor recovered in Bulawayo's work, but rather persists as a fragile and uneasy presence that continues to influence the experience of exile.

EYESHA ELAHI

HEINRICH HEINE UNIVERSITY DÜSSELDORF

NEGOTIATIONS OF DISTANCE: HOME, MOVEMENT, AND HUMANITY

From the earliest history of humanity, we have built. The history of building is encompassed in the history of the word build, which in turn has links to dwelling and abode.¹ From the earliest history of humanity, as religious history testifies, we have built heights, towers.² This paper links both these historical notions of building to the present and the future of humanity, encompassed within the notion of home as an avenue, destination, and origin simultaneously. It interweaves the concept as bookends to humanity that propels forward movement. Using Martin Heidegger's conceptualizations on dwelling and building, and Gaston Bachelard's notions of home³, I aim to establish a theory of home that protects, is protected, and projected, and that serves as the impetus for effort, for doing, extending its tendrils out to our movements in everyday life, movements of intentionality, as well as more momentous movements of our attempts at reaching outwards and upwards into space, inwards and downwards into oceanic depths, as well as horizontal traversal on Earth. Home then becomes the tension between remaining on earth, with earth, and simultaneously leaving it, attempting distance, for the faroff home. It becomes the movement of life.

¹Heidegger, Martin. "Building Dwelling Thinking." *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter, HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 1971, pp. 141-159.

²Genesis 11.4. The Quran 28.38; cf. 40.36-37.

³Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. 1958. Beacon Press, 1969

NETA GOLDFEIN

HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

**BORDERLANDS OF HOME: LANGUAGE, BELONGING, AND THE PERILS OF
RETURN IN LUCIA BERLIN'S "TIGER BITES"**

This paper examines how language mediates the experience of homecoming in Lucia Berlin's short story "Tiger Bites", arguing that for the narrator Lou, home is not a stable origin to which one can safely return but a contested space structured by language, memory, and the ever-present threat of rejection.

Drawing on Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of the borderlands and Aneta Pavlenko's work on affective bilingualism, I trace the paradox at the heart of Lou's homecoming: crossing into Mexico triggers an overwhelming sensory recognition, yet this home is always-already fractured by the presence of American soldiers and the political border that persists even when physically crossed. Meanwhile, Lou's family house in Texas is rendered strange and impersonal, intensifying the dissonance between felt belonging and liveable space.

This fragile homecoming becomes most acute in an underground abortion clinic, where Lou refuses to speak Spanish to the Mexican staff, fearing that would expose her to harsher moral judgement. Reading this refusal through Anzaldúa's account of the fear experienced by those who dread rejection by their own culture, I argue that Lou's silence enacts a painful distancing from the home she instinctively recognizes.

Thus, in "Tiger Bites", the mother tongue becomes both a site of intimacy and a source of exposure. Home emerges not as a destination but as a space one can be homesick for without ever being able to fully inhabit.

GABRIELA IWANOWSKA

UNIVERSITY OF BIAŁYSTOK

***PIRANESI* - WHEN THE HOME BECOMES THE DIVINE**

The matters of Divinity and religion in Susanna Clarke's *Piranesi* has always been of literary scholars' interest since its publication in 2020. The following presentation, however, will focus on the Divine portrayal of the House in the book. The presentation will start with the analysis of *Piranesi* through the lens of Owen Barfield's *Evolution of Consciousness*, claiming that there is not only no separation between the Divine and the Human, but also that *Piranesi* lives *inside* the Divine. Then, the focus will shift towards Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy and the manifestations of the spiritual world in the physical one, fortifying Barfield's claims. Finally, the presentation will conclude with the analysis of Biblical motifs and themes in the book, with the claim that the House is the garden of Eden of sorts.

BERNADETTA JANKOWSKA

DOCTORAL SCHOOL (ACADEMIA ARTIUM HUMANIORUM), NICOLAUS COPERNICUS UNIVERSITY
IN TORUŃ

“THIS PLACE HERE/IS ME”: THE REPRESENTATION OF MODERN YOUNG INDIGENOUS WOMEN’S IDENTITY IN *WINYANBOGA YURRINGA* (2016) BY ANDREA JAMES

The aim of my presentation is to analyse the portrayal of modern Indigenous Australian women’s identity – in relation to the “Country”, in Andrea James’ play *Winyanboga Yurringa* (2016). Drawing on Aileen Moreton-Robinson’s (2000) commentary on “the ‘traditional’ versus ‘contemporary’ Indigenous woman binary”, I will also apply the concept of “sovereign Aboriginal woman” examined by Tracey Bunda (2007) as a theoretical background to my study. In my analysis of Andrea James’ play, I will concentrate on the representation of two characters – Carol and Jadah – both being Indigenous women (living in the city) with successful professional careers, who come to the “Country” – the land occupied by their Ancestors. In particular, I will examine the problem of the “right” to be a member of the Indigenous community, the significance of Indigenous Australian tradition (“the Dreaming” experience, women’s ritual) and the role of kinship in constituting the identity of both characters. I will argue that the identity of modern Indigenous Australian women presented in *Winyanboga Yurringa* must combine Aboriginal tradition and culture as its essential aspects, with the challenges of life in the contemporary world.

References

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- James, Andrea. 2019 [2016]. *Winyanboga Yurringa*. Strawberry Hills: Currency Press.
- Moreton-Robinson, Aileen. 2021 (2000). *Talkin’ up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

EDGAR JAMES ÆLRED JEPHCOTE

DOCTORAL SCHOOL (ACADEMIA ARTIUM HUMANIORUM), NICOLAUS COPERNICUS UNIVERSITY
IN TORUŃ

“FORGIVE ME FOR HAVING EVER DARKENED YOUR DARK HOME”: WINDOWED SPACES AND THE FAILURE OF DOMESTIC FUNCTION IN *DOMBEY AND SON*

As J. Hillis Miller observes, the central problem of *Dombey and Son* lies in the barriers separating its characters from the world and one another (p. 146). This paper addresses this problem through the lens of windows and (darkened) windowed spaces. The theme of the home is central to the novel as the motherless Florence Dombey lives out her adolescence “alone in the great dreary house” (Dickens, p. 350). Focusing mainly on the Dombey household for this study, I propose a close-reading of windows in the novel as potentially agentic, porous, and mediating architectural sites that further explore the issue of relational separation. The novel is replete with the modality of dark or un-opened (non-porous) windows as both symbolic and indexical signifiers of death, decay, and disorder. With reference also to other windowed spaces, such as Mrs Pipchin’s front parlour window – “which was never opened” (p. 118), this paper will present this negative modality of the window motif as one that highlights a distinct failure of mediation between the private sphere of the home and separate, external milieus. Moreover, despite appearing almost as a synecdoche for the darkened Dombey home, the central character of Florence Dombey is presented ultimately as a key ‘Window Figure’ (my own term) of hope, light, and positivity – a character who, as Hillis Miller states, can move between various social strata, acting almost as a different person (p.144), thus resisting, and escaping her non-porous, non-functional, and oppressive home environment.

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Hillis Miller, J. *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1958).

ALICJA KUROWSKA

NICOLAUS COPERNICUS UNIVERSITY IN TORUŃ

NEW HOME OF THOSE WHO CANNOT GO BACK: MIGRATION PORTRAYED IN THE CONTEMPORARY MUSICAL

The contemporary musical is often associated with pure entertainment and, while this is partly true, it is important to note that this form often explores serious topics as well. One of them is migration, which can be portrayed from different perspectives that this research aims to present. Based on Richard Dyer's theory of entertainment as utopia, this paper seeks to understand how musical theatre adjusts reality to be both captivating for the audience, and suitable to particular topics. Such a background provides space for examining different images of migrants and how they are shown building a new home overseas. They are faced with continuous obstacles, ostracism and inability to return to their homeland, while trying to explore new possibilities created in a different country. The research is based on three musicals: *In the Heights* (2021), *West Side Story* (2021) and *Hamilton* (2015). Additionally, this paper addresses the question whether musicals can be a space of redemption for migrants, who were not given the voice before.

PAWEŁ LISIK

UNIVERSITY OF WROCLAW

LANGUAGE ATTRITION IN POLISH-AMERICAN IMMIGRATION: POLISH UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF AMERICAN ENGLISH

This study investigates the phenomenon of first language (L1) attrition in the speech of a Polish immigrant who has lived in the United States for several decades. The research focuses on phonetic, morphological and syntactic changes in Polish under the influence of American English. The study aims to identify linguistic features that indicate attrition of Polish as a first language after nearly fifty years of residence in an English-dominant environment. The methodology involved transcription of the recorded speech, repeated listening and a comparative analysis of the speaker's utterances with standard Polish structures. The analysis was informed by several theoretical frameworks commonly used in language attrition research, including markedness theory, functional load theory and the regression hypothesis. The results reveal noticeable grammatical and syntactic interference from English, as well as phonological distortions and the presence of lexical borrowings and discourse markers typical of American English. While phonological and grammatical changes are evident, the lexical system of Polish appears relatively well preserved, surprisingly. The findings support previous research suggesting that different linguistic components are affected by attrition to varying degrees and demonstrate how long-term immersion in a second-language environment can influence the structure of a speaker's native language.

KORNELIA MAZURKIEWICZ-KLOC
NICOLAUS COPERNICUS UNIVERSITY IN TORUŃ

**ALWAYS HOME, NEVER HOME: DIGITAL DIASPORAS AND THE POSTHUMAN
ASSEMBLAGE OF HOMESICKNESS**

Homesickness is most often associated with physical separation, defined as a longing for a place that is physically distant and emotionally significant; such an assumption relies on clear boundaries between presence and absence. However, digital communication technologies often blur these distinctions. Constant connectivity allows individuals to remain present in multiple spaces simultaneously, not merely by overcoming the distance, but by participating in the production of home itself. Drawing on digital diaspora studies, this paper reconsiders homesickness through a posthumanist lens. Candidatu and Ponzanesi frame diaspora as a “traveling concept”, as it moves beyond its origins to include new configurations of belonging: digital mediation. While constant connection may alleviate displacement, it generates a new condition in which homesickness emerges from the interplay of bodies and algorithms. The diasporic subject is neither entirely absent from the homeland nor present in the place of residence. Digital homesickness can be therefore understood as the tension between algorithmic co-presence and embodied detachment – a state of being always at home, yet never fully at home. By reading Anglophone digital diaspora narratives as sites of mediated belonging, this paper concludes that digital technologies do not erase homesickness but transform it into persistent tension, reconfiguring home as an ongoing, relational process.

HOU MINJIE

SCHOOL OF ENGLISH STUDIES, XI'AN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES UNIVERSITY

THE CONSTRUCTION OF HOME IN *THE BEAN TREES* IN THE FLUID MODERNITY

In the 21st century, society is in fluidity. Many people in modern society are also constantly migrating from one place to another. This has made the traditional concept of home destroyed. More and more people tend to build a community with strangers rather than a home bonded by kinship. This community is the new home modern people build for themselves. This paper examines Barbara Kingsolver's debut novel *The Bean Trees* to explore the experience of those who construct homes not from a place they were born, but from the absence of it. The novel follows two different types of displacement, both physically and spiritually. Taylor, one of the main protagonists, leaves her hometown Kentucky and begins her journey. The journey makes her lose the original home built from kinship. Another character of the novel is Luo Ann. The displacement of her is spiritual. The home she built through marriage broke down with the leaving of her husband. By using the theories of fluidity and community, this paper analyzes three dimensions of building a home in the novel, including the geographical space, the emotional bonds, and the identity. Through these perspectives, the novel reimagines home not as a fixed place, but as a community forged in the absence of the traditional concept of belonging. By exploring how individuals navigate displacement and homesickness, this paper argues that Kingsolver's novel offers a renewed understanding of home in the background of fluidity.

MALAVIKA K NAMBIAR

PH.D. SCHOLAR, DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN AND WORLD LITERATURES, THE ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES UNIVERSITY, HYDERABAD, INDIA

WHAT THE HOME SPEAKS: POETICS OF MATERIALITY AND TRAUMA IN *BELOVED*

Home may not necessarily be an abode of peace and stability for every inhabitant. However the practice of inhabiting a place and the continued use of the material artefacts in that space mediate the subjective consciousness of the user and function as containers of their emotions, particularly unspoken trauma. The paper explores how materiality negotiates with the changed conception of home by considering instances from *Beloved* which is a 1987 novel by the American novelist Toni Morrison. While the principal characters adhere to silence, failing to cope with their trauma, the material artefacts at the house at 124 Bluestone Road attain agency to address the pain of slavery, the community's betrayal and infanticide. That home offers no warmth, instead shares the deterioration of its people. While the human language fails, the language of the home - including its color, texture, smell, objects, floors and chairs start to speak. The paper endeavours to explain this idea by taking theoretical insights from material culture as proposed majorly by Bill Brown and Danile Miller, spatiality and Cathy Caruth's trauma studies. The idea of Bachelardian home is subverted as the home in *Beloved* is an intimate archive of agony. By foregrounding the autonomy of the material environment, this paper proposes that in *Beloved*, home is redefined as a fragile, object-mediated space where memory resides outside language. In a broader sense, it hopes to contribute to the notion of how the materiality of home and selfhood are mutually constitutive.

BARBARA PAWLAK

DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES, UNIVERSITY OF ŁÓDŹ

“PEACE OF CAFE, SAFETY OF TEASHOP”: REDEFINING COMMERCIAL SPACES AS PLACES OF CARE AND SAFETY ON THE BASIS OF THE NOVEL *LEGENDS & LATTES* AND THE VIDEO GAME *WANDERSTOP*

Cozy fantasy novels and video games challenge the domination of productivity and efficiency cultivated in commercial spaces. It is done by transforming places, such as a café or a teashop, into environments that build a sense of community, stability, and safety, which will be presented on the basis of the video game *Wanderstop*, developed by Ivy Road, and the novel *Legends & Lattes*, written by Travis Baldree. In the novel, the protagonist Viv abandons the life of adventuring to settle down and run her very own coffee shop, which becomes the heart of the local community. In *Wanderstop*, a gladiator, Alta, is compelled to rest at a teashop to recover her strength from the endless pursuit of perfection in the art of fighting. In both works, fierce heroines take up the jobs of the service providers, but instead of focusing on relentless drive and seeking commercial success, they redefine the spaces usually associated with profit. Viv and Alta transform the shops so that the financial exchange and drive towards success take a background role, allowing human connection and peacefulness to take the foreground. Thus, the café and the teashop, through the abandonment of exploitative practices, form a space for respite and become temporary homes for guests. As a result, the works go against the capitalistic chase after productivity and money-making, offering instead a space where both service is provided to the clients, and humanity is retained during the exchange, creating a safe and homely environment.

KATARZYNA PRZYGOŃSKA

NICOLAUS COPERNICUS UNIVERSITY IN TORUŃ

“IT WAS THE SPRING OF HOPE, IT WAS THE WINTER OF DESPAIR”: HOME AND IDENTITY IN CASSANDRA CLARE’S *THE INFERNAL DEVICES* TRILOGY (2010-2013)

London, as one of the world’s most famous cities, has often been chosen to be the setting for fictional literary narratives, as is the case with *The Infernal Devices* (2010-2013) by Cassandra Clare. The story follows Tessa, a teenage girl born and raised in New York, as she arrives in London to begin a new life; however, this new chapter is nothing like she imagined. The world, and her family, is proven to be entirely different from what she had previously believed. Although they suffer from homesickness, trauma, and a demonic curse, Tessa and her new companions, Jem and Will, treat London as a place of new beginnings; however, the city becomes the background for a set of traumatic events in characters’ lives. This paper argues that, due to their trauma and loss, Tessa, Jem, and Will are transformed during the events of the books, and new identities emerge for each of the characters which is presented in the resolution of the plot in *Clockwork Princess* (2013). Such identities are closely related to London as home. In order to fully research the abovementioned identities, this paper also explores Clare’s other novels and novellas, including *City of Heavenly Fire* (2014).

LILIANA RADKIEWICZ

NICOLAUS COPERNICUS UNIVERSITY IN TORUŃ

I WANT TO BE HERE! THE UNIVERSITY AS A “THIRD PLACE” IN A PERSON’S LIFE

The concept of the “third place” was introduced by the American sociologist Ray Oldenburg and gained popularity in the late 1980s. His concept has also become a topic of discussion in Europe, since work-life balance has become an important aspect of daily life. The sociologist identified three types of spaces in human life that are important for well-being. In his concept, the “third place” is a public space that facilitates informal gatherings, is accessible, and its main purpose is to build and strengthen relationships. In this sense, the “third place” can be seen as a ‘home of choice’: a meeting place where we feel safe and where we have the opportunity to develop social relationships or pursue our passions. And although universities formally fit into the concept of a “second place” in a person’s life (like any school, university or workplace), people are creating some places on university campuses that are open to the public and being used to integrate the academic community and local residents. One of the examples is the Copernican Integration Centre at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń - a place formally associated with the university (a “second place”), but nevertheless reflects the principles of the “third place” concept. In my presentation, I will explore the idea behind the creation of places like the CIC and its social significance for the development of the local community. I will present the results of an Individual Depth Interview research conducted with individuals involved in the functioning and development of the Copernican Integration Centre.

ALEKSANDRA RONATOWSKA

NICOLAUS COPERNICUS UNIVERSITY IN TORUŃ

**“SWINGING BY MY NECK FROM THE FAMILY TREE”: THE SHIFTING PERCEPTION
OF HOME IN ETHEL CAIN’S *PREACHER’S DAUGHTER***

This paper analyzes the portrayal of the theme of home in Ethel Cain’s debut concept album, *Preacher’s Daughter*, specifically focusing on how abuse influences one’s perception of home. The narrative nature of the album provides a look into the lyrical subject’s—also named Ethel Cain—shifting perspective on the notion of home as her life progresses. Her hometown is initially presented as a site marked by intergenerational trauma and violence, which Ethel is desperate to escape. As it is revealed in a later song, what she considers her true home is a house she stayed in with her lover after running away. Thus, home in the text is defined as comfort at the side of a loved one, rather than the place you are born in. Throughout the rest of the narrative Ethel frequently expresses yearning for that home she cannot return to, since her lover has left. After being forced to run from the law, she suffers through more abuse before eventually being murdered. In the songs reflecting on her short life, Ethel reminisces about the house she shared with her lover, as well as her hometown, which is portrayed more favorably than in the first few songs of the album. Through lyrical and cultural analysis, this paper argues that Ethel Cain’s *Preacher’s Daughter* portrays home as an unstable concept, shaped by trauma and nostalgia, that changes over the course of one’s life, reflecting the instability of belonging in contemporary culture.

AGATA RUPIŃSKA

DOCTORAL SCHOOL (ACADEMIA ARTIUM HUMANIORUM), NICOLAUS COPERNICUS UNIVERSITY
IN TORUŃ

UGLY AT HOME?: FACIAL BEAUTY EXPECTATIONS AT HOME IN *FIX* BY LESLIE MARGOLIS AND *THE FOLD* BY AN NA

Most people associate the home and family sphere with a place of acceptance, where one is free from judgment and loved for who they authentically are, both physically and mentally. This expectation is no different regarding the realm of facial appearance. After all, the popular, albeit hurtful, expression used to describe those with unconventional looks goes: “only a mother could love a face like that!”. Thus, mothers, fathers, and other relatives are often perceived as those who should not pay attention to the attractiveness of younger family members and, instead, should foster their self-confidence.

Unfortunately, for some young people the home is not a space free of appearance-based judgment. Instead, societal beauty expectations permeate the family sphere. Relatives can play a key role in urging a family member to conform to the dominant beauty ideal. This can occur in a variety of ways, ranging from meaningful glances and unkind comments to more direct measures such as pressuring one to use certain beautifying strategies and even undergo plastic surgery.

ZUZANNA SANECKA

UNIVERSITY OF ŁÓDŹ

HOME IS A MOTHER: ANALYSIS OF MOTHERHOOD REFLECTED IN HOME SPACE IN MARY BRONSTEIN'S *IF I HAD LEGS I'D KICK YOU* (2026)

Due to the persistently patriarchal nature of the society, women, especially mothers, became inseparable from the notion of home. The Anglosaxon canon of literature includes a number of works which examine a relationship between a distressed woman and a domestic space. Literary works such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) or Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) portray helpless women entrapped in houses due to their mental condition. Moreover, twenty-first century filmmakers also take interest in the relationship between women and the space they function in. Movies such as Lenny Abrahamson's *Room* (2015) or Lynne Ramsay's *Die My Love* (2025) focus on how the space affects women's mental health. The aim of this paper is to analyze home and domestic space as a direct reflection of a mother's mental state. *If I Had Legs I'd Kick You* (2026) follows Linda, a distressed mother of a child who suffers from a serious, mysterious illness. Due to her state, Linda's daughter requires almost constant, round-the-clock care. Left on her own by her husband, Linda tries to coordinate her working life and motherhood while struggling with alcohol addiction. Her situation worsens when the ceiling of her apartment suddenly collapses and she and her ill daughter are forced to live in a motel nearby. However, as the story progresses the hole in her ceiling becomes an eerie portal into her psyche. By using Slavoj Žižek's concept of parallax, I intend to analyze the relationship between Linda's state and the hole.

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BEING AND UN/BELONGING: EXPLORING THE POETICS OF HOME IN HARUKI MURAKAMI'S NOVELS

In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard charts the essentialist characteristics of 'home'. For Bachelard, home is "our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word" (Bachelard 26). It is the space which shelters not only the individual's body but also one's psyche. Across cultures, home is related to the idea of security, warmth and belonging. Bachelard further states that an individual without home will be "a dispersed being" (Bachelard 29). In contrast to this essentialist worldview, Haruki Murakami calls in for a separate notion of the home. In his fictional world, home is not projected as a safe haven. Through various characters and situations, Murakami justifies how the home space can turn out to be a problematic space with notions of trauma and suffering attached. This paper takes into consideration the phenomenology of 'everyday' through the idea of home and studies the given space from two perspectives- one, the essentialist notion and second, the existentialist notion. While doing so, this paper takes into consideration Murakami's novels-*Kafka on the Shore* (2002) and *1Q84* (2009) to justify that home is a place of unbelonging. The main aim of this paper is to illustrate how belongingness can be mapped in spaces beyond the phenomenology of the 'everyday' by exploring liminal spaces beyond the home. This methodology adopted in the paper is a close study of Murakami's novels *Kafka on the Shore* and *1Q84* worked through the lens of phenomenology to understand the poetics of home.

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THE DYSFUNCTIONAL HOME IN VLADIMIR NABOKOV'S *LOLITA*

The concept of a dysfunctional home in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* has always been portrayed as an unstable and emotionally distorted space. Nevertheless, the presentation examines an unhealthy relationship between an underage Dolores Haze and Humbert Humbert. The presentation will commence with Shafiqul Islam's analysis of the psycho-social problem of pedophilia and the ways in which it is represented in Nabokov's *Lolita* through Humbert and his double, Quilty as an obsessive fixation on so-called "nymphets". The examination of how different locations have a profound impact on Humbert's sexual behavior and attraction towards Dolores Haze, the titular Lolita, will be conducted based on Michael McGehee's analysis of *Lolita* and Transatlantic family structures. Additionally, the presentation will scrutinize the unorthodox relationship between mother and daughter in the story, highlighting the neglect and mutual resentment reflected in their conversations, as well as the treatment of the child as a burden. However, she eventually tries to protect Dolores. The presentation then analyzes how Humbert utilizes his role as a stepfather to manipulate Lo psychologically and sexually abuse her. Finally, it examines Dolores Haze's mental state based on Xiaoya Liu's research on Lolita's traumatic experiences connected to family loss, gender imbalance, and social isolation.

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**“I WANT TO WAKE UP NEW AND NOT CARRY THE ARMS AND LIMBS OF DEAD
MEMORIES INTO THE MORNING”: HOME, MEMORY AND GRIEF IN *SEASON: A
LETTER TO THE FUTURE***

The undefinable nature of the concept of home facilitates the appearance of a range of ways in which the concept is approached and discussed. Along with the strive to find and name the place one might belong in, there occur representations of various attempts to remember and preserve the memory of one's home. Such is the case for the game entitled *Season: A Letter to the Future* in which the player assumes the role of Estelle who, upon realising the impending end of the season (an event that completely wipes out the memory of inhabitants of Tieng Valley), decides to record and document all vital experiences, conversations and sights to preserve the memory of the place for the future (generations). The player, thus, is brought on a journey through the memories scattered around the soon-to-be-gone home in an attempt to create a perfect book that captures the essence of the place. Drawing upon the theory of grief, memory and game studies, the paper aims to examine the fleeting sense of home and the relationship between remembrance and grief.

DARJA STRYHO

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**NOSTALGIA AS AN INCURABLE DISEASE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF
NOSTALGIA IN RAY BRADBURY'S *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES* AND ANDREI
TARKOVSKY'S *SOLARIS***

Nostalgia was originally coined by Johannes Hofer in the 17th century as a physical sickness, specifically among displaced soldiers who were unable to return home (Boym 2001:7). By the eighteenth century, physicians had discovered that even returning home did not cure the disease, leading scholars to redefine nostalgia as a longing for an irretrievable time rather than a specific place. In this paper, I would like to analyze Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* and Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris*, focusing on the theme of homesickness and its original logic, where it acts as a force that is irresistible and ultimately incurable, because what is lost is not so much a place, but a past life.

Drawing on Svetlana Boym's theories of "restorative" and "reflective" nostalgia, I examine how the landscapes of Mars and Solaris function as mirrors that manifest the Earthly traumas of their settlers. In Bradbury's "The Third Expedition," Martians weaponise the crew's deepest memories—dead relatives, childhood homes, 1926 Ohio—to produce a simulation of home that the crew cannot resist. In other chapters, the drive to rebuild Earth on Mars expands into a form of colonialism. In *Solaris*, the "ocean" reads the astronauts' memories and materializes them, while human artifacts in the space station's library are used as psychological tools against the weight of alien space. Finally, the paper explores the concept of "prospective nostalgia"—a longing for a future home that can only be found by abandoning earthly identity, yet it is so shaped by the past that we end up creating a future-past.

PRATIKSHYA TRIPATHY

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MATERIAL MEMORY AND THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF DWELLING IN SELECT NORTH-EAST INDIAN FICTION

Growing scholarship on spatial configurations in literary fiction has foregrounded the close interconnections between bodily experiences, lived spaces, and affective environments. However, existing critical studies in North-East Indian Fiction have predominantly focused on issues related to ethnic clashes, insurgency violence, identity struggles, and political turmoil, with insufficient attention to the material and affective aspects through which these narratives are experienced. Within this broader lacuna in literary research, the phenomenological and material significance of domestic spaces remains largely underexplored. To engage with this gap in current scholarly research, this study investigates how houses in select North-East Indian novels are conceptualized as living archives, functioning as material sites where memory, identity, and affect are inscribed, negotiated, and transmitted through everyday practices, rituals, and material artefacts.

The study is theoretically enriched by phenomenological enquiries of lived space conceptualised by Gaston Bachelard and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, further expanded by Janet Donohoe in her work on dwelling and Edward Casey's reflections on place-based memory, together with Rachel Hurdley's studies of domestic material culture. Guided by these theoretical frameworks, the study investigates how domestic architecture, spatial thresholds, and household rituals constitute the houses into affective archives that carry the emotional and historical experiences of the inhabitants.

Through a critical reading of the selected texts, the study aims to present the houses as active mnemonic structures that negotiate between the past and the present, shaping the identity and lived experiences of the characters. By focusing on the materiality of the domestic spaces, the study shifts the focus from macro-political discourses to the intimate confines of lived domestic structures to show how memory is inscribed within lived environments. The enquiry contributes to scholarly debates around literary spatial studies and material memory by conceptualising the domestic space as a pivotal affective category within the contemporary literary corpus of North-East Indian fiction.

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HOME EQUALS TRAUMA: AN ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF TRAUMA ON SEEKING A HOME IN THE TV SERIES *DEXTER* (2006-2013)

After having experienced horrendous events, can a person ever return to their initial mental state from before the events occurred? Various examples from literature would suggest that it is quite impossible to do so. Once an individual endures trauma, there is no possible way to know how they will react and how severe the outcome will be. For example, in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), the main character's guilt over killing her own child is one of the main sources of her psychological disarray, preventing her from finding a "home". Furthermore, Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* (1978) depicts the mental displacement of a group of friends who were drafted during the Vietnam War. Although trauma affected them in various stages, they felt equally alienated, not being able to come back to their previous selves, their homes.

The events in *Dexter* follow Dexter Morgan, a forensic technician working for the Miami Metro police department, who specializes in blood spatter, and is a serial killer by night. Dexter suffered from an unimaginable trauma as a child, which shaped his entire life. Unable to entrust his secret to anyone, he puts on a fake persona in public. His trauma pushes him to make questionable choices, as he is desperate to find a source of home. Based on Cheever's (1978) definition of homesickness and Kohut's (1971, 1977, 1984) idea of twinship, this paper aims to evaluate the effect of trauma on the search for home and a twin soul.

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HOME IN THE FACE OF WAR – A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PERCEPTION AND ANGLOPHONE LITERATURE

The concept of “home” is frequently associated with warmth, safety, and stability, which can, as history shows, undergo a complete breakdown and redefinition in the face of war. This can be particularly noticeable after the Second World War, during which experiences of relocation, loss of home or family were common on a global scale, influencing human identity and psyche. This paper analyzes the impact of difficult experiences of war on the perception and experience of the fundamental human value of “home” in a multidimensional perspective. It is based on a comparative study of Polish and Anglophone literary examples that emerged from the experience of the Second World War – both during and immediately after its end. The aim of this paper is also to show the way in which literature can preserve the experience of war and its influence on human identity and psyche.

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SEARCHING FOR HOME IN WOMEN'S TRAVEL WRITING: LONGING AND SELF-DISCOVERY IN *EAT, PRAY, LOVE*

In contemporary society, characterised by increasing diversification, inclusivity and women's emancipation, women are afforded greater freedom to seek meaning and purpose — including through travel and exploration of the world. Women's travel writing offers numerous examples illustrating this shift: women search for their place not only through education and professional choice, but also through the act of travelling. Travel, in this context, can be understood as both physical and mental — a journey leading towards a place of emotional belonging and self-understanding, which may equally be external or internal. This paper explores the themes of home, return and longing in contemporary travel narratives, with a particular focus on *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert.

Gilbert's memoir—subtitled *One Woman's Search for Everything*—exemplifies not merely a physical journey across Italy, India and Indonesia, but also an inward search for emotional stability, a sense of purpose and personal healing through travel, undertaken in the course of overcoming depression. The protagonist's departure from an unfulfilling marriage and the conventional home she and her partner had built—a space in which she felt compelled to conform to social expectations, including the promise of motherhood—marks the initiation of a process of self-redefinition. The comfortable home, it emerges, no longer fulfils its function. A new sense of normality is sought not through a return to one's hometown or family, but through lived experience.

In this paper, the journey is examined not only as a transformative space in which the narrator reclaims an identity lost and neglected over the course of years marked by unsuccessful relationships, but also as a means through which she regains emotional autonomy, ultimately severing her toxic attachments. The longing for home thus becomes intertwined with the search for the self, suggesting that true return is not necessarily geographical, but rather psychological and emotional.