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FOREWORD

IBSC IN 2025

Welcome to the IBSC Newsletter vol. 5!

What a year it's been!

The world has been rocking and our imaginaries are changing under a constant onslaught of information on wars: wars real and hybrid, wars ongoing, wars planned, wars threatened, trade wars, civil wars, cognitive wars, phantom wars, wars on drugs, wars on migrants, wars on citizens, wars on foes, wars on allies, three-hour wars, one-day wars, twelve-day wars, genocides, deportations, ethnic cleansings, war crimes, war criminals, coups, conquests, mass shootings, massacres, war on the academia, war on institutions, war on peaceful protests, war departments, war secretaries, warrior culture, war preparedness, etc. On top of that the tools we use are dramatically changing with the advent of AI and we do not remain unaffected. Incrementally, we change too.

At IBSC, we asked ourselves how we could contribute to figuring out this moment from the border studies perspective, not only for ourselves but for those who are the future, young people entering their adult lives. What alternative paradigms and ways of thinking do we propose to start breaking the pattern which has led us to this moment? How do we work harder to build the much-needed literacies about how narratives build imaginaries which overdetermine social outcomes?

Apart from the many accomplishments of our members the reader will be able to read about in this newsletter, here is what I consider our main achievement: the launch of explorations into the pedagogy of border studies.

Over the summer of 2025 IBSC edited in Polish a collection of texts, both academic and creative (a comic strip, a play, a short story, a workshop), authored by members and friends of our Center. The editors of the volume (Katarzyna Mirgos, Krzysztof Ulanowski, Grzegorz Welizarowicz) intend it as a didactic resource offering a pedagogical model in border studies and migration studies. *Reader Migracje i uchodźstwo (Reader: Migration and Refuge)* is to be published by the University of Gdansk Press in 2026.

FOREWORD

A connected project was IBSC's participation in the Blended Intensive Program (BIP) *Crossing Borders: Migration Narratives and Border Studies* conducted in collaboration with partners from CAU University in Kiel, Germany, University of Split (UNIST) in Croatia, University of Western Brittany (UBO) in France. The project, made possible through Erasmus funds under the SEA-EU Alliance, brought together an international student group in Brest, France in October 2025 (more about this inside the *Newsletter*). Ideas tested and experiences gained there will be continued and expanded upon when four IBSC members (Ross Aldridge, Martin Blaszk, Maciej Rataj, and Grzegorz Welizarowicz) start teaching their first original project-based course in Border Studies at the just-launched UG's Global Studies program in the spring semester of 2026.

Thus, let me express this hope and a wish to my colleagues and partners at the IBSC: as we continue to pursue our individual interdisciplinary interests in all things border, may we also continue articulating and debating ideas about how to communicate our approaches combining research with creative and project-based methodologies. This also means that we should seek out cadres of young people, that we should actively create new educational and research opportunities, that internships and dialogs with young scholars should become a rule.

Finally, a more personal note: thank you to all our colleagues and interns at the IBSC. I wish us all a peaceful 2026. I hope we remain human.

GRZEGORZ WELIZAROWICZ

OUR PROJECTS

BLENDING INTENSIVE PROGRAM

CROSSING BORDERS: MIGRATION NARRATIVES/BORDER STUDIES

SEA-EU ALLIANCE, OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2025



In **May 2024**, during *Globality Forum* symposium held by the IBSC participating American Studies specialists from four universities, Jutta Zimmerman from Christian-Albrecht University of Kiel (CAU), Gordan Matas from University of Split (UNIST), Jean-Marc Serme from University of Western Brittany (UBO) in Brest, France and Grzegorz Welizarowicz from UG, hatched a plan of implementing an educational collaboration focused on creating a program in Migration Narratives and Border Studies to be offered to students of all four institutions.

In October-December 2025 thanks to the generous grants of the Erasmus Program under the banner of the SEA-EU Alliance and using the Blended Intensive Program format, *Crossing borders: Migration narratives/Border studies*, the first such international program in Border Studies between our universities, was organized.

At UG, the recruitment was addressed to American Studies students. The collaboration had virtual and onsite components. The virtual part introduced theory and assigned first tasks as well as was the vehicle for the finale in December.

OUR PROJECTS

The onsite segment took place in Brest, Brittany, France in October 20-24, 2025. The encounter between students with multiple national and religious backgrounds proved an enormous added value of this international collaboration. Each of the partner institutions sent at least five students. Not only did the students get to know each other but also began to break some of the cultural barriers and personal inhibitions. Everyone got to visit the windy tip of the continent and learn about Brest's history.

This was an introductory course in border and migration studies in the context of Europe and the Americas. It took a comparative, experiential, project-based, and collaborative approach. The course included lectures, case studies, field trips, meetings with experts, group assignments and discussions, and creative projects.

The course ended with a final project where the students, organized in international teams, presented online their collaborative work (scripts, films, artworks, etc.) based on the concepts and materials drawn from the course and invented by themselves.

The project allowed the entry of young scholars onto the arena of international collaboration and creative pursuits. For organizing partners, it opened an opportunity for future joint research and educational initiatives. Below we present four excerpts from the final projects: two plays, an essay, and four short stories

Grzegorz Welizarowicz



PLAY: *THE INTERVIEW ROOM* (EXCERPT)

BY KENZA BENJELLOUN, ROKO ČULIĆ, MINH ANH LÊ, EMILIA SIAGŁO

From the authors: The Interview Room follows three characters who experience heightened border control in a post-9/11 world at different airports, and even though they find themselves in similar circumstances, their stories have various outcomes.

This excerpt focuses on Alba González who experiences the consequences of negative imaginaries of Mexican immigrants in the United States, exposing how institutionalization of borders controls restricts access to better living conditions for some through the strict immigration laws.

BORDER SERVICES OFFICER

Madam, your husband unsuccessfully tried to obtain a working visa two times, and you don't know about it?

ALBA

Well... I did know that, but because he didn't get in, I thought it didn't matter.

BORDER SERVICES OFFICER

It very much matters. It makes me question your intentions for coming here.

ALBA

My intentions are clear. I am here to see the city and relax a bit. You have the information about my flight back home. Why is that not enough for you to believe me?

BORDER SERVICES OFFICER

Let me explain my perspective. Your husband tried not once but twice to enter the US. Now you're going to Phoenix, of all places, alone, with no real purpose. I think you want to stay here. Perhaps give birth here?

ALBA

Birth? I am not pregnant.

BORDER SERVICES OFFICER

You might be, I don't know that. You didn't deny my reasoning for you coming here.

ALBA

But I really don't want to stay here! I have my flights back in a week!

OUR PROJECTS

BORDER SERVICES OFFICER

I am afraid I don't believe you. I have to send you back home.

ALBA

Back home? No, sir, please! Okay, I will tell you the truth, but please understand. I really don't want to stay there. I just need to collect something.

BORDER SERVICES OFFICER

Collect something? Ma'am, if you want me to let you in, you have to be very honest with me. You should have been from the start.

ALBA

Okay... The truth is, my husband did cross the border some time ago, but he died recently. I found out over the phone. (STARTS CRYING.) I never got to say goodbye. I just want to collect his belongings, nothing more. Please, understand and let me in. I promise I will go back. It's just for a week. (CRIES MORE INTENSIVELY.) I just want some closure, so that I can live in peace. Please...

BORDER SERVICES OFFICER

Ma'am, I understand that's a difficult situation for you, but your husband did enter the U.S. illegally. You also were not truthful from the beginning. I don't know if you have any other members of your family there. I cannot let you enter the country under these circumstances. Please follow me.

ALBA

(MUMBLES UNDER HER BREATH.) Where are you taking me? I don't want to get lost!

BORDER SERVICES OFFICER

(STEPS TO THE CENTER OF THE STAGE. FACES THE AUDIENCE) My job is to protect my country, to make sure that my people are safe. Most times, I can just smile and wish someone a good trip, but sometimes I have to hear people's stories and ruin their plans which is hard. But it's not personal. Rules are rules.

ALBA

(STEPS NEXT TO THE OFFICER.) I think I am getting deported, but I don't know what will happen to me. All my husband and I wanted was to have a better future. The border not only made that impossible but also took my husband away from me. I didn't say goodbye; I can't see where he spent his last weeks and where he died; his body is forever in a place I will probably never be able to reach... He's erased. El ya no existe.

PLAY: “INSIDE OUT” – NARRATIVES IN OUR HEADS (EXCERPT)

BY HELENA KREUZMANN, ROMANE LALLIER-SOULTAN, ANA LJUBAS, PAWEŁ HERMAN

From the authors: Inspired by the animated Pixar movie Inside Out (2015), in which viewers are able to see inside the main character's head, this play is supposed to depict the power that media holds and how this power can be used for political purposes, in order to create new realities of borders. It tries to display how opinions on migration, borders, and general politics are formed.

[...]

TV

“Your wife has won the hearts of a nation. - This country has been so warm, so welcoming. The affection is... is truly mutual. - You are sharing her, aren't you? With all of us. - I certainly am. - And she's sharing you. She is not just married to the man anymore. She's married to the American government. What must that be like?”
(Switches back to UN sequence)

TV

“We the people...”
(Switch)

TV

(Intro of Friends is playing)

“So no one told you life was gonna be this way... Your job's a joke, you're broke. Your love life's D.O.A....”
(Switch.)

TV

“We have the possibility to coordinate our efforts and to manage better the reality of human mobility...”
(Switches again.)

TV

“Baby shark du du do, Baby shark du du...”
(Switch)

OUR PROJECTS

COHEN

(Throws head back)

They can't be serious. NOTHING IS ON.

(Back to UN sequence.)

TV

"Migrants have made extraordinary contributions..."

COHEN

(frustrated)

Oh c'mon.

(One last switch. He lands on a CNN news report.)

CNN NEWS REPORTER

"Part of the train journey north for some is what's called La Bestia, the beast. It's also known as the train of death, and often controlled by cartels..."

COHEN

(to himself)

Ugh, all they seem to talk about lately are immigrants and ICE raids.

(He continues to watch. At that moment, we take a closer look inside his head. Sitting at a table, three small figures are watching what is happening before COHEN's eyes.)

DON

(scoffing)

Here we go again. Chaos on wheels! That train sounds like trouble coming straight for us.

(SOPH and BUNCH OF VOICES glance at each other and look away, annoyed.)

SOPH

How can you say that? This is so dangerous. They are risking their lives.

CNN NEWS REPORTER

"Roberto wears a face mask to not infect the others, tells me he got sick early on in his travels. He says a lot of them have been sick, and over the journey, he's had to leave his two kids, young ones. He tells me his two toddlers nearly died, so he sent them back with family in Honduras as he continues on." . . .

ESSAY: MOTHERS, MIGRATION AND THE EXPERIENCE OF BORDERS

BY HALA ABIZA, NELE BARTEN, KORNELIA GRABAN, LAURA MATAS

Borders have always played a crucial role in shaping human experiences, especially during times of war, crisis and migration. They determine movement, separate communities and influence the choices individuals must make in order to survive or create better opportunities for their families. One of the most powerful perspectives from which to understand these experiences is the perspective of mothers, whose decisions are often guided by the responsibility to protect and secure a future for their children.

The history of the twentieth century demonstrates how war and political conflict forced millions of people to leave their homes and cross borders in search of safety. During the Second World War, civilians were frequently confronted with dramatic situations that required immediate and life-changing decisions. Mothers in particular faced the enormous challenge of protecting their children while navigating the dangers of war, occupation and displacement. Their experiences reveal how borders were not only political boundaries but also barriers that determined survival, security and the possibility of escape. Testimonies from women who lived through wartime experiences show how motherhood shaped their actions and choices. In situations of hunger, violence and uncertainty, mothers often became the central figures responsible for keeping families together. They were forced to find ways to protect their children from immediate danger while also thinking about long-term survival.

For many of them, crossing borders—whether physically or symbolically—became a necessary step toward safety. These historical experiences also demonstrate how war reshaped family structures and everyday life. Displacement separated families and forced many women to take on new responsibilities. In many cases, mothers had to make extremely difficult decisions about where to go, whom to trust and how to secure food, shelter and protection for their children. Such decisions often involved great personal sacrifice and required courage and resilience. Although the historical context of the Second World War was unique in its scale and violence, similar patterns can still be observed in contemporary migration.

Today, many women leave their home countries in search of better living conditions, employment opportunities and educational prospects for their children. Migration is often motivated by the desire to provide the next generation with possibilities that may not exist in the country of origin.

OUR PROJECTS

For many migrant mothers, crossing borders represents both hope and uncertainty. On one hand, migration can open new opportunities for economic stability and personal development. On the other hand, it often involves separation from family members, cultural adaptation and the challenges of building a new life in an unfamiliar environment. These experiences demonstrate that borders are not only geographical divisions but also social and emotional boundaries that individuals must navigate. The decision to migrate frequently involves balancing the risks of leaving home with the potential benefits of a new beginning. Mothers often take on the responsibility of making these decisions because they are deeply connected to the future of their children.

Education, safety and long-term opportunities become key motivations that drive migration across national boundaries. In addition to the physical act of crossing borders, migration also creates transformations in identity and family relationships. Moving to another country often requires adapting to a new language, culture and social system. For children, this process can involve growing up between different cultural worlds. For mothers, it may involve maintaining traditions and values while simultaneously helping their children integrate into a new society.

These experiences highlight the complex nature of borders in the modern world. Borders regulate movement and reflect political sovereignty, yet they also influence personal lives in profound ways. For individuals and families, especially mothers responsible for the well-being of their children, borders often become spaces where difficult decisions and emotional struggles take place. Understanding these experiences helps reveal the human dimension behind discussions of migration and border policies.

Behind every migration story there are individuals making choices under conditions of uncertainty, often motivated by the desire to protect their families and build better futures. From this perspective, the experiences of mothers during wartime displacement and contemporary migration illustrate both continuity and change. While the historical circumstances may differ, the underlying motivations—safety, stability and hope for the next generation—remain remarkably similar. These stories remind us that borders are not only political constructs but also deeply human experiences shaped by responsibility, sacrifice and resilience.

SHORT STORIES: “THE SPACE BETWEEN US”

BY CLÉMENTINE DUQUENNE, MINA HESSE, GABRIELA SZELAĞIEWICZ,
JOSIPA VIRIJEVIĆ

A project exploring the idea that physical and social differences can quickly turn into psychological borders that shape how people see and separate one another.

The authors wanted to show how borders are processes which evolve (move, redefine, erase) and at the same time live both in our minds and in our perception of the world. They shape our identities and are ingrained in our lives.

Mina:

As someone with the privilege of EU-citizenship, and no intercontinental travel-experience, borders have rarely been a physical place or object for me. Rather, a border between me and another country, culture, person, reveals itself to me over time. When I first cross the border into France, Italy, or the Netherlands, it doesn't seem so different from home, especially considering that the economic status of these countries is not too different from Germany's. It is only when I go deeper into the country that the fragments of a border start to come into view and startle me. This experience stands in stark contrast to the border experiences described by Gloria Anzaldúa: The border crossing is more permanent, more dangerous, an incision made into life. And yet, observing both experiences, the true crossing sets in afterwards. Anzaldúa describes how people who have crossed the Mexico-America border are a “synergy of two cultures” (1987: 63), how the conflict is psychological as well. As my experience is less severe, it is reduced to the psychological, lesser than the one Anzaldúa speaks of, but present.

Gabriela:

Having been born into a debordered EU, I had never known passport control. Thus to cross the border of being able to travel to another country, first I had to cross the societal border of communication and personal space of other people. I had to step into the unknown. Mental unknown of not knowing what awaits me in this situation, and physical one of not knowing what is on the other side of the wall protected by the guards. We always read and interpret borders, we relate to them, we relate our bodies to them. Have we crossed? Are we there yet? Are we in the process of crossing? These are the questions I asked when the time for my passport control came. How did I know it was over? I closed the door behind me, I crossed the border and suddenly I could breathe again.

OUR PROJECTS

But I could not see the whole process for what it was and what it entailed. Why is that? Precisely because of what Schimanski says: “it is ... impossible for us to see the whole border from both sides at once” (98). The place I was stuck in (an airport, border control point) was a touch-and-go place of contact for me with the guards and the border of my country, but it was also there because even in Europe, we still do have visible and tangible national borders.

Clementine:

During my travel to Norway I learnt how an external border (the physical crossing border into another country) becomes an internal border that can shape our identity. Indeed, in Norway, the real barrier was not territorial but linguistic and cultural. My experience reveals that meeting the ‘Other’ brings out internal borders: fear of not understanding. Yet, these borders did not contain me but allowed me to surpass myself and go beyond these borders. By learning to communicate sometimes without words, by confronting the vulnerability of refugees, by being guided by Irene, as mothers guide their daughters in the Joy Luck Club, I crossed invisible borders and redefined, in a way, my identity. In short, my stay shows that external borders become internal borders that force us to evolve and, sometimes, reveal a new ‘home’ to us.

Josipa:

When I think back to that moment in the bakery, I realize it wasn’t just about names, it was about identity, and the small ways it can be reshaped by belonging somewhere that isn’t quite yours. That same tension runs through *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan, where characters move between languages and lives, constantly negotiating who they are and how they’re seen. This feels close to what I felt in that bakery: the quiet loss that happens when a name, full of history and meaning, gets softened to fit someone else’s comfort. By someone else’s choice. Watching Jennylyn become Ďeni and Siddartha become Šime reminded me that assimilation often happens in subtle gestures—the shortening of a name, the acceptance of a nickname that feels foreign in your own mouth. In both Tan’s story and my experience, naming becomes a site of both surrender and resistance. To whisper someone’s true name, or to insist on using it, is to claim something essential and unchangeable.

It’s a way of saying: I see you, as you are, before the world tries to rename you.

GUEST LECTURES

FROM NEW MEXICO TO POMERANIA: SANTIAGO VAQUERA-VÁSQUEZ'S VISIT IN GDAŃSK

2025 was a year of sustained international engagement, creative production, and scholarly leadership for Santiago Vaquera-Vásquez. His work continued to bridge creative writing, border studies, and transnational cultural analysis through invited lectures, conference keynotes, and publications across Europe, Latin America, and the United States.

At the end of the spring term, with support from the Erasmus+ program, the University of Gdańsk, and the International Border Studies Center (IBSC), he was invited to the **University of Gdańsk** to teach a mini graduate seminar on **spectrality in borderlands**. The seminar engaged graduate students in American Studies in examining how ghosts, absence, and haunting function as critical frameworks for understanding borders, migration, and historical violence. He also delivered an invited lecture in the university's Spanish department, further strengthening transatlantic scholarly exchange. The visit was the second segment of a bilateral collaboration between University of Gdańsk and University of New Mexico Albuquerque made possible through the Erasmus KA-171 2024 grant.



FACTORS SHAPING IDENTITY IN THE MINING COMMUNITY OF KATOWICE DURING THE PERIOD OF NATIONAL CONFLICTS 1870-1914.

Held on 30th of May, 2025, as a part of the "Friday at the Historical" series, Dr. Anna Pelka, professor at the University of Regensburg, gave a lecture addressing the topic of multiculturalism in borderland societies in the context of nation-building processes at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. She focused on the example of the community of Katowice miners during the intensification of national conflicts between 1870 and 1914, a time when Upper Silesian workers were perceived as a social group with low national consciousness and were therefore of particular interest to German and Polish national movements. Cultural and social offers were directed at them, aimed at shaping their identity and national belonging. However, they themselves most often identified with their local communities.

Dr. Anna Pelka, professor at the University of Regensburg in the Department of 19th and 20th Century European History, specializes in the history of European dictatorships, as well as cities in 19th and 20th century Europe. She focuses in particular on everyday life and material culture. She is the author of books on youth fashion in the People's Republic of Poland and the German Democratic Republic, as well as on the development of the cities of Barcelona and Madrid during the dictatorship of Francisco Franco.

Uniwersytet Gdański | 55 LAT | Wydział Historyczny Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego | Piątek Na Historycznym | IBSC INTERNATIONAL BORDER STUDIES CENTER

CZYNNIKI KSZTAŁTUJĄCE TOŻSAMOŚĆ W ŚRODOWISKU GÓRNICZYM KATOWIC W OKRESIE KONFLIKTÓW NARODOWYCH 1870-1914

WYKŁAD

piątek
 30 maja
 godz. 9.45
 aula 1.48
 Wydział Historyczny UG
 ul. Wita Stwosza 55, Gdańsk

PD Dr. Anna Pelka
 Universität Regensburg / Niemcy

Spotkanie z cyklu "Piątek na Historycznym" poprowadzi dr hab. Anna Mazurkiewicz, prof. UG

EVENTS

46TH AMERICAN INDIAN WORKSHOP NORTH AMERICAN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES, LITERATURE AND CULTURE & CURRENT RESEARCH

26-28 MARCH 2025



Organized at the **Universidad Autónoma de Madrid in Madrid, Spain**, 46th American Indian Workshop brought together scholars from Poland, Germany, Turkey, Italy, United States, Canada, Spain, Switzerland, Tunisia, India and many other countries. Among them were two IBSC members: **IBSC Chair Grzegorz Welizarowicz (UG) and Ewelina Banka (KUL)**. Discussions revolved around the questions of literary production, museum preservation and transformation and cultural survivance. We are proud to be part of this dialog and community.

Big congratulations to the outstanding organizer Dr. Avelino Corral Esteban of the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras (UAM).

EVENTS

THE EIGHTH EUROPEAN CONGRESS ON WORLD AND GLOBAL HISTORY

10–12 SEPTEMBER 2025



Marta Grzechnik of IBSC participated in the Eight European Congress on World and Global History. The congress is organised every three years by ENIUGH (European Network in Universal and Global History). In 2025 it took place at the **Linnaeus University in Växjö, Sweden**, and the theme was “Critical Global Histories: Methodological Reflections and Thematic Expansions.” The participants were invited to critically reflect on the diversities in global history today.

Marta’s roundtable, “**Decolonizing Global History – View from Eastern Europe,**” aimed to discuss the place of Eastern European history in global historical research. The panellists talked about their various approaches to the region and its place in global history, and the methodological challenges they encounter in their research. The roundtable was organised by Yulia Gradskova (Södertörn University), and other participants were Julia Malitska, Yuliya Yurchuk (both from Södertörn University) and Mikuláš Pešta (Charles University).

OMHR SEA-EU CONSULTATIONS



In November, **Anna Mazurkiewicz**, professor at the University of Gdańsk, participated in consultations in Cadiz concerning the further development of **strategic cooperation between the IBSC and the SEA EU Observatory of Migration and Human Rights (OMHR)**. The consultations were based on the solid foundations of cooperation developed during previous visits by Grzegorz Welizarowicz, thanks to which IBSC has gained an established position of expertise among its Spanish partners.

During talks with OMHR coordinator Ángeles Jiménez García-Carriazo and Loréna M. Calvo Mariscal from the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence, key initiatives planned for the coming year were discussed. The agenda of the meetings included, among others: co-organization of an international conference of the Committee for Migration Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences (KBnM PAN), which will be held in Gdańsk in September 2026, with the leading organizational role of the Migration Observatory of the University of Gdańsk, coordinated by Rafał Raczyński; preparation of a joint scientific volume in the prestigious *Journal of Migration History*; development of educational programs, including short-term education (Blended Intensive Program); job shadowing initiatives to improve the flow of information between partner entities, with particular emphasis on training administrators responsible for institutional communication.

EVENTS

As a member of IBSC, the Migration Observatory at the University of Gdańsk, KBnM PAN, and OMHR SEA-EU, Mazurkiewicz assumed that the trip would increase the chances of exploiting the potential resulting from the synergy between various organizations with which IBSC is connected not only through migration research, but also through the pursuit of effective exchange of knowledge and experience. An important part of the visit was also a meeting with Juan Pedro Martín Villarreal, a representative of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Cadiz, aimed at further improving communication and strengthening existing inter-university cooperation. During the meetings, the network of contacts was also expanded to include English-speaking lecturers in Cadiz, which made it possible to develop a preliminary program of joint activities for 2026.

On April 20, 2026, Mazurkiewicz and Raczyński will jointly present the activities of the IBSC and the Migration Observatory of the University of Gdańsk at the OMHR SEA-EU forum.



INTERVIEW

KATARZYNA MIRGOS

A founding member of the International Border Studies Center at the University of Gdańsk. Cultural anthropologist currently working at the Institute of Anthropology at the UG, where she completed postgraduate studies in psychotraumatology. She studied ethnology and cultural anthropology at A. Mickiewicz University in Poznań.

Her research interests include migration phenomena, culture and languages of minorities, anthropology of the family, urban anthropology and feminism. For over 20 years, her primary field of research has been the Basque country. She is the author and editor of publications about the Basque culture, as well as a translator from Basque to Polish and organizer of many events, workshops, conferences, exhibitions and film screenings related to the cultures of Spain.

She has led research projects funded by KBN and NCN, worked on the editorial boards of *Prace Etnologiczne* PTL series and "Etnografia. Praktyki, Teorie Doświadczenia," and is an a member of the Polish Ethnological Society, the association Antropólogos Iberoamericanos en Red, and collaborates with the Cátedra UNESCO de Comunicación y Valores Educativos at Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea.

Notable works:

Obcy i nowi Baskowie: Migracje, tożsamości i języki w Baskijskiej Wspólnocie Autonomicznej;

Strangers and New Basques: Migration, identities and languages in the Basque Autonomous Community;

Mit Mari: jego źródła i miejsce w kulturze Basków;

The Myth of Mari: its sources and place in the culture of Basques;

Gure. Historie z Kraju Basków;

Gure: Stories of the Basque Country;

Baskijska historia, baskijskie historie.

The Basque history, the stories of the Basque.

INTERVIEW

Good morning, Professor Mirgos! You are an anthropologist specializing in research on the Basque Country, a minority region quite distant from Poland, both culturally and geographically. What sparked your interest in this particular minority and led you to pursue this topic academically?

Good morning, it's a pleasure to be here. My interest in the Basque region began with the language, but also by chance. Back when I was studying ethnology, a friend from another department told me about a Basque language elective course. At that time, I was interested in the Ibero-American region, but I knew little about Basque. Curiosity led me to the first class, and I was immediately charmed by the language.



I remember that the classes took place twice a week at 8 a.m., but that didn't discourage me. On the contrary, one time when my alarm clock didn't go off and I missed the class, I felt a deep regret. With my newfound love for Euskara (the Basque language), I was also a nuisance to those around me, as I would sometimes respond to my friends and family in Basque, even though they obviously didn't know the language. Later, I set off on my first trip to the Basque Country, hitchhiking with a friend, and I was even more enchanted with this corner of Europe. This also influenced my studies, as various aspects of Basque culture became my main subject of research, my anthropological field. And that remains the case to this day.

You speak the Basque language. I assume that, unlike popular modern languages such as English or Spanish, there are no widely available textbooks for Basque. How did you start learning this language? What surprised you the most, and what became the biggest challenge?

In the Basque Autonomous Community, Basque has co-official status alongside Spanish. Fortunately, when it comes to learning the language, there is a wide selection of textbooks as well as online materials available for every level of study. There is something for everyone. As I mentioned earlier, I began learning at a Polish university as part of a Basque language course, and I also had the opportunity to study at Basque language schools for adults. For what surprised me the most, there were many elements related to the specificity and uniqueness of Basque, such as the vigesimal [built around number 20 – ed.] numeral system.

INTERVIEW



INTERVIEW

Another challenge was that the language classes I attended were exclusively in Basque. At the same time, it was an excellent way to learn. However, to this day, I still find it difficult to use less common forms, such as those related to the conditional mood. Moreover, after a longer break, I need time to speak more freely. Unfortunately, the lack of daily practice affects the ease of communication.

What are your favorite aspects of Basque minority culture? The language, or perhaps their beliefs and legends?

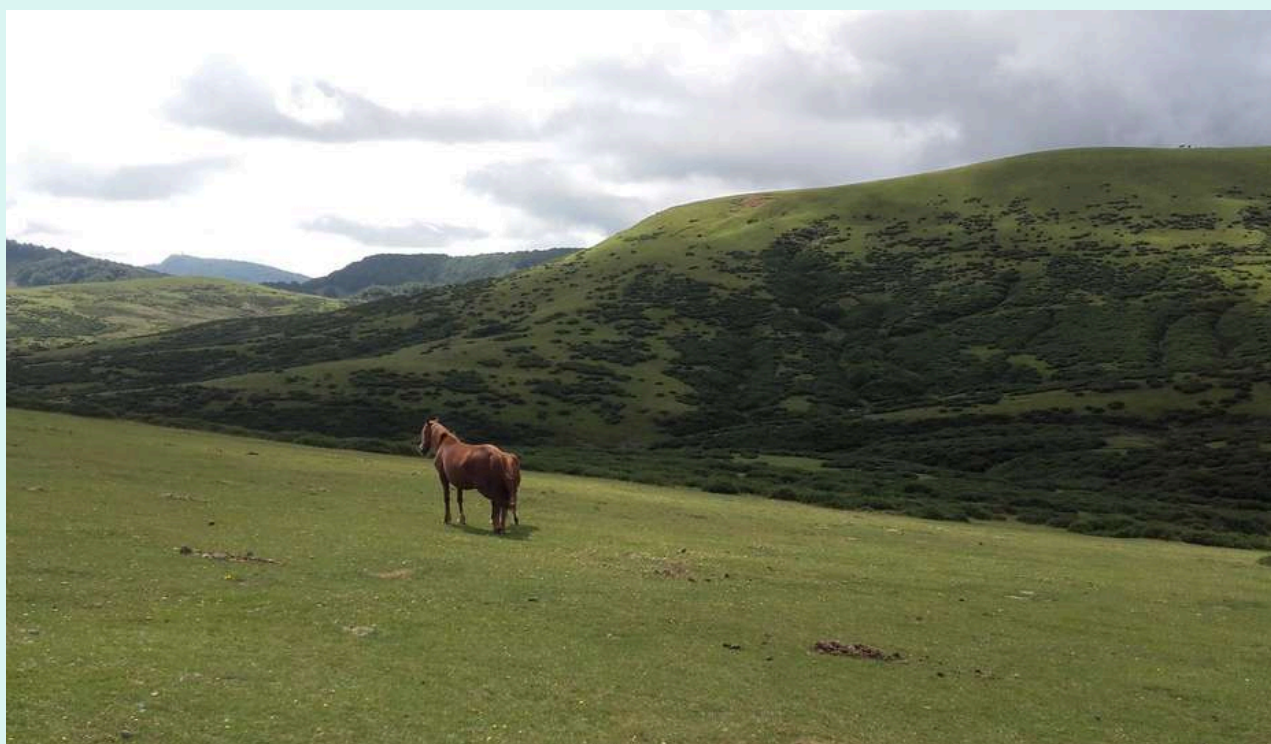
I think I am most passionate about the Basque language and its dialects. However, I am observing all aspects of the local culture, or rather cultures, with great interest. At the same time, the Basque Country is more than just a research field for me, it is more like a second home and a place where I have people who are dear to me.

Is there anything in the cultures of the Basque Country that we could learn from?

It is difficult to make such generalizations, because no culture is internally homogeneous. Basque culture, for example, is not solely the Basque-language culture. That is why I cannot fully answer this question. I can only say that I feel more peaceful in the Basque Country, that the people close to me from there teach me to take a step back from minor matters and accept things I cannot influence. But is that a Basque trait? I would not dare to make such a definite claim. Half-jokingly we can say that we can learn to accept unfavorable weather. Rain is characteristic of the local climate, and my friends sometimes say that if they had to wait for good weather to carry out their plans, they would never leave the house. There are many jokes about Basque weather (for example: I love summer in the Basque Country. It's my favorite day of the year). On the other hand, for some people, rainy weather is the good weather.

In 2025, you participated in a conference in Spain, where you gave a presentation entitled "Asi que la guerra," focusing on the relationship between anthropology and armed conflicts. What inspired you to take up this topic? What conclusions can be drawn from this work?

The inspiration for this topic was the theme of the conference I attended, which focused on expectations and uncertainties, the challenges of the contemporary world, and the place of anthropology within it. At the same time, it was important to me to use my presentation to bring attention to the situation in this part of Europe and Polish anthropology. International conferences are always a great opportunity for discussion and expanding one's knowledge.



INTERVIEW

What are the biggest challenges you face in your research?

The first thing that came to mind was finances... And unfortunately, I think that's accurate. The ability to conduct field research, which is so important in the context of cultural anthropology, is often linked to the ability to finance it. After all, it has happened that research conducted in the field of "anthropology at home" was not based on a specific interest, but rather on necessity.

The second issue that came to mind is bilingualism. During my research in the Basque region, I speak Spanish with some people and Euskara (the Basque language) with others. I change languages many times throughout the day. As a side note, it is also possible to observe situations in the Basque Country where one person combines these two languages in the same utterance.

How does your work at IBSC influence your job?

Working at IBSC gives me the opportunity to collaborate with people representing other disciplines, however, often interested in similar phenomena. It is an opportunity to broaden my knowledge, as well as to carry out joint projects and receive support for my research. This cooperation has both a visible dimension, such as participation in joint initiatives and events, resulting for example in publications, and a less visible, human dimension, connected with integration, development, and scholarly debate, which is equally important.

Finally, could you tell us about your plans for the future and what you are currently working on?

The focus of my current research remains the Basque Country. On the one hand, I am continuing and expanding my research on the Basque language, which is my individual research, but on the other hand, at the team level, I am collaborating with Basque researchers on two projects, and I hope that one of them will be carried out in the future precisely within the framework of the IBSC.

Thank you so much for answering these questions!

Thank you!

*THE INTERVIEW WAS CONDUCTED IN GDAŃSK ON 13TH DECEMBER 2025
BY KATARZYNA MIKOŁAJCZYK.*

MEMBER ACTIVITIES

THE MANY SINS OF DIEGO RIVERA AND TRUMPUS CAESAR RETURNS CARLOS MORTON

This year professor Morton created a play ***The Many Sins of Diego Rivera*** in collaboration with legendary “Culture Clash” member Herbert Siguenza. Siguenza did a one man show about Pablo Picasso and Morton talked him into working together on a play about iconic Mexican artist Diego Rivera. The play has had several staged readings in New York City, Los Angeles, and San Diego.

Another new play Morton wrote in this period was ***TRUMPUS Caesar Returns***, a sequel to *TRUMPUS Caesar*, an adaptation of Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare which was staged online during COVID at UC Santa Barbara.



He is currently working on an adaptation of *Esperanza*, a libretto for opera Morton wrote in 2000, which is now becoming a “play with music.”

Morton: “Instead of trained opera singers and an orchestra, it’s become a stage play where the actors occasionally break out into song. It had a staged reading in June, 2025 at Teatro Paraguas in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and is scheduled for a full production next March, 2026 in Santa Fe.”

Morton’s most recent work, ***Pastorela Fronteriza***, is a “borderlands shepherd play” set on the border between Mexico and the United States. The shepherds are Mexican immigrants coming to the United States to “workshop the Baby Jesus in Bethlehem,” but they are dissuaded from their true path by devils who trick them into the North Star Mall in San Diego. “**Santanás** Claus’ hooks them with credit cards and tries to sell them a bill of goods built around crass commercialism instead of the true meaning of Christmas” explains Morton.

KRZYSZTOF ULANOWSKI: “MY RESEARCH OBJECT IS THE WORLD SITUATED BETWEEN RELIGION AND MAGIC, HOLINESS AND DIVINATION, PRAGMATISM AND MYTH”

“The boundaries I navigate in my scholarly journey are primarily immaterial in nature. My research object is the world situated between religion and magic, holiness and divination, pragmatism and myth. These boundaries are not easy to define, and navigating them, or perhaps around them, is a considerable scientific challenge, as clear scientific definitions are difficult to come by, and rather, these topics themselves must be redefined.”

Between April and May 2025, Dr. Ulanowski participated in a trip to **Sicily, Italy**, to study cultural flows between southern Europe and the Middle East in ancient and contemporary times. Research was conducted in local libraries and archives (Biblioteca Comunale di Palermo, Biblioteca Centrale della Regione Siciliana, Biblioteca Cappuccini, Archivio Storico Comunale), as well as archaeological museums (Museo Archeologico Regionale Antonio Salinas, Antiquarium Domenico Ryolo of Milazzo, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Catania).



RESHAPING BOUNDARIES

14-19 DECEMBER 2025, ITALY, ORGANIZED BY KRZYSZTOF ULANOWSKI



The trip aimed to establish or deepen collaboration in research on boundaries, both literal and more difficult to define, such as those between religion and magic in ancient and contemporary times. In Venice, the visit included analysis of the project "Jewish and Christian Magical Traditions in Comparison and Contact" with its benefits for the study about magical experiences. It included a visit to the synagogues of Venice and a discussion on the origins of the term "ghetto" from a liminal perspective. These comprised visits to museums and galleries to understand common research points. These were also the tour at the Palazzo delle Prigioni "Inquisition, Torture and Witchcraft" exhibition and at the Gallerie Accademia Venezia for a temporary exhibition devoted to witchcraft and the occult in the works of Pietro Bellotti.

The most important part of the visit were the meetings on December 16-17, 2025 in Verona with representatives of the local university, including the organization on December 17 of a scientific seminar by the University of Verona (Dipartimento Culture e Cività) with Simonetta Ponchia (Assyrian Studies), Luigi Turri (Syrian Studies), and Andrea Bianchini (Greek Studies), regarding their experiences from the international project "Shaping Boundaries in Antiquity" and the possibility of continuing research and publications together with the International Border Studies Center of the University of Gdańsk in the future.

In this trip of just a few days, I managed to successfully conduct a scientific seminar, a series of advisory and information meetings, and lay the foundations for further cooperation, conducting a conference and publishing a joint book on religious, divinatory and magical issues.

NOT JUST DRAGONS AND WITCHES KATARZYNA MIRGOS'S 2025 ACTIVITY

In 2025, Katarzyna Mirgos published the chapter "La nueva Gernika-Ucrania" in the international edited volume *Gernika(k)/Guernica(s). Resemantizaciones de un trauma histórico* (Peter Lang Verlag, Berlin). In July, she delivered the paper "Así que la guerra". *La antropología ante los nuevos conflictos* at the International Congress of Anthropology AIBR in Santander, Spain. At the same time, she supervised research on Euskaraldia, a social initiative promoting the use of the Basque language. In autumn 2025, she was also involved in giving public lectures on the Basque Country and its culture as part of the Open University at the University of Warsaw and during the 3rd Indigenous Film Festival at the Ethnographic Museum in Gdańsk, the latter titled "Not Just Dragons and Witches. About Basque country and its cinema."



MIGRATIONS, AFFECTIVE GEOPOLITICS, AND THE BALTIC SEA REGION.

MARTA GRZECHNIK

Continuing IBSC's cooperation with the Baltic Geopolitics Network set up at Cambridge University, on 25 April 2025 Marta Grzechnik participated in the network's annual meeting, during which participants discussed, among other things, expansion of the network to include new members. This year, the annual meeting was combined with the 16th Conference of Baltic Studies in Europe "Converging Paths. The Baltic Between East and West." Together with another IBSC member, Alexander Drost, Grzechnik organised a conference panel "Different Baltic Sea regions for different times," in which participants discussed the Baltic Sea region as an intellectual framework used to help tackle problems and challenges at different times in the 20th and 21st centuries.

In September Grzechnik participated in the 8th European Congress on World and Global History "Critical Global Histories: Methodological Reflections and Thematic Expansions" with a panel, co-organised with colleagues from Södertörn University in Stockholm, "Decolonizing Global History – View from Eastern Europe," which aimed to discuss the place of Eastern European history in global historical research.

Another significant milestone of 2025 was a launch of a new project, "Magnitude. Migration, Affective Geopolitics and European Democracy in Times of Military Conflicts", financed within the Horizon Europe framework. The first year of its activity included, among others, a methodological workshop in Ljubljana in July, and a comparative report "Labour Market, Education and Housing under Temporary Protection", which tackles these issues with regard to the forcibly displaced persons from Ukraine in the Baltic Sea region.

OUR PUBLICATIONS

READER: MIGRACJE I UCHODŹSTWO

**EDITED BY: GRZEGORZ WELIZAROWICZ,
KATARZYNA MIRGOS, KRZYSZTOF ULANOWSKI**
UNIVERSITY OF GDAŃSK 2026

The idea for the *Reader: migracje i uchodźstwo* (*Reader: Migrations and Refuge*) first emerged in 2022, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. At that time, as researchers affiliated with IBSC, we discussed how we could productively contribute to the debate on migration and refuge, taking into account our specializations and research methodologies. *Reader: Migrations and Refuge* was edited in Polish by Grzegorz Welizarowicz, Katarzyna Mirgos, and Krzysztof Ulanowski over the summer of 2025 and is due for publication by the University of Gdansk Press in 2026.

The collection offers multidisciplinary approaches to the question of (im)migration and refuge. Inspired by the call for accompaniment, solidarity in standing with refugees as well as their hosts at a trying time, the *Reader* offers a diverse array of educational materials that facilitate an understanding of (im)migration from the point of view of (im)migrants and refugees.

The publication combines interviews with two migrant women, a short story set on the US-Mexican border, a comic strip about migrant children, a play script, as well as scenarios for performative and poetic workshops with scholarly introductions to problematics of (im)migration in Poland and in southern Spain, and, last but not least, a primer on theoretical foundations of the collection. This approach aims to foster empathy and conscientization, while introducing the reader to (im)migrant experiences, which are often marginalized or oversimplified in mainstream narratives. Anchored in the critical pedagogical toolbox the *Reader* is a practical didactic resource for intercultural education of young and adult students and aspires to decolonize our thinking patterns around (im)migration and refuge. It encourages collaborative knowledge creation and a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that shape our attitudes toward the "Other."

With this publication IBSC is launching its *Reader* series in which contemporary debates on (im)migration, borders and borderlands, border aesthetics, languages, history, education, and much more will be engaged.

OUR PUBLICATIONS

Grzegorz Welizarowicz

"Work on this collection accelerated in 2025, when the materials we had been gathering for a while came to form a diverse yet what seemed to us a coherent whole, and when we realized that the daily deluge and instrumentalization of discourses related to crisis, war, refugees, and migrants demanded that we take up a particular methodological framework – a critical pedagogical one fostering critical literacies and new ways of thinking to offer one productive response to our new condition."

Katarzyna Mirgos

"*Reader: Migrations and Refuge* is a unique and important publication, particularly in the context of recent political movements and sociocultural changes. It aims to demonstrate the multifaceted nature of migration phenomena, the various cultural contexts and individual experiences involved, and the universality of the migration experience. It also draws attention to the diversity of ways of talking about migration. Suggested discussion questions enable the use of this publication as a pedagogical resource. The variety of contexts, narrative forms and perspectives tells a story about a phenomenon that has always been part of the experience of Homo sapiens (or perhaps of Homo migrans?)."

Krzysztof Ulanowski

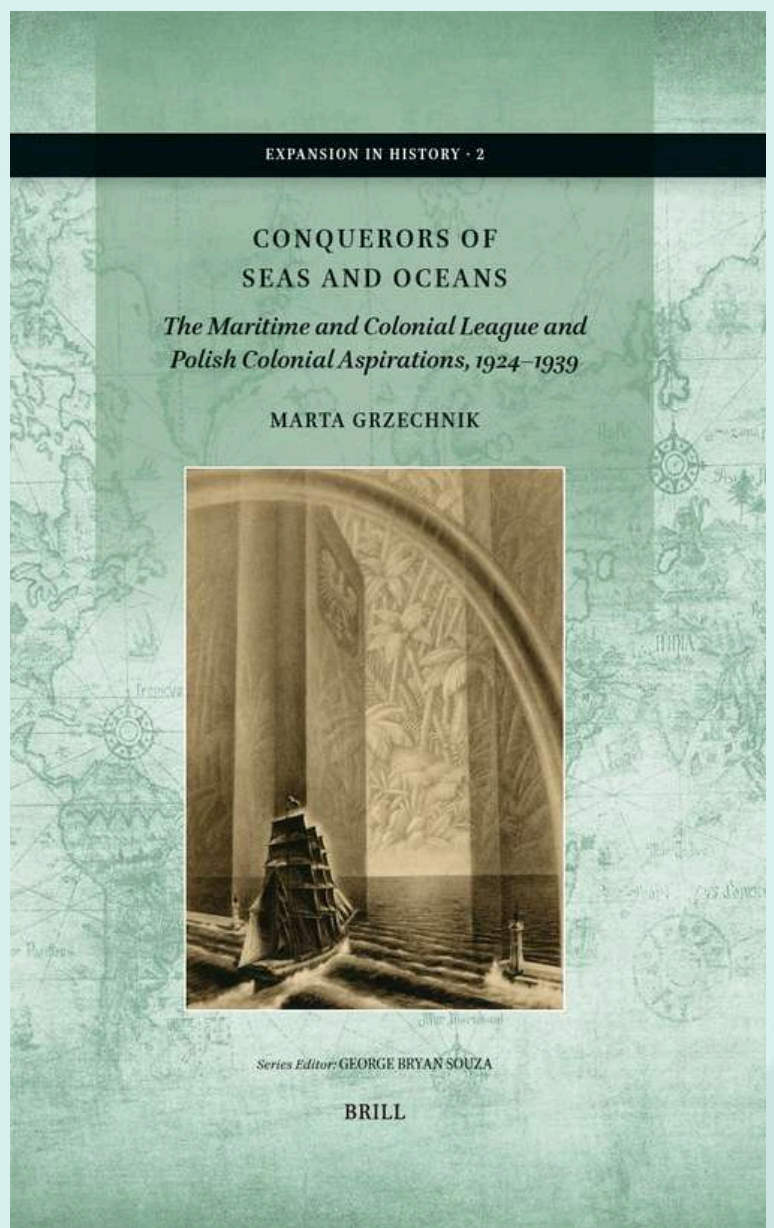
"The book consists of a series of original texts that offer diverse perspectives on migration. The authors describe the experience of crossing borders in various ways—both the literal, geographical ones and those that are immaterial cultural and emotional. My interview with Susanna Izzetdinova shows migration as a personal journey marked by challenges, where family history intersects with harsh geopolitical realities. Yulia Kiselyova's account highlights the trauma of wartime displacement and the search for understanding after the experience of loss. Santiago Vaquera-Vásquez introduces a literary and metaphorical tone, emphasizing the migrant's loneliness and his/her existence in a space "in-between." Carlos Morton's border novella is about a border not only as a line on a map, but a tangible experience inscribed in the body and memory. The workshop sections demonstrate that migration, approached performatively and poetically, can also become a tool for knowledge, creative transformation, and that language can serve as both shelter and a space for intense emotional experience. Lorena Calvo Mariscal adds a perspective from southern Spain while Rafał Raczyński closes the collection by reminding us that integration requires engagement from both sides. Together, these contributions offer a moving and thought-provoking picture of contemporary migration – an issue that continues to call for active participation in addressing the successive challenges that surge like waves on the historical surface of human civilization."

MARTA GRZECHNIK
CONQUERORS OF SEAS AND OCEANS
THE MARITIME AND COLONIAL LEAGUE AND
POLISH COLONIAL ASPIRATIONS, 1924–1939
BRILL, 2025

We invite you to read *Conquerors of Seas and Oceans: The Maritime and Colonial League and Polish Colonial Aspirations, 1924–1939* by IBSC member Marta Grzechnik. Find more information about the publication and a short interview with the author (exclusively for the IBSC Newsletter) below!



Marta Grzechnik



FROM THE AUTHOR

The book focuses on the discourse of the Maritime and Colonial League (formerly the Maritime and River League), the second largest social organization of the Second Polish Republic. By promoting its maritime and colonial program, the League aimed to transform Poland from a landlocked country into a maritime one, from a backward and marginalized nation into a modern and fully European one. It was, as Michał Pankiewicz wrote in *Morze* in September 1936, a dream of “a new, pioneering type of Pole, a conqueror of seas and oceans, mosquitoes and malaria, (...) building bridges, taming waterfalls and carrying the Polish flag high everywhere.”

The League's maritime program aimed to instill a maritime worldview in Poles, as well as to pursue an active maritime policy and expand ports, the merchant fleet, and the navy. The colonial program, on the other hand, aimed to acquire land for organized settlement (to which large numbers of emigrants could be directed) and direct access to natural resources and markets in overseas countries. This stemmed from the belief that these were essential for the development of Poland, in particular its industry. These postulates were presented and promoted in numerous League publications (e.g., the monthly magazines *Morze* [Sea] and *Polska na Morzu* [Poland at Sea]), but also during lectures, exhibitions, and mass events organized by the League, primarily the annual Sea Festival and Colony Days.

In addition, the Maritime and Colonial League promoted the image of Poles as pioneers and explorers by citing examples of past and contemporary travelers and publishing accounts of their expeditions. In describing overseas countries and their inhabitants, the League's authors often reproduced stereotypes about race and the non-European world that accompanied colonial expansion, while discursively placing themselves on a par with Western European colonial powers.

The book *Conquerors of Seas and Oceans* thus presents how, according to activists and publicists of the Maritime and Colonial League, thanks to its active presence in the colonial world and on the seas and oceans of the world, Poland was to overcome its internal problems and become a modern power with a global reach, on a par with its Western European neighbors.

Marta Grzechnik

INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

Dear Doctor Grzechnik, congratulations on your publication! Please tell us: what was your inspiration?

Thank you! I came across the Maritime and Colonial League during my earlier research on visions of the Baltic Sea region and Poland's relationship with the Baltic Sea. I was intrigued because I had never heard of this institution or of Polish colonial ambitions in the interwar period. I was surprised that, even though the League was the second largest social organization in the Second Polish Republic and its slogans were present in the public sphere, it is relatively unknown today, and most studies on Polish maritime culture and the history of the interwar period only mentions it briefly. That is why I wanted to take a closer look at this topic.

Was there anything that surprised you while writing? Or perhaps at later stages?

Actually, the topic *itself* was a surprise to me: I found it hard to believe that in interwar Poland, a country that had only recently been freed from foreign domination, plans were being developed to acquire overseas colonies, or at least to acquire land for organized settlement and access to raw materials and markets in overseas countries – because this was what the demands of the Maritime and Colonial League usually boiled down to.

It was also a pleasant surprise that soon after I took up this topic, issues related to the Polish (and Central European in general) attitude towards colonialism began to become a popular subject of scientific research, which gave me ample opportunity to present the results of my research and collaborate with other researchers.

How has your involvement in the IBSC influenced your creative process?

Thanks to the IBSC, I have gained new opportunities to collaborate, meet other researchers, and share the results of my research with them. Such meetings and discussions are invaluable in scientific work; they become a source of inspiration, an opportunity to try out new ideas, and hear constructive comments. Among other things, I had the opportunity to present part of my research in a special issue of *Studia Historica Gedanensia*, which was the result of the conference “Gdańsk-Danzig-Gduńsk within the Baltic Borderlands” organized by the IBSC in October 2021.

OUR PUBLICATIONS

I published an article "Gdynia 1920–1939: Poland's Gateway to the World," in which I looked at the creation of the myth of Gdynia and the Polish presence on the Baltic Sea in the interwar period. I also found the meetings with students from the University of Cambridge as part of the summer university "Border Infrastructures Changes and Socio-Cultural Impact (Past and Present)" organized by the IBSC in cooperation with the Baltic Geopolitics Network in July 2023 very inspiring.

Can you tell us what we can expect from you in the near future?

Several more articles of mine are due to be published in the near future, in which I discuss topics related to the subject matter of the book, i.e., the history of Polish colonial ambitions. I am also involved in collaboration with researchers from Sweden, among others, with whom we are working on a project concerning the vision of the future and modernization in the Baltic Sea region after World War I. In addition, in the summer of 2027, I will have the opportunity to spend three weeks as a visiting fellow in Regensburg, at the Leibniz ScienceCampus. IBSC is a partner in this program on behalf of the University of Gdańsk.

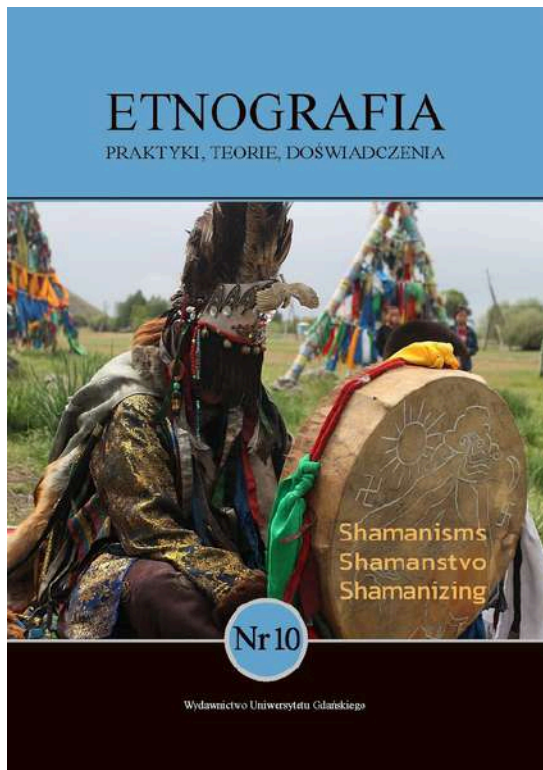
Thank you very much for your answers and good luck with your future projects!

Thank you very much!

*THE INTERVIEW WAS CONDUCTED IN GDAŃSK ON 14TH JANUARY 2026
BY KATARZYNA MIKOŁAJCZYK.*

ETHNOGRAPHY. PRACTICES, THEORIES, EXPERIENCES

TARZYCJUSZ BULIŃSKI



Issue 10 of the journal *"Ethnography. Practices, Theories, Experiences"*

presents a contemporary approach to one of the classic research topics in the field of cultural encounters and epistemology, namely shamanism.

The title of the volume deliberately departs from the use of this general term, which has proven to be a vague category, burdened with a multitude of meanings and interpretations. Instead, it presents a broad spectrum of phenomena referred to in contemporary anthropology as "shamanisms," "shamanism," and "shamanizing."

The articles collected in the volume, mostly in English, show this diversity on many levels. Most of them are based on research conducted in "classical" ethnographic areas such as Mongolia, Siberia, Central Asia, Korea, and the Americas. Others concern phenomena closer geographically, analyzing contemporary neo-shamanistic practices in Poland. The issue presents analyses of the phenomenon both at the level of local social practices and studies of individual experiences that can be described as "shamanism."

Given the considerable complexity and fluidity of the subject matter, the volume begins with a text by the editors, Tarzycjusz Buliński and Oyungerel Tangad, which proposes a kind of "cognitive map of shamanisms." It is an attempt to organize the literature on the subject from a paradigmatic and historical perspective, and at the same time a tool to facilitate orientation in the dynamically developing discussion on the nature and boundaries of the category of "shamanism."

**POLISH AMERICAN LIAISON:
WILLIAM J. TONESK (1906–1992)
AND THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF U.S.
INTELLIGENCE IN THE EARLY COLD WAR
ANNA MAZURKIEWICZ**

Anna Mazurkiewicz's new book aspires to become a significant methodological intervention that restores the human and social dimensions to the history of U.S. intelligence. The book, *Polish American Liaison: William J. Tonesk (1906–1992) and the Social History of U.S. Intelligence in the Early Cold War*, is the result of an OPUS NCN grant (2019/33/B/HS3/00579) and will be published by Routledge in 2026.

While traditional narratives often center on spy chiefs and generals, this work reconstructs the career of William J. Tonesk, a “smooth, often invisible operator” who functioned as a liaison between U.S. institutions and diverse Polish intelligence networks. Mazurkiewicz argues that early Cold War information gathering was not merely an institutional system, but rather a set of social practices mediated through personal relationships, cultural fluency, and transnational connections.

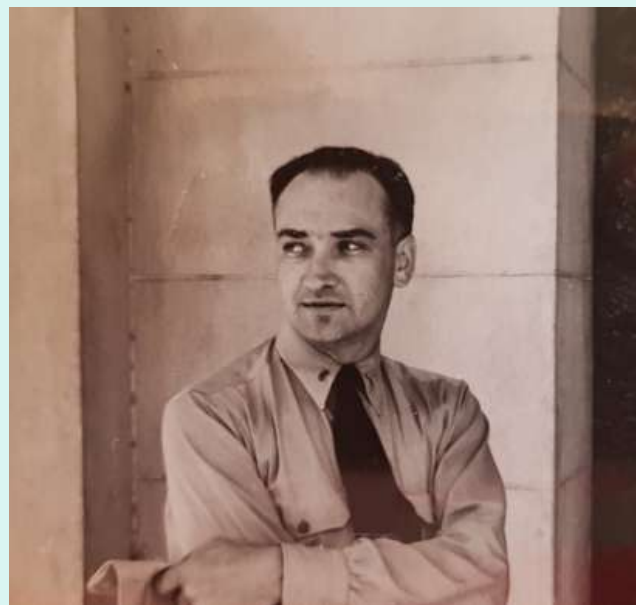
She employs an innovative microhistorical approach, using the life of a single, lesser-known individual to illuminate macro-level phenomena such as U.S.–Polish relations and the evolution of the CIA. The study is based on extensive research conducted in seventeen archives, including the Hoover Institution, the Polish Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), and multiple U.S. Presidential Libraries. Beyond official records, the book incorporates private family papers, oral histories, and physical artifacts to reveal the human dimension of intelligence work that is often absent from official diplomatic records.

From his early life in the industrial hub of Schenectady, New York, to his role as Deputy Chief of Protocol in the Kennedy White House, Tonesk's life offers a glimpse behind the scenes of American intelligence and diplomacy in the twentieth century. The book details his role in receiving clandestine materials from the anti-communist underground (WiN) and his subsequent designation as an “American spy” during Communist show trials.

OUR PUBLICATIONS

The book introduces several conceptual innovations to the field of intelligence studies. First, it demonstrates that the Polish American diaspora functioned as an operational intelligence infrastructure that preceded, and often operated independently of, formal bureaucratic organizations. Second, it introduces the concept of the “Ethnic Trap.” The narrative examines the paradox of ethnic intelligence: Tonesk’s Polish identity was his greatest operational asset in wartime Cairo and postwar Warsaw, yet it became a liability during the McCarthy era, when the CIA questioned his loyalty. Third, the book conceptualizes intelligence as a form of cultural brokerage. Tonesk appears not as a “James Bond” figure, but as a liaison and interpreter who curated political and social realities for high-level diplomats such as Averell Harriman and Arthur Bliss Lane. Finally, the book reflects on institutional fluidity. Mazurkiewicz highlights the permeable boundaries between diplomacy and intelligence by tracing Tonesk’s career across the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), the Strategic Services Unit (SSU), the Central Intelligence Group (CIG), the CIA, and the U.S. Department of State.

The life story of William J. Tonesk offers a novel and groundbreaking contribution to intelligence studies by shifting the focus from top-down institutional histories to a bottom-up social history of intelligence practitioners. The book seeks to reclaim the legacy of the intermediaries who made Cold War intelligence operations and diplomatic networking possible.



MORE PUBLICATIONS

Mazurkiewicz, Anna

- „Archival Reflexivity on Exile Agency: Rethinking the ACEN within Cold War State-Private Networks”. *East Central Europe*, 52(2-3), 2025, s. 218–253. <https://doi.org/10.30965/18763308-20252004>
- „Polonijne szanse i wyzwania kariery w amerykańskim wywiadzie – przypadek Williama J. Toneska (1906–1992)”. *Studia Historica Gedanensia*, 16(2), 2025, s. 373–393.
- „Pragmatic idealism and academic autonomy: Stephen P. Duggan and the American model of international education, 1919–1946”. *Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, 23(4), 2025, s. 59–95.

Mirgos, Katarzyna

- „La nueva Gernika-Ucrania”, w: Olaziregi Alustiza, Maria Jose, Gandara Sorarrain, Ana (red.), *Gernika(k)/Guernica(s). Resemantizaciones de un trauma histórico*, Berlin: Peter Lang Verlag, 2025.
- *Basque sacred places in the past and at present: cultural change and memory*, w: *The Human and the Divine: Aspects of Sanctity in Time and Space*, Ulanowski Krzysztof, Warburton David A. (red.), *Culture and History of the Ancient Near East*, nr 142, Brill, 2025.

Ulanowski, Krzysztof

- „Od wschodu po zachód: słońce w ludowych praktykach magiczno-leczniczych w XIX–XXI w.”, *Przegląd Religioznawczy (The Religious Studies Review)*, 2(296), 2025, s. 93–117.
- *The Enduring and Evolving Magical-Healing Practices in Pomerania over the Past Two Hundred Years. Western Folklore*, 84(2), Spring 2025, s. 191–223.
- „Grounded Sanctity, yet Still in Motion” in the Context of the Discussion about Sacred Places in Antiquity, w: Ulanowski, K., Warburton, D. A. (red.), *The Human and the Divine. Aspects of Sanctity in Time and Space*. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2025, s. 1–14.
- Ulanowski, K., Warburton, D. A. (red.). *The Human and the Divine. Aspects of Sanctity in Time and Space*. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2025.

Welizarowicz, Grzegorz

- „Teatr Latinx A.D. 2024”. *Teatr: pismo Stowarzyszenia Polskich Artystów Teatru i Filmu ZASP*, nr 2, 2025, s. 73–76.

CALL FOR PAPERS: BORDER SEMINAR 2026

“CONQUEST, BORDERS, ARTS”

MAY 26-27, 2026

“The Conqueror model contains a submodel we shall call the Empire model, or model of imperium, which is the process by which the prototypical conqueror ‘reaches out’ and ‘grabs’ or ‘seizes’ new lands in order to dominate those lands and the indigenous peoples living there.”

Steven T. Newcomb *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery* (2008)

2026 marks four years since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In hindsight, Russia’s neo-imperial ambitions appear as heralding a global re-awakening of imaginaries and practices of conquest. We live in times of terrible bloodshed. Another school is bombed. Global military spending has never been this high.

In Border Seminar 2026 we want to ask what we see as related questions of conquest, borders, and arts.

- What can the history of conquest propaganda teach us about contemporary imperial imaginaries?
- How does the imperium reproduce itself through ideology, legal frameworks and cultural narratives?
- How do various artistic genres and performances feed (or resist) into what anthropologist Michael V. Wilcox calls the “terminal narratives” or the lasting of the conquered/bordered peoples and institute (or erode) the moral economy of conquest?
- What cognitive models expressed in discourses normalize conquest and divorce it from its consequences (i.e. migrations, displacement) and what are those that sustain hope and resist apathy?
- If borders and the conqueror (ego cogito/ego conquiro) are the essential products of Modernity, what does their relationship tell us about the darker, occluded dimensions of modern borders (i.e. as instruments of both fortification and expansion)?
- What are the repressed pluriversal alternatives to these models?

OUR PROJECTS

Papers addressing these and related questions from the perspectives of global studies, American studies, literary studies, popular culture, cognitive science, performance studies, linguistics, education, history, art history, anthropology, and other fields are welcome. Following models of performance as research and embodied research practice, we also welcome creative responses to the theme, including texts, performances, and artworks as well as all mixed-format (scholarly/artistic) presentations.

Selections from the proceedings will be published in the second volume of the IBSC Reader series. Border Seminar 2026 "Conquest, Borders, Arts" is intended to offer an environment in which the arts and scholarship freely intersect. The program includes keynote lectures by IBSC scholar Marta Grzechnik (author of *Conquerors of Seas and Oceans: The Maritime and Colonial League and Polish Colonial Aspirations, 1924–1939*), and by Chicano scholars Francisco Lomelí and María Herrera Sobek.

On May 27, Chicano actor and artist Herbert Siguenza will perform *Diego Rivera: His Story*, a one man show. Creative workshops by California artists will be offered to an international group of students. Performance artist Martin Błaszczak will lead a workshop and a performance/installation.

A participation fee of 70 PLN will help us provide coffee and snacks for participants. Program will be announced in the first week of May. Registration details will be provided with notification of acceptance.

Submission Guidelines

- Abstracts: max. 150 words
- Presentation length: 15 minutes (scholars), 10 minutes (students)
- Submission deadline: April 27, 2026
- Notification of acceptance: April 29, 2026

Please send abstracts and a short biographical note (50–80 words) to:
grzegorz.welizarowicz@ug.edu.pl

"The title by conquest is acquired and maintained by force."

Chief Justice Marshall, *Johnson and Graham's Lessee v. M'Intosh* (1823)

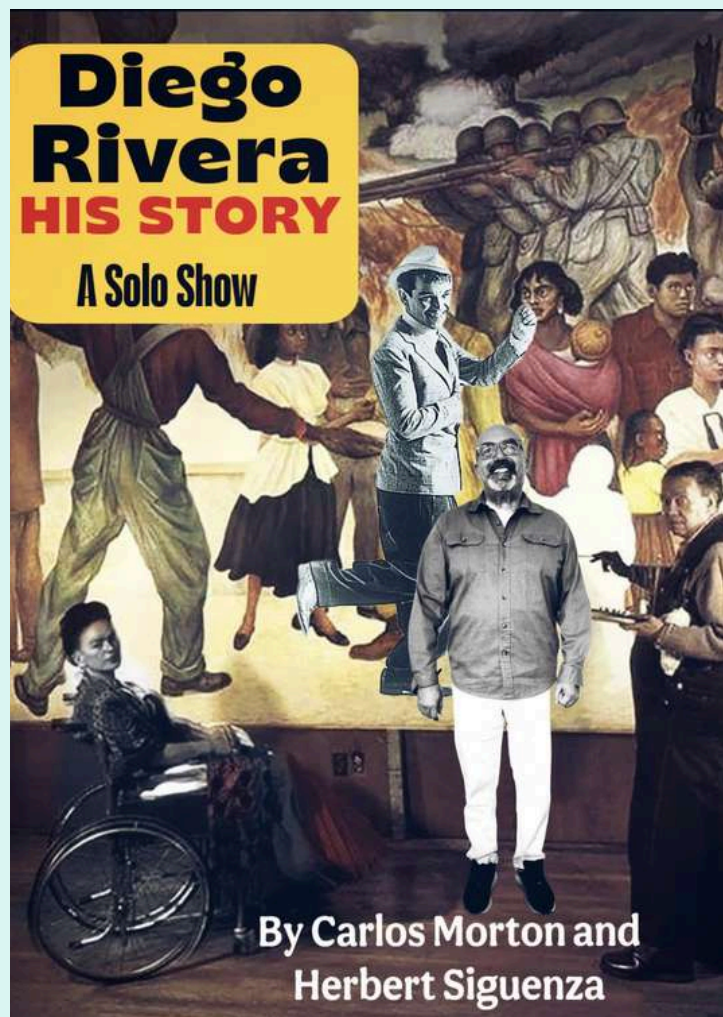
DIEGO RIVERA: HIS STORY

BY CARLOS MORTON AND HERBERT SIGUENZA | 65 MINUTES

Diego Rivera: HIS STORY is an evocative one-person show that delves into the extraordinary life of Diego Rivera through his art and relationships with women and patrons. Set in the aftermath of the funeral of his iconic wife, Frida Kahlo, Rivera returns to his studio, grappling with grief, confusion, and a looming sense of mortality. In his solitude, Rivera is visited by Cantinflas, a charismatic figure embodying Mexican consciousness and the common man. Through a compelling blend of visuals and music, Rivera recounts his vibrant journey through art, politics, and his complex relationships.

The play offers an intimate look at a revolutionary artist whose mural movement elevated Mexico on the global stage, and explores his tumultuous yet inspiring relationship with Frida Kahlo. Diego Rivera: HIS STORY is a tribute to one of Mexico's most influential visual artists of the 20th century, brought to life by the acclaimed actor, playwright, and visual artist Herbert Siguenza of the Chicano group Culture Clash.

**Diego Rivera: HIS STORY
will be performed by
Herbert Siguenza during the
"Conquest, Borders, Arts" Seminar
May 27th 2026, 12:30,
University of Gdańsk,
Jerzy Limon Theatre
Neofilology Building
ul. Wita Stwosza 55**



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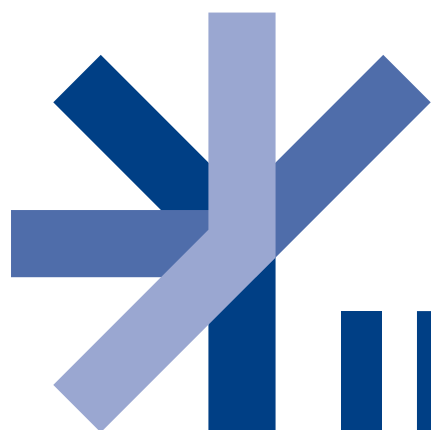
Grzegorz Welizarowicz

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