



## EUROPEAN **BEAT STUDIES** NETWORK

### 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

in cooperation with the Crossroads IV conference

University of Białystok, Poland, May 13-15, 2024

### **“The Beats: Wilderness and Wildness”**

The conference organizers invite proposals for papers, panels, roundtables, and creative performances for the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the European Beat Studies Network, which the University of Białystok, Poland, will host on 13-15 May 2024.

The conference will probe the extent to which Beat aesthetics retains its relevance in the Anthropocene by comparing and contrasting it with contemporary eco-narratives that center on the pressing immediacy of the current biodiversity crisis and the looming environmental collapse. The growingly apparent and dramatic effects of climate change lend a sense of timeliness to interrogating Beat texts in search of understanding the human impact on the global environment and seeking ways of maintaining environmental sustainability.

The conference will also engage historically with Beat creativity, for example in relation to writers of the Romantic period and Transcendentalists. Similarly to their 19<sup>th</sup>-century predecessors, the Beats seem attuned to and inspired by the surrounding land-, sea-, mountainscapes, natural habitats, and diverse life forms. They also infuse their philosophies with references to nature and display yearnings for escape from the turmoil of urban existence. In the spirit of the above, the conference will feature a guided trip to Białowieża National Park. One of the most biodiverse spots on the

continent and home to the largest population of Europe's biggest wild land mammals—the European bison – the Białowieża forest will give participants a unique opportunity to experience the richness of one of the last primeval forests in Europe, with its rare flora, array of wildlife and picturesque landscapes.

The conference will also reassess the potential and relevance of “wildness” within the framework of Beat aesthetics, thinking back to Henry David Thoreau's idea that “in Wildness is the preservation of the World. . . . In literature it is only the wild that attracts us [and] dullness is but another name for tameness.” The notion may be understood as advocating a departure from literary formulas and conventions while aiming at a loss of discursive control, among other means, by reveling in what Michael Hrebeniak described as “a prolongation of ecstasy to counteract the enervation of sanctioned narratives.”

We also invite proposals that evaluate Beat aesthetics as coming out of the “wild zone” (a concept theorized by Elaine Showalter and Craig Werner) guarded by contemporary institutions (such as the academe) and ideologies of power. The conference might then chart “wild zones” within the existing cartographies of Beat studies.

Topics, questions, and theoretical perspectives which can be confronted include, but are not limited to:

- Beats as seen via ecocriticism, ecofeminism, queer ecology, posthumanism, and new materialist ontology
- Beats and Transcendentalism
- Beat ecologies in a transcultural perspective
- Beats and deep ecology
- Beats and (the loss of) biodiversity
- Beats and the Apocalyptic
- Beats and the utopian/dystopian
- Beat aesthetics and (neuro)biology
- Beats and capitalist society, biopolitics, technopolitics and bioengineering
- Beats as a “wild zone” in the academe
- Beat aesthetics as a continual, radical challenge to the sanctioned forms of literary and artistic expression

- Radicality of Beat inter- and transmedial ventures
- New territories in Beat studies

Abstracts (250-300 words) or panel proposals together with a short bio should be sent to conference administrator Raven See at [rsee11@elmira.edu](mailto:rsee11@elmira.edu) by **December 31, 2023**.

Notifications of acceptance will be sent by **January 15, 2024**.

The organizers welcome papers limited to 15-20 minutes. The conference is planned as a **hybrid event**, thus allowing a number of participants to present and attend virtually. Please clearly **indicate the preferred mode of presentation** (face-to-face or online) in your proposal. To participate in the conference, you'll need to be a member of the EBSN. Membership is free.

Keeping the creative and informal atmosphere of previous EBSN events alive, the performance space of UCK (Uniwersyteckie Centrum Kultury UWB) will serve as a place for performance art, poetry readings, music, film and other artistic endeavors, thus complementing conference panels.

**Conference fee** (covers coffee breaks, lunches and conference materials):

Full fee (on-site and online): 100 EUR

Discounted fee (students and post-docs without full-time employment, on-site and online): 70 EUR

(Fees for virtual viewers as well as the optional fees for the reception and the trip to the primeval Białowieża forest to be confirmed)

**Travel & accommodation:** full details will be posted soon

**Conference Organizing Committee:**

Tomasz Sawczuk  
Anna Maria Karczewska  
Jacek Partyka  
Jerzy Kamionowski

All members of the Conference Organizing Committee work in the Faculty of Philology (University of Białystok), the co-organizer of the event.

**Conference Administrator:**

Raven See