

Deconstructing the Kennedy Mystique: JFK as a Cultural Phenomenon

International conference, March 28-29, 2014

American Studies Center, University of Warsaw

Al. Niepodległości 22, 02-653 Warszawa

www.asc.uw.edu.pl

Program:

28.03.2014

American Studies Center, room 317

- **14:30 – 15:30, Registration**
- **15:30 – 16:00, Opening remarks; Collecting JFK memorabilia** - prof. Bohdan Szklarski, ASC Director
- **16:00 – 16:30, JFK memorabilia – Exhibition, Coffee break**
- **16:30 – 18:00, Panel I: JFK in the Mirror** (chair: prof. Bohdan Szklarski)
 - John Andreas Fuchs - *JFK and Jed Bartlet: Two Catholics. Two Fictions?*
 - William R. Glass - *From Religious Liberty to Faith in America: JFK and Mitt Romney on Religion in Politics*
 - Karol Górski - *Identifying the political speech and its antithesis: comparing the presidential rhetoric of John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Ronald Reagan*
- **18:00 – 19:00, Dinner for panelists**

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American Studies Center, room 317

- **09:00 – 11:00, Panel II: JFK – Images** (chair: prof. William Glass)
 - Magdalena Maksimiuk: *The Man Behind the Alluring Image – All the Faces of JFK in Selected Movies and TV Series*
 - Zuzanna Berlińska – “*JFK blown away, what else do I have to say?! – John F. Kennedy in lyrics of popular songs*”
 - Marek Jeziński - *Between the person and the idea – JFK and rock music*
 - Wojciech Lewandowski - *Picturing an icon: JFK's portrait in selected comics and graphic novels*
- **11:00 – 11:30, Coffee Break**
- **11:30 – 13:00, Panel III: JFK – Texts** (chair: prof. David A. Jones)
 - Dorota Waśniewska - *The changing image of JFK in American collective memory conveyed in books, documentaries and newspaper articles*
 - Piotr Szyja – *Looking Through the Eyes of Enemies: the Picture of JFK in Communist Propaganda*
 - Jolanta Szymkowska Bartyzel – ‘*Good Guy among bad Americans*’ - *the image of JFK presidency in Przekrój -1960-1964*
- **13:00 – 13:30, Coffee Break**
- **13:30 – 15:30, Panel IV: JFK - Expectations and Reality** (chair: prof. Bohdan Szklarski)
 - Grzegorz Kosc - *Robert Frost's Pre-Inaugural Hallucinations on the Biopolitics of the 1960 Presidential Elections*
 - Marcin Fatałski - *Anticommunism in the Policy of John F. Kennedy*
 - Elene Medzmariashvili - *JFK and American Women's Issues*
 - David A. Jones - *Camelot at Dawn and Beyond into Night: In What Respects, In What Locations, Does the JFK Legacy Live On In America?*
- **15:30 – 16:00, Closing remarks and final discussion** - prof. Bohdan Szklarski

Presentations:

John Andreas Fuchs - *JFK and Jed Bartlet: Two Catholics. Two Fictions?*

Next to JFK *The West Wing*'s fictional Jed Bartlet is the only Catholic President of the US. Being Catholic, however, is not the only thing they have in common: Just like JFK, Bartlet is a New England Democrat, hid a serious illness during the presidential campaign, and after winning the nomination he had to beg his former rival to accept the vice presidency in order to get support from the South and win the general election. In my paper I will compare the creation of presidential myths in fact and fiction surrounding the only two Catholics in the White House.

William R. Glass - *From Religious Liberty to Faith in America: JFK and Mitt Romney on Religion in Politics*

In 1960, JFK appeared before the Houston Baptist Ministerial Association to address concerns about what the election of Catholic would mean for Protestant America. His speech was a classic defense of the separation of church and state and the right to privacy in matters of religion. In 2007, in his first, unsuccessful run for the presidency, Mitt Romney gave a parallel speech trying to explain how his Mormon faith would inform his term in office. The purpose behind both speeches were similar, but the differences between them were striking and reveal much about the changing role of religion in presidential politics over those forty five years.

Karol Górski - *Identifying the political speech and its antithesis: comparing the presidential rhetoric of John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Ronald Reagan*

The aim of my paper will be to compare the rhetorical styles of John F. Kennedy and Ronald W. Reagan. The research question is as follows: what made those two presidents so famous speakers? Using rhetorical categories proposed by Kenneth Burke and Aristotle I will try to define the rhetoric of each president, bringing out the differences as well as similarities..

Magdalena Maksimiuk: *The Man Behind the Alluring Image – All the Faces of JFK in Selected Movies and TV Series*

50 years after the tragic death of the president, the image of John F. Kennedy continues to force its way to the hearts of minds of millions. Today it is certain that the power and influence of the alluring image itself is beyond understanding in sociological, cultural or historical terms. How is it perceived, comprehended and represented in films and TV series (*Thirteen Days, Kennedy, JFK, The Kennedys, Parkland, The Butler*)? Has it undergone significant revision, purification or transformation in the eyes of filmmakers over the years? How is the „what if” factor and the mystery (?) behind the assassination important to the overall portrayal of the 35th U.S. president?

Zuzanna Berlińska – “*JFK blown away, what else do I have to say?!’*” - John F. Kennedy in lyrics of popular songs

John F. Kennedy and his sudden passing were the topics of several commemorative albums in the years immediately following his assassination. In the subsequent decades, topics of JFK’s life and death rarely filled whole songs and were often restricted to several verses used only for triggering off a series of associations. The aim of the paper is to determine symbolic meanings behind the figure of JFK conveyed in lyrics of popular songs, especially by artists representing post-Camelot era.

Marek Jeziński - *Between the person and the idea – JFK and rock music*

In the paper the image of JFK represented in rock songs is discussed in two ways: (a) as a historical person, the USA president and an influential politician, and (b) JFK as an idea, a cultural motif, or a certain political myth created and maintained by the artistic visions, and represented in the songs of numerous artists. Such songs as “He was a friend of mine” by The Byrds or “I Shall be Free” by Bob Dylan belong to the first category, while the name of the band Dead Kennedys and the songs as “Sympathy for the Devil” by The Rolling Stones, “God” by John Lennon, or “Born in the Fifties” by The Police represent the second one.

Wojciech Lewandowski - *Picturing an icon: JFK’s portrait in selected comics and graphic novels*

Mystery, scandal, drama and wealth are the ingredients of the popular image of JFK. This is enough to make an everlasting icon of popular culture. No wonder that graphic novels’ authors want to depict him and to explore the phenomenon of the figure so appealing. In the “Watchmen” and “Before Watchmen” series some sound biographical facts mix up with

fantasies and obsessions of American People. And, as usually, it says more about the nation than about the President.

Dorota Waśniewska - *The changing image of JFK in American collective memory conveyed in books, documentaries and newspaper articles*

With passage of time people tend to change views on certain events that influenced their lives. Researchers interested in commemorative actions and collective memory claim that such variation is specifically noticed after 50 to 60 years from the given event.

In my paper I would like to analyze the image of JFK and its changes over time referring to theories of collective memory and commemoration. Some examples of newspaper articles, books and documentaries will be used as primary materials together with theoretical works.

Piotr Szyja – *Looking Through the Eyes of Enemies: the Picture of JFK in Communist Propaganda*

John F. Kennedy took office during the escalation of Cold War hostilities and his presidency contributed to heightening them. This increased the – usually high – level of attention directed towards the United States in the communist press. The aim of this paper is to use propaganda as a tool to deconstruct some of the myths surrounding JFK and his presidency. Journalists and correspondents from the Soviet Bloc were far from objective, but as outsiders they could, in their observations, brutally reveal America's weaknesses and problems. By looking at the language that was used, the choice of arguments and information that was published, and the contexts in which they were presented, a careful analysis can place what is commonly thought about JFK and his presidency in an interesting perspective.

Jolanta Szymkowska Bartyzel - *'Good Guy among bad Americans' - the image of JFK presidency in Przegląd -1960-1964*

Przegląd was one of the most popular culture magazines published in Communist Poland. It was addressed to intellectual elites. For many years it saved much of its independence and neutral character. The paper presents the image of JFK in the magazine that generally did not deal with politics and avoided communist propaganda. Content analysis of the weekly's issues from the period of 1960 - 1964 show several discourses in which JFK was presented to *Przegląd* readers.

Grzegorz Kosc - *Robert Frost's Pre-Inaugural Hallucinations on the Biopolitics of the 1960 Presidential Elections*

I will discuss an early draft of the Dedication poem which Robert Frost had planned to read, in its final version, along with "The Gift Outright," at John F. Kennedy's inauguration on January 20, 1961. Largely unknown until 2006 when it was finally transcribed by Robert Faggen as one of the Notebooks, the poem seems to betray Frost's foreboding about the President's assassination. The poem shows that Frost viewed the election of Kennedy as a manifestation of America's collective desire, best understood in terms of Darwin's sexual selection. It also reveals Frost wary of the nation's subsequent anxieties which he intuitively configured as fears of infection and castration. The poet envisioned the beheading of Kennedy as one of several responses of communities and cultures to alien elements that disrupt their cultural purity.

Marcin Fatalski - *Anticommunism in the Policy of John F. Kennedy*

For many observers John F. Kennedy was a statesman who had well thought out vision of U.S. foreign policy in the Cold War world. Nevertheless many historians question his ability to answer the challenges of the Cold War and strengthen the position of the United States. Historical sources confirm that Kennedy had clear idea of U.S. foreign policy and was determined to contain communism through many political and economic tools. He was convinced that military approach to political problems could not be sufficient any more. Kennedy paid more attention to economic and social mechanisms of anti-communism than other U.S. presidents.

Elene Medzmariashvili - *JFK and American Women's Issues*

This paper deals with one of the interesting fields of JFK's activities. The author tries to investigate reasons why JFK became the first among Presidents of the USA to be interested in women's rights issues, what steps he took in this direction and why? What was the result of these steps? After answering these questions with an allowance for ideological, personal and other priorities of JFK, the author makes conclusion, that JFK took the lead over the time and proved once again his progressiveness.

David A. Jones - *Camelot at Dawn and Beyond into Night: In What Respects, In What Locations, Does the JFK Legacy Live On In America?*

The JFK legacy appears to live on more visibly in some United States regional cultures than within others. Daniel J. Elazar's three American regional subcultures offer insight. This paper will examine the states where John F. Kennedy and Ronald W. Reagan scored victories in the 1960 and 1980 Presidential elections, then dovetail this together with where the Democratic and Republican political parties have scored more recent victories, and where the Affordable Care Act ("ObamaCare") implementation has witnessed both failure and success.

Panelists:

Zuzanna Berlińska: graduate student at the American Studies Center, B.A. graduate of Institute of Applied Social Sciences at the University of Warsaw

Marcin Fatałski: Associate professor at the Chair of American Studies, Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora, Jagiellonian University. He specializes in diplomatic history and foreign policy of the United States. He is the author of “Widmo rewolucji. Polityka USA wobec Ameryki Południowej 1961-1968,” Eng. “A Specter of Revolution. U.S. Policy toward South America 1961-1968”.

John Andreas Fuchs: studies American Cultural History and American Literature with a focus on American Catholicism, the Civil War, and the American South. He read History, American Studies, Anglistics, Educational Sciences and Theology at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, the University of Aberdeen, and the Ludwig Maximilian University (Munich). Currently he is assistant professor with the Chair of School Pedagogy at CU Eichstätt as well as an adjunct with the department of Religious Education.

William R. Glass: professor of American Social History at the American Studies Center of the University of Warsaw, Poland, where he is also co-editor of *The Americanist*, the journal published by the Center. He has published articles on American Protestant fundamentalism and a book entitled *Strangers in Zion: Fundamentalism in the South, 1900-1950*. He is currently working a book tentatively titled “Laughing in War/Laughing at War: the Service Comedy as Genre.”

Karol Górski: graduated from the University of Warsaw Institute of Journalism and Phd student there. Also student at the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Warsaw University. His areas of interest include: political rhetoric, discourse and narrative analysis, cultural and literary anthropology.

Marek Jeziński: head of Journalism and Social Communication Dept. at UMK in Toruń. His main academic interests include political sociology and anthropology of popular culture. He

published: *The Quest for Political Myth and Symbol in the Political Language of AW“S” and SLD* (2003); *Marketing polityczny a procesy akulturacyjne. Przypadek III RP* (2004), and *Język przemówień politycznych Wojciecha Jaruzelskiego w okresie stanu wojennego* (2009), *Muzyka popularna jako wehikuł ideologiczny* (2011). He is the editor of several academic books and published academic papers on political marketing, popular culture, contemporary theatre and music.

David A. Jones: professor of Law, Management, Public Policy at American Studies Center, University of Warsaw. He offers lectures on U.S. business culture and foreign policy, and has made 14 research trips to China since 2004 to study the influence of American culture in Asia compared to Europe.

Grzegorz Kość: assistant professor of American studies at the University of Warsaw and the University of Lodz in Poland. He is the author of *Robert Lowell: Uncomfortable Epigone of the Grands Maîtres* (2005) and has co-edited, with Krzysztof Majer, *Tools of Their Tools: Communications Technologies and American Cultural Practice* (2009). His most recent book, *Robert Frost's Political Body*, is forthcoming from Camden House (Rochester, NY). Kosci is currently working on a project involving Robert Lowell's prose.

Wojciech Lewandowski: Assistant Professor at the Institute of European Studies at the Faculty of Journalism and Political Science at the University of Warsaw. Co-founder and coordinator of British Socio-Political Studies Research Group BRITANNIA. Guest Lecturer at American Studies Center, University of Warsaw. Host of a music radio show “Art.Rockowy Świat”. Scientific interests: political and social problems in popular culture (special focus: graphic novels and comic books, counterculture of the 60's, progressive rock, horror literature); cultural interpretations of social and political processes.

Magdalena Maksimiuk: PhD Candidate at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences. She has an MA in Law, University of Warsaw and an MA in American Culture Studies, University of Warsaw. During her studies she also spent one semester in Berlin at Freie Universität and Humboldt-Universität. Her academic interests focus on American film, media discourse, terrorism and globalization.

Elene Medzmariashvili: Professor, Director of MA and PhD programs in American Studies at Tbilisi State University. She graduated from TSU and holds a PhD. in World History. She teaches courses: Introduction to American Studies, US Diplomacy in 20th Century, Terrorism in the U.S. and Europe, Women in 20th Century American Politics, History of Latin America. In 2005-2006 she worked at Rutgers University (USA) as a Fulbright visiting scholar. She has more than 80 publications, among them some history textbooks, also papers on women in American politics, and problems of Georgian immigrant women in the US.

Piotr Szyja: PhD candidate at the Institute of Political Science, Polish Academy of Sciences. Graduate of Warsaw University (European Studies, American Studies). He spent one semester at the Groningen University as an Erasmus student. He is interested in American and European politics, American foreign policy and international relations theory. He prepares a dissertation on cultural determinants of American foreign policy.

Jolanta Szymkowska Bartyzel: adjunct professor in the Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora, Jagiellonian University. Her scholarly interests focus on history and reception of American popular culture in Poland. She is an author of a book and articles on American popular culture, Americanization and mass media communication.

Dorota Waśniewska: graduate student at the American Studies Center in Warsaw, MA graduate in Psychology (Warsaw University) and BA graduate in English Philology (Warsaw University).