



PREMIS seminar, 15 April

Kevin Wolke (English Language and Literature, Åbo Akademi University)

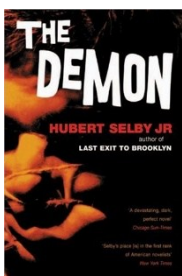
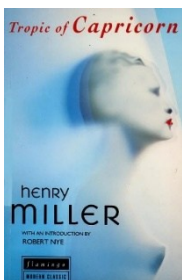
Where? Arken, Jöns Budde (M218) or online via Zoom:

<https://aboakademi.zoom.us/j/6950507660>

When? Wednesday 15 April 2026, 16:15 –17:45

Welcome to another PREMIS seminar! At this seminar, doctoral researcher **Kevin Wolke** will present his research.

“Late Modernist Mysticism in Henry Miller’s *Tropic of Capricorn* and Hubert Selby Jr.’s *The Demon*”



In this seminar, American novelists Henry Miller and Hubert Selby Jr. represent the idea of a late modernism. This liminal category between high modernism and postmodernism was first laid out by Tyrus Miller (1999) and further developed by scholars like Anthony Mellors (2005) and Marina MacKay (2007). While the concept of a late modernism is still not fully integrated into academic discourse, an interdisciplinary tie to existentialist philosophy can explain the evolution and demise of modernism. From the nineteen-thirties onwards, we find an anti-humanist bend in many Anglophone novels. This seminar will investigate how Søren Kierkegaard’s deadlock between ethics and religiosity, Arthur Schopenhauer’s pessimistic metaphysics, and Emil Cioran’s ambiguous elaborations on mysticism relate to the events of Miller’s *Tropic of Capricorn* (1939) and Selby’s *The Demon* (1974). It will become apparent how a sceptical approach to mysticism, featuring both enthusiasm and disillusionment, was born in Europe but flowed across the pond and into late modernist fiction.

Kevin Wolke is a doctoral researcher in English Language and Literature at ÅAU whose current draft thesis title is "Late Modernist Existentialism: Philosophical Approaches to the Novels of Henry Miller and Hubert Selby Jr.". He expects to defend his thesis in late 2026.

What is PREMIS? It stands for Post-graduate Research in English: Multimodal and Interdisciplinary Studies, and refers to a literary and cultural seminar which promotes research at all levels. While the emphasis is on new developments in literature, the seminar also keenly appreciates multi-modal, interdisciplinary or multi-cultural input.

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